

28

//VOL. 5



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28 is a free digital magazine that primarily focuses on 28mm models in the Warhammer hobby. We have no affiliation to other companies or groups, and any similarity in imagery or nomenclature is purely coincidental.

We do not accept hate or prejudice. 28 aims to expand the hobby and promote diversity and inclusion, through creativity and freedom of expression.



TEAM 28

GREETINGS FROM YOUR BIOMECHANICAL OVERLORDS!



Rejoice, pitiful beings of flesh! After a protracted period of absence while we journeyed deep into the treacherous enigmas of the Immaterium, we have emerged triumphant to claim our rightful place and bestow Volume 5 upon our loyal readers.

Be warned... the knowledge within these cursed pages carries a heavy price, and the path it illuminates is paved with madness, damnation and turnips!

Artist Focuses reveal countless luminaries who showcase their talents and ignite the fires of inspiration, including 28's own Martin McCoy. For those who wish to excel in this aesthetic arena, the arcane secrets of brush and pigment will be revealed through Tutorials empowering you to paint your own twisted masterpieces. Peer into the souls of the creators through riveting interviews, including Max Fitzgerald the creator of Turnip28 and our cover artist and creator of the first ever 28 magazine miniature, Nicky Grillet.

The Female Space Marine Challenge of 2021, a resounding testament to our unyielding determination and relentless pursuit of progress, is revisited and celebrated. Lo! The galaxy shall forever bear witness to the extraordinary achievements of our indomitable sisters-in-arms!

Revel in the ever-present embrace of the grimdarkness as a veritable torrent of macabre horrors drive you to the depths of despair and delight. You are welcome.

Volitare-28 // Editor



JAMES SHERRIFF

Last seen walking barefoot into the battle mists of the *Trench Crusade*, clutching only a battered old dataslate and a rusty spoon, James was lost to us for some time. Volitare was about to redact him from the 28 datorium, when we received a garbled radiotelegraph from the Front. Reams of punch tape regurgitated his instructions for the layout of volume 5. Blessings of the bomb upon his wretched biomass.



ALEXANDER WINBERG

With the launch (and tragic disappearance) of Warhammer Quest: Cursed City, Alexander made it his mission to replace all the miniatures with old metal replacements from Citadel's glorious past. He has also been a busy bee, juggling various 28 related projects and challenges and generally having a say in all kinds of matters that really shouldn't concern him.



PAUL VON BARGEN

Stuck so deep in a rabbit hole called 3D modelling, he didn't even manage to write that article about 3D printing he promised. Hobby highlight: Painted three miniatures in 2023 so far!



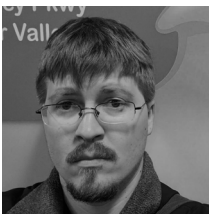
EADWINE BROWN

Ead has been putting brush to mini less often of late, in favour of writing pulp adventure and being professionally pedantic about other people's writing.



MIRA MANGA

Mira has been lost deep in exploration of the 30K universe with help from Black Library authors Dan Abnett and Graham McNeill and under the tutelage of Arbitor Ian. Check out these interviews and horrible, self-penned theme songs at her @miramanga YouTube channel. As the grimdark tightens its fist around her, she is ever on the lookout for new fantasy and sci-fi worlds to step into and share with her book club!



ERIC WIER

Eric continues to paint Dark Angel's, but instead of True-scale Space Marines, he has now found himself painting Rogue Trader era models. He has also realised he needs to paint some terrain if he ever intends to use them in a game...



GREGORY WIER

Gregory has not involved himself with any miniature building or painting in quite some time, but has kept himself aware of the Games Workshop miniature scene. He has occupied himself with writing about music and dabbling with no-input mixing.



ADAM WIER

Adam busies himself with converting and sculpting tinier and tinier details on his models. While he has been trying to expand a warband of fanatical cultists of the Imperial Creed, he has recently been distracted by the City of the Damned. Wyrdstone is a powerful lure it seems!



KRISTIAN SIMONSEN

Kristian has been away from the hobby for a while, instead making a lot of art including drawing and painting pictures. Now he is easing himself back into the hobby doing scale modelling, mainly WW2 planes. More recently, he has also been working on his Black Legion army.



MARTIN MCCOY

Martin is currently traveling around the US living out of a Jeep Cherokee with his girlfriend Shelby and dog Marzipan. Between guest spotting at tattoo shops and volunteering on farms through Workaway, Martin is working daily on a new RPG world: *MossCairn*. Hobbying on the road is very difficult but he does have the new Krueboyz, paints and green stuff hidden in his luggage, just in case.



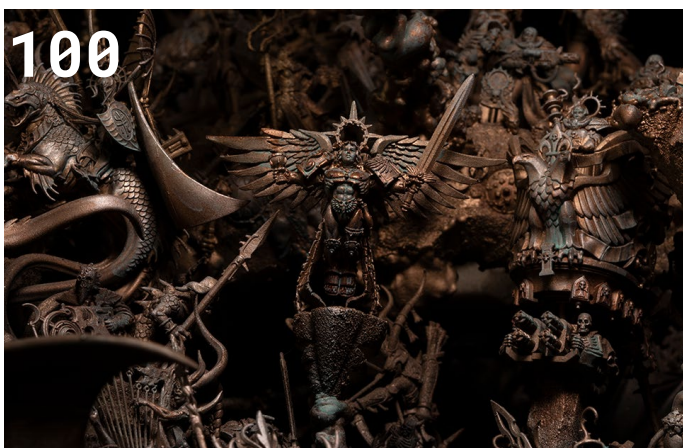
WILL RAHMAN-DAULTREY

Creator of *Forbidden Psalm* miniatures game, short stories and the very silly *Mörk Boll* sports game. Often awake, sometimes aware, most likely a vampire.

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NICKY GRILLET

Hi Nicky! Welcome back to the pages of 28 - the magazine you helped create back in 2019. Let's get the most obvious, boring question out of the way - Did you always want to be an artist?

A. I had a few silly career goals as a kid, but for the longest time I wanted to be an astrophysicist. I spent most of my time at school doing maths, physics and chemistry with this in mind, until I started to struggle. I had some mental health issues at the time, and I realised that the realities of working in science didn't interest me. I liked the ideas and the theories, but the practice not so much.

I was bored a lot during class and drawing was always an easy way out, so I could be physically present but doing something I enjoyed. It also helped push raw feelings down. I was really into music at the time and, for a while, I wanted to study it, but I thought I had to be a virtuoso of some sort to even consider it, which I'm still not, sadly.

After my chaotic high school years, following my mum's advice, I was lucky to finally start

at a small traditional art school. I had no idea what it could bring career wise, but I really wanted to learn how to be better at drawing. I learned that it could actually be a job during those years.

Looking back now, I think what interested me in scientific fields, outside of understanding how things work, were the possibilities of exploring new things. Now I'm very happy to do it at my desk with a pencil and some paper, and explore outside of the realm of what is even possible.

I also recently thought about the impact that the *Lord of the Rings* movies had on me. I had just started reading the books for the first time when I went to see the first movie and, seeing what the balrog looked like on screen compared to the description in the books, made me realise the impact an artist such as John Howe could have! It was more than just an adaptation of the description. A lot was added to the idea of a balrog to make it one of the most impressive moments of the movies.

Q. You have a wonderful artistic style combining elements of whimsy and horror,



effectively conveying fantasy and science fiction. Who/what are some of your influences creatively and artistically?

A. Thank you! It took me quite a few years to be where I am now, and I've had a lot of different inspirations through this time. My first conscious ones were obviously the illustrations from the old black and white Warhammer books, which I thought were fantastic! That's what got me into being more interested in traditional media as opposed to digital. Before that, we were lucky to have a lot of art books at home and I spent a lot of time going through Bosch, Magritte, Escher and Dali. We didn't have a book on Giger's work, but after I saw the film *Alien* when still quite young, my mum showed me his work, which instantly fascinated me and it still does.

Later I spent some time reading comic books - Dave McKean was a big influence. The work of Axelle Lenoir also influenced me a lot, probably more directly, and maybe this explains the mix of friendly and dark characters that is prevalent in my work. Later, John Blanche became an obvious one. I've also picked things here and there looking at a lot of different things, and it's still evolving. Pinterest, Instagram and Artstation are terrible places to waste time in, but are great to see a lot of things and hopefully be inspired, obviously without copying anything, outside of technique exercises. It's an interesting question to explore now with the rise of computer generated images with apps and such. In general, I tend to switch between friendly and darker characters, probably to find a bit of balance. I noticed that spending too long making only dark stuff, or very introspective things, can have a negative effect on my morale, so I fluctuate between them. Maybe with time they are slowly becoming just one thing...?

Q. In addition to your freelance work, you also worked as a concept artist for Games Workshop. What was that like and how was it to work alongside John Blanche?

A. It was super interesting. I feel really grateful that I was able to have this opportunity and a small influence on a few things released or yet to be revealed. This was my first full time job in a creative field. Like most people in the miniature hobby, I'm fascinated with the process of the making of a miniature. Being

able to see the very early stages of this was fantastic. I was able to be in rooms where people talked about the reasons behind specific details and exchange interesting feedback. I realised quickly what may seem obvious - that everything is carefully crafted. Everything is a decision, sometimes down to details as seemingly minor as the position of a rivet.

Personally, it was a challenge in many aspects too. Besides living very far from my comfort zone, I was sometimes asked to keep working on projects for which I felt I had no more ideas to contribute. Pushing through these moments and seeing something unexpected and better come out of it felt really great, and I have even more respect for professional concept artists. And working with my colleagues and the designers gave me an even stronger admiration for their work and their contribution to the miniatures. Not everyone is as famous as John Blanche or Jes Goodwin, but there are so many hugely talented people gathered in such a small place. It's really inspiring.

John Blanche is a power house of creativity though. Every time we could see what he was working on, it was like nothing I've ever seen before, and really felt somehow new and challenging - there is such a huge backlog of his work to be inspired from. His work alone is impressive and humbling. Furthermore, his work ethic is just as inspiring. He keeps outside influences carefully in check, to be sure not to have too much of someone else's ideas in his head!

I was lucky enough to spend a couple of afternoons at his place, so I could have a glimpse of his process concerning some current project, and it really helped me push things a bit further and make better drawings. I might repeat myself, but I feel really grateful I had this opportunity - to call him a colleague and to have his feedback on my work for a couple of years.

Q. In addition to your artwork, you also build evocative miniatures that maintain your signature style. What is your favourite part of the miniature hobby? Building, painting or playing games?

A. I really enjoy building scenery the most. Stories are mostly told through characters, but the games often feel sad to me. Because

“Like most people in the miniature hobby, I'm fascinated with the process of the making of a miniature. Being able to see the very early stages of this was fantastic.”





most miniature games are competitive, the characters we spent hours building and painting sometimes just last one round before being pulled off the table and that seems a waste to me. I wonder if others in the community feel the same? Due to this, I enjoy spending time on the scenery because they are the only things I'm sure will last through the whole game.

I've had times where I played a bit more with a friend and it was nice to see our game evolve from one evening to the next. I also really enjoyed the few games of *Warcry* I played. It's challenging but very easy to learn, and can be done in an hour, which I cannot say for the other games I tried, many of which can take quite a while to learn and play! I wish I had more opportunities to play *Warhammer Quest*. Co-operative games are really my favourites and the settings for the last few renditions of *Warhammer Quest* are really great.

Recently, I have had fewer and fewer opportunities to play, something that was affected by the lockdowns in England due to the pandemic. During that time, I focused on trying to tell stories through the scenery I created for the games, which is a thing the *Dark Souls* and *Bloodborne* video game series do really well.

Painting miniatures, or a piece of scenery, is always a bit daunting to me. I do not do it regularly enough to build on what I did before, or even remember how I've done something in the past. So it's mostly improvisation and trusted old ways.

Q. One of your most iconic contributions to the miniature hobby is the creation of your vignette boxes, which have been affectionately dubbed Grillet Boxes. How did you come to create these, pushing the concept to even create an entire miniature game board within one [see the *Mordheim 2019* event article in Volume 2 - *Vollitare*]?

A. I'm super happy every time I see someone making a box of their own and mentioning the Grillet Box thing! Although it was never my intention when I started creating them, my ego is always boosted a bit when I see people create them.

I made the first ones in 2016, I think, when I was planning my first trip to Warhammer

World. I had a few chats with John Blanche and other folks from Nottingham at the time, and thought I could bring some minis with me, just in case! I wondered how to carry them though. I'd seen John transporting his minis in old wooden boxes, with a few old dice, a dried lavender bag and an illustration on the opposite of the box and I wanted to try something similar.

A few years before that, in 2010 or 2011, I started making 'assemblage' sculptures, made from scraps and trash and unused stuff. I quickly started to make them to be hung on a wall, mostly because I live in a very small studio and don't have a lot of room. They were rusty sad robots stuck in a textured wall, like the one on the cover of this issue of 28. Between early 2014 and the end of 2015, I made a lot of scenery on the theme of a ruined under hive. This project and some of the minis I did at the time were the things that got me noticed online.

In these scenes, I reused this idea of sad rusty robots stuck in a wall on a miniature scale, fitting servitors in gothic archways like some characters from an old rule book were fitted in gothic frames. With this in mind, when making my first two boxes, instead of painting the gothic archways inside it, I decided to build them in 3D.

It was just this at first and then, on a third one, I included the servitors in the archways and made them as a tribute to an illustration by the late Wayne England. This box and the minis inside were featured in an issue of *White Dwarf* in the *Blanchitsu* section.

After that, it was mostly a game of exploration, finding some cool boxes and seeing what I could do with them. I quickly realised that they were not really practical to transport minis safely though, so I focused on the things I enjoyed the most, telling small stories and making a mess.

When we talked about the *Mordheim 2019* event, I first wanted to make a 'classic board', although it was a bit ambitious at the time. I started working on it during the winter of 2018, around the same time I applied to the concept artist job at GW. It would have been a multi layered 1x1m board, separated into two parts. In February 2019, I was invited to Nottingham for an interview and it was my first trip by plane in a long while. I rediscovered

how unpleasant airports are and realised how idealistic my expectations were to be able to transport a fragile and heavy board with my two small arms!

When I came back home, I decided to make a board that would be easy to carry first. With my small experience in boxes, I decided to find a bigger one that I could carry on my shoulder and see what I could fit inside.

This time working on it was really great. I spent the next months on it when I was not at my job. I spent a lot of time just looking at it trying to figure out how it could work. I had to cut a few things in the process to make sure it fitted inside. It was awesome to see cool - and very real - people playing on it, during what was a memorable weekend!

I haven't done a lot of boxes since then, but I've collected a lot of different ones and can't wait to be in a better head space to dive into them. I also need to go back and finish that initial Mordheim board, as it was damaged more with every move to England and back.

Q. In addition to your illustrations, artwork and sculptures, you are also a musician, producing some hauntingly beautiful pieces that blend ambient and industrial genres. What brought you into creating music and does it allow you to express yourself in a way you feel your other artwork does not?

A. Thank you for the kind words. I'm not confident about the things that I do, but I feel insecure about my music the most. Even if I was drawing as a kid and never really stopped, it was music that made me understand what creativity, at least to me, is. I love music and used to spend a lot of time going to live concerts, volunteering at a local rock club. Eventually I decided to try to create some myself.

I'm really interested in industrial music and the idea that you don't need to be a musician, nor do you need to play an instrument to actually make music is liberating. Furthermore, music doesn't need to fit to standards.

I played a bit of guitar though and was able, at around 20, to get my hands on a laptop and some music software. I spent nights working in the rock club and days playing music and video

games. Minis weren't really on my mind at the time. I don't remember if something specific happened, but it was when playing with this software, my guitar and some noises that I realised that I could create stuff. Any kind of stuff really.

There was silence and, after a bit of playing and some work, there was an idea of music. I still find this genuinely amazing! It doesn't have to be good and my stuff back then really wasn't. But it was unique and something I had not heard before. It was just me making noise and it was so freeing.

Drawing after that was similar. A blank paper, some time, some play, some work and there is something new-ish on the page! Even if it's not good, it's there and it's awesome. This feeling is what I've been running after since then and it helped me so much in difficult times.

Music has this specific thing though, compared to the other things that I do, that is really figurative and totally abstract. You can imagine things based on sounds and words can suggest a picture, but to me, chords and sounds and rhythms are like textures and colours, arranged in ways that are hopefully pleasant. I think music can express feelings the most directly. Be sad while playing a guitar and that sadness will likely come through in your music.

I still wish I was better at it though and I still try to do things, even if it's in a less obsessive way than it was then. I'm scared to look back later in my life and regret that I haven't spent enough time trying to make better music.

Q. Some of your work touches on important social issues, such as LGBTQ+ representation, sexuality and gender identity. What unique qualities does art possess that allows it to tackle these challenging issues and spark positive change?

A. It has taken me a lot of time to figure out that I was a part of the LGBTQ+ community. My understanding of it all is still relatively young, but I think if these subjects were depicted more often in the media, and in a more positive light, it could have changed my life for the better, maybe allowing me to put words to feelings I had no idea were OK to have and this occur decades earlier.



“... be in love with the process. The result is a fleeting thing. Once done, a thing starts to live its own life, in a drawer or on the internet.”

Art is a powerful media - it can help normalise seeing people outside of the perceived 'norm' and present them in a positive light. It might be trivial for people inside those 'norms' and sometimes even ignored. I still have a lot to learn myself. But for the people concerned, it really can change a life. The small things matter, I think. And I really hope to see more diverse characters in all media, so everyone has a chance to see a bit of themselves be the important part of the world they are.

Q. Are there any current projects you are working on that you can tell us about?

Outside of freelance projects that I share online, or will share at some point, I've had a slow year and I haven't done as much as I wish I had. It has taken me some time, but I tried my hands at sculpting with greenstuff and milliput, and after some complications and bumps on the road, I'm learning to make silicone moulds to be able to use what I've done in my next projects. Hopefully it will be an investment of time that will make the rest of my work a tiny bit more interesting in the future. If it is of interest for other people too, I'd be happy to make these available on my online shop. I just need to make sure what I made will be usable. It is still a work in progress. After that, I really hope I can finish the original Mordheim 2019 board and make

loads of new boxes and, hopefully, some music, even good tracks if I dare to dream.

Q. Finally, do you have any advice for aspiring artists, whether they are illustrators, character designers or sculptors?

A. I think that there are a load of wiser and more fluent people able to give advice than I am. I'm still trying to figure things out myself. I guess I'd advise artists to keep in mind why they are doing what they do. I feel that I've been very lucky, but luck came because I kept doing things, even when nothing seemed like it would come out of it.

If possible, I would advise you to be in love with the process. The result is a fleeting thing. Once done, a thing starts to live its own life, in a drawer or on the internet. The process is always new and the feeling keeps going as long as you keep doing it. And it helps to not be discouraged too soon by unsatisfying results, or by the dire prospects computer generated images could have on the profession. To me, art is a very human thing to do. It is what humanity would do in an ideal world where basic needs would not be the constant worry they are. Humanity needs art just as much as individual humans do.



ARTIST FOCUS // AARON HOWDLE

AARON HOWDLE



I've been drawing fantasy since I was in school. It really started after coming home from seeing the movie *Dragonslayer* (1981) at the cinema and drawing the dragon over and over again. But I really got into it when a school friend showed me some Citadel miniatures sometime around 1984. I was twelve years old and *Star Wars* (which was all I drew until then) was fading into memory. Citadel miniatures filled the space left behind very nicely. I immediately went out and borrowed *The Fellowship of the Ring* from the library and I was hooked. I loved drawing and painting, trying to emulate the art I saw in early editions of Warhammer, White Dwarf, Fighting Fantasy and Paper Tiger art books.

Growing up in a small town doesn't provide much exposure to the art world, so it came as a shock in college to find that fantasy artwork, like a goblin standing on a mountain of bodies, was not considered art. I spent a bit of time trying to bend myself into something more acceptable to my teachers, but in the end I quit after my foundation year.

I'd like to say that I immediately went out and did my own thing, but I spent my twenties doing bar work, call centre jobs and a bit of work as a model maker, before ultimately becoming a graphic designer, which continued in various forms for the next couple of decades. By 2014, I'd had enough of computers and design work. I really wanted to do something else. I gave up design work (and the accompanying money!) with the vague idea of doing an illustrated story book. I scratched around trying to develop a drawing style, until one day it dawned on me that I already knew how I wanted to draw when I was at school. So, I dusted off the Rotring pens and have not looked back since.

In terms of subject matter, I love including little stories in a picture. For me, the bored guard, leaning half asleep on his halberd can be far more appealing than god-like super beings. It's good to be a bit more subtle.

I am a huge fan of artists like Ian Miller, John Blanche, Iain McCaig and many others, but I also love work from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The *Ring Cycle* pictures by Arthur Rackham, Gustav Doré's *Paradise Lost* and his London pictures, *Peter Pan and Wendy* illustrated by Gwynedd Hudson, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Parsifal*, illustrated by Willy Pogany. It's worthwhile to look at works which influenced your genre, rather than simply consuming the genre itself.

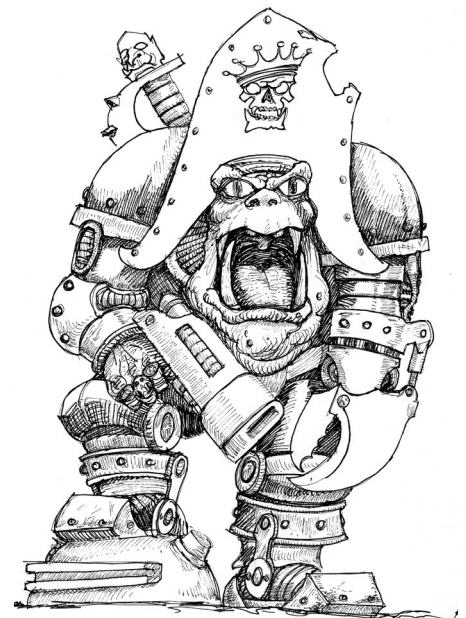
In recent years, I got to know Ian Miller, who has given me some very helpful advice and useful criticism. Most of all, he is an excellent example of how to live as an artist and illustrator without following the whims of fashion. Just witnessing that is a useful lesson.

I usually work with Rotring Isograph pens, fountain pens and dip pens. When I use colour, I tend to use watercolour and inks. I should also mention that, for the last three or four years, I have been sculpting miniatures. This has led to building dioramas and scenery to help show them off. I am not going to win any prizes for my old style miniature painting, but I enjoy it. As a side note, my favourite sculptors are Nick Bibby, Tom Meier and Jes Goodwin.

The near future promises the first in a set of illustrated books, each focussing on a different fantasy environment. Plus, several other rule books and projects which include my work. On the miniatures front, I will be releasing some of my own figures as Iron Hammer Miniatures as well as sculpting for Ral Partha Legacy, Knightmare Games, Old School Miniatures and others in the coming year.

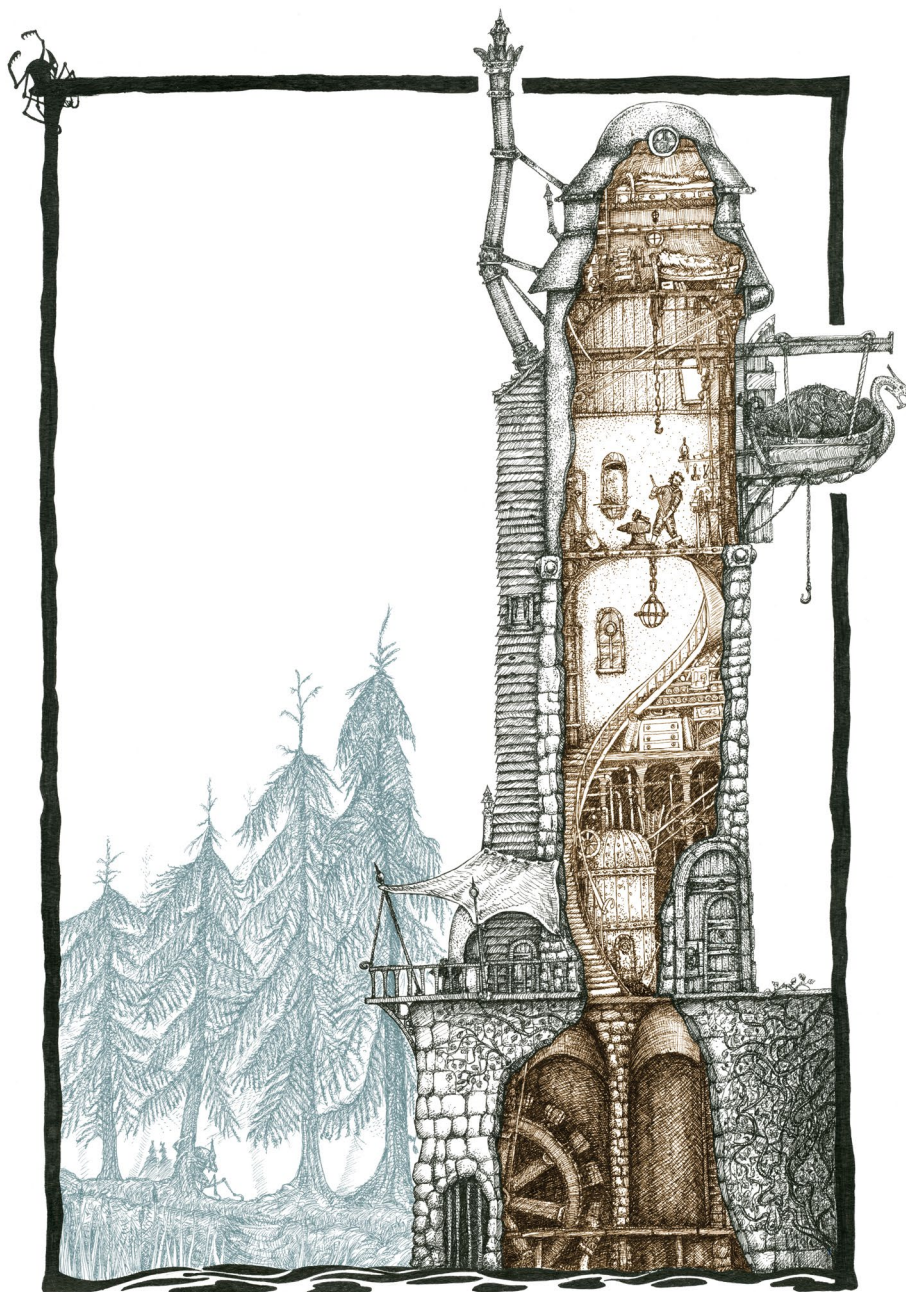
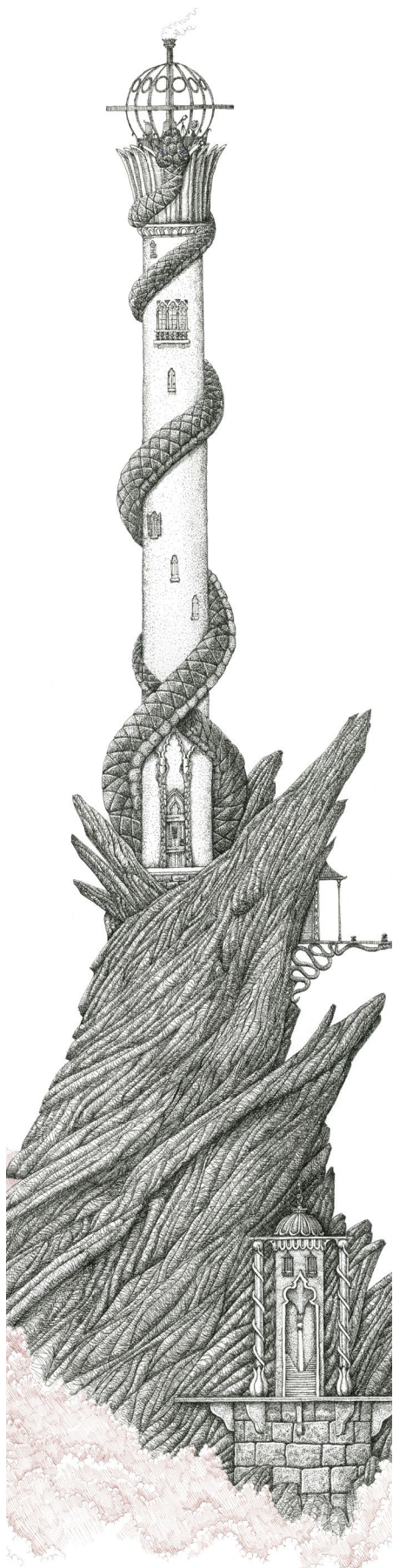


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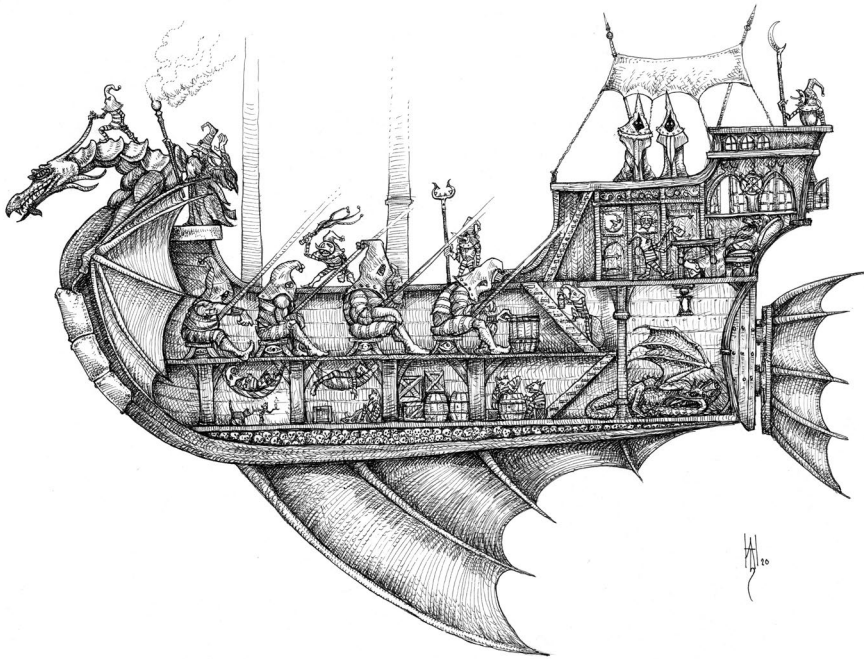
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- Bad neighbours
01 Ogre for Knightmare Games
02 Orkling King for Skull & Crown



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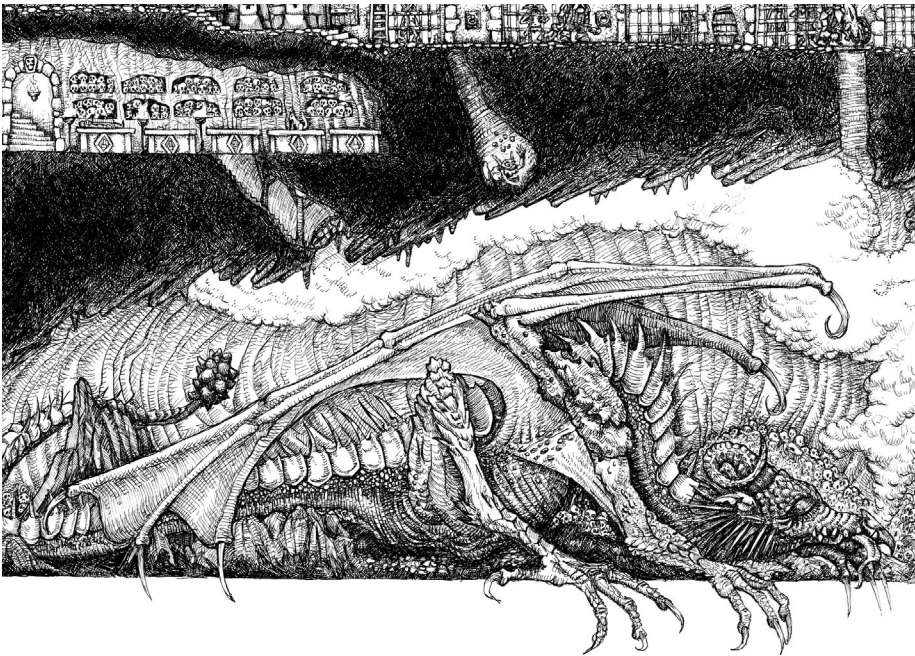
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SUNHOLD: THE FIRST TRIUMVIRATE



By Ana Polanščak

Sunhold: The First Triumvirate is an AoS28 narrative gaming event we ran in Zagreb on July 2nd 2022. The game was originally scheduled for July 4th 2020, but it got pushed back several times due to the pandemic. In the meantime, the original venue was damaged in an earthquake, but we were kindly provided an alternative dungeon by local modellers & wargamers club UMS "Agram".

Sunhold is a sprawling ruined city surrounded by plains, forests and marshes. Many dangers lurk within its walls. Our story takes place in a vast territory freshly liberated from occupation by Chaos. The huge and mighty Stormhost is gone to fight somewhere else and mortals are working on resettling the area: rebuilding, repopulating, starting new kingdoms on ruins of old. Although the armies of Chaos are gone, the lands are not yet fully safe. Wild beasts, the undead and small groups of servants of Chaos can still be found - especially in darker, less accessible places. The land is scarred, and it will take time and effort from the Free Peoples for it to heal and not fall back into chaos and ruin.

A small contingent of Stormcast Eternal remain to co-ordinate and lead these efforts. Each city-state and country are painstakingly reclaimed for mankind, and the execution of this effort is organised as a series of reclamation projects. For each, a Company is formed, consisting of hired

soldiers, suppliers, builders and more, with a board of wealthy investors to fund the project. For their efforts, upon completion of a project the company is given the reclaimed land in the name of Sigmar.

Setup

The events of our game took place within the ruined city of Sunhold. Each player took command of a small warband of 1-4 members, representing factions that entered the city to fulfil their individual goals. They may be a part of the reclamation project and want to exterminate enemies of mankind to make the city habitable once more, or they may be a party of adventurers or bandits who wish to loot the ruins and fill their own pockets. Apart from their warbands, participants were welcome to contribute NPCs, monsters and terrain pieces. The warbands could make alliances and collaborate, or betray and eliminate each other on their path through the ruins.

The game was moderated by a pair of GMs: my brother Ivan and myself. We discussed which rules to use at the event and none were just right for the particular circumstances of narrative multiplayer crawl. A custom rules system was written for it, designed to keep the maths and dice-rolling from taking over the experience, so players could focus on the characters, story and atmosphere of the game.

List of participants:

Witold Krawczyk
// backwaterdeathworld.blogspot.com

S raphim Soupizet
// @lazaraie

Vladimir Matić-Kuriljov
// @vmkuriljov

James Stone
// @theemptyrean_

Goran Krunic
// @goran.krunic.85

Matt Ross
// @totally_not_panicking

Simon Schie l
// @ingrimsson

Cody Taylor
// @magos_buer

Nic Evans
// @nic_the_evans

Ana & Ivan Polanščak
// @gardensofhecate

Marko Paunović
// www.ums-agram.hr

the SPECTRE of the FIRST TRIUMVIRATE

Field Marshal
Basilides

High Pontiff
Evaristus
Fulgentius

Zonaras
the Oligarch





We named it *Fabula*.

In what should have been months, but turned into years leading up to Sunhold, the hosts and participants created all the models, scenery, additional backstory, rules and anything else that we needed to play the game or that would simply make the experience more enjoyable. This was a group project, but that didn't mean anything was acceptable. There was a vision behind it, and respecting a set of guidelines and directions was essential for the project to keep focus. There was plenty of space left for expression within this framework. I trusted that the people I invited to my project were sensible folk.

In my approach to Age of Sigmar at the time, I moved away from the polished high fantasy look into a gritty, low, drab aesthetic. For humans, I switched to using 28mm historical and fantasy miniatures, which are smaller and proportioned differently to modern Warhammer models. I encouraged the participants to go in that direction when creating their warbands. The visual design of the game was heavily inspired by video games such as *Diablo II*, the *Dark Souls* series, *Darkest Dungeon* and *Blasphemous*.

The people I invited fell in one or both of two broad groups: hobby friends I knew from before, and folks I approached because I felt their modelling and painting style would fit

the Sunhold setting. Each invitee received a briefing document, which informed them about the setting, rules and art style guidelines (including a mood board).

The Pandemic Troubles

2020 was the year when the world was thrown all the way out of normalcy, with any sort of in-person gathering impossible, let alone international travel. For two years the event stood suspended indefinitely. It was a bad time overall, but speaking with regards to Sunhold specifically: there was uncertainty, frustration and major loss of momentum. With passage of time I lost motivation and connection to the project and setting I had created, having moved on to other hobby interests. I'm sure at least some of the people I had invited completely lost interest in that time period. But the two year postponement did have two major positives: there was more time to accumulate models and terrain, and we gained more experience playing the rules system we had written. The board and pool of painted monsters and NPCs I provided would have been visibly sparser had Sunhold taken place in 2020 as scheduled.

Once we were able to host the event and had the date, we had to contact everyone again to see who was still in. It took a bit to remember where we were, finalise the stats and make scenarios based on models, terrain and players we had. I'd like to thank all participants who made warbands and sent their minis to us,



and especially those who joined us in person: Goran, James, Séraphim, Vladimir and Witold.

The dead must sleep. All is in disarray...

The Day of the Game

The event took place on a Saturday and was split into two games: first the crawl through the city, followed by the epic battle against the spectral First Triumvirate. Big thanks to my brother Ivan for co-writing the Fabula system we used for the event and for handling most of the GM-ing on the day.

When the warbands deployed, each seeking to enter the city for their own motives, they were greeted by the Graveyard Spirit, a towering apparition (massive model by Simon Schießl). The spirit recited the following lament and vanished:

+++

Hear the anguish of Sunhold's souls! The great city has fallen to ruin, ravaged by monstrosities from beyond the realms mortals may inhabit. My herd numbers in thousands, wandering the streets and homes they once lived in. They are but shadows, their lost spirits and desiccated bodies trapped in endless unrest and misery. The glorious leaders of ages past are rising against nature to comfort their tortured folk. The spectre of the First Triumvirate has heard the call, and emerged from their eternal slumber for vengeance: Slayer of Barbarians Basilides, Pious Evaristus Fulgentius and gold-shining Zonaras.

+++

Unperturbed, the five warbands started milling through the ruins: discovering areas of interest, looting, fighting enemies and triggering traps. The game took longer than we hoped, so in order to finish the story we didn't use up all the optional content Ivan and I prepared. The whole thing was arranged so that we could manipulate it based on time and number of players that showed up. Had we had more players we would have split the action on two boards, running parallel games before they all meet in the boss battle. The warbands were capped to four models each to keep the players' turns short. We prepared backup warbands in case a player's band got wiped out early in the game, but fortunately that didn't happen. All players had at least one model standing at the end.

During game one the players encountered ghouls, walking dead, spectres, cultists, a feral vampire, a procession of revenant nuns, a swarm of netopyr, three tree people, skeletons, a wight... They had their hands full with that lot and, perhaps unsurprisingly, did not elect to scrap with each other at all.

There were several points of interest on the board: a massive crystal containing a bound



demon, a malfunctioning teleportal in the park, a haunted library, an ogre mercenary camp, tombs, vampire's throne, a healing fountain and more.

Books of lore, books of magic, enchanted items, loot of monetary value, tools... These were all contained in barrels, crates, bookshelves and other places that could be explored in the ruins of Sunhold. Searching such places would give the warband a roll on a random table.

When the players reached the end of game one, they entered a new area. Just before the boss arena, they found themselves in a small courtyard with NPCs. The Screaming Many, a model created by Matt Ross, was an unsettling creature that could resurrect a character that died during part one if offered items of a certain value. The players could trade the loot they had found during the game to the merchant Abuelita, in exchange for items useful for the final battle. The players could even purchase a black powder cannon, which they fired with a crit result — dealing a lot of damage to the Triumvirate!

The Guardian of Sunhold was a Stormcast Eternal summoned from an altar closed with three locks. The keys were scattered throughout the first part of the game. Without unlocking the Guardian, the final battle would have been much tougher, so it's great that they had all three keys. The model was created by James Stone.

Once everyone was ready, they proceeded into the arena to face the Triumvirate. This is where Séraphim revealed his betrayal to the other players. His Church of Abundance offered healing delicacies to his allies all along the way, which unknown to them were contaminated with tapeworm eggs. The cult's Tapeworm god's Egg manifested during the main boss fight, allowing Séraphim to control the other players' infected models. So in this most inopportune moment, they started infighting.

But the Egg was eventually destroyed, the players agreed to a temporary truce and finally fully focused on defeating the massive angry spirit. After rounds and rounds of dealing damage, the killing blow was fittingly delivered by the Guardian of Sunhold and the First Triumvirate was no more.

I usually do a photo shoot recreating the interesting scenes after my games, but it wasn't possible this time due to time constraints. We had to take down all of our gear and get it out of the venue immediately after the game. So I made sure to take photos during the day with my DSLR and just set up a group pic of each warband before we packed up in the evening.

What we learned

Seventy percent of people I invited made or at least started a warband or monster, three people sent their miniatures by mail and one third of invitees showed up in person. I aimed for around eight players, so it was a good call to invite more than was optimal. The pandemic really messed with logistics in every way. It did not allow us to announce the date too far in advance, which is not great when most of the participants needed to plan time off, flights and accommodation from other parts of Europe or from the USA.

Giving ourselves a lot of flexibility in how we ran the scenarios on the day proved to be a good plan. It's better to have optional content that gets unused than to run out of things to do early in the day. The system we wrote worked well and the participants seemed to pick it up easily and enjoy it throughout.

I was happy to see my old friends from abroad, Vladimir and Witold, and to meet Séraphim and James for the first time. We had several days of hanging out besides the day of the event. Meeting up with like-minded hobbyists in person is always my favourite part of these events. I hope I'll find the time and energy to attempt something like this again in the future.

MINIATURES

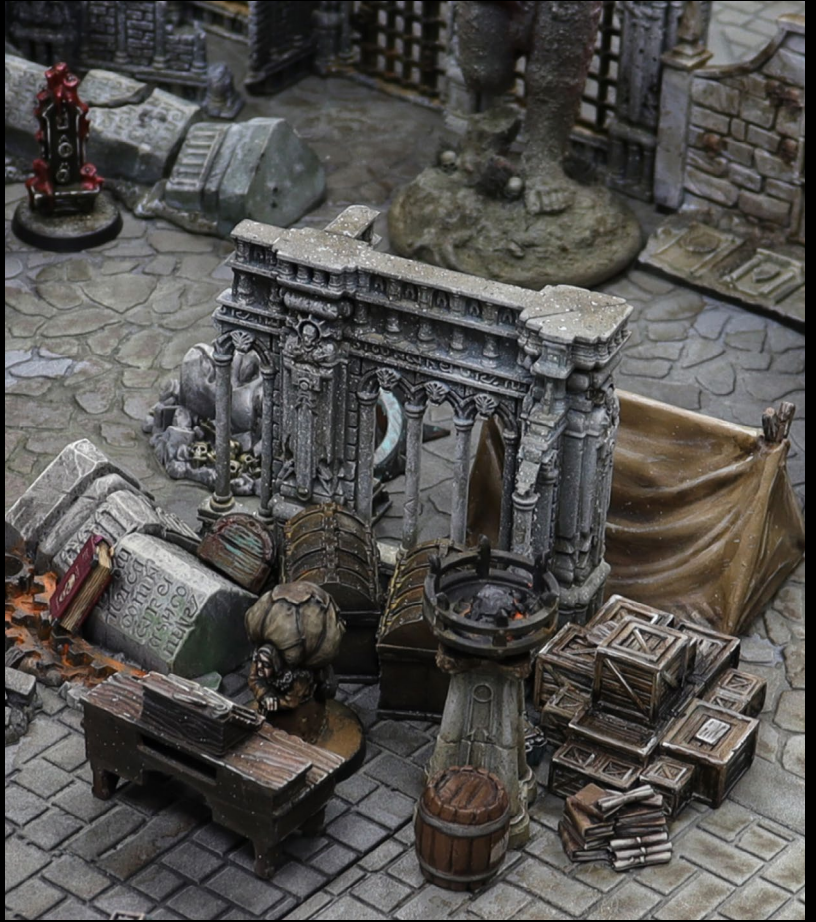
Cult of Spring by Witold Krawczyk

Amid smoke and ashes, Tolenne would sing of rebirth. Death is merely a change of form; every passing moment is eternal. She would sing us about the deceptions of time, the perseverance of spiders, the coming spring. One day they came for Tolenne and slayed her with swords and axes. Now we hear her song in our thoughts and dream of her – alive and cocooned, deathless yet ever-changing. Come with us, revel and seek the Singer!

- 01 Graveyard spirit
- 02 Abuelita and shrine
- 03 The Guardian of Sunhold is summoned



01



02



03

NPCs

by James Stone

the **GUARDIAN**
of **SUNHOLD**

AMYI,
Leave Her to Dream

SERVESTINE,
the Outcast

The Apocryphal Sigmarite Church of Abundance

by **Séraphim Soupizet**

They're followers of an ancient tapeworm god of abundance living in the city before the chaos invasion, camouflaging their heretical cult under Sigmarite rites and symbolism. Their adepts were loved by most of the city folk despite their defiance of the official cult of Sigmar, because in exchange for a food, wine or blood offering they protected crops and livestock from drought and disease. Knowing that the city is now free, those cultists led by the last of their paladins are coming back to town to protect the interest of their cult and find the lair of their now starving god.

The Draghanward Family

by **Vladimir Matić-Kuriljov**

Chalik Draghanward is the current head of an ancient dwarf family of merchants, who come to Sunhold to reclaim their abandoned property, after spending many decades in exile. He is joined by his two sons, Momar and

Bradun. None of the three is a warrior by career or training, but because of their pride, heritage and distrust of tall people they are taking up arms to claim what is rightfully theirs. They also hired a mercenary, an experienced ranger, Zar Mina Eikelboom, to guide them through the city. They don't trust her completely, but she was the only dwarf available.

The Church of Her Lady's Silent Sigmar

by **James Stone**

Zessab, Sorrow's Archivist is the memory of Sigmar, a living totem and altar for holy books and historical texts. Medea, Witch of the Visage is a reader of prophecies and low-level magic-user - she is a quiet figure, never removing her brass mask. Khida, Child of Sigmar is a Knight Questor of the Stormcast Eternal. Having secured a Chaos-held realm gate in Vasaria, she travels to secure Sunhold and escape their demons. Namdas, Prophet of Her Lady's Silent Sigmar: first to bow before the Stormcast Eternal's coming to Vasaria, now a constant companion and herald of Khida's coming. A

the CULT of SPRING

by Witold Krawczyk

1 - Tessin, the Spear Dancer
 2 - St. Tolenne
 3 - Vennika, the Maypole Bearer

4 - the Altar Spider
 5 - Dargil, the Drummer
 6-8-9 - Spore Spiders



05

bitter and aggressive character.

Princeling's Court

by Matt Ross (played by Goran Krunić)

The Princeling rides his trusty steed to do battle against the knaves and vile swine that inhabit Sunhold. Yes, the sword is made of wood and yes, the armour does "magically protect" him from all harm. And yes, since you're asking, he is very forthright and just. Ask his steed, he'd tell you the same. Go on, ask him.

West Ledict Township and the Horvat family
 by Cody Taylor

The Spectre of the First Triumvirate
 by Simon Schießl

The Graveyard Spirit
 by Simon Schießl

04 NPCs by James Stone
 05 Cult of the Spring by
 Witold Krawczyk

Following pages:

06 The Church of Her Lady's
 Silent Sigmar by James Stone
 07 The Apocryphal Sigmarite
 Church of Abundance by
 Séraphim Soupizet
 08 The Draghanward Family by
 Vladimir Matić-Kuriljov
 09 Princeling's Court by Matt
 Ross

the Church of Her Lady's Silent Sigmar

by James Stone



MEDEA,
Witch of the Visage

ZESSAB,
Sorrow's Archivist

NAMDAS,
Prophet of Her Lady's
Silent Sigmar

KHIDA,
Child of Sigmar

06

the Apocryphal Sigmarite Church of Abundance

by Séraphim Soupizet



Sister Paladin
Taraxacal

Brother Sommelier
Parthecissus

Brother Huntsman
Laurantobiles

The PARAGON

the EGG

07

the DRAGHANWARDS

by Vladimir Matić-Kuriljov

CHALIK
DRAGHANWARD

ZAR MINA
EIKELBOOM

MOMAR
DRAGHANWARD

BRADUN
DRAGHANWARD

08

the PRINCELING'S COURT

by Matt Ross
played by Goran Krunić

the SQUIRE

the JESTER

the CELEBRANT

the PRINCELING

09

BRYAN PAUL REES



Building worlds has always been more appealing to me than building armies. I am naturally drawn to skirmish games of the Grimdark variety, as they are more narrative driven, with a smaller miniature count, making a lot of the tactical focus about how the minis interact with their environment, as well as their opponents. As a result, I am no stranger to the likes of *Mordheim*, *Inquisitor* and even the occasional *Warhammer Quest*.

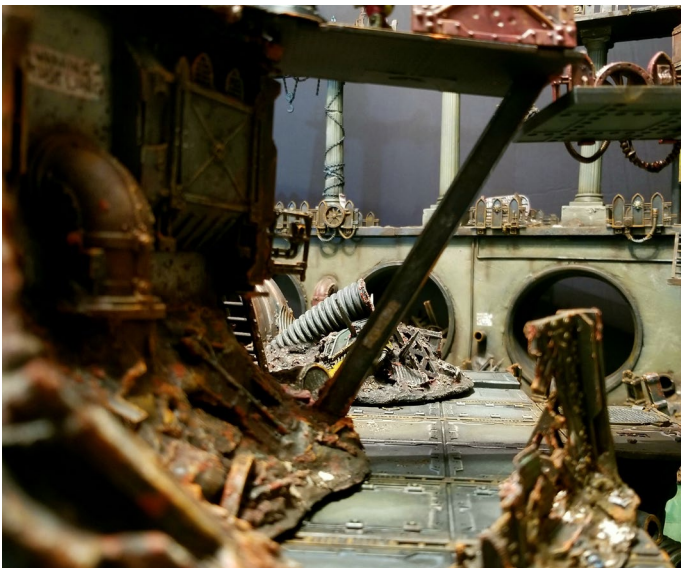
Ten years ago, I played the most memorable, immersive *Mordheim* campaign of my life with a group of good friends. Over the course of a weekend, we built a very elaborate board, composed mainly of scratch-built cardboard pieces. We played on it and swore that one day we would paint it and build onto it. Sadly this did not happen, as eventually all the terrain pieces fell victim to beer spills and basement floods, but this was a pivotal experience for me in my life as a gamer and an artist. It led me to spend the next decade honing my skills for my profession as a scenic artist.

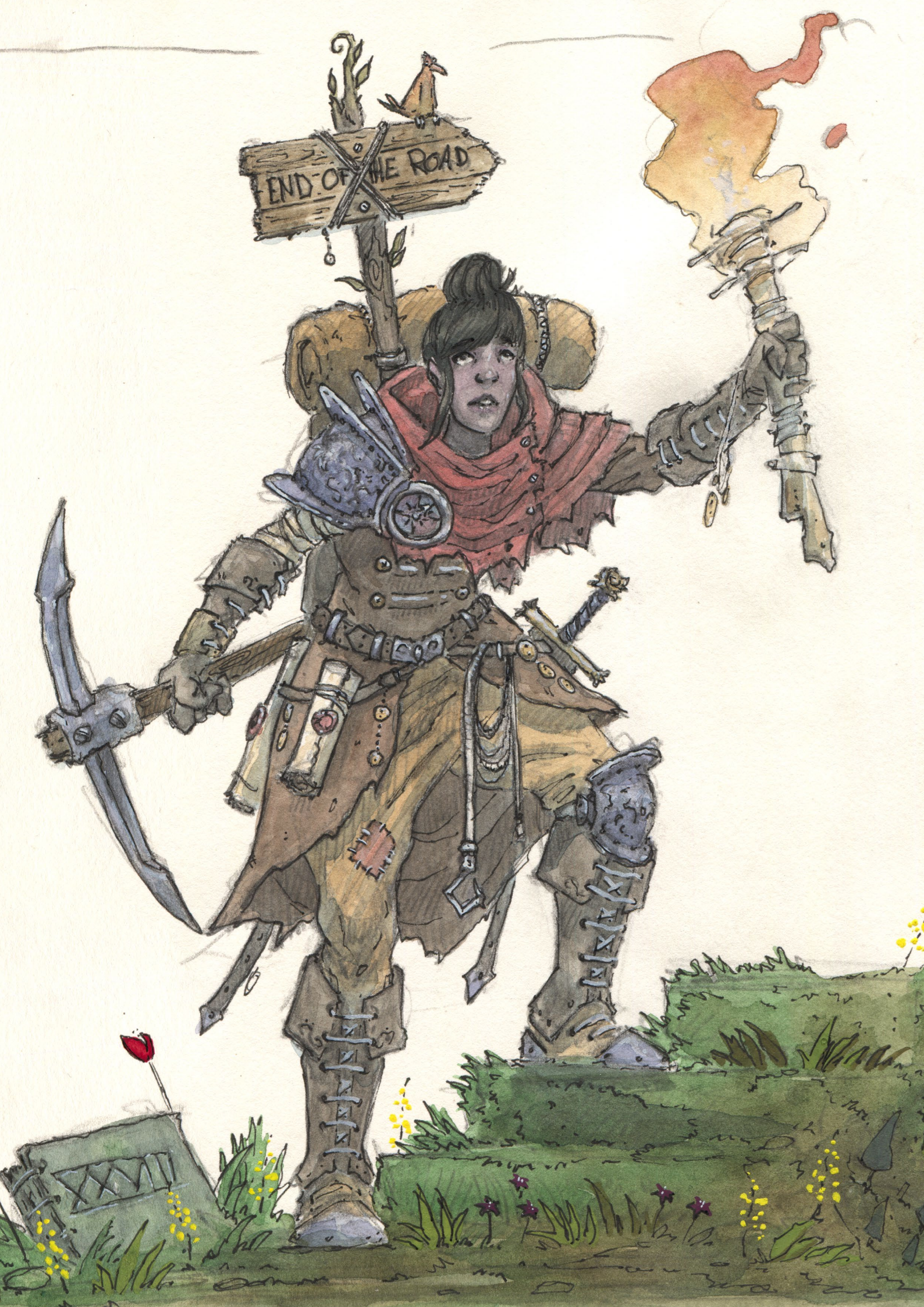
Ironically, as a commission-based scenic artist, you end up with little to no terrain of your own. I found myself blessed to get to do what I love, but cursed to never enjoy the fruits of my labours. Some of my favourite pieces were built for clients or inventory to be sold, and

therefore, my friends and I never played on them.

When the new *Necromunda* starter set was released a few years ago, I found myself in the fortuitous position of actually being able to keep and enjoy my pieces again. I went to work on building my own corner of the Underhive, *The Crumbles*, where I hope one day to reunite the crew for more narrative campaign mayhem.

I am currently a little over two years in on a long-term collection of projects in order to recreate the immersive feeling I got from that *Mordheim* campaign years ago. I am taking an 'If you build it, they will come' approach. I still have not managed to wrangle everyone together around the table yet, so *The Crumbles* just keeps getting bigger as I discover new and ever more intricate ways to bring the grimdark aesthetic onto my board. A good deal of it involves repurposing household items, while others are various pieces I have built. I have achieved a rough breakdown of half Games Workshop bits and half scratch built elements to give it a unique yet familiar aesthetic.





END OF THE ROAD

INTRODUCING THE EXPLORER

It is finally time... we could no longer resist. Our appetites were no longer satisfied with simply reporting on the epic creations and artwork that populate our hobby. We needed something visceral, something we could draw upon and mould, something we could taste with our tongues and share with our readers.

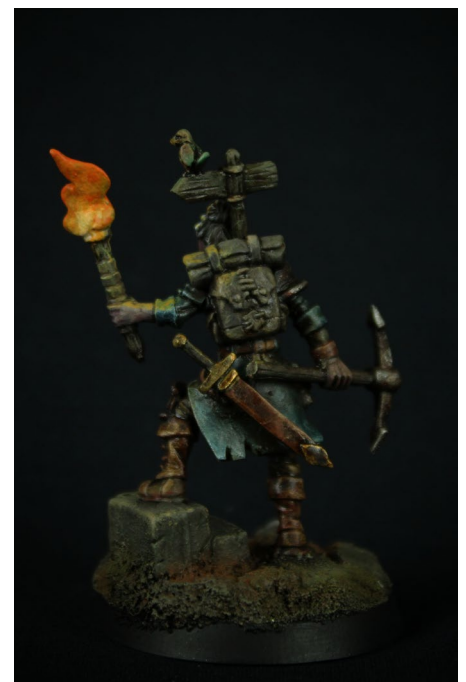
The path has been long and arduous but the reward has been magnificent. We have crawled deep into the trenches, become filthy in the grimdark, tapped into the molten core of this hurtling planet and emerged covered in blood, sweat and tears until finally, with the help of a few talented friends, we have created our very own official 28 miniature, the Explorer.

Our beloved Explorer came into existence after legendary miniature sculptor Andrew May approached Team 28 wondering if we would like to collaborate on a mini. Of course, we immediately said yes and beat a path to the door of legendary artist and ex-GW alumni Nicky Grillet with a request to provide the character concept and artwork. She kindly agreed and lo! our sculpture was begat, our miniature came to be made and exists, ready for your perusal, approval and painting!

To accompany this stunning figure, friend of 28 Will Rahman-Daultrey stepped in and provided some bespoke rules so players can use The Explorer in *Forbidden Psalm*, a tabletop miniatures game, inspired by and compatible with *MÖRK BORG*.

Read on to hear from Andrew, Nicky and Will and learn more about the journey and creation of The Explorer...

This page Explorer miniature painted by Steve Rowlinson
Opposite The final Explorer design by Nicky Grillet



CONCEPTING THE EXPLORER

By Nicky Grillet

When I was asked to create some concept art for a miniature that would be sculpted and produced for 28, I first thought of it as a great exercise for me to learn how I would work in a new environment. I also quickly realised that I would have to ask myself a lot of questions about what I can do, what I choose to do and what could, in the end, be done.

While working as a member of a concept team for Games Workshop, the sculpting aspects of the job were rarely a preoccupation of mine. I always thought that I had the easy job of just having to have ideas (it's actually a bit more complicated on a daily basis I've learned), and letting other people figure out if these ideas would lead to an actual physical miniature and how to do that. Most of the time I also had a lot of direction, thanks to a rich universe from which to pick elements and also because each project usually had a pretty clear objective, like making a specific character or a squad for a specific faction. In my mind these were creative limitations that helped me feel free to explore a corner of a set universe with very little risk of getting lost or making something absolutely off topic. That's what I want to talk a little bit about because the project of creating a miniature for 28 came with so few limitations that I found myself petrified by the sheer amount of possibilities!

I asked a few questions to have an idea of what the team wanted and what could be done in the end. We agreed that a huge vehicle or a floating monster with a complex narrative base would probably be too ambitious for a small project, so we settled for a 28mm human sized miniature. They also decided on a fantasy setting. But from here, I was free, and even with these few boundaries, I still felt a bit

scared. Where do I go?

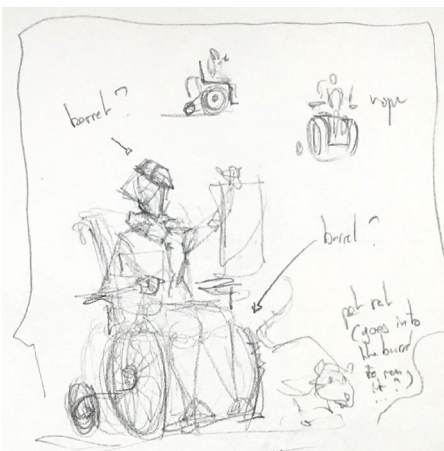
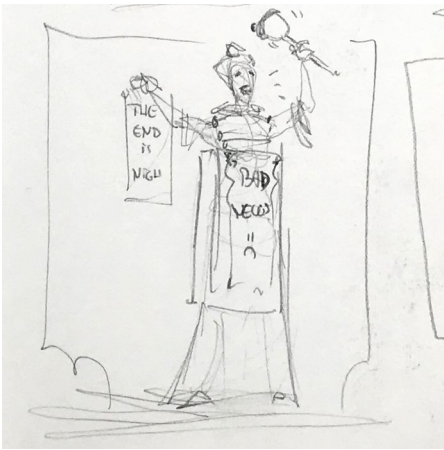
This being my first project post Games Workshop, it brought to mind all of the things I was not able to do when making toy soldiers for a strategy war game. This included non-combative characters, civilians or characters expressing any emotions other than rage or anger, a common emotion needed for a miniature probably intended in the universe, to smash the head of someone else with a pointy stick. There are obviously exceptions to these rules with great miniatures that can expand the atmosphere of a game, but they are still a rarity.

And because I think that the miniature hobby still needs a better representation of gender diversity (I personally am a bit bored by the usual big, angry muscular dudes), I'm setting myself the goal of making a lady. Take that, patriarchy!

While searching for an archetype on which to base the future character, I chose to study 28 magazine, the team behind it and the work that they do. That's what I had in mind when I drew, several years ago now, the quill-and-parchment-holding servo-skull and the pen-holding acolyte that appears on the 28 website and in the magazines.

What is this team of cool and talented people actually doing in the context of 28? They are writing, they are exploring, they are creating. I probably missed a hundred other verbs about the work that they do, but these were the first ones that came to mind at this time.

With this in mind, I thought about exploring a few fantasy journalists, a few fantasy explorers



Above Some sketches by Nicky showing some of the creative process



or detectives and a few fantasy artists.

An artist character would probably be the one I would feel the closest to. Imagining a character doing what I do most of my time, I wondered if it would have made an interesting miniature though. Specifically, I sit at my desk, hunched over paper or a miniature. A musician would probably feel more dynamic, but it felt too far away from the miniature artistry we are talking about in this context. So to be honest, I let go of the idea of making an artist character quite quickly!

I liked the idea of a journalist though, and I quickly thought of the Town Cryer publication that was released for Mordheim. Creating a Town Cryer miniature would feel really fitting for a 28 magazine miniature!

The explorer felt maybe more obvious, as it's easier to rely on a lot of pop culture characters exploring the ruins of ancient civilisations, fighting a T-Rex or hating snakes.

I made a few quick sketches of those two characters. They were really basic at this stage,

mostly trying to get the idea out and give a rough idea of what the archetype and the mini silhouette could be. After asking for feedback from the team, they decided that the explorer was the right choice.

I made a few more sketches, trying to give the right feeling of discovery for such an archetype. While I'm writing this down, sometime after the drawings were done and approved, I realised that I made an unconscious choice about this miniature. I decided that it would be a *healthy* human, in contrast to a sickly pitiful one. I think that came from me wanting to make a more relatable character, or better said, someone we would want to identify with? I think it has to do with her being a *first miniature*, I wanted her to feel like the centre of her story. If there should be other miniatures at some point, it could be interesting to dive into anti heroes and characters she might encounter on the side of the road.

So then, since she was a very human character, less broken and miserable than what our community has grown to love, I tried to add a few narrative details to show that even if

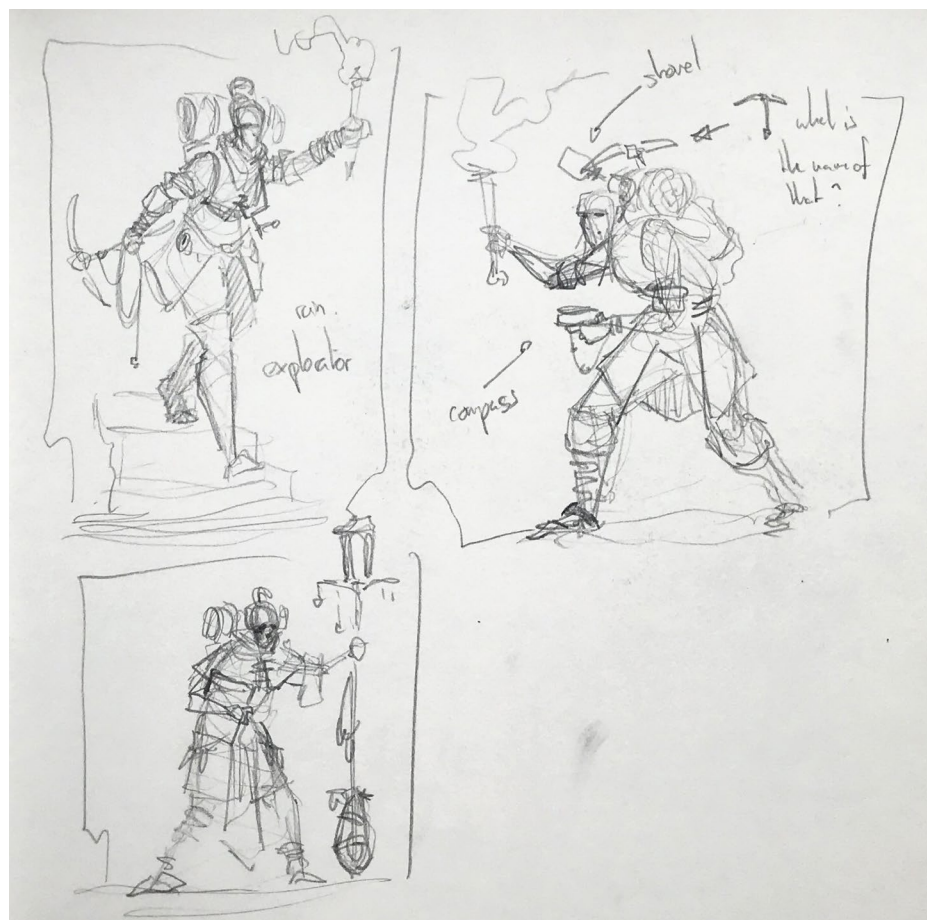
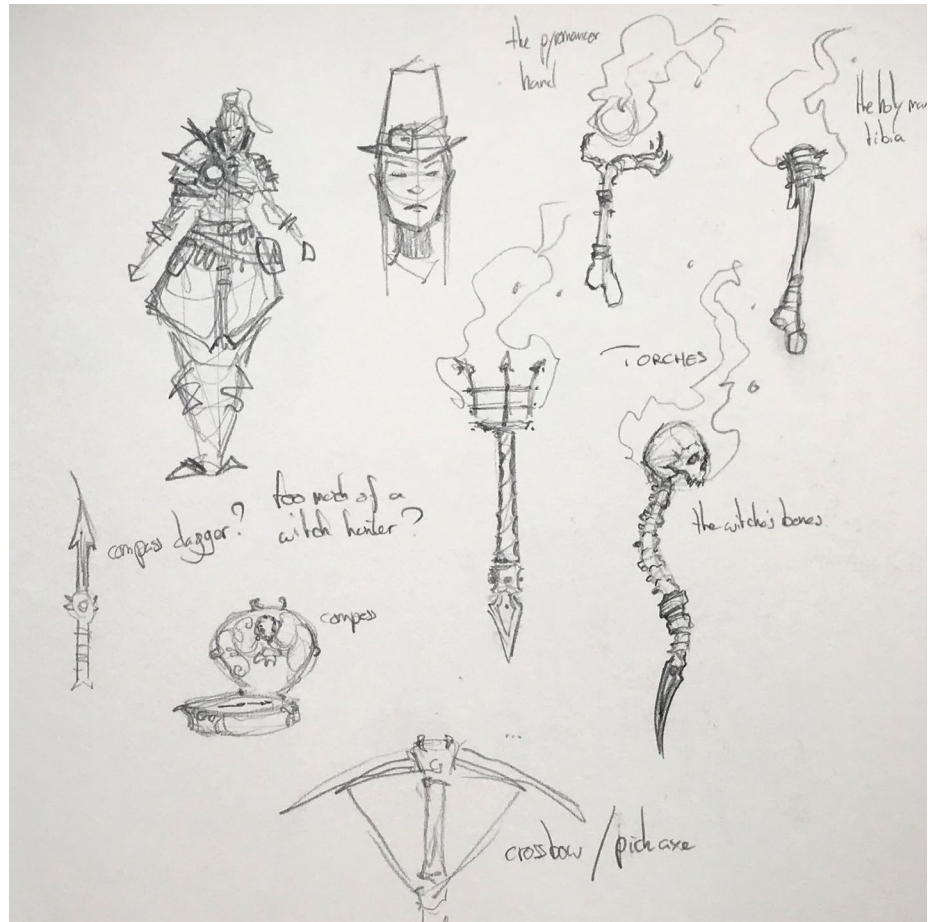
she's relatively sane herself, her environment is definitely weird. I tried that with some of the details I sketched before making a bigger, prettier drawing. For the torch for instance, I tried to imagine different things she could use that would look like a torch and produce light, but without actually being a torch. Hence the bones of a burning witch or the hand of a pyromancer.

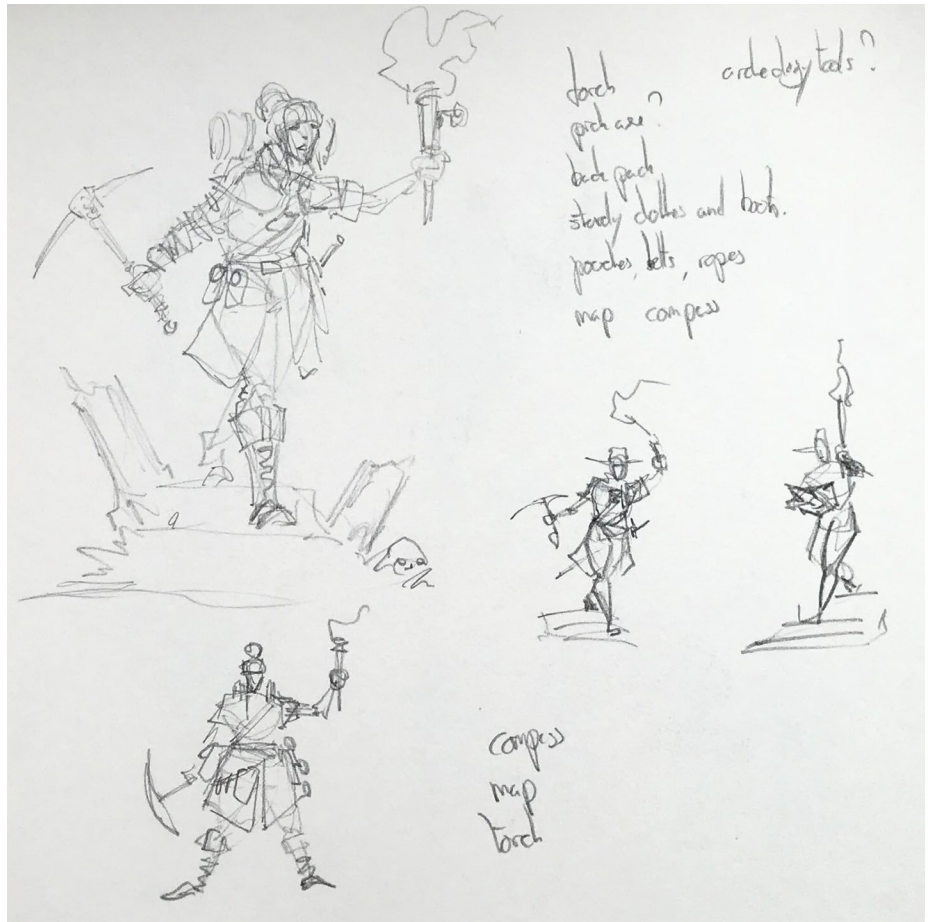
I had the quick idea of her having a dagger in the shape of the arrow of a compass, but that was probably too complicated to represent on the miniature. I still used the compass motif on the shield of her pauldron. Maybe the pieces of her armour guide her? Maybe to the rest of the armour? I'm very much making it up as I write!

The scrolls might be maps. Her weapon felt obvious somehow, because it's a tool first. I wondered if we could use the fact that it's shaped like a crossbow to make a pickaxe/crossbow weapon, but that's another detail that might be tricky to show on a small miniature.

Adding the chubby bird is as much of a cute detail in a serious world as I like to add, but is also a nod to the canaries that people used while mining underground, to check if the air was still breathable. I first added a wooden sign, maybe as a way to say that she has seen many roads. Then I thought of using it as a small banner on her heavy backpack. The end of the road text on the drawing is an easy detail to add to say that she has gone further! There be dragons!

I have not seen the miniature yet as I write this, but I am so excited to see it released! I hope that I did a good enough job for this task and that the 28 team, and anyone who will want to have the mini, will be happy with her! On a personal note, I'm very glad that after two years at GW, if short and weird years, I'm still learning a lot about making concepts, about design and just being creative in general. I don't look as brave and adventurous as this character, but the sense of exploration and discovery is very much here!





Above and opposite More wonderful concepts by Nicky. As you can see, Nicky really went through a lot of iterations. We hope our readers can gain a renewed appreciation for the concept artist - a vital role in the creative process.

SCULPTING THE EXPLORER

By Andrew May

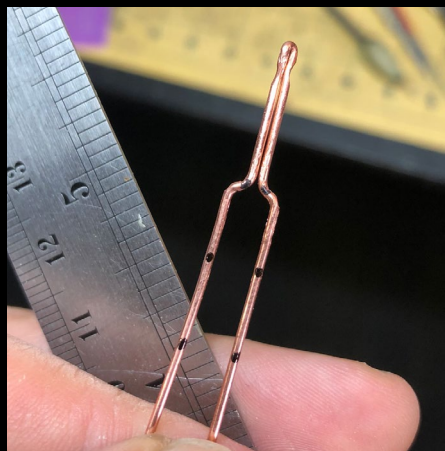
Last year, Alexander (*creative director at 28*) and I discussed the possibility of creating a mini for 28. After a bit of discourse we decided to go ahead. I had no idea what to expect in terms of the design other than it was going to be an adventurer mini. After receiving the concept art from Nicky Grillet I was ready to go. She had put a lot of detail into the design and I was determined to keep as much of it intact as possible.

I always start a piece in the same way - a length of copper wire is bent into a frame and the knees and feet are marked out in pen [01]. Then I pose the wire armature and insert it into a cork base [02]. I'd already prepared the step detail on this one and added a nice smooth surface using milliput so that her foot would sit flat. Next I add a layer of epoxy putty for the skeleton and basic masses of the figure [03].

I add flesh to the bones with another layer of epoxy putty. I wanted to get as realistic a female figure as possible, not resorting to cartoonish proportions like many other minis. The surface was smoothed with a soft brush and alcohol then left for twenty four hours to fully cure [04].

The figure's weapon was made on a twisted wire armature, separately to the main mini as it will be crossing the body, not allowing me to access the body to sculpt the details [05]. In the meantime the other arm and torch were constructed using the same method I used for the rest of the figure [06].

I took one long sitting to sculpt the first layer of detail. Polymer clay was added in thin layers like a skin on top of the armature and painstakingly sculpted into shape with dental



01



02



03



04



05



06

tools and rubber tipped clay shapers [07]. A thin sheet of polymer clay was then added and trimmed to form the coat tails before the next lot of detail is sculpted [08-09]. Next up the weapon arm was attached and detailed [10].

With that done, I was able to add the last layer of detail. The final details were made separately from the figure, the sword [11] and the sign complete with little bird [12]! Once completed, they were fitted to the mini leaving only the terrible job of having to cut her up for casting! I used a jeweller's saw to make cuts so that the pieces can be moulded successfully.

It was great to work from a completely different style of concept art than what I am typically used to. Nicky did a great job of creating a realistic female character. I hope to see it on folks' tabletops in the future.



07



08



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11



12



PLAYING WITH THE EXPLORER

By Will Rahman-Daultrey

Forbidden Psalm is a 28mm table top skirmish game and the creator Will Rahman-Daultrey created custom rules for *The Explorer* for the game. Using these rules you can add *The Explorer* to any warband in any game of *Forbidden Psalm*.

For 25 gold you can hire any mercenary to join your warband in any scenario. When you do, one of your warband stays behind as you cannot exceed five members per scenario.

Mercenaries never drop their equipment unless killed. If a mercenary is killed outright, they cannot be rehired.

Explorer 28	
Agility	+1
Strength	+1
Presence	+1
Toughness	+1
Health	9
Armour	2

Equipment:

Skeleton Torch, Medium Armour, Horseman Pick, Short sword, Backpack, 1 Random scroll

Flaws: None

Feats: Scavenger: Roll twice on the treasure table and take both results.

Special: Can Carry 10 items regardless of Strength. Always hands over found items and treasure to the warband at the end of the scenario.





**THE EXPLORER
COMING SOON...**

EMERGENT NARRATIVE



By Will Rahman-Daultrey

Forbidden Psalm is a tabletop miniatures game, inspired by and compatible with MÖRK BORG.

In Forbidden Psalm you will recruit a warband of five greedy souls to undertake Vriprix the Mad Wizards' bidding. But the Mad Wizard hasn't just bet on you. You will face rivals before you see any of his coin. Hunt ravenous monsters and unearth dangerous relics as you search for the Psalm itself... maybe even help the Mad Wizard locate his misplaced socks!

A game of blood, metal and death. In Forbidden Psalm your warband is disposable. Its members will suffer injuries, flaws and even unleash horrible magic. But for hardened survivors, a wealth of plunder and experience awaits.

The Art of the Emergent Narrative

When I set out to create a miniature game, I focused on ideas and themes that interested me the most. I thought, if other people enjoyed it then that would be great, but I wanted to focus on what mattered the most to me. I love storytelling and when stories emerge on the tabletop, nothing makes me happier. This was the underlying design principle that went into making *Forbidden Psalm*, a miniatures game born out of the excellent roleplay game *MÖRK BORG* and its openness to third party content.

I have fluttered between different game systems since entering the hobby some six years ago (I never played *Mordheim*, played my first game of *Blood Bowl* this year and my first marines were Primaris!) No matter what system I tried, I felt that something was missing. The rules of the games I played were fun - they allowed for interesting strategic choices and taxed my brain in exciting ways, but the rules never told a story.

While I am relatively new to wargaming, I have roleplayed since I was thirteen years old. Dungeons and Dragons is where I cut my

nerd teeth and for years exploring the myriad tabletop roleplay systems is how I spent my time. It is not a surprise then that I would be drawn to those early wargames that roleplay games grew out of.

I discovered *MÖRK BORG* when a friend posted it on a shared Discord in 2020. Within minutes my copy was ordered. In the lockdown-driven winter of 2021, the idea of creating a miniatures game based on the bleak world of *MÖRK BORG* emerged, a game where the rules told a story.

Story or Rules?

Warhammer 40,000 is a game I have enjoyed and will likely enjoy again, but playing it highlights what I mean by the phrase 'rules do not tell the story'. In 40K, a player will often need to make non-narrative choices in order to win. Pulling crazed berserker units out of combat to claim an objective, or fearless space marines failing morale checks demonstrate how the rules of the game do not support the emergent narrative on the tabletop.

In the wide sea of miniature games, there are plenty of games that set out to be narrative-focused over competitive in nature. While other games have moved between these principles, 40K seems more content to be a competitive game these days, over one in which grand stories unfold. This push and pull between balance, competitiveness and story often leaves miniature games feeling void of narrative, and reducing miniatures to simple playthings like chess pieces on a blank board.

There are games that tell very specific stories. In *Bolt Action* you can relive and retell the stories of battles from across World War II, *Frostgrave* offers a number of fantastic narrative campaigns for you to play through and *Horus Heresy* lets you enact the sibling squabbles and space fascism that underpin the narrative of all

of 40K, but this is not what I mean when I use the expression 'emergent narrative'. It is not the stories written in the books we refer to or the battles we try to retell, but what happens on the tabletop itself. The miniature who cannot shoot for toffee but manages to land a critical shot at the last minute to win the day, or the hero member of a warband who stays behind to fend off a monster so the rest of his squad can escape and tell tales of his heroism. When we recount the stories of our tabletop games, these are what we tell people, not the rules of the game we were playing at the time.

With *Forbidden Psalm*, this was the goal and every design choice was made to serve this purpose. *Forbidden Psalm* has a narrative campaign you play just like many other gaming systems, but that simply serves as the reason your warband of five members is here and not the whole story.

Design Choices for Narrative Gaming

Each element can provide threads to weave into your storytelling. As I came up with the game, even the size of the warband was considered for how it played into the story. In the land of *MÖRK BORG*, trust is hard to come by and the idea of more than a handful of desperate souls working together made little sense. Making warbands of just five miniatures allowed for more customisation of each model in the warband, allowed more room for individual stories to be told and allowed players to love (or hate) their warband members.

To fuel this, when you create each member you give them a name that is generated from a D100 table. You randomly roll for a flaw and a feat and then you equip them with the meagre funds you have available. Why random rolling for flaws and feats? Simply put, to tell stories that no player would ever pick. Would you ever choose to create a medic who would rather be alone and suffers penalties to healing

others if they are too close? By removing the option to min/max or optimise your warband, the game pushes towards emergent stories for each warband member, making them unique in their own pathetic way. This random element fuels many of *Forbidden Psalm's* systems, from monsters and encounters to treasure and relics.

Losing is Winning

I love *Necromunda* but I also hate playing it. Many game systems that aim for a campaign or narrative with persistent effects punish losing - your warband gets worse while the winner's gets better. The best miniature games I have played all felt as fun to lose as to win. *Forbidden Psalm* takes this idea and runs with it. When your warband members meet a grizzly or sometimes laughable end, you get new warband members for free. When someone dies you get experience and rewards that can be spent on the survivors. *MÖRK BORG's* grim world has its tongue firmly in cheek and *Forbidden Psalm* wanted to carry this approach forward. When you start to lose or your warband members take their last breath, the design of the game intends that this is just as fun as when you win.

This approach seems to be working. On the *Forbidden Psalm* Discord, players share the demise of their warband members with some glee.

"My group started a lil campaign yesterday and the first fatality is one of my own... Gride the Distressed. He was full of anger... and later full of arrows."

"This was the last we saw of Suzi The Sorrowful. After battling the Great Maw for three rounds she was swallowed whole on round six!"

You can do it too

I have been asked a few times on what advice I have for others wanting to make a miniatures game. To this I say, create a game you want to play, find like-minded players who want to play it too, put it out in the world and then see what people think. Most of this essay has been about how I approached making a game I wanted to play. I looked at what I felt was missing from the games I was playing and found a way to incorporate the stories I desired, so I would advise you to do the same.



THE UNIVERSE IS FLAT

By Pascal Reber

I know what you are thinking: this is a space for real miniatures! Why should I be interested in an article about boring printed miniatures? Why did the Emperor let me down like this?

Honestly, I don't know. But I can lead you to a place where you will find answers if you promise not to tell the Inquisition...

I love collecting games that are discontinued or fringe. Inquisitor is one of those. I used to play Epic when I was a teenager because I liked the lore of Warhammer 40,000 a lot. Later, I occasionally bought White Dwarf magazine but rarely played anything. In 2018 I got back into miniature painting and started a project called Cheaphammer where I tried to build warbands as cheaply as possible. I used boardgame miniatures from discontinued games on sale or inexpensive 20 mm miniatures - but that is a whole different story.



Outside the realm of gaming, I really enjoy comic books, mostly in Ligne claire [an art style pioneered by the Belgian cartoonist Hergé, creator of *The Adventures of Tintin*, characterised by strong lines and very little shading - Voltaire] and contemporary artsy style and only rarely darker stuff and very few fantasy or science fiction.

A big influence is the dark side of Games Workshop, as well - particularly Blanchitsu which should come as no surprise. But it was always in a different category for me, maybe because it appeared slightly childish as I connected it with my teenage years. I started to draw comic strips myself but only silly and whimsical ones for over ten years.

When I found 28, it was a true revelation. The general tone and art style hit a nerve. It seemed adult and dark but also met all my artistic expectations and I had to rethink a lot around the stuff I had previously discarded as being immature. I loved the underlying grotesque humour that is present in most of the artwork and conversions, and most importantly the creativity of the contributions blew my mind.

I drew a lot using ink and pens, but it was always a bit messy. I would then scan and vectorize my drawings. This all changed when I got a tablet and a pen. I loved that I could paint easily without a mess and the colour black was really black. On the downside, the usual painting applications had way too many options for me and I felt this was standing in the way of my creative process. I always preferred to have a small set of options, which helped me to focus on the drawing itself and not playing around with a ton of tools. By accident I started to scribble in a program that I normally use for visualisations for teaching. It turned out it had all the options I needed - very few. Also it is vector-based, so I was in heaven.

With this discovery, I started to draw, draw and draw. It was a very productive pastime during the pandemic while listening to Dan Abnett audio books (as one does), thinking about the backstory of the characters I was drawing.

After I finished some characters I thought about how I could use them. Having stuff printed is always a good experience, particularly on bright white paper. The contrasts always look

sharper than on the screen. I was really happy with the first results, although I realised some edges were not as sharp as I wanted them to be.

I had the prints lying on my desk on top of some of my board games, which led to an idea: Would it be possible to use the prints for an INQ28-themed game without real miniatures? I could use some stands from my board games and cut some of my prints with my cutter (that I usually use for removing flash).

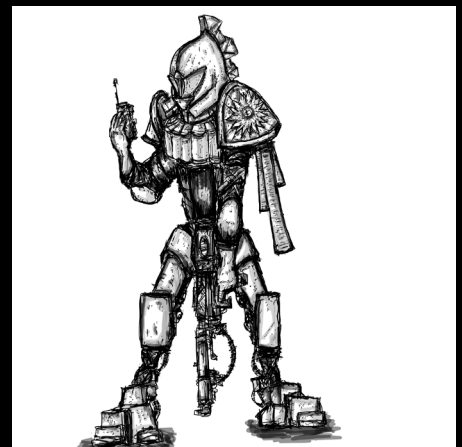
I started printing more of my paintings, first on standard white printer paper. I cut them out and used the board game stands to fix them. It worked, but I was not entirely pleased with the results, as I thought it looked a bit silly. It did not help that I tried to use real tabletop obstacles to make it look better. I decided the way to go was to focus on simplicity. Also, I have very bad eyesight and my depth perception is very limited. Maybe that also contributes to the fact that my drawings themselves are very flat and lack a true three-dimensional perspective - which was also in a way fitting to printing them.

I already painted in greyscale, so the next logical step was to use transparent stands, which I found online very inexpensively. In a second step I used transparencies to print on which eliminated the problem of the one sided printing. Lastly, I started to use very simple obstacles. I had some white boxes that were perfect for it. Not only could I use them as obstacles in a game - the miniatures could be stored in the box at the same time. So the whole set-up became portable.

The friends that I currently play with are not from a tabletop background but enjoy new experiences. So it was an easy gateway for them to try out a board game which was, in fact, a tabletop game.

An individual on social media suggested that this setup could be used to play a game of Necromunda or Inquisitor online, where both players print the two warbands and each set up the game simultaneously. This is an idea that never occurred to me, but I think that could be done easily and also without spending too much money. You can vary the size of the prints very easily and you can print a bunch of militia, soldiers or other more expendable characters very easily too.

Overall, smaller scales work better because bigger prints are not as stable. I plan to try



printing on plastic in the future to add stability.

2D printed miniatures are not for everyone, and there are already some manufacturers for miniatures on cards, but for me it has been a very exciting journey to try something different. Thinking about my character's backstory, drawing them and finally using them in a game has been really enjoyable during this trying time. And now I am waiting for the three-dimensional Inquisition to take me away. I do not repent.



ROBERT BIRKBECK



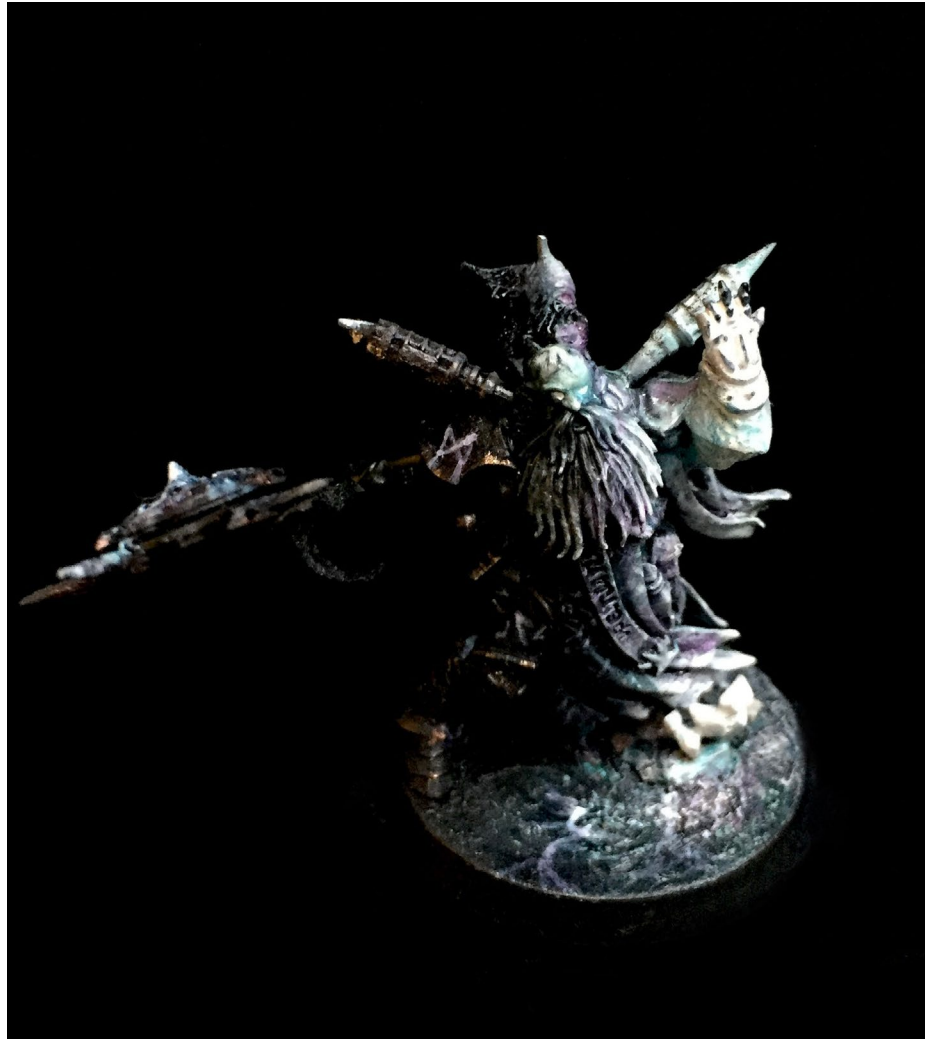
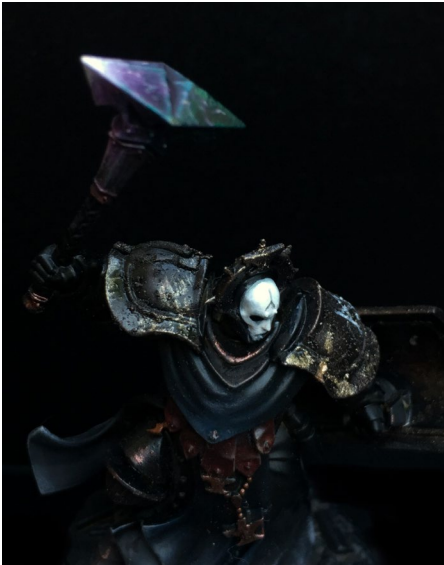
This project began when I was exploring the notion of the soul in Age of Sigmar and considering where the souls of the Duardin reside within the Warhammer universe.

The Stormcast are the product of a collaboration between two besieged gods: Sigmar and Grungni, who were on the back foot and needed a strike force to counter the more powerful Chaos gods. Their collaborative efforts created the Stormcast, 'soulcrafting' that is engineered by Grungni and powered by Sigmar. I expected much more of a crossover between the two factions, and wondered whether Stormcast bodies might be inhabited by Duardin souls.

I started to experiment with Duardin heads and bits on Stormcast Sequitors. This produced a Norse aesthetic, so I started to consider a Viking Stormcast theme and began looking into Elder Futhark runes and similar markings to adorn their armour. Before long, I started to think more about the ideas of reincarnation

and resurrection and the implications of the writers' decision to build what is essentially a transcription flaw into the immortal engine of the anvil of apotheosis. This introduces the idea that a great hero may then become suspicious of their god if, for example, they hear that there may be a secret problem, or a conspiracy in the upper echelons of Sigmar's pantheon. This starts to make the entire 'good' faction unsteady, which makes it more interesting creatively. You might now imagine a mutiny - perhaps equivalent to Horus, Melkor or Lucifer rejecting their creators.

I then focused back on individual warriors. What would it be like to be reborn, but to lose more and more of your past? I work professionally with people who suffer from dementia and this experience is described as a gradual loss of self, sometimes not clear to the sufferer. However, unlike people with dementia, the Stormcast do not lose their day to day ability to function, and instead suffer with a retrograde amnesia, similar to the effects of long term



brain damage from alcohol misuse. What these examples have in common though is the loss or degradation of memory. It is strange, and quite interesting, to consider that these heroic archetypes are suffering with major progressive and (as far as we know) irreversible neurological damage. Sigmar and Grungni have in effect forced mortals into a second slow 'death of the self' in order to defeat their enemies. There are obvious parallels here with the Emperor and 40K, although important differences too.

In order to understand the reforging process, I have conflated the concept of 'memory' with 'soul', which the writers also seem to have done. As I understand the lore, the grafting of a fragment of Sigmar's soul during the process of reincarnation onto a mortal soul essentially damages that soul beyond repair, with the damage worsening on each replication of the graft. This happens with broken bones, wherein multiple fractures to the same injury site cannot heal as efficiently. The process of

apotheosis appears to be an experimental and unnatural piece of soulcraft; a process of mortal and immortal soul fusion which Sigmar and Grungni (and the six smiths) try to treat like two alloys being welded together on an anvil to forge a sword. These men and women are in fact being used by Sigmar as soul-powered weapons until their souls are completely hollow and all that is left is an automaton carrying a fragment of a deity. In this sense, Sigmar will eventually occupy a similar role to Nagash, the Chaos Gods and Vampires, who also take mortal souls and make them immortal with some extreme caveats. At what cost victory?

I then started to look into the lore for a deity that had a different approach to mortal souls. I already knew a little about the Gardens and Knights of Mōrr from Warhammer Fantasy, and explored this further. Mōrr was a shepherd of the dead, a giver of prophecy and dreams. He sought to protect the souls of the dead from Chaos and necromancy. This was a worthy deity for the restoration of balance to the





afterlife. Of course Nagash tried to destroy him. Next, when looking for a setting, I found Lethis in Shyish very appealing. Lethis and Styggx are based on the Greek myths of Lethe and Styx. The Greek themes here are death, dreaming and memory, and in particular the waters of Lethe, which can remove memory. The GW writers have taken parts of this idea directly. For example by creating 'peacewater' which can either provide a gentle calming effect or entirely remove one's memories and emotions.

Putting this all together, I created a narrative in which Nagash, through the creation of the necroquake, has inadvertently resurrected the god of the dead, Mórr who has emerged into the Mallus of 'The World that Was' in Azyrheim and has met Sigmar there. Mórr is now an old hooded man following the trauma of Nagash's assault on Shyish. He must remain in the Mallus and stay hidden from Nagash in order to survive. He strikes a pact with Sigmar to help him overthrow the Necromancer and the Ruinous Powers, finding the souls of ancient heroes and bringing them to Sigmar. These ancient souls are past followers of Mórr, a forgotten army that he and Sigmar have now remade into the Omens of Mórr stormhost.

The Omens do not behave like other Stormcast though. Following the reforging, they are gifted the memories of their past lives by Mórr, and each Omen will then embark on a pilgrimage to their site of death and will attempt to excavate their own remains and belongings. This is partly out of ritual and partly out of superstitious fear of necromancy. An Omen will sometimes also find a loved one's remains and will often also carry these as sacred reliquaries. Omen's can therefore intimidate mortals with their morbid collection of deathly artefacts. The deathmask impassive of the Omen is a pale white polished marble, often with a rune of death or portent inscribed. They tend to adorn their sigmarite with ancient metal, creating complex baroque designs. They are permitted to wear the mark of Mórr alongside Sigmar and are powered by both the amethyst winds and the storm.

In Lethis, the cult of Mórr has been kept alive for thousands of years, even after the god's supposed destruction. Within the cult, he is still referred to as Mórr, but outsiders also call him Morrda; The Pale Rider and Master of the Bleak Raven.

The heart of the cult is the Council of Múnin, a secret order within Lethis, beneath an ancient and vast Garden of Mórr built atop an inlet from the Lake of Lethis that runs beneath the city. It is here that the arcane rites of the twelve original mortal Omens are carried out. These were the first souls that Mórr guided into the underworld in a time long forgotten and were said to come from the races of duardin, aelf, human and others besides. It is said that once an acolyte of Mórr has willingly drunk from the lake and the ritual is performed, then his mind is an empty cup. The order priests know how to transfer a soul just prior to the time of death into the empty mind of an acolyte, thereby escaping Nagash's knowledge.

In this manner, the twelve founding Omen's have been reincarnated for generations, accruing vast knowledge and experience. With Mórr ensuring their memories remain intact, some have agreed to be reforged and now command legions within the stormhost. In addition, many of the souls Mórr has offered to Sigmar for reforging were brave mortals who infiltrated the armies of the dark powers during the Age of Chaos, knowing that on their death the priests of Mórr would be able to direct their souls home and speak with them in Shyish, purifying their spirits and learning their secrets. Each time a soul escaped them this way, the Ruinous Powers would rage and bellow with anger at the tricks of Mórr, who was once the unrivalled protector of the dead before Nagash smote him down.

Finally, in Lethis, Mórr does not fight alone. He has the freeguild, the duardian and the aelves, all of whom have some use for the power of prophecy or the power to forget. I created an Ulrung lodge of Fyreslayers who are all elderly (by their terms) veterans and now desperately seek a glorious death in battle. They have greying hair and daub themselves in the pale grave ash of Shyish. Their magmadroths glow with amethyst fire beneath purple scales. Mórr shares with them the locations of Grimnnir's golden soul in exchange for their alliance in war. There are other characters in Lethis too, for example Master Tinkerer Quentelm Boros, who has built the Borosian Steamcrawler, a giant steam powered tank in the shape of a hand.

I am working on a prototype at a smaller scale for a Cities of Sigmar: Lethis Army. The gothic



Celestial Mórricanum trundles slowly to war with Silas Gravebane, Magister of Mór and Battlemage of Lethis riding silently on board, the tongueless acolyte Grumbald beneath deck, muttering via his great grandfather's ghost. I am also working on some Kharadron Overlords for Lethis, which are all possibly undead (or at least that's the rumour) and are powered by amethyst magic.

My freeguild will also be fighting alongside ancient undead veterans, as in Shyish there is hardly any line between life and death, with ancestors existing beside their descendents, probably offering unwanted advice. Large cities like Lethis would be a cacophony of the voices of the living and the dead, with virtually no privacy! I have also begun to illustrate these ideas slowly, and over time will hopefully be able to realise an Omens stormhost beside a mixed Lethisian city force, perhaps even with a kitbashed Mór miniature at the centre, leading a long overdue revolution against the tyrant Nagash.

To Mór however, Sigmar's work with the Stormcast souls is also fundamentally wrong, and so perhaps after Nagash and Chaos are defeated the two gods would then come to a peaceful accord and the stormhosts would be freed... or perhaps we would simply have swapped one war for another.



THE FEMALE SPACE MARINE CHALLENGE



01

Here at 28, we love to throw down the gauntlet and challenge our readers to show off their creativity. Back in the Summer of 2021 we launched The Female Space Marine Project and asked entrants to use their hobby skills to show us their interpretation of women in the ranks of the Emperor's Astartes.

There were no restrictions or rules. The only limit was the imaginations of the artists themselves - and they leapt willingly into the fray to show off their creations. By the end of the contest we were delighted to have received over one hundred and fifty entries.

We were blown away by the standard of the submissions and will forever be indebted to

our amazing judges: legendary sculptor Trish Carden, Wulfhidr aka Becky of the Angels of Purification project, Rebecca aka @revimakk_minis and Helge of Wilhelm Miniatures, who had the almost impossible task of choosing the winners.

Representation in the hobby is important to us and we know many of our readers feel the same way. We are proud and delighted to share the winners and some epic entries here. Feast your eyes upon these! The future is Female Space Marines...

Finalists

- 01 Samuel Allan
- 02 Ryan Griffiths
- 03 Kit Leung
- 04 Rylan Woodrow



02



03



04



05



06



07



08



09



10



11

- 05 Alexander Lunde
- 06 Nicholas Tregidgo
- 07 Kristofer Haugvik
- 08 Henrik Gallion
- 09 Kervantes Kreations
- 10 Duncan Hall
- 11 Ray Parker

1ST PLACE

Laurence Senter





2ND PLACE

Drew Carrington



3RD PLACE

Pasi Pitkänen



MUSINGS ON FEMALE SPACE MARINES



By Trysanna Yantha
Art by Kit Leung

Female Space Marines. It's a pretty simple idea, especially when it comes to Warhammer 40K. Space Marines, but also women. That's it. Same Power Armour, same Bolters and Chainswords, same brotherhood of genetically engineered superhuman warriors.

And yet, it's an incredibly contentious subject. Whether it's a post in a conversion group or a fun challenge run by a community magazine, there are always a lot of very loud, vitriolic men (and yes, it is mostly men) getting very upset about it. "It goes against the lore", "it's too big a change", "you have Sisters of Battle", "representation is dumb". And so on.

I'm Trysanna, and I've been involved with wargaming for 20 years now, starting at the young age of 11 when I was given a glorious Warhammer 40,000 3rd edition starter set to split with my brother as a birthday gift from my Dad, who had no idea of what sort of Pandora's Box he was letting me open. I'm also a trans woman, an artist and a Space Marine enthusiast.

I don't share that I'm trans often, especially on the internet and especially within any sort of 40K community (topic for another time, but the 40K fandom is not great with LGBTQ+ folks and we need to work on that). For one, it's not

really anyone's business, but it is part of who I am and how I see the world, and how the world sees me. It also, conveniently, ties into my first point.

There would already be Female Space Marines. Wait, I hear you gasp, we've only just started! How can you jump to such a conclusion so quickly? Easily. I exist.

Most people bring up the Gene Seed as the reason why women can't be Space Marines. It's arguably the main implant to create a Space Marine, it's how they reproduce, it carries the genetic heritage of their Primarch and, by extension, the Emperor. It also, apparently, only works on men. What they really mean here is that it would only work on people with an XY chromosome. Really basic gender identity concept here, not everyone with an XY setup is a man, just like not everyone with an XX is a woman. Transgender people exist. Non-binary people exist. We have always existed and we will always exist, even into the 41st Millennium. Statistically, over the 10,000 years they have existed, there would have been trans Space Marines. You can talk about how they would have been influenced by the culture of their homeworld and/or by that of the chapter, but it would do the community a lot of good to acknowledge trans people and the

wider LGBTQ+ community. Especially outside Slaanesh, Khorne help me that is such a huge issue and it needs to stop.

Any other lore excuse is really just silly sci-fi nonsense and can be easily rewritten without much fanfare. I mean, the Gene Seed is nonsense too but I wanted to address that specifically to make a point. Some argue that The Emperor just couldn't figure out how to get the Gene Seed to work with women or bring up zygotes, but that's the weakest of arguments. What, you want me to accept that a demigod, a being that has lived for thousands of years, whom it hurts to look upon for his psychic radiance, who saw the Golden Age of technology and the descent into the Dark Age, who united Terra and crafted the Thunder Warriors, Primarchs and Space Marines, who created the Astronomicon and led the Great Crusade across the galaxy just couldn't figure out how to make Space Marines also be women? Breaking into an alternate dimension between the Warp and reality? Got it covered. Letting women also be Space Marines? Nope, too complicated.

That's too far, even for 40K. Men and women are not so fundamentally different or incompatible that a being capable of all that would be unable to make the process work for women too.

The lore isn't really the issue, of course. Oh, it's the most common excuse, wanting to stick to the lore, that it would be too massive a change, but that's just what it is. An excuse. 40K isn't known for its consistent and well planned lore. It's contradictory, things aren't mentioned for a decade and then reappear. New units and technology and events are being added while pretending they've been there the whole time, we just didn't notice. It's a galaxy of lies and half truths and stories and myths, and that's one of its best aspects, in my opinion.

I mean, is it as big a change as the Necrons going from soulless machines bent on the extermination of all life in the galaxy to the warring dynastic kingdoms we have now? What about the additional information on the previous Black Crusades and the reframing of Abaddon? Ollanius Pius? Squats, the origins of the Deathwatch and the War of the Beast, the addition of everything Forge World has put out surrounding the Horus Heresy and Badab War? I could go on. Compared to *all of that*, what does adding women to the ranks of the Adeptus Astartes really change? Nothing about their structure or aesthetic would be changed, nor their place in the setting. Their recruitment would involve the same hardship, trials and genetic enhancements, they'd still have Bolters and Power Armour and be a brotherhood. Including women in that doesn't change *anything* beyond just letting women exist in that space. You just have to use different pronouns for some of them now. You include women, a substantial portion of the general population, in your really cool space army. You help make women more visible and present in the setting, which will be reflected in the community, and you get to see cool, badass women in Power Armour.

Furthermore, no other deviation from the lore garners this kind of response. I've seen Salamanders riding Cold Ones instead of bikes, Knights plastered in Space Marine heraldry, Chaos Grey Knights and Sisters of Battle, even entire projects about alternative versions of the Heresy. And yet none of those ever receive the backlash that Female Marines do, even though they aren't following the lore either.

I want to also mention the Sunstroke scenario in *Challenge magazine #36* by Roger Hamlin and published by Game Designers' Workshop (GDW). While not an official publication by Games Workshop themselves, the magazine was a collection of unofficial rules and scenarios for a variety of wargames, published between

1973 and 1996. In this issue, a Chapter of all female Space Marines is showcased, the Little Sisters of Purification. While this is an unofficial project, it proves that the idea of female Space Marines is nothing new and was already being considered by fans all the way back in 1988. Female Marines aren't a new idea.

You can argue that this is 'just how it's written', but that doesn't excuse the sexism present in the work. And yes, it is sexist to intentionally exclude women the way Space Marines do. Yes, I know the lore, but guess what? It's not real. Gene seed isn't real. The rules that apply to it and the creation of Space Marines aren't real. They can be rewritten and changed, and as I mentioned, it's not even a big change.

Space Marines, as it currently stands, contain the following Codices/Supplements (I realise that some like the Iron Hands and Ultramarine ones aren't as big as some like Blood Angels and Deathwatch, but stay with me here, I have a point to make):

Space Marines, Blood Angels, Dark Angels, Deathwatch, Grey Knights, Imperial Fists, Iron Hands, Raven Guard, Salamanders, Space Wolves, Ultramarines, White Scars, Adeptus Custodes, Chaos Space Marines, Death Guard and Thousand Sons.

(I am counting Custodes for this argument - I know they're technically different, they just happen to also be genetically engineered superhumans that are also, somehow, strictly male-only).

I would like to impress upon you just how much of 40K is focused around Space Marines. They're the main faction and protagonist of this setting as it stands. I don't think it should come as a shock that some women would like to be included in such a huge portion of 40K, and I don't think it should garner any sort of negative reaction and certainly not the reaction that it currently does from a portion of the community. I mean, that's 16 armies. 16 separate army books exclusively about men, no girls allowed. Most of them don't even mention women at all. Do you see an issue here?

It's important to include people in spaces where they previously hadn't been allowed, or where they were made to feel unwelcome or uncomfortable. Warhammer 40,000 has its issues with women and how they're depicted. The main and only female-centered faction, the Sisters of Battle, wear Power Armour

that doesn't even remotely resemble that of the Astartes, instead looking more like a skintight suit, corset included, with some shoulder pads and a backpack/collar. They're incredibly sexualised, with their designs and by the fandom, and while this is an issue on its own, it's not helped by the fact that whenever anyone shows interest in female Space Marines, they're told to just go and play Sisters of Battle. This isn't a fair comparison, of course, the Sisters of Battle are different to Marines in almost every way that isn't Power Armour and Bolters, and even then they have slender, womanly Power Armour instead of the walking tank vibe of the Marines. They're only one army compared to the 16 of the Space Marines; they were sidelined and ignored for 10 years, missing out on new codices and plastic kits until recently, and it's a shitty statement to tell people that if they want Power Armoured women in 40K, they have to settle for, and I can't stress this enough, skintight armour and a corset instead of something that actually looks like Power Armour.

And even if, hypothetically, they did have the same type of armour, they still wouldn't be comparable. The Space Marines are genetically engineered superhuman warriors and the Sisters of Battle are unmodified humans who act as the army of the church. They have completely different aesthetics, functions and place within the setting, and if you need that explained to you, you don't understand either faction and should probably read a codex or something.

Representation is important. It's important to see yourself in stories and in media, to be acknowledged by others. It does the community no favours to exclude women (and LGBTQ+ folks) from the majority of 40K for any reason, lore or not. If you're a straight white cis man, I would ask that you take a moment to consider how that would feel. To not only be rarely acknowledged in something you enjoy, but sexualised whenever you are allowed to exist in the setting, and to have a host of pearl clutching lore purists ready to dogpile you the instant you mention wanting to be included within the ranks of half of all 40K armies and 90% of the Horus Heresy. It's also important for others to see you, as you are, and not be able to ignore you or pretend you don't exist.

SIMON ROGER BRYAN ANDREWS



Why do we do the things we do? It's not a question I often ask myself, but it's not always possible to avoid being asked *why* when people see that I have gone out of my way to recreate a vintage Warhammer model, often one that I already own. I get asked why I painstakingly attempt to pastiche a primitive, low-fi modelling style when it would be *easier* to use more detailed, better proportioned, newer components. I certainly get asked why I prefer plastic models of the 1990s when it is their metal counterparts that defined the aesthetic of the era.

I do not believe in psychic determinism, but it's hard not to be reminded of two unresolved hobby traumas of my childhood, both relating to miniatures I desperately wanted when I was about 11, but could not have. I coveted the dwarf from *Warhammer Quest* more than anything. To me, he was perfect – absurdly perfect. The proportions were all over the place: an axe the size of his body, legs too short to walk and the biggest hands I had ever seen on a model. I had to own it, but for some reason it never occurred to me to actually buy *Warhammer Quest*.

I also wanted the free plastic wizard miniature that came with White Dwarf issue 186 [*this issue came with one of eight different plastic wizard miniatures - Volitare*]. That is to say, I wanted any but the two that were available at either of my local, small-town newsagents: the alchemist and the astronomer, the two most offensively normal-looking of the bunch.

Where were their giant beards, their mad hair, their billowing cloaks? They were not even holding an oversized weapon above their heads. Was this even Warhammer? Fuming, I bought the alchemist and tossed it into a pile of minis I would never paint, letting the wound fester for 20 years.

When I came back to modelling as an adult, about four years ago, I was most keen to try converting and kitbashing. This was something that had seemed so esoteric, wonderful and completely out of reach to an 11-year-old. Unsurprisingly, the trauma of White Dwarf 186 bubbled beneath the surface, leading me to primarily build wizards, with pointy hats quickly becoming a particular speciality of mine.

But there was a problem: shortly after discovering that the only real limit to my modelling was my imagination, it swiftly occurred to me that I didn't really have an imagination. I was more comfortable recreating existing characters than inventing any of my own. As a result, probably my best project from my first year back in the hobby was a Heinrich Kemmler conversion using the versatile battle mage kit.

I wandered from project to project, theme to theme, not really finding anything to settle on and really get my teeth into. As my painting improved, producing paint jobs closer to what I wanted to achieve when I was reading White Dwarf as a kid, I picked up the dwarf and the wizard from *Warhammer Quest* on eBay. They were the first of the static-posed plastic minis I'd bought since the 90s and I was instantly hooked. I had finally found my calling.

I bought the rest of *Warhammer Quest* just before it became impossibly expensive, and actually painted everything with more focus than I had ever mustered before. As I started to expand my collection, I realised that I

couldn't get behind the idea of mixing the more sophisticated, metal expansion heroes in with the goofy, static, giant-handed base set heroes. There my real passion was born, answering the question: "What if iconic models from mid-90s Warhammer were made of plastic in awkward, two-dimensional poses with inconsistently proportioned hands and heads?"

My ideal approach is to find a plastic model from the era to serve as a base, modifying it in a way that pays tribute to both the original mini and the character it will represent. This can be challenging, but part of the fun is the thrill of the hunt.

The best sources for base models are *Talisman* and *HeroQuest* – both regular and advanced – and I prefer already broken models to convince myself that I am rescuing them, rather than defacing a 25-years-out-of-production masterpiece.

Sometimes conversion opportunities can present themselves unexpectedly in miniatures I've been familiar with for decades. I could not understand why the *Talisman* ranger's resemblance to Felix Jaeger was not all over the internet. Excuse me, that tunic? That brooch? A similar breakthrough came when I realised I could make a passable Krell by giving a Heroquest chaos warrior a skull for a head. Other models have required a more complete reimagining, like the *Talisman* sorceress that I used for Isabella von Carstein or the henchman model that became a Witch Hunter.

When I have my base model in hand, I cut away the unwanted parts. Because these minis are single pieces of plastic, this often involves laboriously peeling away thin shavings with a craft knife and only sometimes cutting my thumb open in the process. I used the same *Talisman* ranger already mentioned for Vlad von Carstein, but this time I had to carefully peel his hand and crossbow away whilst trying not to cut off his cloak.

Finding bits for conversions can be hit and miss. Hands and heads that look perfect on eBay can easily end up too small, so I am always on the lookout for oversized accessories or things



designed to be held by dwarves or Skaven, who are often sculpted with larger hands.

Over time, literally recreating the details of classic characters has become less important to me than identifying the most recognisable features of that character and attempting to harmonise those elements with the vintage charm of the base model.

That was certainly true until I came across the challenge that was the Dread King Van Damneg. There was no early monopose plastic

mini that could be used to represent a decrepit, angry lich on a giant golden throne. Easily my most ambitious conversion, incorporating the largest variety of elements, I still tried to limit myself to vintage components where possible to maintain the exaggerated, comic tone.

I find that it can be very rewarding to combine newfound skills with past nostalgia to bring new creations to life and remind people of the roots of their hobby.

ARTIST FOCUS // JUAN GÓMEZ CABELLO

JUAN GÓMEZ CABELLO



Tahur



I am Juan Gómez, more known in the illustration world by my Instagram account name "IllustratorFodder." I am a Spanish artist who recently graduated from the Fine Arts Academy of Seville and I am trying to build my own style and aesthetic.

My story is a little bit chaotic right now. My main work relies on traditional art and is very focused on the reproduction of digital watercolours and aimed for the world of galleries. It is more based on what I practised during university, with little knowledge of the professional illustration industry.

When the pandemic hit it gave me time to see other people's work outside of my comfort zone, including the riches of digital illustration. Then I discovered the grimdark aesthetic championed by this magazine, such as the world of Turnip28 created by Max Fitzgerald, the work of John Blanche and other modern masters. All of this mixed perfectly with all the classical artists from the Baroque period that I love so much like Caravaggio, Jusepe de Rivera and Velázquez.

I could not stop thinking about the dark aesthetics of contrasting tones that were presented to me, and the infinite number of fantasy worlds that could be created, where

rust, blood and the glow of fire were king. With this inspiration, I started drawing. I intended to draw just for myself, as a hobby, but when I had a good handful I decided to start sharing them.

My main Instagram account did not fit the grimdark aesthetic, so I decided to open a secondary account focused on Turnip28 illustrations. The Turnip community and other grimdark communities embraced me and gave me so much support and encouragement, that I decided to dedicate more time to it, and began fan-art commissions. That is how I got to where I am today, happy and exploring new ideas and new ways for people to enjoy my art. I begin at first by imagining a scene – daily, warlike or epic – then I imagine an environment and ask myself: Which characters are involved? What is their mood? How are they dressed? Do they suffer, or are they enjoying themselves? Are they crazy? How do they communicate with each other? It is as if I am creating a theatrical play through illustration. I always inject some realism, usually basing the environment on something recognizable to the viewer. Because of this, some people have even told me that I create "historical-fantasy" illustrations.

The second stage is to search for references, usually photos. Models, armour, flora and fauna and so on. If the composition is complex,

I make a volumetric sketch with Plasticine and take some photos and sketches to help me build up the scene.

The third and final part is the practical one, where I actually start illustrating. With all the previous work done, starting the illustration is easier, as I know where and how to place each element. After a few hours a dark, twisted illustration is born. If you decide to try my method, be sure to pay attention to your previous studies and the elements you selected. I have found it is easy to work with grimdark elements, twisting a reality into a nightmare world, new and unexplored, where imagination runs free and the possibilities are infinite.



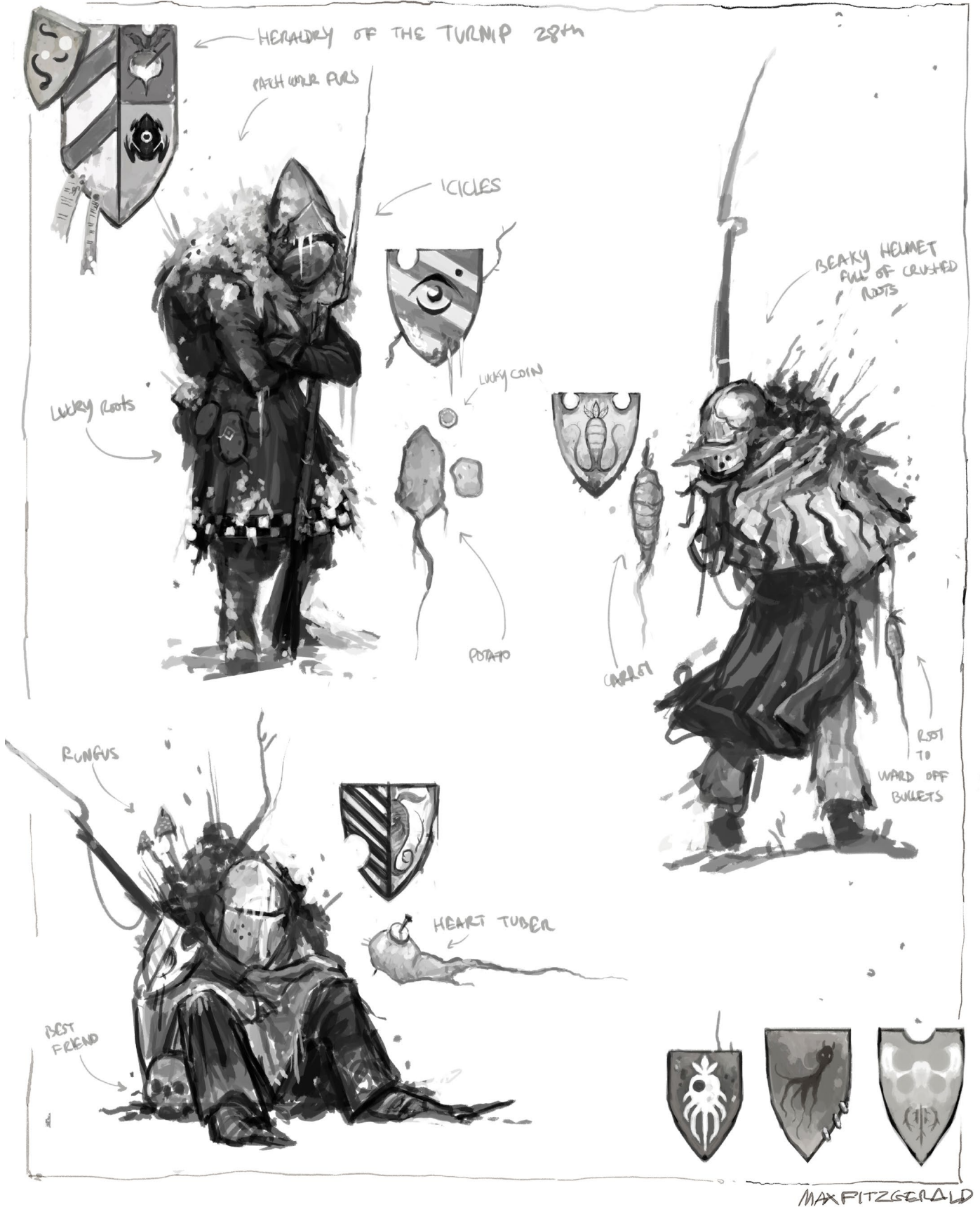






MAX FITZGERALD

Interviewed by Trey Geer



I'm Max, Max FitzGerald with a capital G in the middle of my name. I dunno why, but I have that. It's a Caribbean thing. I'm a concept artist, that's how I make my living.

Q. Can you describe one of your first memories of playing tabletop games?

A. When I first got into war games, I was pitting a random squig hopper and a vampire lord against each other, not really quite knowing the rules. I got some old White Dwarf magazines from a car boot sale and referred to them alongside the modern rules for some of the Night Goblins and tried to work the game out. Not really understanding what Warhammer was, and pitting stats that don't line up together, with models that were badly painted versus my father's painting (which was very good) on one of those classic, badly painted green tables.

Q. Who is Todd?

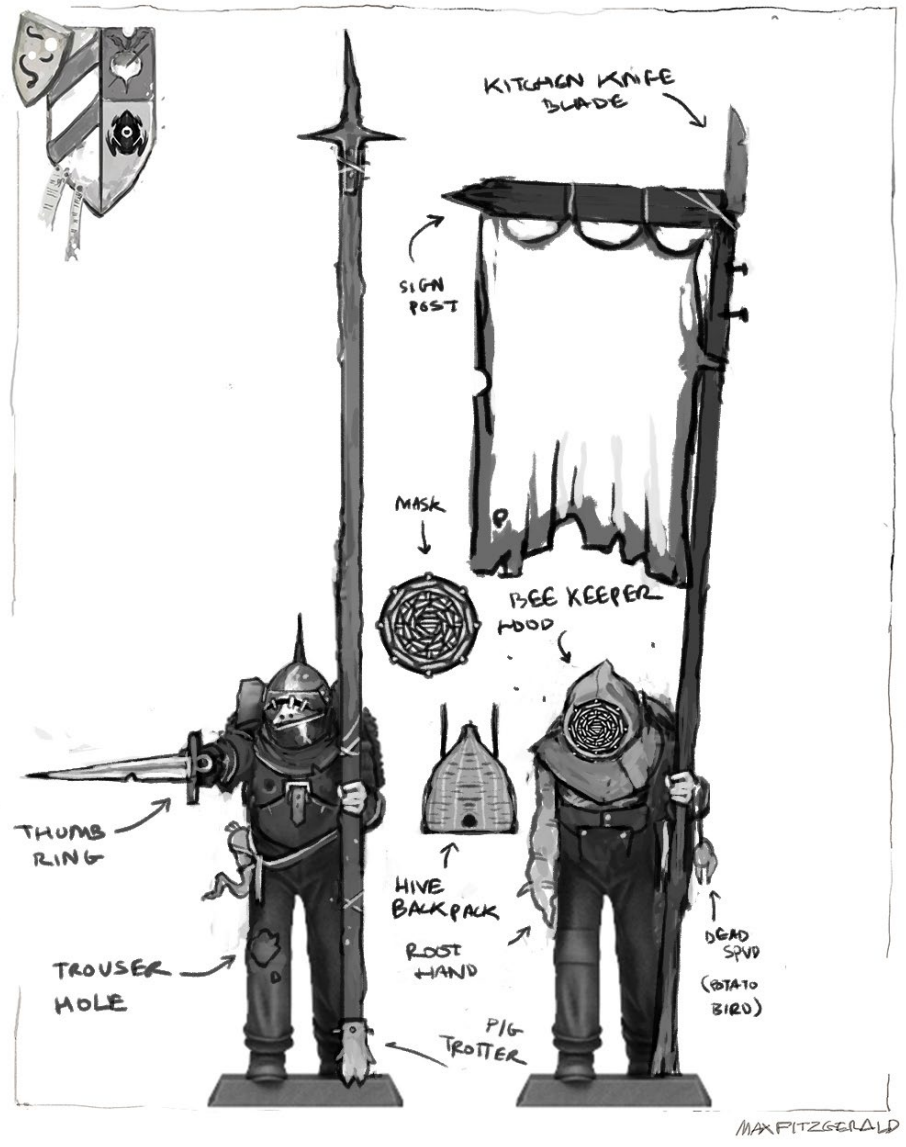
A. Todd? He is me. All the characters in Turnip 28 are just me, unfortunately, because I don't know anyone else. I'm making the game so I don't go outside, so everyone has to be me. Todd was a once devilishly charismatic man. Now he's a toad man after mutating. He lives with his mum in a little hovel, telling stories. He's still mildly charismatic, but terrible at everything he does. He means well but is not very good.

Q. That really highlights how Turnip comes from this playful space that is infused with the grim.

A. It's grimsnug. That's the term. It's cozy but depressing, lighthearted but violent. It's like living in Britain.

Q. Is grimsnug a genre you created?

A. I'm trying to make it work. It's not going to work. No one cares. Nobody will use it, but I'm still going to use it because there's a place for it. You can't take it too seriously. I loved it in old Warhammer and even Mordheim, and you even get glimpses of it in 40K – mainly with the orks and the older books and sometimes Nurgle. That mix of horror, absolute mind-numbing sort of evilness and then a funny man with a silly hat. It's such a good combo but finding that balance is really tough.



Sometimes I swing too cute. Then you have to swing back to violence. It has to be hyper violent so that it's silly. You can't have suffering. It's got to be "his whole body was exploded by a cannonball"... not "He gets hit mildly in the shoulder and spends fifteen weeks recovering in a penitentiary". Unless the penitentiary is run by a toad warden. Then you balance it back up. Because I'm making it for myself it's a lot easier. I don't have to make it more heroic or more sellable. I can put body horror in it and not worry if people like it or not. Some people will bounce off it, and I think that's fine.

Q. I get the sense that, for lack of a better way of saying it, you made Turnip as a joke.

A. It's a meme. It's just a silly meme.

Q. People have really grabbed onto it though.

A. But we are weirdos. You have to understand. We are the strange people that stand in the corner at parties. "Do you want to see my metal goblins that I have in my pocket?"

Q. Do you feel like all these people that have started to kitbash turnip models are influencing you?

A. That's a strange thing, because there's so much of the community into it. And they're all amazing. But I've tried to be sort of anti 'miniatures-agnostic'. Miniatures-agnostic wargame, I hate that. It sounds so boring and not what actual games are like.

I want to be more Gnostic. I have an idea of what Turnip is like. If I don't like it, I can change it. You can't argue with me! I could just tell you no, that's not right. Or like, you've missed



the point. Which is nice as an iron-fisted developer...(!) *he laughs*

Of course not, but what I do have to do is make something better! Something exciting that tends in the right direction. Making something so tempting, so fun, that everyone's saying, "I'm going that way!". There's a huge community element of it, and they're all amazing. Everyday I log on and I see someone's created something absolutely insane.

Here's an example. Someone ran out of visors for their conversions, because you don't quite get enough visors in the Perry set. You get enough visors to start, but then you're thinking 'God, I need some more visors!' So people began converting and sculpting and this particular person started using shells. They look amazing. The Shellmans! With little sea shells he's glued on and they look fantastic. Then he took some shells and made a slug snail thing. I would never have thought of that.

Q. Is that impacting your crystallisation of the game?

A. 100%. So yeah, people wanted crabs for instance, so then I put crabs in and everyone loves the crabs! If enough of something that's cool is made, I'll probably make rules for it. I'll put it in.

It reminds me of the old GW stuff where you've got looted tanks and random conversions made out of shampoo bottles. They would just write random stuff into the game and you would think "Oh! I could make that"! That's kinda what I want Turnip 28 players to do. There are no official models yet (there will be). I want to spark their imagination and then they spark my imagination, so it all balls into something amorphous and cool.

Q. You once said, "A turnip is a fish". Can you elaborate on that?

A. Yes! You've got to have a fish – or a turnip in my case. You got to have a thing. I've seen so many Napoleonic or first-world-war, muddy, grimdark things, but they always lack that thing: an object, iconography that ties it all together. Warhammer has skulls.

Everything has skulls. You can see this is a problem in Horus Heresy, because Horus

Heresy doesn't have as many skulls. They lack that unified interesting object you can riff off. Whereas 40K, millions of skulls. If you don't know what it is, skull.

In my case, if I need to fill a gap, it's a turnip. Or in Mordheim, it's a fish. So you see fish all over, on shields and backs and things.

Q. You're approaching the game as an illustrator?

A. It's art first. I've never made rules before. I've never been a mathematician and I don't know any mathematicians. I make a game that I want to make. I don't like bookkeeping. I want a nice elegant game system. The game should take up a certain amount of time, to use a certain amount of figures that look nice, to use an amount of dice that feels good to roll. It's a very



sensory game in a lot of ways. Not competitive, go in there with a sense that you're all terrible. I have to find a way to make that fun.

I read a lot of other rule books. You have to research. You have to play a million games, even bad ones, even amazing ones. Then rewrite your rules all the time. I've had so many ideas that seem really great, but when I actually play them, they turn out to be just awful.

There was a faction that only had five models and a terrain piece, a guillotine. It was the most complicated army to play. But people would pick that army because it only had five models, so it was quick to build. They were not having a great experience because the army was so complicated. I had to ease them in. So I had to add the normal amount of models back in. It's just full of surprises, and obviously never making a game before, I can't see them coming. It would be terrible if I was working for a company, but because I'm working for myself, it's kind of okay.

Have you played Turnip?

Q. Uhh, no... I've posted in the Discord looking for a game, but no one in my area responded.

A. No one has played Turnip! It's all a lie! No one plays wargames! It's a big lie!

I mean, of course they do. Painting models and sitting down and thinking about playing wargames is a lot more exciting and interesting. It takes up most of your time. That's kind of magical. It is really all about imagination. It's about trying to make these little figures you make come alive.

Q. Do you have a play-testing process?

A. No, just feedback. Lots of it. Just rolling dice, thinking about things. Sitting in the bath going, "Hmm, what if I do this?"

At the moment, I'm working on a bunch of folk dancers that act as a doomsday clock as they dance towards objectives. They ring bells and do a merry dance as the world gets worse.

Q. So there's a certain joy to losing in the game?

A. I try to make it fun to lose, I suppose, but it is kind of more hopeless. Like you're not laughing at your character, you would have to be laughing with them. As they fail, you fail, but it's alright because all the units are terrible and not good at their jobs. I do like that sense of failure. To be able to laugh at yourself. It's very silly. The game is narrated by a collection of toads in a bucket.

Q. What do you see as the future of the game?

A. Miniatures! Yeah miniatures! I want to make so many miniatures! I want to make them digital. Making them traditionally is really difficult and getting them everywhere else in the world is impossible. I reckon the first unit will be released soon.

They will be multi-pose and very combinable with a Perry kit or GW kit. I want freedom, because I don't want the spirit of converting and personalisation to be lost. While players will be able to just buy and print as is, I still want to bring those new players into making and personalising their own regiments.

I'm working with Saint Decent. She is very good. She does Mage Hunters and lots of cool stuff. It is important to get that look right: faux historical. You have got to combine really accurate bassinets with gear that doesn't make any sense. The multi-pose thing is really difficult. We've had to redo the necks many times.

I want to make it easy. The 28 community is full of amazing artists, people a million times better than me. I want to be on the other end. This is silly. If something goes wrong, just cover it with mud. It's still wonderful.

Also I'm making a campaign book. The core rules are half of it. I want people to tell a story with Turnip.

Q. Is there anything you'd like to close out with?

A. I need to thank the patrons. The fact that the community went, "No, I want this weird game made by an idiot with no experience". This wouldn't have been possible without them. It's happening more and more. You're seeing loads of people go, "Oh yea! This idiot made it. I'm a bit better than an idiot. I can give this a go".





MAX FITZGERALD

LIFTING THE LID ON THE MULTIVERSE

By Jon Boyce

You can barely take a step into the Grimdark without tripping over antecedents or straight lifts from the books of English fantasy and sci-fi writer Michael Moorcock. Throughout Warhammer and 40K examples abound - see for instance dark elves, chaos, chaos spawn, demonettes, elementals, Nurgle, big shoulder pads, the Eldar, big black swords, everyone wearing pirate boots, the key cosmic battle being between Chaos and law as opposed to between good and evil (which Moorcock lifted from Poul Anderson), the gods being dependent on their worshipers for existence (which Moorcock lifted from Jack Vance), big wolf face helmets, fire dragon's fusion guns, everything being vaguely German, science-sorcery, everything being covered in chequers, the butcher's nails, mediaeval castles with big lasers on them, pompadours... we could go on.

Over the decades, Citadel Miniatures has produced a number of licensed ranges, the most recent and enduring of which is the current *Lord of the Rings* range that was launched in 2001.

Although I am fond of the *Judge Dredd* (1985) and pre-slotta base *Lone Wolf* (1984) ranges, my favourite is the short-lived *Eternal Champion* range. In production between 1986-1988, it was intended to support the third edition of the *Stormbringer* RPG, jointly published by Chaosium and Games Workshop in 1987.

The range was based on characters from Michael Moorcock's sprawling fantasy novels set in the Multiverse - interconnected planes of existence, each with their own timeline, technologies, magic, flora and fauna. Each plane of existence has its own incarnation of the Eternal Champion - an appointed paladin fighting to maintain the balance between Law and Chaos. If you haven't read any, you absolutely should go and check them out!

Stormbringer focuses on the world of Elric - Moorcock's most iconic character - an albino, amoral elven emperor with a debilitating wasting condition that keeps him in the thrall of Stormbringer, a daemoniac blade that gives



01



02

01 Elric and Moonglum face off against the Theocrat of Pan Tang. All figures from *Melnibonean Personalities* (EC05).

02 Hawkmoon and Oladah encounter a coven of sorceresses. Hawkmoon is from the *Eternal Champion* boxed set (BC5), whilst Oladah is a conversion. The sorceresses are based on pre-slotta Amazons.

03 The most infamous captain from the Isle of

the Purple Towns is Smiorgan Baldhead from *Melnibonean Personalities* (EC05). I have teamed Smiorgan up with some 1980s Corsairs of Umbar.

04 King Urish and the Beggar Court of Nadokor. Urish is from *Melnibonean Personalities* (EC05), but his two companions are suitably ragged figures from Citadel's 1980s ranges.



03



04

him strength. As a result, Citadel's *Eternal Champion* range had a rather Elric-centric focus, with fifty-seven out of the sixty-four officially released miniatures derived directly from Elric's travels around the Young Kingdoms. A handful of the other figures from the range such as Hawkmoon and Erekoze pop up as cameos in his wider adventures.

The range comprised of five subsets:

Michael Moorcock's Eternal Champion Boxed Set (BC5)

This initial boxed set release contained eight Jes Goodwin sculpts; seven incarnations of the Eternal Champion including two Elrics, plus Moonglum an incarnation of the Eternal Companion who associates with Elric. The figures are beautifully delicate Goodwin sculpts, although Corum and Hawkmoon are notorious for their weak ankles. As a jumping off point into Citadel's Eternal Champion offering, you could do a lot worse than starting here, especially as the figures were in production for the longest. Several of the figures were also later rolled into the Warhammer Empire Knights range.

Melnibonean Infantry (EC01) & Melnibonean Cavalry (EC06)

Melniboné is an ancient island nation ruled by an imperial dynasty. It is populated by a race of elf-like, Chaos-worshipping dragon riders and might possibly suffer an apocalyptic mishap at the hands of Elric. Citadel's range gives you plenty of options to assemble a warband of Melnibonean fighters. There are twenty infantry armed with a range of hand weapons, spears and bows, as well as six cavalry and a

mounted Elric. Once again these are sculpted by Jes Goodwin and there is a lot of stylistic overlap with his Warhammer elves from the same era. These too were in production after the loss of the *Eternal Champion* licence and saw duty as Warhammer High Elves.

Pan Tang Infantry (EC02) & Pan Tang Tiger Handlers (EC04)

The upstart island nation of Pan Tang is a rival of Melniboné, also worshippers of Chaos, but generally perceived by Melniboneans as being brash, reckless and a bit tryhard! Elric has several adventures on Pan Tang fighting against its forces, so a large group is very useful for Elric-focused gaming. Aly Morrison sculpted fifteen infantry figures armed with some nice chunky axes and cleavers, as well as a pair of pelt-wearing tiger handlers. There are also a pair of gorgeously modelled tigers sculpted by Nick Bibby, but sadly no devil rider cavalry (Pan Tangians mounted on six-legged reptilian mounts). The Pan Tangians seem to be some of the more difficult figures in the range to track down – it seems that even when in general production they were not widely available in Games Workshop stores or stockists, and they appear to only have been in production for around 18 months.

Melnibonean Personalities (EC05)

The personalities set is my favourite from the range, including a couple of absolutely brilliant sculpts. Sculpted by Jes Goodwin, Aly Morrison and the Perry twins, the set attempts to fill in many of the character gaps in Elric's narrative with some key adversaries and companions. There's the hunched Richard O'Brien likeness

of Tanglebones, the menacing bulk of Smiorgan Baldhead and the tattered faux grandeur of Urish the Beggar King. There are some really nice Pan Tangian characters including the sorcerer Theleb Kaarna and Jagreen Learn clad in his burning chaotic armour. Oh, and for variety's sake, another two Elrics. Hunting down every character in the Personalities set is quite a challenge, but completing the set gives you a load of options for re-telling Elric's adventures.

Expanding the range

On the face of it, the Citadel Eternal Champion range is a relatively limited offering with just sixty-four official figures. There are a couple of ways that you can add to your Eternal Champion collection.

Oddities and Extras

Citadel often produced figures that for various reasons remained unreleased or were included in other ranges. It is worth tracking down the spear-armed chaos warrior with 'Pan Tang' clearly on his tab. You could also look at adding Donaldbane from the Tragedy of McDeath scenario pack – early castings have 'Elric' written on the tab rather than the blank tabs on later castings. And if you really want to set yourself a challenge, try to seek out the pair of unreleased bare-chested Pan Tang tiger handlers!

Possible EC Figures

There's no way of knowing for certain, but there is a glaringly obvious stylistic similarity between Citadel's Melniboneans and the DRAG7 Dragon Masters figures (also sculpted by Jes Goodwin).



Even if they weren't intended as additions to the *Eternal Champion* range, there are some nice riders, a variant warhorse and, of course, a lovely sleek Nick Bibby sculpted dragon to fight alongside your Melnibonean army.

Mixing and Matching

The nature of the multiverse means that there are a host of Citadel figures that can happily be used in *Eternal Champion* themed games. I tend to look at miniatures from Citadel's catalogues from around 1985-1988 as figures of this era are contemporary with the *Eternal Champion* range and often share the same designers, scale and aesthetic. That's not to say there aren't earlier pre-slotta or later Warhammer figures that would also work – it's very much a case-by-case basis! By way of examples, I've included a wizard, chaos thug and pre-slotta chaos warrior alongside my Pan Tangians; a pre-slotta rogue and fighter/flagellant accompany Urish the Beggar King; while the pirates of the Purple Towns are repurposed Corsairs of Umbar from the 1980s *Lord of the Rings* range. Where a suitable figure doesn't exist, you can always convert something.

Creating Your Multiverse

Playing games using Michael Moorcock's Multiverse gives an almost limitless scope for narrative. Your hero (or anti-hero) is likely to be an incarnation of the *Eternal Champion*. You might want to add in the support of an Eternal Companion or a handful of fighters, and they'll probably be engaged in a fight against the forces of Chaos or Law to maintain balance. But that is about it!

Your incarnation of the *Eternal Champion* could be Elric wielding Stormbringer against the crew of a Pan Tangian warship on the Pale Sea. Or Hawkmoon carrying out a raid into the heart of the Dark Empire of Granbretan in an insane future mediaeval Europe. It could even be the tattoo-covered Socul blasting great gouts of dark energy from his black carbine as he makes a last stand against bestial hordes at the ruined watchtower of Nygar (I made that last one up).

That's the beauty of the *Eternal Champion* setting – you can tailor your games to match your collection of figures and terrain. There are no set rules to the setting, other than that the *Eternal Champion* exists to maintain the balance between Law and Chaos. All you need to do is pick a game system, pull out some themed miniatures and have fun. I can thoroughly recommend using some of Citadel's fantastic *Eternal Champion* range to do so!



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06

Catalogue scans of the full Eternal Champions range are available at Stuff of Legends ([www. solegends.com/citec/index.htm](http://www.solegends.com/citec/index.htm))

An excellent collectors guide is available at the Collecting Citadel Miniatures Wiki ([www. collecting-citadel-miniatures.com/wiki/index.php/ Eternal_Champion](http://www.collecting-citadel-miniatures.com/wiki/index.php/Eternal_Champion))

With thanks to J Edward Scott for his Moorcock research and observations

Previous page Two incarnations of the *Eternal Champion* join forces to face down a powerful Pan Tangian wizard and his forces.

05 Two incarnations of the *Eternal Champion* join forces against a powerful Pan Tangian wizard and his forces. Figures from the *Eternal Champion* boxed set (BC5), Pan Tang Infantry (EC02), Melnibonean Personalities (EC05) and Citadel Warhammer & AD&D ranges.

06 Planes of the Multiverse aligned to enable multiple incarnations of the *Eternal Champion* to tackle the ultimate threat at Bring Out Your Lead 2017. Photo courtesy of Jean-Baptiste Garidel.

JON SERRANO MARTIN



01

This is the story of a lie. A lie so horrible, only a creature equally monstrous could bring it to the light.

This project is the brainchild of two moments. The first one, albeit a silly one, is the introduction of Sephiroth in *Super Smash Bros Ultimate*. The moment when Safer Sephiroth briefly appears in all of his majesty truly blew my mind. The other one is the recurring idea of how unfair Sigmar's Reforging actually is [*when you die, you go to heaven for a bit, but Sigmar returns you to earth. After each Reforging you lose some of your memory until you're just an empty shell of a soldier. It's a nice bit of lore that explains why your plastic soldier can die and yet fight another battle! - Volitare*]. An existence devoted to fighting until the memory of who you were is washed off by the never-ending war.

Clearly, if Sigmar is this warmonger monster, we need someone to end His curse. Who could possibly be this hero? None other than Archaon! I mean, he doesn't really look like Archaon, does

he? To fulfill this mission, he needed to ascend and become a symbol of hope. Hence his angelic form. We all know that Archaon's ways are not the nicest, which explains why this new form is called the Seraph of Extermination. Regardless of how scary 'extermination' sounds, we need to remember that his purpose is to end the cycle of war, death, rebirth and more war that Sigmar offers. The only answer to never-ending suffering must be to embrace the end. The end of all things. No spoils of war. No conquest. No glory after victory. Just the end. Nothingness. Quietness. Peace.

That is the core concept that pushed this project. I tend to come up with a big and bombastic model and then I rally their minions.

Angels were not created following human logic, so their beauty and design doesn't have to be limited by it. I know that biblically accurate angels can be a bit of a meme, but they are a great source of inspiration. The Forsaken One is inspired by the Ophanim [*Ophanim is the*

01 Seraph of Extermination
Opposite Shrine





02



03



04



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ancient Hebrew word for 'wheels' and is used in Ezekiel 10:9-13 to describe angels that are radiating wheels full of eyes - *Volitare*] illustrated as four wheels full of eyes surrounding a baby. For my model, it represents the sad truth of what awaits every Stormcast Eternal. The figure that accompanies the Forsaken One in some of the pictures was an old Arkhan the Black conversion with a few religious icons and some modified earrings inspired by Simon aka @ingrimmson.

My research into different types of angels led me to a video game with some of the most bizarre and amazing designs for angelic creatures: *Bayonetta*. This game series has wonderful enemy designs, such as these big marble faces, which inspired the little critters I created to follow the army, The Legion of the Faceless. The main critter, the one known as The Voice of the Extermination, usually plays the part of Sloppity Bilepiper in games. I wanted to continue with a similar design, while making it more unique. I discounted using a more humanoid looking model, as that would have been too different.

My main sorcerer, Mother Alexandra, is inspired by *Resident Evil 8: Village's* main antagonist, Mother Miranda. I was really struck by how impressive the character's design was, so I wanted something similar for the Herald of the Extermination. My other sorcerer, Father Miguel, and the Chaos Lord, The Witness, take inspiration from the side-scrolling video game *Blasphemous*. The Witness is based on the game's main character, the Penitent One, using the amazing Sigval model as a base. The name is the task: to bear witness to the Extermination and to be the last one to enjoy it. Father Miguel is not based on any specific characters, I just wanted to give him that twisted and dark Catholic design similar to the *Blasphemous*' design language. The face was painted to loosely look like *Darkest Dungeon's* narrator, another video game. As you can see, I like my video games!

The last two units, The Compassion and The Acceptance, are the Vanguard. The chosen angels of the Seraph of Extermination. At one point I considered making my Seraph by using the Dreadful Visage, the Slaanesh Endless Spell, instead of a body. Even though I didn't go through with this design, I rescued it after seeing Ana Polanščak's Daemon Prince using



06

Sigmar's face. I thought it was the perfect choice as a final insult to Sigmar and I stole the idea (Sorry? Thank you!).

Once I had the designs more or less planned, I started thinking about how to paint the models. I knew I wanted dark, purple robes similar to the penitents from the Spanish Easter's Pasos. For the skin I found James Stone's (@theemptyrean) skin recipe and I adjusted it to the paints I had available, to achieve a pale and sickening skin that contrasted really well to the regal and religious purple. Almost as if their bodies understood that they were ready to shuffle off their mortal coil and all sign of life was gone.

All in all, this was a fun project that gave me the opportunity to dive deeper in a darker type of fantasy, in contrast to many of my previous projects. Additionally, it allows me to play as different factions in Age of Sigmar, depending on what I fancy. This means that I'm always open to new angelic horrors depending on which list I want to play, which is the perfect excuse to mash some kits together. More and more angels until the sweet embrace of Extermination.

02 Mother Alexandra
03 Father Miguel
04 Forsaken One
05 The Acceptance
06 Voice of Extermination

GRIMDARK METALS PAINTING TUTORIAL

By James Stone

For a couple of years now, I have been working on improving my formula for painting dark brass armour across a range of projects. When it came to painting the Emperor's Daughters, Games Workshop's Sisters of Silence for the Horus Heresy, I cultivated the formula I want to share with you. I wanted to emulate the pale, ghostly brass as seen on the Sisters in the Visions of Heresy books. At first, I tried a more direct approach with brass-coloured primers, but in the end, I settled on a mixture of glazing and wet blending to achieve the armour you can see across my Stormcast Eternals and Sisters of Silence.



01. Start by undercoating the model and all its component parts with black. Games Workshop's Chaos Black Spray was used on the model pictured. Make sure you leave this to dry for a few hours for best results.



01

02. Use some masking tape to mask off parts of the model that you do not want to be sprayed with metallic paint. This is not a wholly necessary step, but the less "glitter" paint you have to paint over later, the better. In this example, the cloth details of the miniature are covered with tape.



02

03. Spray the model with Leadbelcher from Games Workshop. Make sure to get a nice, flat and even coat across all the areas of the model that you want to feature this armour effect.



03

04. Once this spray coat is dry, carefully peel off the masking tape, revealing the black from underneath.



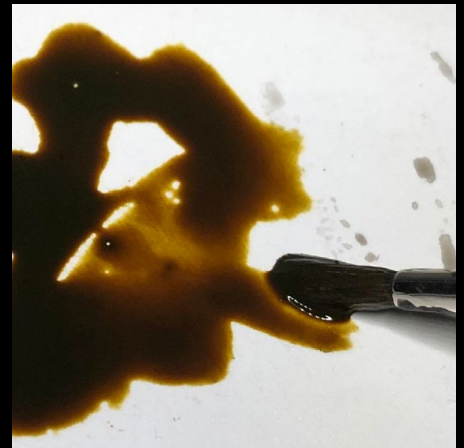
04

05. The first step of the painting process is to apply a coat of Nuln Oil Gloss to the miniature's armour with a size 1 brush. This helps define the armour plating, while still conserving the metallic sheen of the base layer. While this step dries, keep the kitchen roll on hand to wipe away any pooling.



05

06. Again using a size 1 brush, apply Daler Rowney's FW Sepia artist's ink to your palette and thin it with a touch of water, achieving a consistency similar to what is seen in the photo. Then glaze this twice over the miniature's armour, waiting for each coat to dry before applying the next, forming a strong brass colour. The following photos of the model show the armour after one and two coats applied respectively.



06

07. After these coats are dry, use a couple of mixes to highlight and shade the armour. The first you can make using a 40/60 mix of the aforementioned Sepia Ink with White Alchemy by Scale75. I call this mix, seen below, Sepia Alchemy.



07

08. The next mix is between Scale75's black ink, GW's Rhinox Hide and Scale75's Bosh Chestnut in a 35/35/30 mix. I call this: Rhinox Shadow. When making this mix, however, keep the paints flowing into one another but not properly blended, so you can use the different colours as you see fit.



08



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9. This step of the painting process is probably the most labour intensive. Start by using a size 0 or 00 brush to apply thin highlights of Sepia Alchemy to the raised edges of the armour, leaving the natural shading of the Sepia Ink remaining, as shown by this leg. On flatter areas, glaze Sepia Alchemy thinly across the panel.

10. While the Sepia Alchemy is still drying, wet blend in Rhinox Shadow to the recesses and undersides of the model, emulating the way the armour's reflective qualities might pick up the dead earth on the base. Mix the darker parts of the mix into the recesses, wet blending the lighter portions into the Sepia Alchemy. Blend these two mixes in, back and forth, as you'll see across the following photos, until you are happy with the result and feel it is natural looking. This technique blends the true metallic metal (TMM) and non-metallic metal (NMM) painting styles.

11. Once you are happy with the blending on the model, add some final edge highlights. Return to your White Alchemy, and using a wet Size 00 brush, carefully edge highlight the highest points of the armour, running your brush lightly alongside the ridges of the model until you are satisfied.

12. For your final highlight, apply pure white paint to the tips of each of these previously highlighted areas, making sure to only pick out where the brightest natural light might reach.

13. Finally, the model might be feeling a little cluttered or hard to read. Here comes the secret weapon: use Black Ink with a size 000 brush to panel line the recesses of the model and the joints between the armour panels. This helps define the model better against the other parts of the paintjob. Once this step is complete, paint the rest of the model and then varnish it with Humbrol's Acrylic Matt Varnish spray, creating a NMM.

Here is a selection of some of the models from this project that I used this technique on, both large and small, including the completed Sister of Silence. As you can see, this brass effect fits somewhere between a warmer, almost golden colour, and a cold, black metal, depending on the light. This makes it ideal for characters as sneaky and ambiguous as the Sisters of Silence—though obviously, this tutorial can be



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13

used on any part of a model you wish, the wet blending makes it ideal for covering small and large areas alike.

I hope you enjoyed this tutorial; let me know if you try it yourself!



BEYOND THE GRAVE: HOW A NARRATIVE APPROACH ADDS DEPTH TO FROSTGRAVE

By Simon Schnitzler



Experiencing a thrilling story, sweating whilst making survival rolls for my favourite models, like watching a gripping movie, has always been a compelling motivation for me to play tabletop games. Whether it was *Warhammer*, *Warhammer 40,000* or *Infinity*, the narrative has always been my reason to build models, build terrain and play with both. Over the decades, I played all sorts of narrative games, from global online campaigns to two-men-campaigns, and campaigns that have stretched over weeks to campaign-weekends. But playing a tabletop game and playing a narrative is something that appears contradictory to some. I first want to talk about why that might be the case, followed by how I attempt to solve this puzzle for myself. Lastly, I would like to show you what gets my blood pumping these days.

It really depends on your metagame, but when you look at the structure of most tabletop rulesets, they use a system of points to represent the 'value' of a model. Making these systems work has become an artform and games are not often reviewed based on whether they are properly balanced or not. Some companies even skew balance to make newer products more powerful in the game to boost sales.

But what do players expect from games? The answer is simple: fairness. When players agree on a certain amount of starting resources, they expect to have an equal chance of winning the game; few gamers out there would start a game with half as many points as their opponent. The dice gods are cruel, however, and even the best strategies fail when you constantly roll poorly. But we want the games we play to appear to be fair.

When considering the types of games that can be played, there are two main types: one is competitive tournament play, where miniatures are basically sophisticated gaming pieces and it is all about winning a game where everyone starts on equal footing. The other is narrative gaming, where the competitive aspect takes a backseat over the desire to tell a compelling story. Despite this, there is still a competitive aspect, as most players enter into a game with some desire to win. No matter how much you focus on narrative gaming, simply removing row after row of miniatures from the board feels... unsatisfying. Narrative gaming must find its spot somewhere between the urge to

win and enjoying the narrative, even when the odds are against you.

I believe narrative gaming needs three things to distinguish itself from competitive gaming without feeling unfair from the onset: A campaign, the ability to identify with your models and randomness.

A campaign is basically a series of successive games that are linked by either a ruleset or a narration, or both. The shape of a campaign is limited only by the imagination of the players, so making a list of possibilities would never be complete.

When I speak of identifying with your models, I am talking about creating characters with human motivations that allow us to relate to their struggles. By creating your own characters, with their individual stories, motives, urges and faults, you turn them from simple gaming pieces to almost-beings. Playing a campaign can allow you to see these characters evolve as they are subjected to different hardships.

When I built my Cthulhuesque warband, they were just skull/tentacle headed dudes. After the first game, I had the idea that they were former fishermen, lured by their leader into worshipping a dark god to grant them bountiful catches from their fishing expeditions. This worship slowly transformed them into the state that I had built them into — like the brothers of Davy Jones. Whenever a warrior died, I imagined that the leader would bring them back to life, but they would lose a bit of their memories, becoming more a monster and less of a human. All of a sudden, I had manoeuvred myself into a difficult position during a game. Should Hans, now barely human, make a suicidal run for the scenario's objective, risking death, or should I let the game end in a draw and save him from the abyssal forces? Of course, you could just come up with a character's background, build the respective model and play with that. The goal is to start caring for your character's fate.

Randomness is a crucial part of every tabletop game. The dice or cards decide whether your warrior is successful in his efforts to chop off the beast's head, or if he becomes the beast's dinner. There are other ways of adding randomness to your game, which I will illustrate

a bit later. For now, we can state that the effect of randomised things during a game helps to reinforce the feeling of balance, without tipping it in any one player's favour by design. This helps greatly to get moments of surprise and tension during an otherwise predictable game. It also helps to create great narratives, which leads me back to the ruleset.

Frostgrave

For almost three years now, I have been playing *Frostgrave*, a ruleset written by Joseph A. McCullough and published by Osprey Publishing. It is a fantasy skirmish game, in which you play a warband of up to 12 models. Each warband consists of a wizard and his apprentice, accompanied by a handful of henchmen. The goal of almost every game is to grab as many treasure/loot markers as you can and earn as much experience for your wizard as possible. Experience enables the wizard and his apprentice to gain more skills and magic spells. Good ingredients for a fun game, but I want to illustrate, using my three aforementioned aspects, why I think it works well for narrative gaming.

Firstly, the campaign. In *Frostgrave*, playing a campaign is not mandatory, but it is a fixed part of the ruleset and enriches the game greatly. There are actions that take place before the game and are already good cornerstones for storytelling. There are spells that can be cast before a game (to raise a zombie or prepare a potion for example) and warband members can be hired (a fantasy version of the Cantina Scene in *Mos Eisley* comes to mind). The post-game sequence is great fun as well: determining what treasure chests contain, rolling on the survival chart to see who survives or has to start the next game missing a limb, spending hard earned gold on gear.

These steps are all part of the basic ruleset and can create a great campaign feel. The true heart of any campaign however, is the goal for the protagonists and connecting story arc. This is where the real fun starts. Osprey has several campaign books to offer, from large campaigns with ten connected games, to just a handful of loosely linked games. You could play these scenarios and storylines as written or take the rules and add your own storyline, monsters, interpretations of required terrain and objectives. The idea is to take fantasy models that you already have and play with them. But

where is the fun in that? Adjusting models and terrain to adapt to your chosen storyline can be an enjoyable hobby on its own.

The *Frostgrave* rules are fairly easy to learn. This enables you to take a few weeks between games and still remember how it works. Furthermore, it is easy to come up with tweaks or house rules to change the game more to your liking, which is highly encouraged by the author.

For example, in my *Perilous Dark* campaign (a co-op version of the game which is even playable remotely with a few webcams), we wanted to have the possibility for our henchmen to level up. The easy way would be to just 'buy' the next expensive soldier and pretend the character had levelled up. A quick but weak unit, such as the thief, would then become a treasure hunter, also quick, but a better fighter. But we went a step further and wrote a short and easy gold-coin based levelling system that would give us a few more choices, but would still be in the spirit of the existing profiles. This way, not just our wizards have evolving abilities, but also their henchmen, turning the whole warband into something like the gangs in movies like *Inglorious Bastards*. This makes a great segue to my next point.

The aspect of narrative relates to how well you identify with your models. In *Frostgrave* you have a rather small force on the table, so you can concentrate on getting to know your soldiers a bit. With few soldiers, I can focus on each model individually while I build, paint or play with them. And at some point, I realised that I cared for my characters. This resulted in heavy decisions: sacrifice a character to win the game or save him from the possibility of final death?

A good example is my barbarian. Her background story has her escaping the grasp of a demon by chance, and she swears to kill the thing one day. Now, my wizard is a demon summoner and can get warband members possessed by a demon, granting them better stats. But would the barbarian accept that? How grave would a situation need to be that she would reject her oaths and share her body with a demon? In a competitive game, possessing the barbarian would be an easy choice, a powerful miniature would become even more powerful, but here my narrative hinders me from doing that.

However, it also gives me a great opportunity to tell and experience a story.

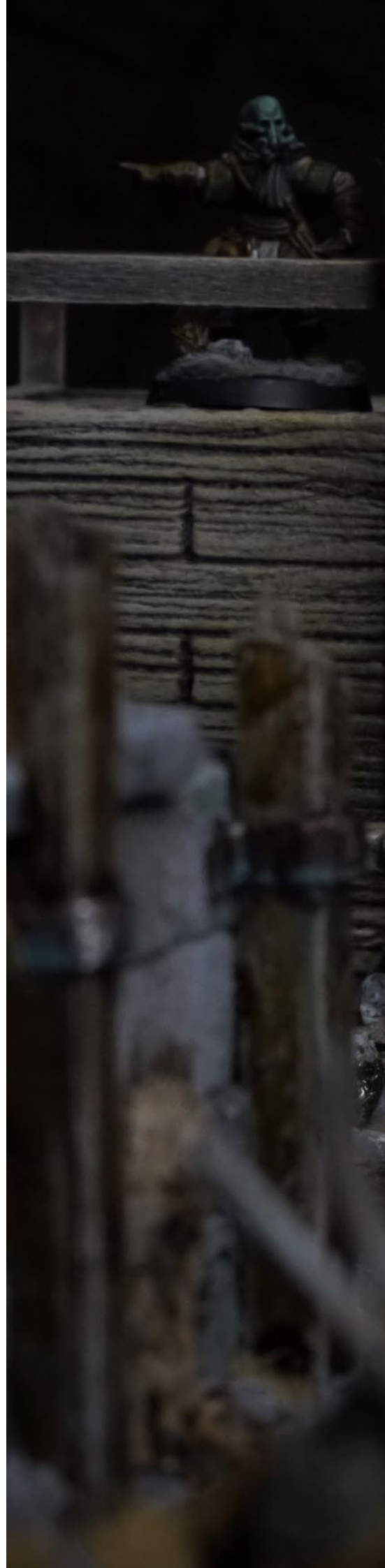
Another example would be the final death of a model after the game. Yes, you could simply invest gold coins to buy a new archer... but is the archer you wrote a story for gone then? It is a wargame, but a good dose of empathy towards your miniature's 'life' can add so much more fun to the whole thing!

Finally, the aspect of randomness. Randomness in the form of dice or a card system is a crucial part of all tabletops. McCullough uses the D20 intentionally for his systems. Since results vary greatly in range, it is hard to predict the outcome of a combat. Of course, there are modifiers that represent a very strong arm or a fearsome axe, but ultimately, even the biggest warrior can be stopped by a rat. This makes the system appear unbalanced to some people, but I find it brings a great freedom to just play, because I cannot calculate and try to predict outcomes, I can only hope for the best and make up a cinematic scene in my head for what the dice are showing me. That alone is not what makes this ruleset stand out to me. It is the random monsters.

Some of you may remember the random monsters from *HeroQuest*. Here the system works similarly. Whenever someone picks up loot, there is a chance for a monster to appear on a randomly determined board edge. This mechanic might feel unfair to some, since it can really tip the balance of a game in one direction, but on the other hand... how cinematic can a game get? Your men thought they were safe, all have survived so far, loaded with gold and loot, the enemy a good distance behind you... until this monster emerges from behind a boulder to bar your way to safety!

In addition to the game mechanics aspect of the monsters, I dwell on the modelling possibilities. Most of the time, I just build a thing and then look at the rules and choose what would fit best.

To these factors of randomness, casting spells, their effects and specific scenario rules add a great variety of unforeseeable events that pose a constant threat and a great opportunity for a little storytelling along the main course of events.









#FG28

For me, *Frostgrave* and 28 have a big thing in common: freedom. While the style of approaching a model in the 28 way feels to me like the freedom that impressionism brought from the strict rules of classicism, *Frostgrave* felt like liberation from canonised gaming universes. Since by design, stat lines of models only represent their abilities on the field and not what they are supposed to look like, you are free to build, paint and use whatever you want. *Frostgrave* has very vague lore, with so many white spots on the map, that anyone can build their own world.

To some, this freedom might look threatening and easy to get lost in, but to me it is pure joy. Let me give you a few examples: my first warband was Skeletor and his evil warriors (in miniature form, not the action toys of old), who had stumbled into this dimension and had to find a way back. After that I built a small warband of Rangifer: a hybrid of reindeer and humans, followed by a Warband of Snakemen, led by a wizard. Everything was sort of dark fantasy, but not the grimdark stuff we love.

Having seen the things that were made for the #mordheim2019 campaign, I wanted to make a warband in their spirit. By coincidence I started to reread the works of Lovecraft, known for his Cthulhu Mythos, and I felt like this was exactly the sort of darkness I wanted in my miniatures. While *Frostgrave* itself is not any specific genre of fantasy, most people would call it High Fantasy. Felstad, its main location, is bright and colourful, with some dirt and grime in the corners. Undead, demons, two-headed trolls, magical traps and flying castles are common. But I wanted to go in the other direction and make something pale, grim and dark.

My goal is to blend the aspects of Lovecraftian horror with a mediaeval setting into what I called #fg28 on Instagram.

To do this, I tried analysing how Lovecraft created his unsettling, dark atmosphere for his stories. For me, his best works consist of the rather simple recipe of contrasting the mundane with the alien. *Whisperer in Darkness* for example starts with the sentence 'Bear in mind closely that I did not see any actual visual horror at the end...' Although some of the creatures are described, that was never the cause for the tension and horror in his works. It

was the undescribed that got my mind working and coming up with horrors beyond description.

I am aware that this recipe is almost impossible to transfer to the tabletop. Our hobby is a visual one and inhabits all three (?) dimensions. There is hardly any space for intentionally blank spaces, which the observer's mind can fill with his own horrors. Our horrible things are in plain sight, reducing their gruesomeness a good deal. We are so used to seeing models holding decapitated heads, that I would claim it is normal to us. But the equation of protagonist vs. antagonist suffers greatly from that. The bigger the hero's sword is, the bigger the beast needs to be, for killing it to look heroic. Put differently, the stories we have consumed and have etched into our narrative consciousness, tell us: an armour-clad warrior with a longsword and a spear facing a gruesome monster, will fight it and win. Period. Yes, he struggles; he bleeds, but he wins. Always. And knowing that takes away from the atmosphere. Lovecraft turns this around in his stories. Often his protagonists either claim to die very soon, or are on the brink of committing suicide, since they ultimately know that the monster might be defeated, but only for now.

My approach in #fg28 is to use the contrast I have talked about earlier and crank it up. By reducing the size of things like weapons, armour or miniatures, the contrast to my monsters will be even bigger and maybe give us back some of that Lovecraftian horror. Of course, we all want our heroes to win, whatever their motives are. I think the designers' challenge in this setting is to make them look believably weak, to make their survival less possible. Empathy for our characters, the love we put into creating models and their stories, will make us tremble in fear when they are at risk of being killed by an eldritch monstrosity, bringing us a measure of that horror the books and movies invoke.

In that spirit, I am trying to make things as realistic as possible. Visually and narratively, I am taking elements from the Dark Ages. When your terrain is a derelict fishing village or a small farming community with animals running around, a bunch of ragged warriors with tentacle-covered skull-heads stand out dramatically. You can almost hear suppressed screams from the villagers as these monstrosities walk past their barred doors. And you can almost hear the relief, when the

Previous *Fisher folk*
 01 *Fisher folk's shrine*
 02 *In the swamps...*

monsters are confronted by badly armed, yet brave, peasants holding pitchforks and shovels.

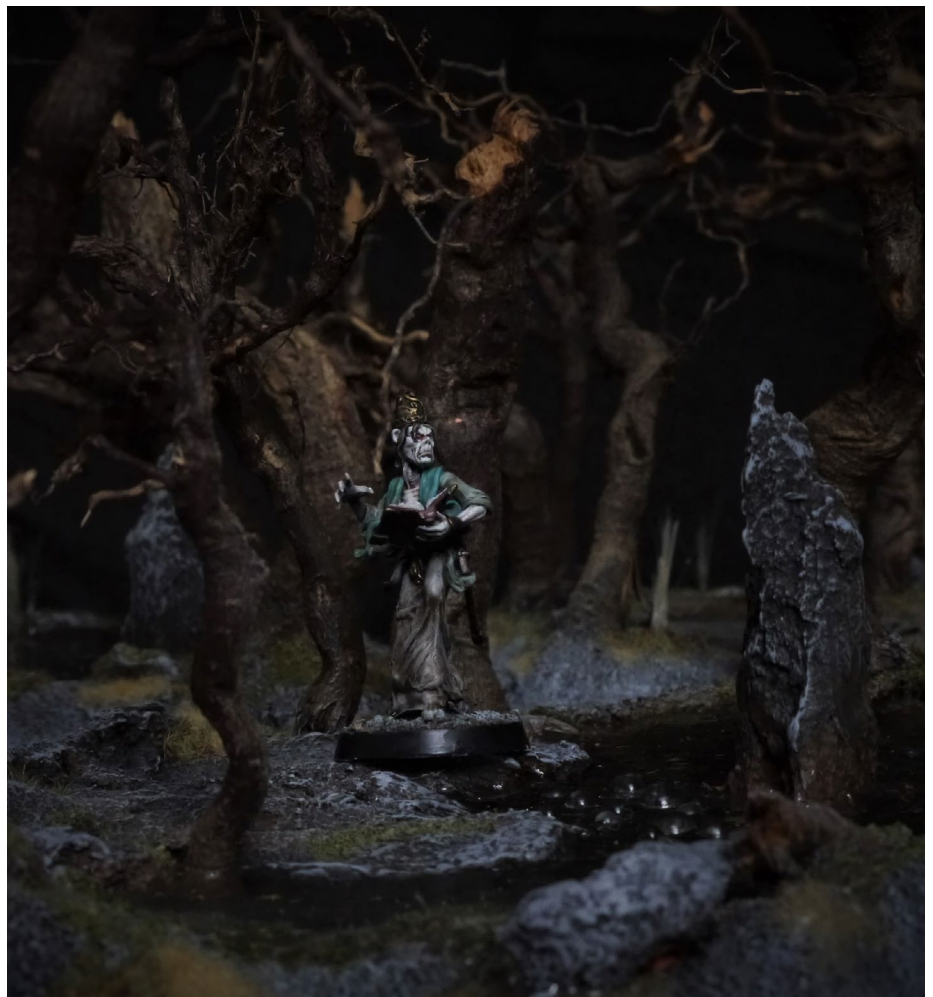
Of course, I am aware there is much more to Lovecraft's stories than simply contrasting the alien with the mundane. The perspective from which the stories are told, descriptions that turn simple things like the moon into something threatening, or the 'story within a story'-style he borrowed from *One Thousand and One Nights*; to name a few, but translating these stylistic elements to the tabletop is not easy, if even possible. Others, like clandestine cults, forbidden knowledge and things lurking in the dark, find their way onto the board and rules almost naturally. The *Frostgrave* ruleset either contains fitting rules (there is even a supplement for fighting Lovecraftian creatures called *Shadowgrave*) or offers enough adjustability to come up with ones. The approach on miniatures and terrain that the 28 style exhibits gives them the dark and sinister atmosphere that you also find in the Cthulhu Mythos.



01

This is one of infinite ways to create a narrative for your games. And while my definitions might sound like a restriction to some, others see them as a challenge to come up with new and exciting concepts and models, at the forefront the group that has formed under the #thealignment28 on Instagram.

May your games be exciting and lä! lä! Cthulhu fhtagn!



02

GIOVANNI DE POL

I started the DEAD MEAT project 17 years ago. It is an art factory where I am the art director and oversee the main projects.

I started buying GW miniatures more than a year ago. The first purchase was a couple of penitent engines. I struggled at first trying to understand how to build them but as soon as I'd completed them, the addiction began.

I met a professional painter named Lorenzo in Riccardo's GW shop. He helped me to learn the basics and assisted me throughout this long process.

My primary idea was to create some sort of Catholic relic and the aesthetic is a huge crossover of cultural influences: from samurai helmets to German XVI century armour, Catholic relics and south east tribal nuptial crowns.

As my inspiration grew, so did a narrative for the piece. I decided the crown would be like a movie prop and the character would be some sort of minister and judge. The heaviness of the crown would represent bearing the weight of human struggle, the social competition, the need to belong to some flag. I wanted to express something that felt universal, just as well known historical narratives such the *Talmud*, *New Testament*, *Quran*, *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, *The Divine Comedy*, *Star Wars*, *Lord of the Rings* and *Marvel* movies do; they tell the same timeless stories but use different metaphors.





Another perspective on the work has been that of Flemish orthopraxy. Jan van Eyck, a Flemish painter's adopted motto was *als ich can*, which means 'as best as I can'. It was Aristotle who said *ars imitatur naturam* or 'art imitates nature' and St Thomas of Aquinas who jumped in with some moral underwear adding to this observation aphorism *quantum potest* or 'as best as it can', meaning that human work can't reach God's work. But what was important to Flemish painters was the struggle, the tension, the mission.

From a final perspective I just turned into a child. The richness and complexity of the work obligates you to wander into chaos in search of new details and scenes. It's sort of a fractal. I work with shows and the fashion industry, so the crown was designed to be worn. I used over 5000 bits, probably closer to 10,000 including 100 original miniatures and 50 kitbashed creatures, everything from the very expensive world of GW!

The DEAD MEAT team who collaborated on this work has been: Giovanni Battista De Pol (me), Lorenzo Paltrinieri (who painted it with me), Francesco Scacchetti (the tailor) and Martina Bardelli (the model). I would like to thank 28 magazine, Ingrimmon, Totally Not Panicking, Witticism and many more grimdark artists who inspired my work, with a special thanks to Uollas_Uolsh because he let me into this world.





ETHICS AND LOGISTICS OF SURVIVAL

By Stuart Crewswell

Art by Christian Schwager



Renowned Mordheim aficionado Stu Crewswell takes a deep dive into Mordheim, exploring the various options and narrative possibilities available for veteran players. The material is based upon Mordheim, the Town Cryer collection, Border Town Burning and Stu's own research into the Warhammer lore.

Tonight we dine in Mordheim! This hobby article is more than a resource management menu. It is the quartermaster's guide to the delectable wealth of assets available when participating in narrative campaigns in the City of the Damned. Plunging dagger-first into the wealth of historical Mordheim articles will present succulent modelling choices. What follows is a deep overview of the playable rewards collected in campaigns by your warband. The game throws up many opportunities to treat your warband's stored equipment as if they represent holdings or assets and here we present a sampling of a modest few, served hotter than a halfling hot pot!

Managing Spoils

Basic resources in every Mordheim campaign will complement the personnel of your warband. Beyond hiring your warriors, there are gold crowns to bank or guilders if you find yourself using the currency of Marienburg. [Check out the *Mutiny In Marienburg* supplement for more on the largest and most prosperous

trading city in the Old World - *Volitare*]. The special currency in the City of the Damned is wyrdstone shards: burning stones known to scholars as *abn-i-khat* or warpstone, the stuff of Chaos. Income is hoarded to purchase equipment including weapons, armour and objects of interest. There are other possibilities to be explored in this study.

Stockpiling additional resources creates fun modelling opportunities, as special assets can be represented with painted miniatures.

Source Materials

Since the golden age of the Citadel Journal, the addition of special guidelines such as weather rules in Warhammer games has been a fascination for gamers! Middenheimers would say "*better to predict the outcome of a cock fight than foretell the foibles of the wild skies.*" The *Border Town Burning* supplement includes mechanics for simulating weather conditions in your battles so players can represent environments with scenery that tailors the table to their tastes.

You can also root out publications and player aids best themed to your miniatures collections and those of your enemies. They will help you to take inspiration as campaign organiser, to create player hand-outs, such as: newspapers, quartermasters' rationing

reports on stockpiled winter supplies, weather forecasts, tributes owed, projected sowing and harvesting returns and building and shipping manifests for imported victuals traded from thieving merchants and much more. These are a mere handful of suggestions for theme.

Town Cryers

Tuomas Pirinen created Mordheim. After lighting the beacon, he passed his burning torch on to the hobby community. What came next was a stunning series of articles published in a monthly magazine called *Town Cryer*. In total, it consists of twenty-nine issues expanding the scope of the Old World skirmish battles, whether it be through shopping for supplies, to summoning daemons or sending heroic warriors to visit special locations after battle. Eventually the creative spark burned low or it was snuffed out in 2003, a full four years after *Mordheim* was released.

Watchtower Bonfires

Border Town Burning is a fan-developed alternate setting for Mordheim where fledgling Chaos Champions attempt to rally marauding tribes and win the favour of the Chaos Gods in the Northern Wastes. It is more than just an alternative setting, as it offers improvements to the Mordheim game system itself, and introduces a new campaign system to further enhance the narrative elements of your games.

Their motivation was to improve the game by building on the foundation of its core rules.

A true campaign package of this kind consists of traditional adjustments like new equipment and rules specific to the setting. All are factors that affect the way your warband is managed.

Warbands have motives! By setting a series of objectives, the players can aspire to earn rewards. Achievements can be written by your campaign organiser with the players help or use ones from an existing supplement as a guide.

Information Currency

In the core Mordheim rules, warband ratings are calculated based on a selection of performance criteria recorded on your roster sheet. The warband roster collates all of the known information as a living record. Ratings are determined based on the number of warriors and number of experience points earned by your warriors plus any additional values for large models, mounts or draft animals.

Experience points serve as the currency of progress as warbands develop. Ratings help manage potentially unfair advantages since they have an impact on identifying handicaps when one side is recognised as an underdog. This makes them one of the most important resources of the game.

The *Border Town Burning* supplement uses the currency of campaign points to measure warband status, rewarding them with achievements along their path to overall victory. Campaign points represent progress being gained through information. Hierarchy of authority or virtue is more than just force of arms, it is power and knowledge combined.

Treasury Coffers

Treasures act as the replacement resource term for wyrdstone shards in most campaign supplements. There was initially a lot of it left lying around after the comet fell in Ostermark. Wyrdstone is not exclusive to Mordheim. Far from it, since mantle pieces all across the Moot display ornamental chunks of the rock gathered from Sylvania! Many smaller meteorites rained down upon that cursed land during the Great Plague.

Whether you prefer generic gems or piles of raw warpstone, the income system is unaffected.

The only difference is how your campaign manages corruption. 'Corrupted Characters' is a companion article published on the *Border Town Burning* campaign web page, which explains the consequences and suggests how to define safety levels of dangerous resources.

There are other jewels and valuables to be discovered in scenarios. Unless defined otherwise, you're looking at a fixed denomination of gold crowns or a standard unit of treasure.

The way treasures or shards are managed for gaining income is an interesting economic challenge. One might say it is the classic resource management puzzle of the core game.

A campaign article like '*Power in the Stones*' (published in *Town Cryer* issue #15) presents alternate uses for resources, such as wyrdstone. Heroes can choose to risk carrying shards as magic amulets instead of selling wyrdstone as income, adding layers of depth and suspense to decision making.

Imaginary Places

The Old World is an untamed atlas of cartographic nightmares. The Pit, Sigmar's Rock, the Mordheim docks, Cutthroat's Den, the Ostermark Marches, Marienburg, the World's Edge Mountains and lands beyond!

Warbands battle through the streets of cities and ruins of civilisations. In the post battle sequence the story takes on a life of its own. This is considered the most enjoyable part for players who enjoy roleplaying challenges.

After the stress of battle, what follows can be simple and relaxing or a challenging distraction such as shopping for equipment or pursuing the wider narrative.

Exploration is the first piece of the puzzle. The campaign setting dictates where your warriors end up and what they uncover. The dice usually decide outcomes here, unless players plan ahead by

purchasing special equipment to mitigate or manipulate results.

Income and character development needs administration. The exciting part involves the path of your heroic members. Heroes each get to take one dedicated action in the post-battle sequence.

The standard action is to shop, as explained in the core rulebook, however, not all players are searching for goods or seeking to hoard equipment. This is an important consideration when you are running a campaign. You need to keep them engaged to make the experience interesting for your friends and enemies. Heroes need alternatives. Offering a choice of actions plays a critical role in narrative play.

The Shadowlord, founder of Mordheim and chief designer Tuomas Pirinen himself recently shared his thoughts on introducing the new 'Rabble Rousing' guideline for warrior-priests and witch hunters which allows them to rally support on their next holy crusade. He remarked that he also had ambitions to expand the scope of decision making in the post-battle round.



Favoured post-battle alternatives that some players have found fulfilling include evaluating wyrdstone shards by visiting Alchemists and sending crippled or mutated warriors to an Apothecary to be fixed up.

Heroes can also be sent into the underbelly of nearby locations. Campaign material describing marketplaces and locales representing the underworld in settlements of the Old World, have been shared in the hobby community since Mordheim was published.

Weapons Racks

Items of equipment are used to kit warbands out. All of the gear purchased or acquired by other means needs to be carefully managed. Maintaining a warband's armoury is an essential aspect of maintaining a strong warband.

Possessions do not affect warband ratings. The more heavily invested a player is in a single character, the greater the risk. It is common to invest more heavily in leaders, as most are irreplaceable once a campaign begins.

Armour itself is among the most expensive commodities in the game.

The great variety of equipment items available has been broadened over the years. Supplements introduce magnificent manifests for players to pore over in search of crafting challenges and winning combinations.

Caravan Bodyguards

Hired Swords are neglected in campaign play. Look for ways to incentivise them. Since they possess custom skill sets or bring special talents, by hiring from 'Swords of the Empire' [A compilation of all of the Hired Swords available into one handy document created by the author of this article. You can find it on Liber Malefic, a Mordheim blog for all things related to Warhammer Fantasy, which the author has created and maintained over the last 15 years. It is a great resource, check it out - Volitare] the strategy of your warband can change. Outsiders keep things fresh. Evolve your warband with them.

Supply Trains

Armies are dependent on the assorted supply trains that trail in their wake. Hordes of ogres, greenskins and beastmen can ritually consume the flesh of human, elf, dwarf and kin alike and ghouls, trolls and wolves are carrion-eaters feasting off corpse meat but without a subsidiary of cooks and victuallers to provide for them, along with the requisite cookware and provisions, any force of human soldiers exists forever on the brink of starvation.

Most warbands, unlike most armies, can afford to forage for food.

Rationing Provisions

A concept introduced in the *Border Town Burning* supplement allows warriors to supplement travel rations by collecting provisions or victuals. A similar process applies in the *Ogre Maneaters* warband list, except warriors can choose to consume stragglers, captives and even fellow warband members!

Such concepts move a *Mordheim* experience beyond the simple framework of its core rulebook.

Mercy Duties

Mercy killing after battle is an ideal example of a

concept to consider in narrative gameplay. An illegal activity by any stretch for most civilised warbands. Normal behaviour among barbarians.

A great quote I came across exploring Mordheim literature and lore explains this perfectly and was attributed to a humble miller of Hochland. [*Hochlanders have a notorious reputation in the business of banditry!* - Volitare]: "When you put an enemy to flight, he doesn't usually have time to go collecting up his wounded – even if he has a mind to. Most of them get left on the battlefield. Now, when you're fighting civilised men, it's not too much of a problem. You leave those with mortal wounds to die, and the rest become your prisoners. But, when you're fighting orcs, or beastmen or marauders, matters are different. Wounded or not, they'll cut your throat given the chance, and neither side takes prisoners. So you finish them. In the lull between attacks, you send your men on mercy duty. They don't mess around trying to sort the wounded from the dead. They just take a weapon and stick each body in the head or heart, to make sure the job's done right." Next time pity stays your hand, heed the words of this retired soldier.

Playing to the lore is widely considered by veterans to be more rewarding than playing any other way. The quality of your campaign experience will be vastly improved by developing the roleplaying skills of your group.

Hosting Hostages

The framework of the basic game rules introduce non-player characters in the form of stragglers. Warriors or not, these prisoners being collected by the 'host' warband can be considered another resource, even though they cannot fight.

Similar situations can occur when warriors from another warband are taken captive. Everything from man-catchers to bounty hunters as Hired Swords exist in popular articles to embellish themes of body snatchers taking hostages.

Hostages form excellent objectives in scenario-based play. The use of objective markers can be epitomised by the use of hostages. What better to fight over than defending the honour of a chaste maiden or attacking an enemy hideout to liberate a captured brother!

If you prefer your hostage markers to be aesthetically appealing, then you can try



repurposing those old Citadel Villagers & Townsfolk miniatures. Goose girls fit into market-based scenarios as well as butchers boys. There is always a chance the mayor or a town crier might turn up! Dust off classics from the collection or custom kit-bash something special.

Ritual Sacrifices

Gorbad Ironclaw [*the infamous hulking Orc leader of the most notorious of tribes, the Ironclaw Tribe - Volitare*] sacrificed an entire royal family to the orc gods in the devastation of Solland. Slain or held hostage, they were as good as dead upon capture!

In the Old World there are wicked applications for captives. Stragglers and captured warriors need to be dealt with as seems appropriate by their captors. The framework of narrative campaigns deals with hostage objectives by turning them into a story.

Play with ethics. The main thing to consider is not to think tactically. Work out what the ethical choice would be for the culture of your chosen warband. Once your moral compass has been established, additional decisions will become fluid. Then consider the kind of deals you would like to see brokered.

Daemon summonings require mortal sacrifice, for example. Tales are told of villages destroyed by ceremonies gone wrong and blasted ruins decorated with the inhabitants' corpses. *'Dark Rituals of the Chaos Gods'* (published in *Town Cryer* issue #14) details requirements for recreating such events.

Captives can be treated as a resource to be sacrificed for the gain of your warband. If there is no obvious use for one, they can be returned for ransom or detained as a hostage until they become useful. Keep a note of everything on the warband roster.

Cadaverous Fetishes

What those gaunt trollops from Lahmia get up to in their spare time is none of your business. Unless you collect Undead warbands of course! Disturbing crypts with sarcophagi and effigies in dark places stacked with rotten grave goods can unleash old secrets and gewgaws kept hidden or buried underground

Cargo Shipments

Cargo can consist of any items you can dream

up! A list could include furniture and freight such as crates, chests, barrels, coffin caskets, provisions, sacks of booty, wheelbarrows, ladders, iron crowbars and other tools. The legality of certain equipment types is questionable. Categorising contraband items such as a keg of Bretonnia brandy that may be subject to import duties, or a barrel used for human trafficking will raise more alarm bells and raise the stakes.

Explosive Firearms

Pistols, handguns and rifles are commonplace on battlefields of the Old World. The availability of blackpowder firearms in Mordheim is limited based on the time period and conditions for using firearms changes with the setting. Their availability is based on the time period. Their legality may mean unlicensed usage is subject to penalties for handling contraband. Other campaigns are not so rigid about the calendar, meaning most players won't treat flintlocks as experimental technology.

Supplements have already expanded the range of explosive devices and artillery to the point where guns can be considered normal. Advanced rules for blackpowder misfires are optional. Use them and let the dice decide if you prefer.

Special ammunition is exhausted after a single battle when used. The design intention of projectile combustibles is also based on single use. One spark is all it takes to ignite a keg of blackpowder!

Similar principals can apply to managing resources which would be spent after one use. A set of throwing knives can be used every round whereas a projectile weapon like a javelin is unlikely to be hurled more than once during a battle. These missiles are easily recovered after each battle.

Torches require wrapping before soaking. Brazier irons need only fuel for longevity. While flaming brands would be considered finite, an iron sconce, brazier or lantern is not

considered disposable.

Smoke bombs are prepared using alembics. Flaming arrows need fletching. Any such preparations cannot be assumed as being undertaken by your warriors as crafting skills are required. These items are single use only.

Setting fires with explosives or torches is not covered in the basic rules. Border Town Burning collated some of the best guidelines published. Fire rules are advanced or optional. Witch hunters wish folk to be set on fire with certainty.

Narcotic Caches

Potions and booze as contraband cargo may be subject to special conditions in campaigns. Unlike healing herbs, other naturally occurring ingredients can have harmful effects. Herbalists can tell the difference so, in practice, restrictions need not apply to hazardous items acquired from a reliable source! Players should feel free to discuss what local embargos to set on the licensing of hazardous substances.



Prescriptions and liquors are subject to a number of doses. Unless otherwise stated assume any drugs, poisons and alcohols are one use only.

Tainted Goods

Wyrdstone shards, stones of power evaluated by alchemists or items containing warpstone are contaminated by Chaos. All are considered tainted. Not only will these goods expose warriors in your warband to the mutating effects of warp-touch, they attract the ire of the witch hunters, as well.

Antique Tomes

Books of antiquity contain advanced knowledge. Heroes can read and since not all books are tomes of magic, a spellcaster may not be required to interpret their meaning. Spell books containing magical lore are arcane items. Any profane texts will be considered tainted. Some even speak through the bearer! Rituals of Chaos and spells of sorcery, prayers of protection, litanies of warding and blessings of the gods come in many forms. Academic skills are required to become engineers of the

arcane or divine. Prayers and spells are not so different. Books contain the secret symbols of both.

Recovering Artefacts

Magic arcana goes beyond rare books of lore and summoning supplies used to cast rituals. Artefacts are major objectives best tied to your campaign story through special scenarios and challenging exploration results. Greater artefacts can be visually tracked along their journey. Use campaign markers for enchanted items, divine reliquaries and antique heirlooms. All it takes is the sight of a flying carpet or a mystical blade to set warbands at one another's throats.

Handling Livestock

Animal husbandry may not be the most exciting theme to some players. The popularity of farming games in the tabletop hobby industry would suggest otherwise! Livestock management in the Old World is simulated using the animal handling skills published in the Empire in Flames supplement. Wilderness campaigns feature ideal breeding conditions for any warband leader with the ambition to complete a stable restoration.

War dogs make ideal bodyguards. They require no upkeep or weapons, leaving more gold crowns to spend on equipping heroic masters. They can distract enemies while warriors fulfil objectives. Animals do not gain experience, meaning your warband rating does not become bloated.

Exotic pets and great beasts are featured in most supplements, offering more fantastic opportunities to collect and paint unusual Citadel miniatures.

Transporting Wares

Supply wagons and merchant barges are ideal for moving cargo objective markers around the table. Chests can be used as strongboxes to hold hazardous items or keep them out of sight. Cargo is cumbersome. It can be more easily manoeuvred in wheelbarrows and rowboats or loaded on a cart.

Using vehicles provides plenty of modelling

opportunities. The original Mordheim stagecoach mini is gorgeous. You can assemble kits or build from scratch and make upgrades. Try your hand at customising harnessed beasts of burden or mounted artillery pieces as the subject of special scenarios in circumstances that require boats or wagons.

Guidelines for trade in the core rulebook are limited. Prisoner exchange situations are fairly common. Equipment can always be sold back to the house, at half book value.

One of the highlights of *Border Town Burning* is the Merchants Caravan warband rules. Having a player take up the mantle of trader opens up a lot of strong narrative.

Pitfalls of transportation become more obvious after the wheels start rolling. Wagons are not indestructible and the wheels can fall off. Guidelines published in *Empire of Flames* receive unfair criticism. Players crave total control. When something goes wrong there are tears. The great thing about these rules is they expose how there are fundamental flaws in using these machines when they go out of control.

The risks keep wagons interesting. Seeking ways to react to or mitigate losing control is where tactical skill of tabletop gamers is tested. Coachmen hired swords in *Border Town Burning* campaigns nullify some of the risky effects of wagon racing. Heroes can become skilled in coach driving and wagon repair, learning the new skills of Handyman and Driver. Guard your highway convoy and learn when to sound a retreat.

Veterans observe a gap in the rules about what happens when a cart goes out of action. If total loss or destruction lacks flavour then refer to the Vehicle Permanent Damage Table D66 chart in *GorkaMorka*.

Introducing merchants in campaigns elaborates trade conditions to allow resource exchanges between players. It is fun when this is being managed by a player who naturally fits into the role of brokering deals between other warbands as the middle man. Interactions can turn nasty when two or more warbands acquire enough opulence to launch a commercial enterprise. The good news is brokers wrestling for control may drive market prices down on the item you seek.



Mastering Hazards

Hazard markers are used to represent traps, beasts, stragglers and wandering monsters. Donkeys loaded with saddlebags of wyrdstone plus a powder keg always come in handy! Collecting and preparing hazards is useful in campaigns. Especially when going underground in a Mordheim-Quest exploring dungeons and sewers. Non-player characters encountered might be convinced to ally with your warband.

Random happenings and exploration rolls can result in encounters with foes or followers. These benefit from being represented with Citadel miniatures on the tabletop.

Nurturing Allies

Treat everything that happens as a touchstone. Interact with tabletop surroundings by interpreting even the terrain models as a living opportunity.

What you will encounter now presents roleplaying decisions. Buildings and ruins could be encampments or hideouts. Miniatures representing random events are no longer happening at random, since they represent a defining moment in the story instead. Are they enemies, rivals or allies?

Allies is an old campaign concept in Warhammer. *The Border Town Burning* supplement provides a basic framework for non-player character (NPC) models to interact with warbands. They can still be slain but what if they fight for the same cause? Special scenarios may include NPC models in addition to random encounters. *Border Town Burning* uses an Alignment Chart to determine the hostility for any creatures and warriors faced. You may like to apply modifiers to rolls or prefer to predetermine alignments in some cases.

Allied non-player models convinced by the warband leader to join with a successful Leadership test can be added to the roster. They could be Hired Swords or Henchmen. In some cases neither apply, meaning they join as an Ally. The same guidelines can be applied to animals, (except beasts) under the conditions of 'May be Allied' without requiring a Leadership test after the battle.

Since recruited Allies don't belong to the warband they do not count towards the maximum number of warriors in the warband and don't affect income. Their loose association

means Allies cannot be re-equipped or stripped of their starting gear. The disadvantages of this is that no experience is earned and they add +25 on your rating.

Allies are passing through, unless they make a pact with the leader. Retainers are a different concept in *Border Town Burning* campaigns using gnoblar fighters to serve alongside masters. These sidekicks being 'Largely Insignificant' have no negative impact on ratings yet present no useful bearing on warband size for rout tests. See also Halfling valets as manservants for Mutiny in Marienburg campaigns or alternatively Pygmy porters on adventures set in Lustria: Cities of Gold.

'Blood Pacts' are another nice way to provide Hired Swords an incentive in your campaign. A simple dice roll is required after every battle to check if the mercenary has thrown in his lot with your band. Upkeep is now covered, under the income rules.

Bolstering the warband ranks with dark magic adds some spice. Warlocks, shamans and sorcerers temporarily summoning daemons. Necromancers raise additional undead warriors or manipulate the 'Corpse Geometries' to wrestle control of NPC creatures of Old Night in graveyard scenarios. Sometimes all it takes is a Leadership test.

When special personalities are introduced in campaigns, make sure they join your team! Dramatis Personae represent incredible characters who can stretch the limits of narrative using powerful advantages, shifted as temporary gains.

Claiming Shelters

If anything is worth using to accurately represent the pulsating black light of *abn-i-khat* then I am yet to collect it. Since a mere touch of a stone shard is corrupting enough to send its bearers down a rat-hole of hellish mutation, it is best to assume the stuff is secured in a portable strongbox or wrapped and strapped to a donkey! If only your gang had a cosy den to stash all their bounty...

Named locations secured by warbands represent the footholds they gain in your campaign. Advantages of fighting over a map are that districts can be used to represent these benefits.

Visiting encampments controlled by enemy warbands will result in battles to contest the location. Playing Scenario 9: Surprise Attack will traditionally determine the outcome. Fortifying bases requires more effective management of your warband. Old mills or dilapidated towers found abandoned, later become high stake resources to dispute in their own right.

Crumbled ruins provide adequate shelter. Building a hideout from scratch takes too long when foundations have already been left behind. Restoration of a trading post or squatting in a derelict manse provides Mordheim fans with terrain building opportunities and refuge for their warbands.

Residual advantages or variable powers can apply using special rules agreed between the players and campaign organiser. There are all kinds of possibilities to spice up campaigns. Consider how using the map of Mordheim or another city will improve the series of battles being fought.

In dilapidated urban landscapes, life is cheap and hunger is king in the slums. Hope is beaten out by desperation. It means nothing to find a corpse slumped in a gutter.

The best fight scenes take place in a ruined city like Mordheim or a maze of shanties, ridden with squalor. Lawless holes like Knife Alley in Marienburg. Hastily erected hovels so much beyond poor housing. Here is where our warbands will seek shelter and claim refuges. Hiding out in the dilapidations or beneath them.

Everywhere in Mordheim is as ruined and lifeless as the last. Yet here we stay, for this ruin is ours.

COVEN: THE DARK FANTASY GAME

Interview By Trey Geer
Art By John Wigley

Coven: The Dark Fantasy Game is a table-top skirmish game heavily influenced by Eastern European myths and folklore; complete with its own range of original miniatures. The game has players take the role of "Ved'ma"; sinister supernatural creatures that control warbands of dark monsters to battle with rival Ved'ma for ultimate supremacy.

Trey Greer spoke to members of the creative team behind the game to find out more about their process and experiences of the project. The team behind Coven includes: John Wigley (illustrator and concept artist), Chris Bone (background story and writer of fluff), Andy Hobday (rules of the game), and Mark Farr of Footsore Miniatures & Games (maker of the miniatures).

Q. Andy, you talk about how you started gaming as a kid with The Warlock of Firetop Mountain. Are there standout or cinematic moments from back then? And then are you trying to evoke those sorts of moments with Coven?

ANDY HOBDAY: For me, if we're looking at it in what we're trying to do with Coven, it's the atmosphere and setting more than anything else. *Warlock of Firetop Mountain* drew you in and it was very claustrophobic. You got lost in the maze.

Q. John, in your last 28 interview, you mentioned that you did not have formal training, that you felt "GW triggered something in you" that drove you to make and produce work with the company. Is that demon GW triggered in you still driving your work on Coven? If not what took its place?

JOHN WIGLEY: So I got into illustration quite late. I was 24 years old when I first started sending work off to John Blanche. I was 26 by the time I got a job at Games Workshop. It was Games Workshop that released all these creative urges inside me. Without Games Workshop I probably would never have done it.

Q. You have all worked with GW. How does that history help your work on Coven? What are you glad to leave behind in your new efforts?

JW: There are loads of things I'm happy to leave behind, but it's a great setting for artists. It's a great foundation. It kinda sets you up.

AH: At the time, there was nothing really like it. Chris was there a few years before me. What it's like now is nothing like what it was. It's like chalk and cheese. A lot of good came out of it. My oldest friends are people I've met at Games Workshop.

CHRIS BONE: I joined in 1990. I was always a fan of military history, also science fiction and science fantasy. I was brought up on *Conan*, Fritz Leiber and *Lord of the Rings*. I was in awe of the artists. And I ended up sharing a house with the likes of Paul Bonner, Mike McVey and Wayne England, so you know, we had a bit of a motley crew. I could watch them work. And when we were allowed to go into the studio, I would occasionally mooch around and see your good self, Mr. Wigley.

Q. Can you walk us through how Coven got started?

JW: Andy came by to commission me to do some samurai. I was keen and excited to do these samurai illustrations. I was showing him around the studio and showed him some pen and ink drawings of various different witches. He thought we could make a cool game out of this and that was it really - two and a half years later [laughing].

AH: John was like, look at this, look at this, look at this! Showing me bits and pieces. Just pulling them out of everywhere. He had loads of these. I was like, this is a game. This has to be a game. That was the catalyst.

JW: I never did get to do samurai!

CB: He was doing witches for Inktober. I

remember thinking these need to be in a book. We both watched a show called *Salem* (2014).

JW: *Salem* got me thinking of doing witches for Inktober. The witches in Salem are amazing.

Q. But the setting is not New England?

JW: What was the name of that book?

CB: I think it was a book by Gogol.

JW: No, no, no not that one. A Polish movie about the Winged Hussars (*Day of the Siege* (2012)). This film is just full of brilliant looking Polish Winged Hussars and guys with big mustaches, just amazing imagery. And I got to thinking I should do something based on this.

Q. It seems that there are elements of Folk Horror in there too.

JW: I never really thought of it that way, but yeah that's in there too.

CB: The fiction around the book is very influenced by Grimm's fairy tales and things like Van Helsing. It's the gothic, Eastern European flavour.

AH: We're trying to tell a tale. It's like a dark storybook. Chris and John are adding all these evocative elements from Eastern European folklore and history, but it's not directly transcribed from there. It's people situated in the setting telling tales that the militia is based in. The fiction for the game is told as it is in today's nursery rhymes, songs and village stories to scare children to keep them out of the woods. It's that kind of fear in the setting that we're trying to get across.

Q. Do you have any occult practices that you're pulling from?

CB: Well, I'm the grandmaster [everyone laughs]. Just cleaned my hands after a pretty blood sacrifice I did in the green room.





JW: Show them the 666 tattoo on the back of your neck. And the pentagram on your bum.

CB: So no not really. I think we just like the macabre.

Q. You have all these really evocative elements - Chris's fiction and John's drawings. And the game started from drawings. How do you translate drawings into a game?

AH: Obviously those bring the setting. It's picking where these witches, the Ved'ma, fit in the game that allows you to construct your factions or your forces. You pick a Ved'ma and they lead your faction. From there, we can construct around that. I'm not going to say warband or a coven, because that would just be witches, but we're looking at 12, 15, 18 miniatures. You can create the mechanics from there.

In the game there are 13 witches, but one has gone missing. So there are 12 remaining, all heads of their own faction, fighting to be head witch. Then there are the villagers who live there. So now we know it's a small-miniature-count, faction-based game with the leaders being the focus. But we also want it to be a campaign setting, because if you look at John's art and Chris's words, they just lead to a narrative-driven game.

Q. Why does Coven need to be a mini game and not another medium like a theatre-of-the-mind RPG? And can you speak a little to why you picked a narrative game?

AH: It's more of the type of game that we wanted to create. We come from that background. We like miniature games. So being able to create miniatures is a key part of it. It was more about what game we want to make first. We're not just creating a skirmish game. We're creating a setting. We could create a roleplaying game. We could create a card game. It's what we wanted to make first.

Q. John, have the mechanics influenced your work at all? Or are you just running with the same thread?

JW: I'm just doing what I'm doing. I guess they've put mechanics around my artwork, as opposed to the other way around.

AH: I would like to release all of John's artwork at once, but we really can't do that. So we narrowed the release down to the witches, what I'm calling "the dark nasties" (they won't be called that in the game) and the villagers. So we've really narrowed down toward those, which is beginning to shape what the first releases will be.

CB: For the prose and the passages that go with it, when I'm describing some capability or attacks these things can do. Yeah, that could get translated into the game.

AH: And when we're playtesting, we can pull in those abilities or the spells to match as Chris writes about them. It's all kinda circular.

CB: John drew a witch with a crow's head and I thought she could control things like flocks of vicious crows or ravens, things like that.

AH: And so with the background of the crow-headed witch that can control crows, we introduced swarm mechanics. So it becomes reflected in the mechanics.

Q. It's great to see how your inputs feedback on each other and create a system of positive growth for the setting, starting from the seed of John's work and then riffing on each other to create this whole universe.

CB: It is a melting pot of creative brains.

Q. John, can you speak a little bit to your process? Like how you started these images? Are you using reference materials? How do you take a crow with a goblin for a head and make it look like it's in the same universe as a tree that is also a troll?

JW: You think there would be a really easy answer for that, but I find that really difficult to answer. Especially when it comes to designing monsters, because ideas are never easy. It's always a struggle. There's no one place you get it from. Most of the time it's the middle of the night and you hope you can remember it. For humans it's easier, that general Slavic 15-16th century look you know, that's fairly straight forward really. There's no real set down process or methods during the rest of it. I have a list of creatures I want to do and I read some background on them. I don't want to copy what I read - some can be quite harmless really. Give

you pimples or sour your milk.

Q. Do you ever create digital art?

JW: I did for a long time actually. I hated it. I haven't touched it for years now and I don't think I'll touch it again.

Q. I feel like the pencil with watercolour or gouache really feeds into Coven's aesthetic.

JW: I mainly work in watercolour and acrylic gouache. I don't understand why anyone works in digital. Don't get me wrong. There are remarkably fantastic digital artists. The best artists out there are digital artists, brilliant, absolutely brilliant. But it was depressing for me. I wish I found that out before I bought a £2,000 Wacom tablet.

Q. Do you feel like there's a void in gaming that Coven is filling? Something that Coven is specifically providing?

AH: When I'm working on projects, I don't think, oh, this will sell loads or this will solve a problem. I create and work on stuff that I enjoy. You could say it's a bit selfish, really. I create games I want to play. You can feel that when it's done, you know, when you put something into it.

However, as an adult fantasy game, it's going to be slightly different. We want to tell a story with it. We're not going to revolutionize the gaming world, like the way GW did with 40K. If we do, that's great, but 40K took 30 years. The original 40K, *Rogue Trader*, has pictures of Space Marines in the pub. It would never be that now. So Coven will evolve.

It will be a success if it strikes a chord with people and people invest time playing it. But I'm not doing this to fill a particular niche. I want to deliver a great game with great artwork and great history and great background.

CB: We all have high expectations for what we want to see in a miniature game, you know, high standards. Fun to play, you know, you don't want to get bogged down. You want a good playable game.

AH: Also great miniatures. We have great artwork. We need to translate that into great miniatures. And if we don't do that, then I think





we're dead in the water. People look for great miniatures first. Great art draws them. Great figures draw them in. And I'd hate to say this, but I think a great game comes third. That's the truth of it. The game will keep them there, however.

We want to create something that is easy to get involved in and play, but also has depth. There's collecting the miniatures, there's talking about the games and the armies, and then there's playing the game. There's those three things. You know you think that gaming was a major part of it, but it's not true. People prefer to talk about a game more than play the game.

If we can give them a great setting, great art, great miniatures, hopefully they'll play the game. So yeah, those are the drivers.

Q. 28 has a strong following of players interested in the DIY/kitbash side of the hobby. Players making their own versions of minis, carving out their own parts of a setting, building from scratch. Will you encourage that with Coven? If so, how?

AH: Massively! It is directly within the game. What we've done is very character-driven. The 12 witches will be named. They'll all be characters that all have rules, but we've also created a kind of character builder within the game as well. You can create your own witches if you want. You can create your own priest, your own village headman. You can take what's there or you can build your own. It's important. When you're doing a skirmish game, some people want it served on a plate. Some people want to create the whole force they bring to the table themselves. Some people can be sculpting them, some can be digitally printing them these days. I can convert them. It could be mixing things in.

We will be providing a setting. We will be providing miniatures. But there'll also be scope for people to explore the Coven world themselves.

Q. How do players extend their narrative experience beyond the individual session?

AH: They can summon creatures. They will get more powerful, but also more dangerous. Some creatures will carry over from game to game. A village will recruit someone passing through, but it's that heroic-leader character

that you're building.

The other way is the scenarios will link. They're all objective driven. By capturing terrain on the table, that will carry over to other scenarios. It's all of those things. It's a moving feast of how to play the game.

The spells are all abilities. The priest will bring their faith, which can be used as abilities. The wise woman from the village will have different abilities and the blacksmith creates sigils and wards. Their stats do go up and down as well, if you want, you know, but I think that's quite a crass way. But it's more about developing abilities.

Q. Fear is a very interesting emotion to evoke. How do you approach that?

AH: The biggest challenge is translating the terror and the fear that is created from the world that John and Chris are creating with their art and their words, into the game. Otherwise it's just going to be another tabletop skirmish game. So that's big; that's the big challenge.

Obviously the miniatures will do this on the tabletop. We will create the look and feel so that when you walk past the table, you will know it's a game of Coven. Within the rules, we have a "fear-o-meter" (not the final name). It works for both sides. As well as trying to control objectives and kill your opponents characters, you're also trying to control their sense of fear and foreboding. As that slides one way or the other, it affects your opponent's ability to perform actions.

Q. Chris, do you have a specific approach to evoking horror when it comes to writing the flavour text?

CB: I just looked back to various influences, whether they be literary, from cinema or old legends and things like that. The names I try to base on either Ukraine and Russia, or Slavic central European. So there might be elements. There might be words in there, which I may or may not have inserted into Google translate and make me a little portmanteau here and there.

I suppose it's a bit like directing a film or something - you've got it in your head and then you just get it down on paper. So I look at John's

pictures and I go, how does he sleep at night? Then what's the beastie's motivation? Are they operating in a howling blizzard? Where's their lair? Is it up a cliff face? And that helps me populate the map.

I'm thinking back to Grimm's fairy tales mixed in with witch hunters. It's a big melting pot really. What's really horrible. Yes. Oh, that's horrible. Yes. It also helps that I too, like John, am a fairly sick-and-twisted individual at heart.

Q. How does being a sick-and-twisted individual manifest?

JW: Chris likes to speak for me. Chris is speaking for himself. Yeah, I'm just a mild-mannered artist. At the end of the day, this is just fun for me. I found something that I really enjoy doing and got a great deal of freedom to do it. And it's the perfect artists' job really. I just like drawing monsters and creatures and nasty things.







ARTIST FOCUS // MARK GIBSON

MARK GIBSON



I was first introduced to the Warhammer 40,000 universe around thirty years ago. I was drawn to the amazing artwork that decorated the inside and out of the early White Dwarf publications. The black and white illustrations which I found inside the issues are still some of my favorites and continue to inspire my own drawings. As talented as the colour realism art of the current artists are, I prefer the grim dark grittiness (and some personal nostalgia) that comes with the black and white art.

My usual day to day trade is tattooing; I've been a custom tattoo artist for around sixteen years now providing one off designs and tattoos to each individual client. I've been incredibly lucky to provide for my family whilst doing something I love for a living. I draw 30K and 40K in my spare time, though I'm lucky if I get any between work and family! I still haven't tattooed a 40K piece on anyone yet... that would be a real treat. Illustrations and miniatures alike provide a welcome break from the high pressure of tattooing. I can do what I like with it, without worrying about a client's expectations.

When I start a new drawing, I begin with a physical miniature and spend some time playing with angles and composition. Photographs are then taken and used for reference, a little like still life drawing. Once I'm settled on a pose I begin sketching and building details. The final step is digitally drawn using several layers to build atmosphere, depth and lighting. I may dive back into the illustration several times making adjustments. I find a fresh pair of eyes the day after will help see parts you would miss whilst in the midst of the creative process. Sleeping on a project and taking another look at least one day after is a great way to work towards a final piece you're happy with and will help point out mistakes or areas that need adjustments.

The hobby has changed a lot for me over the years; I started playing games as a teenager but as the years have gone on I find I prefer the creative side of the process. It would be nice to play another game at some stage though! I read a lot of lore, whether it be official novels or individual created content and enjoy immersing myself in the grim dark future immensely. No other fictional universe comes close in my opinion to the scope, and the limitless potential for creativity and imagination. The genre-spanning setting is perfect for me.







TO KITBASH OR COMPLETE?



By Sinan Atamer

The delicate balancing act between converting and finishing armies

There is an itch that gets some of us when we see a new release. What can I do with this? How can I adapt this miniature? We take the sprues, move them around, sometimes turn them upside down, cut them apart and put them back together. This is not something that is required for the game, as it can lead to unplayable miniatures, but it is a need, a drive for many of us.

After my first army of High Elves back in 1998 or so, I realised the miniatures were quite limited, and apart from the painting aspect, most of them looked very similar. These limitations were what seeded my eventual desire to start converting, even if I did not realise it at the time.

My second project was Space Wolves, where I learnt to use greenstuff, and it dawned on me that I could use other pieces from kits like the Chaos Space Marines to create fun and unique units. This was around the release of the Eye of Terror campaign codex for the 3rd edition of Warhammer 40,000. It was an amazing

book with four different army lists, including the beloved Lost and the Damned and the 13th Company Space Wolves. This book really helped show me the scope of possibilities available to me when building an army and I had an epiphany. "Hold on, I can really make unique and weird stuff!".

After getting over the initial wrongness of breaking a miniature apart to make something that is personal, unique and interesting, we delve into the world of converting. And while converting miniatures can be freeing and rewarding, it can come with its own downfalls. How far will you take things? Will you convert every miniature in your warband? If you are converting every miniature, will you be able to finish a whole army or burn out half way through?

As with any project, it is good to have goals and set limitations for yourself. It is too easy to get excited by the newest GW release and continue to buy more models until you find yourself surrounded by stacks of unopened boxes. Having scores of unassembled models makes me self conscious about my productivity and





kills my drive. To harness my productivity, I have to create a system or otherwise things would get out of control. Systems are always hard for artists. It is a delicate balance of constraining yourself and letting your imagination flow freely. I can use my latest Iron Warriors project as an example here. The following is a list of goals I set for myself:

- Keep it around 1000pts
- Keep it under £100
- Paint as I build. No hordes of grey miniatures on my table
- Convert every single miniature

I wanted to keep it under 1000 points as it is a nice size for playing a few games. I am more of a painter, so I knew my interest would go elsewhere at some point. There is no need to risk buying too much at the start of a project, as you can always come back later. I wanted to keep it under £100, as I am a married man with a new baby. The act of painting miniatures, individually as they get built, is a personal touch. Some people prefer batch painting and it works for them. I tried in threes, fives and tens, but I ended up rushing through steps to

get things done and lost interest.

Painting individual miniatures is slower, but I get the satisfaction of finishing a miniature before moving on to the next one. It should be noted that if I were building a horde army, like Tyranids, I would probably be forced to batch paint due to the high model count. I also try to give myself a carrot on a stick by setting up rules like "I can make a character after I finish five troops". This keeps the flame burning. With the restriction being the two boxes I had (Start Collecting! Chaos Space Marines and Havocs) and my trusty bitsbox, I made an army list and started sketching some plans.

It is always beneficial to have people around who will critique your work. I cannot emphasise how important this is, as their critique can often be what pushes you outside your comfort zone. The biggest challenges for the Iron Warriors project were the two characters and the Venomcrawler, which I turned into a Forgefiend. There was a lot of back and forth between my support group and they were difficult beasts to tackle. By the end of the building process, I converted every single



mini in those boxes. Did I need to? What was the reason and point? Would I have done this if there was no game system or a chance to play with them against friends at some point? Would I be able to finish the project if I did not establish rules for myself?

It is a balancing act, as if you have a crazy creative monkey inside you that wants to pounce at every idea and tackle ten projects at once. From my experience, being smart about it and approaching things with a plan gets things finished. We all love converting stuff and showing them off, be it for feeding our ego, competing with other artists online or just to push ourselves. Or even saying to the manufacturer, "Hold on, I see what you did there, but I can make it better".

We all embrace the stories and the hobby in our own personal way, and make it our own. Having the wisdom of knowing yourself and your limitations, while setting the crazy monkey free from time to time, does the trick for me.



OCCURRENCES IN THE VILLAGE OF FORD

By Graig Russell-Goto

I must make this known — must have it out of me. How else may I find silence?

Here it is then. Not for the investigation, but for my own soul.

Having travelled three nights north of the city to the village of Ford, I made myself known to the town elders. I prevailed upon them to afford me every access that is the entitlement of a representative of the Crown and Gavel. I found the settlement to be in a state of severe destitution, mired about in claggy quags and infertile morass. Also, I say with no undue judgement that a general air of languorousness seemed to cling to every wretched inhabitant, each glazed in an oily sweat and near-grey in their sickly pallor.

With no small exertion on my part I was furnished with a private room, wherein all apposite individuals would come singly and relate the occurrences that culminated in that fateful night in which three men lost their lives and one his mind.

These are the facts as best they can be gleaned from townfolks' maundering; one month prior to the occurrence a stranger arrived on foot in the early evening. The grim fancies of hindsight ascribed to the individual sundry malign attributes, but none of these accounts had the slightest congruence with any other, and they are to be ignored by any person of reason.

The newcomer, on entering the village's sole tavern, made clear his business; he wished to employ a small number of men to gather for him at a particular time and under stipulated conditions, the waters of a pool some half-day's trek from Ford. The time would be one month hence, and the conditions that the water be collected in the middle of the night, and only upon the arrival of a specific other at the lake. The stranger would not be pressed on the particulars of this figure's appearance, but made clear to his employees that the waters must be collected quickly, and surreptitiously, and departure made swiftly.

As is to be expected of this sort of dubious employment, only the lowest of the village's vagrants were attracted, whose names I here relate; Yann 'Beggar', alias Yann the Clubfoot; Snipe, the Tanner's Orphan; Olgett Black; and Amos 'Poacher'.

Each of the men were presented an intricately engraved glass phial to fill, and paid an undisclosed amount, with a promise of twice that again upon completion.

One more detail of events prior to the occurrence bears recording; the boy Snipe asked upon receipt of his binding-coin what, if any, would be their forfeit if the task was not completed. To this, it was said, the

stranger laughed deeply in his throat, and replied 'gods keep you, child'.

With no jail or asylum available, the sole survivor of that mission, Amos, was confined in the cellar of an abandoned house. Even amongst the reeking habitations of the miserable settlement the place was foul, and the cellar was flooded in ankle-deep and foetid water. What light there was passed meekly through a grated opening, so that at no point in our discourse could I fix the image of him clearly, but I dare say that scarcely a more miserable creature can ever have existed.

Here, I pledge on the honour of my name and occupation, is as accurate an account of the utterances of Amos Poacher as any man is capable of retailing. It is branded into my mind.

Shh! Quiet you stupid fool!

No. It's not come.

I'll tell you then, if only to keep my neck from the noose.

We was four of us set to getting there, where that dark one had said: the pool —

No! Back! Keep out the sound, damn you!

We had laid to set on it before sunfall. But that cripple Yann — we should've left the old invalid in the woods — so it was well into gloaming hour by when we saw it.

Just a pool, that's all, as a rich one like you'd have your pretty mare drink from.

He'd told us we'd not to be seen, so we moved off a ways and figured to take turns on watch, till the moon peak.

Olgett passed the first watch with nothing and sent poor Snipe after himself. A lad!

What are we! Damned and double-damned again for fools! Just an orphaned boy.

None of us was of a sleeping position, frozen in that clear winter night and turned up in the humours with the waiting of it — that old cripple Yann had it right when after some hours he treat us all to leave.

They say that old mad beggars have the sense for fate's tidings in them.

DAMN YOU, YANN, RUN YOU OLD CRIPPLE, RUN!

He come back, Snipe, some time later. I never see a boy with so little colour. His face! It's not fear when it's gone that far. It's deeper in your soul than fear.

"There's a lamp", he says, "in the woods coming from far side of the pool." This had us stir to our feet but not a man among us wanted to march them.

"And the waters," says poor small Snipe, "they's — alight."

We'd have laughed him back to his post, if we weren't looking into them eyes of his.

Black! Black in the ears of all men! Pulled from the dark place above and into the ears of all mankind!

[I must report here, though I understand if it is beyond belief, that the voice issued from the accused man was not his own, but of a character markedly distinct]

We go to it, and we see from some way off what Snipe meant.

Alight.

I've seen all the tricks the grey moonlight plays on your eyes. But I ain't never seen the like of the light in that pool. Have you ever seen waters that's alight with evil?

We didn't have time to think 'cause it was there already, with its lamp as Snipe had seen. I cannot tell you what I saw. I won't.

OUT OF MY EARS! OUT! I WILL NOT LIVE WITH IT! OUT!

It was like a whisper while we were still some way off from it.

Just a whisper.

Almost silence.

But on our bellies like damned worms we crept to the pool.

And the whisper grew. It grew. The whisper grows. *The whisper! The sound of blackness is in me! I have looked to the firmament and heard its siren song and it is the dirge of all mankind it is the sound that consumes it is the roar of endless night I have heard and it is the whisper it is the whisper it is...*

The whisper that screams.

[Here the man, who had again been using that other voice, stopped suddenly. He looked me in the eye, an awful pleading countenance come over his features, and in silence took he one of his ears in his hand. Amos then pulled, his face unflinching, I unable to move as though entranced by his stare. Amos pulled until he had removed the whole of his ear. Only when it was done did he break his gaze on me, and only then to stare mute at the thing in his hand. He looked up again to me, the blood pouring from the side of his head in pulsing rivulets, and continued, suddenly.]

OFF BOYS, GO! IT'S SIGHTED US! RUN! LEAVE THE BOTTLES, DAMN IT, RUN!

Where is Olgett? I had him in my sight just now? You poor fool, Yann, make the haste you can, you cripple — oh gods, no! Crumpled like scrap! His bones — gods no! Please! Save us!

My boy, Snipe, yes! You go! You have the wind at your back, you colt! Run, boy, ru— NO!

How is it up up he goes into the black night and there flensed in the sky you poor poor boy I hear his scream above the whisper I hear him pulled apart and feel the very blood of him rain on me — an orphan torn to shreds against the evil stars against the whisper drowned in black I hear his scream here —

Without forewarning Amos suddenly produced from his pocket a small glass phial, intricately engraved with what looked like a chart of the heavens. In the phial there, a liquid so strange I know not how to describe it. Like water, but — alight with the most wicked green iridescence I have seen.

I was transfixed.

I watched as the man, who still gushed blood from his wound, squeezed the phial till it shattered. The liquid now spilled out over his hand, staining it with its terrible effulgence. He dropped his torn ear into the mouldering pool in which we stood.

I know not how or why I was rendered immobile. Perhaps I am simply a coward.

He took the largest shard between thumb and index finger and looking into my eyes with an awful placidity, pushed the corner of the glass into one side of his neck. He pulled it then, in a continuous arc, until it came finally to a terminus at the other side.

That man stood opposite me, his eyes still fixed on mine, the blood cascading out of him.

Eventually he fell.

Eventually he died.

And then it came. That is when I first heard it. That terrible sound, so quiet, but so clear.

I hear it now still, a thousand leagues away from that cursed town, ever louder, ever closer.

I hear it at every moment.

It is the whisper.

It is the Whisper that Screams.

ARTIST FOCUS // HANS REITER

HANS REITER



Six year old me looked transfixed at one of Jimmy Cauty's iconic 1976 *Lord of the Rings* posters. You likely know the one, where Gandalf is standing with his hand on Frodo's shoulder, as they stand atop orc corpses, wearily looking at you while the light of dawn subtly reflects on the ring on the wizard's finger. That same poster's border is alive with orcs crawling out of a cave and up towards the Great Eye at the apex of the poster.

In 1990, standing in my best friend's basement where his father had hung said poster above his weight bench, I knew nothing about fantasy, counter-culture, Art Deco or medieval book illumination. But the image, coupled with the faint smell of stale sweat, made me sense a gateway to another world. I shivered...

A few years passed before I was playing Games Workshop games in the same room under the watchful eyes of Tolkien's heroes. The games that felt like a realisation of the potential promised in that 1976 poster.

Via detours, 'the hobby' has again and again become immersed in what I do. Today, I can very much enjoy it as a folk culture that actually feels like a lifeline, stretching from an ideologically (but definitely not aesthetically and politically) disillusioned 1970's counter-culture to the entrepreneurial and digital present. But maybe there's also something nostalgic at play here, a sense of melancholy and interest in something that pre-dates one's birth. Regardless, I love that I have met people from almost all walks of life through these games and their accompanying miniatures. The houses I visited, simply based on a shared fascination! I love sitting down, building, painting and sculpting, along with getting together to play, whether it's in a community centre or a musty basement.





01



02



03

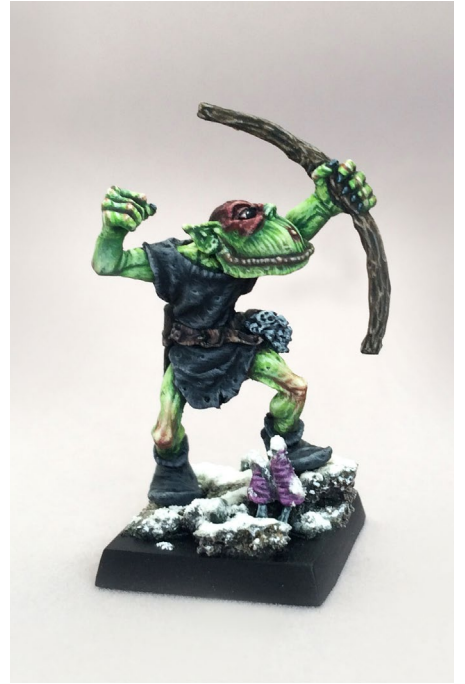


04

- Previous Snail by Kari Hernesniemi
- 01 Inquisitorial grunts
 - 02 House Guard of Khre
 - 03 Jean and Jens le Sleh, private guard of House Khre with advisor
 - 04 John Jeanne and Juan le Sleh, Neoaristocratic guard
 - 05 Rats
 - 06 Hungry orc
 - 07 Ding Dong the Pink Horror
 - 08 Dong the Blue Horror
 - 09 Croucher Cox
Mittelpfad, Demonologist



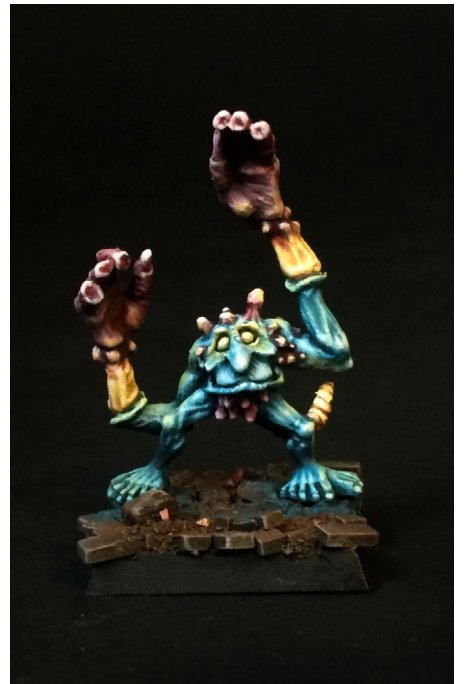
05



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08



09





At the appointed time we shall rise from our secret places

This is the last room. To get here, you have passed horrors that you did not know before. It is small, equipped only with a grotesque shimmering carpet. After the diabolical traps and bloodthirsty monstrosities that tested your abilities almost to the limit, you expected glory and treasures at the end of the labyrinth: incredible riches, worthy of the song and the battles you fought to get here. This torn carpet doesn't seem to contain much of value. Nor is it material for a hero's hymn; the intertwined grimaces are too disturbing.

But what is that sound? Muffled sounds leak through the shiny silk. And yes, there is a trap door hidden under the carpet. Without the subduing carpet the sounds flash into recognition. They're chanted words in call and response. A shiver runs down your spine.

A single voice calls out: "At the appointed time we shall rise from our secret places."

A congregation responds: "At the appointed time we shall rise from our secret places."

"Chaos will cover the land, and we, its chosen servants, shall be exalted in His eyes."

"Chaos will cover the land, and we, its chosen servants, shall be exalted in His eyes."

"Embrace your hunger! Your lust! Your desire!"

All voices shout in unison: "The world is ours for the taking!"

Your adventure is not at its end. Do you open the trap door and climb down deeper into the dungeon?

Print out the room with the hidden trapdoor and the secret cultist meeting room it leads to and glue them onto a piece of cardboard. The rooms are shown here with a square size of 1" x 1", you can reduce them slightly in your printer to fit your game material. When they are dry, carefully cut them out with a sharp modelling knife or scissors.

40K IS EPIC

By Paul Smith



40K is EPIC. The stories are far flung. The characters are larger than life. 40K itself allows us the chance to tell stories of epic battles on a scale that recognises the valour of individual heroes or squads, whilst still offering scope for a larger engagement.

Epic (and its current offspring, *Adeptus Titanicus*) pans out from this to bring the larger tools of war into focus, from whole battalions of infantry to tank companies and titan maniples. *Battlefleet Gothic* (*Space Fleet*, as I knew it) takes that fight up amongst the stars.

"But what if you were to tell a story across all of these? You could even write some RPG material to bring things down to a truly personal level...?"

Over much of the last decade, whenever I thought about getting back into the hobby, this was one of my fantasies: to tell an epic tale across multiple gaming platforms. Now I walk through the Grim Darkness once again and find myself asking: "What might this look like?"

Inspiration

There are so many sources of inspiration. For me, movies and television are an obvious choice. Visual media more than books, as it usually deals with a relatively compact time frame that transposes more easily to the hobby.

The opening of *Empire Strikes Back* immediately springs to mind. Covering the retreat of

valuable assets offers so much scope in terms of the different levels of play. An epic assault by the enemy, a daring retaliation on key assets at the 40K scale by the 'rebels' and espionage on the RPG front. All overseen by a sprawling naval confrontation across the local system.

The arrival of the Necromongers on Helion Prime in *Chronicles of Riddick* presents a similar spectacle, though here the focus is on subjugation rather than annihilation, which could make for some more nuanced objectives. *Chronicles* gets a lot of stick, but I've always liked its aesthetic (that, and the fact they managed to persuade Dame Judi Dench of all people to star alongside Vin Diesel. How...? Just how...?!). Also, two of the Lord Marshal's favourite words must (surely) have been Grim and Dark...

If you're up for something a little different, *300* poses an interesting possibility: pitting wildly outmatched forces against each other, but offering tactical advantage to one through terrain or situation.

With inspiration in hand, it's time to consider the narrative of your campaign.

Overview

For me, the way to approach this is the same way you'd use any work of art (art, after all, being at the heart of our hobby). Flesh out the general form, then focus in on the detail. By necessity, some of this initial section will be informed by which armies you plan to use and what the relationship between those two forces is like.

Do some lore research and think about the story you want to tell. Is this an invasion? A holy crusade on the part of one side? Or both? Who might be thought to have the upper hand? Who is the underdog?

You may want to think about the larger scale engagements with your Epic forces and the naval stand-offs in space, if you're planning to include them.

One of the things I've always thought would be cool to do is to allow the players to bring

custom built starships down onto the *Epic* tabletop, 'bringing the rain' from orbit to bolster their struggling forces. The idea of huge interstellar craft entering the atmosphere to weigh in as a last resort, as Adama does during the evacuation of New Caprica in *Battlestar Galactica*, is something I've always wanted to replicate on the tabletop. That scene always leaves my heart in my throat and would make for some dramatic gameplay.

Themes

With your opposing forces chosen, it's time to think about nuance. In the 40K universe there's an important point to remember. What looks like good vs. evil almost always isn't. In his videos covering the various 40K factions, the YouTuber Brickly makes an excellent point:

"In 40K you are ALWAYS playing the bad guy."

None of the factions could be considered 'The Good Guys', not even the much vaunted Space Marines, who count a variety of dubious practices amongst their 'accepted behaviours' (can we say "servo skull"?).

When I think about this, I am reminded of the show *Babylon 5*, whose major story arc saw humanity (and a number of other races) caught in the middle of a millennia-old struggle between two opposing forces of vastly superior power. Both of whom, initially, look like they fall neatly into the old roles of good and evil. The virtuous Vorlons, who appear to be making every effort to assist the lesser races in their struggle, albeit from the (irony) shadows. And the actual Shadows, whose only goal seems to be sowing terror and wanton destruction.

It slowly becomes apparent, however, that this was not a struggle between good and evil, but between order and chaos. Sound familiar? (We're looking at you, Horus...)

A detail like this could really help spice things up for your campaign. I do concede that certain oppositions (no hiding at the back there, Orks and Tyranids) will lend themselves more readily to this sort of thing than others. But then who doesn't relish a challenge? And there's nothing that says your campaign has to be about grand

sweeping morals. One of the joys of the hobby for me is embracing its wanton violence. You're playing a war game. Enjoy it!

Destruction and terror make just as valid themes as something more noble. Also, who is to say you can't concoct something inspiring around a group of Orks trying to hold out against the oncoming tide of flesh threatening their home. The key consideration here (for me) would be to take what you and your friends enjoy about the lore and use it as your springboard and take it from there.

Detail work

Now it's time to gather your forces. Draw up your army lists, decide what squads and characters you want to include. It could be fun to represent some of these from across the different settings. It would be cool to have characters from your 40K army represented in your Epic forces. Or to represent the individual psyker you create for the roleplay element within your 40K warband, as long as his head hasn't exploded, which is apparently a thing in *Wrath and Glory!*

Fulcrum

This would be your RPG element. Time to create some characters, or transfer the key players from your armies into this format, if that's what you want to do. Both have potential for awesomeness.

This level could represent a pivotal moment from the narrative that might affect the course of the entire campaign in some fashion. Various ideas spring to mind for such a fulcrum:

- Choice information, that allows one of the players to set up a number of units behind enemy lines.
- An artefact or weapon that offers one of the sides advantage in some way on the 40K table - does your Space Marine captain have that legendary chainsword? That allows him to inspire troops during morale checks...
- An act of sabotage that will hamper one side during play (causing a titan's shields to fail, or a squad of tanks to explode during the *Epic* game).

Given that everyone playing is (in theory) going to have a stake in a particular outcome, this could make for some heated, but hopefully entertaining roleplay.

Obviously someone is going to have to GM. It would be up to the group to decide who is most appropriate for this. If you're running the Empire scenario mentioned above, there are interesting connotations for having either side take the role. If it is the invaders, the story likely centres on the rebels seeking to gain some sort of tactical advantage during their withdrawal, such as smuggling a key figure out of the settlement for the 40K engagement, with the backdrop dictated by the outcome of the Epic game. It could be fun to include pivotal moments from the battle as set pieces during the session. The characters are in a bunker, where one exit becomes cut off when an enemy titan is felled, crushing the tunnel. I know I'd certainly enjoy something as self-referential.

If the rebel player GMs, then the invaders could be trying to gain information on the disposition of forces, allowing them to set up with advantage during the *Epic* confrontation. Or they might be following a clue that hints at a skirmish attack (on the 40K field) that threatens to tip the balance of the larger engagement. Success here could let the invaders set up a number of units around whatever objective the rebel 40K force has their eye on. As above, this might come before everything, or fall between the initial *Epic* and following 40K engagement, with a second *Epic* game affected by the outcome of the 40K skirmish.

Summary

So, a campaign of this nature might include the following elements:

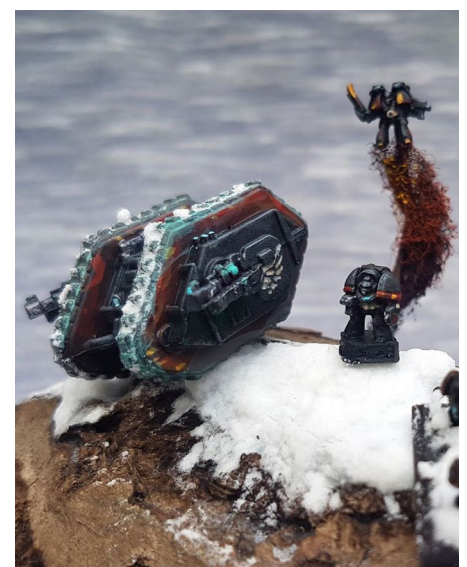
- *Space Fleet* – a naval engagement across the system, with potential to provide the victor with reinforcements or aerial support during one of their engagements
- *Epic* – a clash of full forces, most likely the deciding battle of the overall war
- *40K* – a skirmish level standoff over a few key objectives, or specific goals
- RPG – a story based around a couple of

individuals, covering a pivotal fulcrum within the overall plot

I've talked repeatedly during this article about 'those playing,' rather than referencing two players. This is because for myself, this is something I (eventually) plan to do with my two brothers. GW's games are traditionally played with two sides on the field, but there's absolutely nothing (that I've come across) suggesting you can't have three, four or even five involved, though I admit with more than three it might start to get a little clunky.

If there are more of you wanting to get involved another way might be to play as allied sides. Imperial Guard and Adeptus Sororitas vs. a Genestealer Cult and their Tyranid overlords. This sort of engagement could be really fun, with some great opportunities for team rivalry. It'd also be easier to manage the roleplay element with this sort of format, as both sides will always be represented to an extent amongst the players.

As said at the beginning, there's so much potential here. You could make this as big or small a project as you want, its size governed only by time and resources that you decide to bring to bear. The important thing, at the end of the day, is to have fun!



MARTIN MCCOY

I joined 28 as a staff illustrator right around the conclusion of volume 2; I still remember what a long shot it felt like when I first emailed the team. I pitched myself as their new artist and sent along some of my ugliest and darkest work. Rather than politely or curtly turning me down, as I thought they might, they brought me on and made me a part of the team. I'm happy to say it's been a period of great personal growth and a real honour to contribute to such a cool and communal project.

Work with 28 has opened up opportunities for me I used to only dream about pursuing in the far and distant future. For example, I've made concept art for two different miniature sets currently being sculpted - a forever dream come to early fruition because of 28. If my time here has taught me anything, it's to not wait. Even if that first email feels like a long shot, we can all afford to take a couple, miss, re-adjust and then take a couple more.

The art you see here is the next forever goal I have the great fortune to work on - developing and illustrating my own roleplaying game. This is *Mosscairn*, a world and system I'm currently building with the team at Chronicle RPGS. We plan to release a source book and introductory campaign this year, and I plan to pack them both as full of art, lore and marginalia as possible. The influences of *Redwall* and *Mordheim* are easy to see, but with the inclusion of nature spirits and demons—and all the implications that follow from their world-shaping power—we've created a world with its own distinct atmosphere and momentum. I hope you like what you see, and I look forward to sharing more with you and hearing your feedback in the coming months.





















ROLEPLAYING THE GRIMDARK

By MS Jack
Art by Hugues Blanche

The term 'grimdark' has been in circulation for years and, as a reader of 28, you are no doubt familiar with it. To some, it is an exquisitely dark aesthetic, with creative sorceries and abhorrent monsters. To others it is a gruelling, punishing world where even if the heroes prevail, they risk supplanting the evil they strive to defeat. What can be agreed on is that in a grimdark setting, a small sliver of hope bleeds through the layers of brutality to give the protagonists a purpose, shining bright in stark contrast to their bleak existence. It is no surprise then that grimdark translates so well to tabletop role-playing games (TTRPGs).

In TTRPGs, a Dungeon Master, or DM, offers players a chance to take an active hand in their story, directly inserting them as heroes or anti-heroes into the game. In recent years, TTRPGs have had as much of a resurgence as grimdark has had a boom in popularity, both being catapulted into mainstream attention with varying degrees of acceptance. However, there is somewhat of a lack of games that capture a truly darker tone. Of course there are excellent grimdark games out there; *Dark Heresy*, the *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplaying Game* and *Call of Cthulhu (RPG)* are some that spring to mind, but for the majority, the first thing they think of at the mention of TTRPGs is *Dungeons and Dragons (D&D)*. At first glance the quintessential high-fantasy roleplaying game seems to bear little resemblance to the austere galaxy of the 41st millennium or the perverse realities of the Mortal Realms, so why play D&D over other, darker games?

TTRPGs usually come with initial costs in the form of a starter set or core books required to play the game. D&D, as a titan of the genre, has more resources and support than nearly any other game. Its core components can be found in nearly all gaming stores as well as online, in many cases, for free, eliminating a lot of these costs. D&D is a tried and tested

system, as versatile as grimdark is subjective. It can be played in any setting that the players and DM choose and, with some adaptations to the rules, it can be every bit as ultra-violent, morally dubious and gripping as the grimmest of grimdark.

This article will look at a number of tips and methods for you as a DM to adapt rules and mechanics to better fit the tone you want in your own TTRPGs. While many of these adaptations apply to D&D's 5th edition rules, the same principle can be applied to other games too and there are many that are non-game-specific, so you can apply them to your game system of choice.

ESTABLISHING THE GRISLY: SETTING YOUR GAME

A common practice for running any TTRPG is to run a session zero. This is where you can lay out the themes and basic plot-hook of the campaign, gauge the expectations of your players and go over things like character creation and optional rules you want to include. A session zero is always a good idea but it can be even more important for a grimdark flavoured campaign. What is important for running a grimdark game is that you agree with your players on what everyone is comfortable including in the game. RPGs should be a fun form of escapism from real life where you and your players are more personally involved in the subject matter than in many other mediums.

With the inclusion of lurid themes there is the risk of upsetting people. Whether playing with close friends, acquaintances or strangers, making sure that you inform your players of risqué or gory elements you want to include circumvents any unnecessary upsetting moments at what should be an enjoyable experience. To this end, be open and willing to compromise with your players. If they express hard limits on what they are happy to

include, working with them to find a healthy compromise will help ensure that you all enjoy your own brand of grimdark.

This is an opportune chance for you to set the atmosphere of your game, in-turn allowing player characters, or PCs, to be created in accordance to the setting and ensuring a level of continuity to the world. Tips for grimdark character creation are to have your players devise serious faults and limit the equipment they start the game with. Nearly every character in a dark or low fantasy setting has a series of flaws that often create some of the most pivotal moments of their respective stories. It is something that really helps players subscribe to the mentality of a morally grey world by their own heroes having flaws. Making PCs confront their deepest flaws allows for some of the most compelling moments in-game. By restricting the gear they begin with immediately instils them with a reminder that nothing is given and everything must be earned.

ALL THAT GLITTERS, WILL PROBABLY KILL YOU - HIGH RISK, HIGH REWARD

While grimdark is often characterised by the tribulations of the world, what to remember first and foremost is that as DM your role is to facilitate a story and, more importantly, a good time for you and your players. As a result, DMing a darker themed campaign feels like walking a line between brutalising your players and rewarding them fairly. With that in mind, overly penalising players for every failed roll of the dice can easily ruin their engagement. Instead consider how to penalise your players, simultaneously inviting them to interact with the world without breaking the game.

Let's use an example with combat. A player wants to make an ability check to climb a ledge during combat. Whilst it would align with the theme and be entertaining should they fail, land



at an angle and snap their neck; this won't really be much fun for the player if their PC dies from one bad dice roll. In an instance such as this, set a clear risk with a clear reward; in attempting to climb they are opening themselves up to an attack and failing the ability check lands them on their back, open to another attack on the enemy's turn. If they succeed they have an advantageous position on the battlefield, allowing them to perform an attack from the ledge with a hefty set of bonuses to hit and the damage the attack deals.

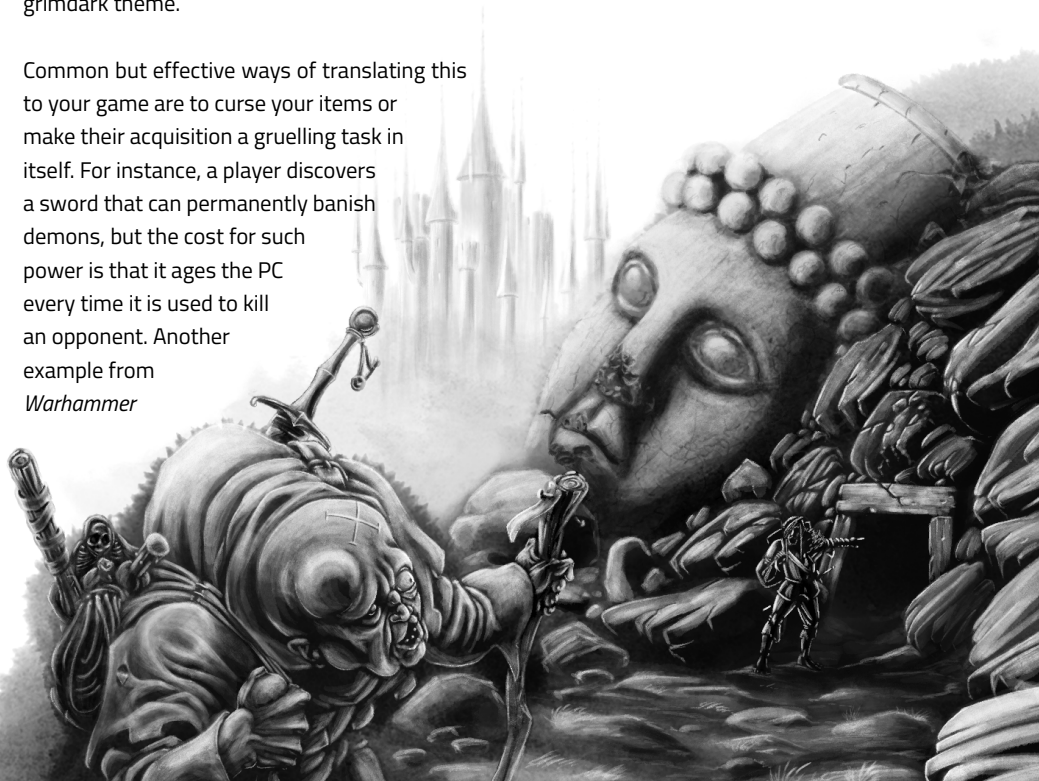
Subtly applying this type of logic helps foster a *risk and reward* mentality in the player's actions at the table. It forces them to evaluate their options before acting too rashly, which not only makes them buy into the severity of the world you're running, but stimulates them to want to take risks. When players take risks it makes for some of the most fun and exciting moments in your games, not something you want to dissuade. Encouraging this kind of smart play really helps with immersion in a darker setting; the first time they fail doing something foolhardy and are met with a near-death experience they will be sure to not act without thought again. However, if they do manage to pull off an extraordinary feat, the feeling of achievement they have is incomparable.

You will be surprised at the ingenuity which your players display when forced to interact with the world in such a way. One of the best moments at my table was when a party was confronted by a hydra. A player managed to get behind it and attempted to scale it with his daggers. He failed. Spectacularly. He slammed against its rear and the hydra countered, fatally wounding him. As his comrades distracted it, he uncorked a bottle of acid. He rolled a successful hit and inserted his hand into the hydra's anus, his arm was shattered but the acid began melting the hydra's insides. Burning viscera cauterised half of his body but he killed the beast. He sustained grave injuries, forcing him to retire. However, he also became famous; he was immortalised in the story of 'the fool and the serpent' and was given lands and a small title. The punishment conformed to the theme of the game, but having made a calculated risk and achieving it made for an incredible moment. As well as this, it provided an integral part of collective world-building, with the players feeling directly involved in the world.

It's something you can and should apply to scenarios outside of combat too, such as non-player character (NPC) interactions and use of magic items. If you apply this principle to your game-world, opportunities to present the players with morally grey dilemmas practically write themselves. They may have to make a choice between NPCs they will accept help from; one offers invaluable information they need to progress, but is a renowned murderer, the other provides passage to new lands, but offers to ferry them on a slave-ship. In choosing one they spurn the other, earning their enmity, while being forced to choose between two comparative evils. This type of application gives you a plethora of channels that can steer your game, all of which make sense within your world and provide moments to challenge the players mentally and emotionally as much as physically.

Magic items routinely play a prominent role in TTRPGs, being a staple component of gameplay in many systems. However, in dark fantasy settings they greatly benefit from the high risk, high reward mentality. In this context, something affording a character unparalleled power should require unparalleled sacrifice. It is worth noting that if you and your players are embracing a truly grimdark tone, then you can outright ban the use of all magic items from the game, focussing entirely on the PCs strength of character. However, there is no denying that they are indeed a fun part of the game and can still be used without diluting your themes. Instead, you can use them to enhance your grimdark theme.

Common but effective ways of translating this to your game are to curse your items or make their acquisition a gruelling task in itself. For instance, a player discovers a sword that can permanently banish demons, but the cost for such power is that it ages the PC every time it is used to kill an opponent. Another example from *Warhammer*



fantasy is Archaon attaining the Slayer of Kings. In order to claim the sword he is forced to steal it from the truly titanic sire of all Dragon-ogres, Krakanrok. Though the task is lethal, the reward offered by the sword is nigh unmatched. You can scale either of these ideas to your own setting, increasing the severity of failure or the price imposed as appropriate to the power of the artefact, introducing a multitude of ways that your PCs can enjoy making use of rare items while keeping the darker tones of your campaign intact.

A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH (AND HEALING)

Think about your setting and how healing fits into it. Do injuries force people to recover much like they do in real life? Do denizens have access to a temple or basic hospital where they can treat wounds? Do people recover at the same rate as in real life? Are potions with healing properties even a possibility in your world setting, if so how rare are they? Are there magics capable of curing wounds? If you first envisage these points, it's much easier to adapt them to the game.

A perfect example of healing in a dark-fantasy setting comes from the Witcher books by Andrzej Sapkowski. As spoiler free as possible; Geralt of Rivia is a mutant with a much faster rate of recovery than a normal man. But he is still a man. Though he can comfortably fight multiple foes, if he is stabbed he might die. If he breaks a bone it will hinder his capabilities for a long time to follow. Even if his recovery is hastened by magic, he must still heal his wounds before he is anywhere near capable of facing monsters again.

Death and injury should play an integral part in any game. This is not to say that the PCs must die or be maimed, intentionally killing or debilitating your players is a means to bring your plot points to an abrupt and hollow end, likely putting players off playing with you again too. However, if they do meet an untimely end, their death should be permanent with no hope of resuscitation. Nothing breaks immersion in dark fantasy quite like a character being torn limb from limb only to make a miraculous recovery. This is a good principle to apply to healing in TTRPGs. Make death permanent and remove spells and abilities that allow players to be resurrected from the game to give a heightened sense of danger to each encounter.

Ordinarily when a character drops to 0 hit points, or HP, they make death saves. They roll a D20, 10 or higher resulting in a pass, 9 or lower, a fail, repeating the roll on their turn until they have three passes or three fails, stabilising and or dying. If you want to go extreme, you can remove the save entirely, instantly dying if HP is reduced to 0. However, if you wish to be a bit more lenient on your players, you can reduce this to one roll deciding if they live or die. My personal ruling on the matter is that unless an ally can stabilise their fallen comrade before their turn, either through a healing ability or successfully passing an ability check for the medicine skill, a single death save decides their fate. If they pass, they are stabilised; they remain unconscious for a number of hours (a D4 is rolled to determine how many), suffering a critical injury but if they are attacked again they make another death save immediately. This offers a bit more mercy while still enforcing that death is simply a harsh reality of the game. It also encourages the players to work together, knowing that at any time they could rely on their allies to protect them from an almost certain death.

The injury a PC sustains should be a permanent hindrance to them, varying depending on what type of attack brought them to 0 HP. There is a wide variety of damage types in D&D, such as *slashing* or attacks that deal *fire* or *magic* damage. If they were dealt a blow with 'slashing' as the



type of damage, they may lose a limb or appendage, if the damage type was 'bludgeoning' they may have a gruesome disfigurement, affecting how others treat them, or a head injury, losing portions of their memory indefinitely. This can allow for a lot of interesting opportunities for characters to roleplay and/or adapt their injuries. It also makes players feel that when they do overcome a challenge it has been hard earned, actually helping them buy into the story in a very personal manner. A player at my table once had their hand dismembered; as a result they had a serrated blade much like Azog the Defiler strapped to their limb. When he was shunned for the disfigurement he became a contracted killer for hire. Sometimes pain is gain, encouraging your players to play into injuries might just open up new plot hooks, pun fully intended.

Cap spells or items which restore health or HP to healing a flat, smaller amount and greatly reduce the amount of times they can be used. The purpose of this is threefold; players are forced to economise their safety options, it gives them a greater sense of urgency and vulnerability knowing they cannot simply heal their way out of a lethal situation and it removes the annoyance of unreliable rolling. For players in this scenario, there is little more frustrating than meticulously planning for an ensuing fight, only to lose your beloved character because you roll a 1 drinking a health potion you just spent your entire hoard on or spell you have saved to use for over a month of in-game time.

As for the limited uses of them, this again can be directly tied to your world setting or balanced according to how difficult you want the encounters to feel. For example, in my world setting, healing magic is an extremely rare and taxing means of recuperation, forcing the caster to sacrifice some of their energy to perform it. As such, healing spells that grant, for example, up to D8 health are set at a flat amount of 5, can only be used once per long rest and inflict a level of exhaustion on the PC as a penalty. Potions are even scarcer, requiring unique materials to craft, which the players themselves will have to locate. As such, they are often limited to finding only one or two healing potions per large town and at an extremely high price, varying from place to place. If you choose a similar method you

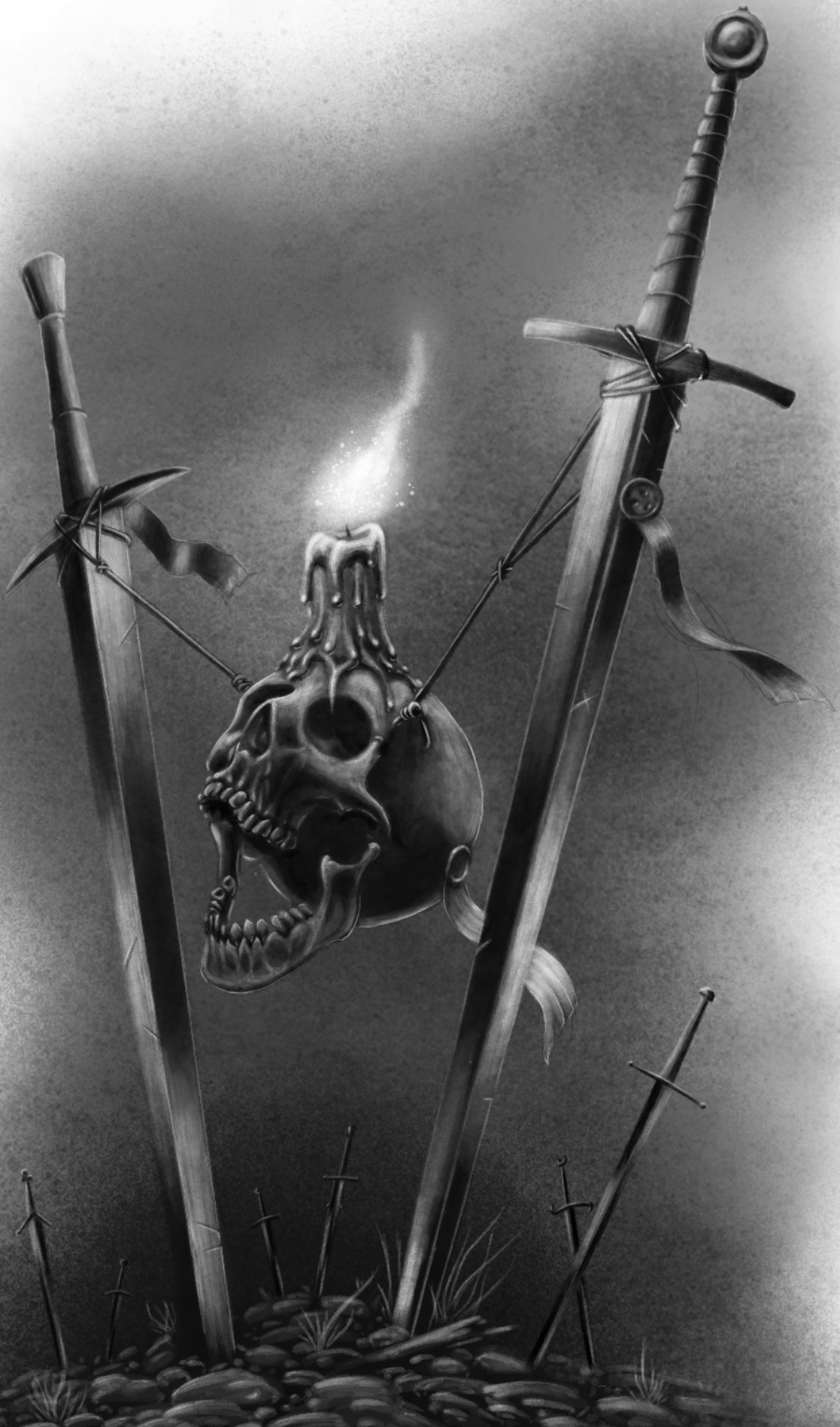
can tailor their scarcity and price according to what fits in with your world, so long as you ensure that they are kept as an exceptionally rare commodity. This incentivises players to carefully prepare in-game as their lives truly depend on doing so.

Resting is also an in-game mechanic used for healing. There are short rests and long rests; a short rest constitutes at least one hour of downtime in which PCs do non-strenuous things such as eating, tending wounds and reading, a long rest is at least eight hours where they do nothing more strenuous than standing watch for two hours. During a short rest they can choose to spend Hit-dice (the same dice they roll when initially calculating their hit points in character creation, they have as many of these as they do levels) to regain that many HP back. In a long rest, they regain all hit-points and all spent Hit-dice. A fix to this is to have a short-rest instead become a long rest, where they can only spend a maximum of 25% of their Hit-dice, rounding up, and have a long-rest constitute at least a week of downtime, where they regain half of their maximum HP. This adaptation means that resting isn't a simple solution to ensuring they can keep up the fight, once again pushing them to manage their resources while dungeondelving and adventuring.

"IT'S ALIIIVE!" - BIRTHING YOUR BEASTS

Monsters have always had a fundamental function in fantasy, horror and science-fiction works, influencing their subsequent portrayals in other mediums, including TTRPGs. What constitutes a monster is as abstract as the grimdark genre itself, their role in the story often just as, if not more important as their repulsive or insidious appearance and nature. Unveiling your Frankenstein-like creations to horrified players is often one of the most engaging parts of being a DM. In order to get the most out of your own grimdark monsters there is a key aspect to aim for; invoke a sense of vulnerability and genuine danger in the PCs by presenting them with the deadly unknown.

To this end, never use a monster as it is written. A simple and effective means of doing this is to reskin or repurpose the rules of existing monsters. There are a host of official and fan-made resources dedicated solely to beasts, many of which sport abilities ideal for grimdark settings. Books like the 'Monster Manual'





provide a brief description of a monster's behaviours, appearance and in-game abilities, as well as their '*challenge rating*', or CR, referred to as their stat-block. If a monster's stat-block fits your world but its look or lore does not, simply change it in a way that does. Tailoring a monster's concept to justify the alluring rules you want to use gives you an abundance of entities to confront your players with.

To look at an example, as well as a personal favourite: the Oblax. Found in 'Mordekainen's Tome of Foes', the Oblax is a highly astute gelatinous creature that ambushes the most intelligent prey of a settlement to feed on their mind. Using their memories, it creates identical copies, complete with the victim's skills, mannerisms and personality. The Oblax uses the copied victims to lure more prey, glutting itself until the entire population is replaced by extensions of its own body. I loved the concept and stat-block for the Oblax, but to make it fit my setting better I altered it. It was composed of blood that congealed on a battlefield, the raw emotions of the dead amalgamating in its form and drawing the attention of demons. Given sentience, it was compelled to seek more emotions to feed on. By using its stat-block but changing the concept, it became an entirely new entity in the game. Importantly, none of the players had any idea what they were against, creating a tense ambience which became imminently fatal as they uncovered the mystery and were forced to face it.

While reskinning works well and is a huge time saver, in a particularly important encounter it might lack the level of gravitas you want. Though it can seem overwhelming to craft your own rules for an enemy, don't be deterred. You can get extremely creative with your games by introducing your own nightmarish behemoths and making their stat-block can be a lot easier than it seems. There is no set formula to make your own, but an easy process I have found much success in is as follows; conceptualise your creature, decide how difficult your encounter should be, find a pre-existing stat-block to base your monster's in-game prowess on and add elements or abilities that better represent your creature.

I will use an example to demonstrate. Start by devising your monster's appearance and background lore. Recently I ran a chimeric beast, a huge lion that had been twisted by chaotic

magic. It had been driven mad, ripping its skin off. A second, avian head had sprouted from its back and its tail devolved into a serpentine head which split in two. With a clear concept of its appearance and behaviour in mind, the next step was to think about just how lethal it would be. In this case, it was a one-of-a-kind, dangerous mutant, but also an introductory monster to level 1 players. I wanted it to be difficult but not brutally punishing so I gave it a CR of 3. Giving a monster a CR helps you quantify how difficult encountering it should be, acting as a sort of goalpost for its stat-block. I looked at the stat-block for a lion in the Monster manual and magnified its stats. Giving it more health and increasing the score of its *Strength* and *Constitution* while decreasing the value of its *intelligence* and *wisdom* better represented its ability to endure pain and its mind being ravaged by magic. I wanted it to have elements similar to a standard chimaera, so I gave it additional abilities; a fire breath and beak attack from the avian head and a venomous bite from the serpentine tail. I based the beak and the breath attack from the stat-block for a chimaera, but as a chimaera is a CR 6 monster, I reduced the damage these attacks dealt by half and changed the damage type for the beak attack to *piercing* rather than *bludgeoning*. I used the stat-block for a venomous snake and used this as the attack for the tail. In the end, it was a demanding fight for the players that bought their immersion in the world that little bit more.

Using this method removes the tediousness of figuring out every single aspect of a monster's stat-block and abilities. Streamlining in this way lets you visualise your monsters with a profile that is entirely your own but has the benefit of having relative balance to what you need for your game.

**MISCELLANEOUS MORBIDITY:
ADDITIONAL TIPS**

In TTRPGs, as with works of fiction, pacing can be a crucial component to getting you and your players into the mind-set you want. Pacing is a vague term, but in the context of this discussion it refers to travelling, downtime and resting. These are elements often skimmed over, but don't gloss over these in your games; they can be an invaluable tool for story progression. You can use travelling and downtime to explore the world, foreshadow future events, introduce new side-quests, plot-

leads or interesting encounters for your PCs. It can also be an opportunity for PCs to digest recent story developments outside of combat and adventuring, or a chance for them to roleplay and develop their personas. As well as this, the periods in between your party clearing dungeons are when they can really get familiar with your setting. These times are when they can form relationships with NPCs and explore the setting, use these periods to make your world feel really organic to them. We touched on resting as a healing mechanic, but it can also be used in this type of manner too. Using rests as a similar platform for PCs to take centre stage can make for some important plot moments as they use this time to strategize for upcoming events or reflect on their actions, etc.

Tied directly into the use of downtime is how your players level their characters. Normally, when characters level up they learn new abilities as well as increase the amount of HP they have. However, in a grimdark setting, this can feel dishonest. Building a premise of your PCs struggling for every feat they achieve in the game for new abilities or spells to be learned automatically is often a point of contention, but there is a convenient approach to change this. When your PCs level up, before they can actually use the abilities or spells they choose, they must find someone or something in-game to teach it to them. This could be a tutor in the field, a mentor or expert on the subject or even a book. Whatever means they learn by, it reaffirms the attitude that your PCs need to earn their power. While this can feel like somewhat of a hindrance to the players, it permits them a much greater sense of accomplishment, as well as giving them time to formulate what direction they want to steer their character's playstyle in.

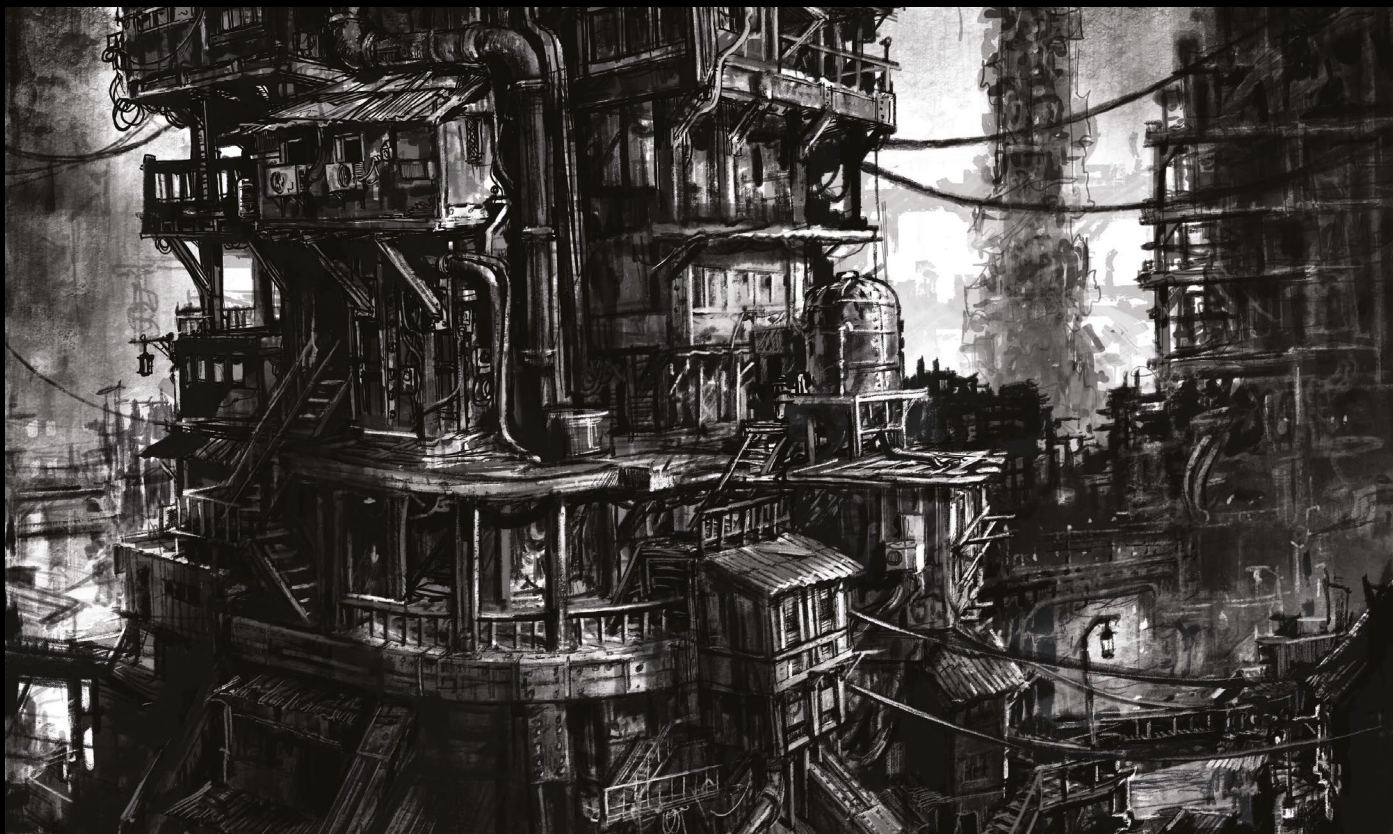
Lastly, there are two more tips that are often forgotten pertaining directly to you as the DM. The first is how you roll the dice. As the DM you will roll a lot of dice, the question is, do you roll them openly for your players to see, or do you roll them in secret? Rolling openly lets your players see everything; they will know you're not giving them any leniency from the fickle fate inflicted by the dice, so if and when you roll for high damage, there's no mercy from it. An added benefit is that it builds their trust in you as the DM; open dice rolls let them know you're being transparent with them.

The second and final suggestion relates to setting the scene. It is your words that shape the image the players will have of the scenes you describe. Two methods I have found to be invaluable for narrating the grimdark are; using a wide, eloquent vocabulary and letting your players imagine the most gruesome scenes. Using descriptive and visceral language helps you set a vivid scene, aiding your beautifully bleak setting in feeling much more organic and engaging to the players. But subsequently learning when to not implement in-depth descriptions can be the distinction between a good DM and a great DM. No matter how well thought out and macabre your descriptions, in the most horrific moments they will pale in comparison to what your players imagine for themselves. In these circumstances, you can actually do more harm than good to a scene by essentially overselling. Less is more; don't hesitate to let the minds of your players do the heavy lifting for you.

The points outlined above are arguably some of the most crucial and complex to adapt in order to emulate a grimdark feeling in your TTRPGs. D&D has extremely changeable rulesets and knowing which ones you want to adapt comes both with experience and personal tastes. These suggestions are reworks for rules I have found a great deal of success in using in my own games of D&D, but for you they might act as more of a platform. The best advice for any DM is not to be scared to experiment. Use these tips as a framework and introduce your own changes to evolve your games into your own, idealised form of roleplaying repugnance.



INTO THE SUMPHULK



By David Rosewell

What is Sumphulk?

Sumphulk is an Instagram/Discord community project created by master terrain builder Sol Vince, set in a long-sunken dome below Hive Primus on Necromunda. The aim of this project has been to bring together a group of talented artists to create an immersive environment and ultimately an unofficial Necromunda PDF supplement. The community has grown considerably over the past couple of years, with members from all over the world sharing their Sumphulk-inspired miniatures, artwork, terrain, background and home-grown rules. The purpose of this article is to give a brief introduction to Sumphulk, to show off some amazing miniatures and artwork and to let you know what you can expect to find in the supplement.

Welcome to the Sumphulk

The massive dome now known as the Sumphulk (its original designation now long-forgotten) was part of the original foundations of Hive Primus and once bustled with trade, manufacturing and mining. However, the constant drilling and mining for raw materials caused a catastrophic hive quake that

collapsed access tunnels and caused the dome to sink under the Great Sump Lake, cutting the dome's inhabitants off from the rest of Hive Primus. For the past 150 cycles, mutation and lawlessness has become rife, and the ever-rising water is slowly forcing the inhabitants towards the dome's ceiling and their doom.

Sumphulk is ruled by a ruthless pair of individuals named Viatrix and Viator, the Twins, the de-facto lords of Sumphulk. Second to them are the Smiler Clans, which control the territory known as the Teeth, located high above the wretched souls who dwell under the dome. The Teeth are a construct of suspended walkways, industrial platforms and slave-powered generators that provide the only source of power for the dome. This power is delivered to the rest of Sumphulk via huge umbilicals, but these structures are much more than just conduits, they also have shanty villages precariously clinging to their flanks. Although there are various places where the population and *other things* live, many hulkers call the Stacks their home. This mega hab-zone is a labyrinth collection of scrap metal and haphazard vertical structures, where fierce

Above & opposite Art by
David Bell





03

gang fights take place and fresh corpses litter the walkways.

Of course, some remnants of House gangs remain, but they have become a shadow of their former selves. The War Pigs were once proud members of House Goliath who became twisted hulking mutants after eating tainted barnacles. Their swollen bodies are now covered in these very same barnacles that they pick from their skin and consume in a maddening, gluttonous frenzy. Former Escher Queen Ophelia, a gangrenous near-corpse sustained upon an archaeotech throne, leads a group of death maidens called The Daughters of Ophelia. Many of the queen's daughters are re-animated corpses that have floated into her domain.

The Merchant Guilds have long been dissolved into the Smiler Clans, giving them full control of (along with power) the air and water purifying industries. Despite this, there are some groups who are either bold or foolish enough to try and get a cut of the profits for themselves. The Harvest are one such group, led by the greedy and cunning Akephalos. They not only illegally produce and sell "clean" water at a premium, but also manufacture hallucinogenic narcotics; both have earned them the Smiler Clans' ire, who have hired bounty hunters and a cyborg

assassin to put a stop to their operations.

Sumphulk also has an abundance of cults. The secretive Fen Wardens and their menials defend the only geothermal well left in Sumphulk; the well has become a shrine to motive force and the Wardens have sworn to protect it at all costs. Then there is the sinister Cult of Evadere, who represent the mortal fear of death and promise escape and salvation through a dignified death (of course everything they promise is a lie).

As well as gangers, cultists, assorted scum and mutants, Sumphulk has also become home to the Spore-kin. These unfortunate souls have become hosts to a mysterious fungal infection, rumoured to be of xenos origin; found aboard an ancient crashed space hulk and unwittingly released by scavengers.

Although life is bleak, brutal and short down here, the populace shows that even in the most desperate of places, the will to live is ever-present.

Sumphulk Supplement

The unofficial Necromunda Sumphulk Supplement has been compiled by Kasper Kac and contains the work of over 20 contributors, including myself, Sol Vince, Andy Rodriguez,



04



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List of participants:

David Bell
// @magogwastes

Timothy Eremin
// @timremain

Mark Gibson
// @a_catachan_kiss

Carl Johnston
// @carl_r_johnston

Vanilla Astartes
// @vanilla_astartes

Jacob Petersson
// @bitzboxer

Alastair Fleming
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Florian Kowalski
// @olfawok

Will Cooper
// @slave_to_the_whip

James Cowing-Pope
// @apostatefidem

Lewis Bingol
// @thecultofones

Cy Dudley
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Giovanni Calapaj
// @giokahnni

Brad Minchin
// @Snertymcsnerts_terrain

Leif Beaver
// @mrleifcbeaver

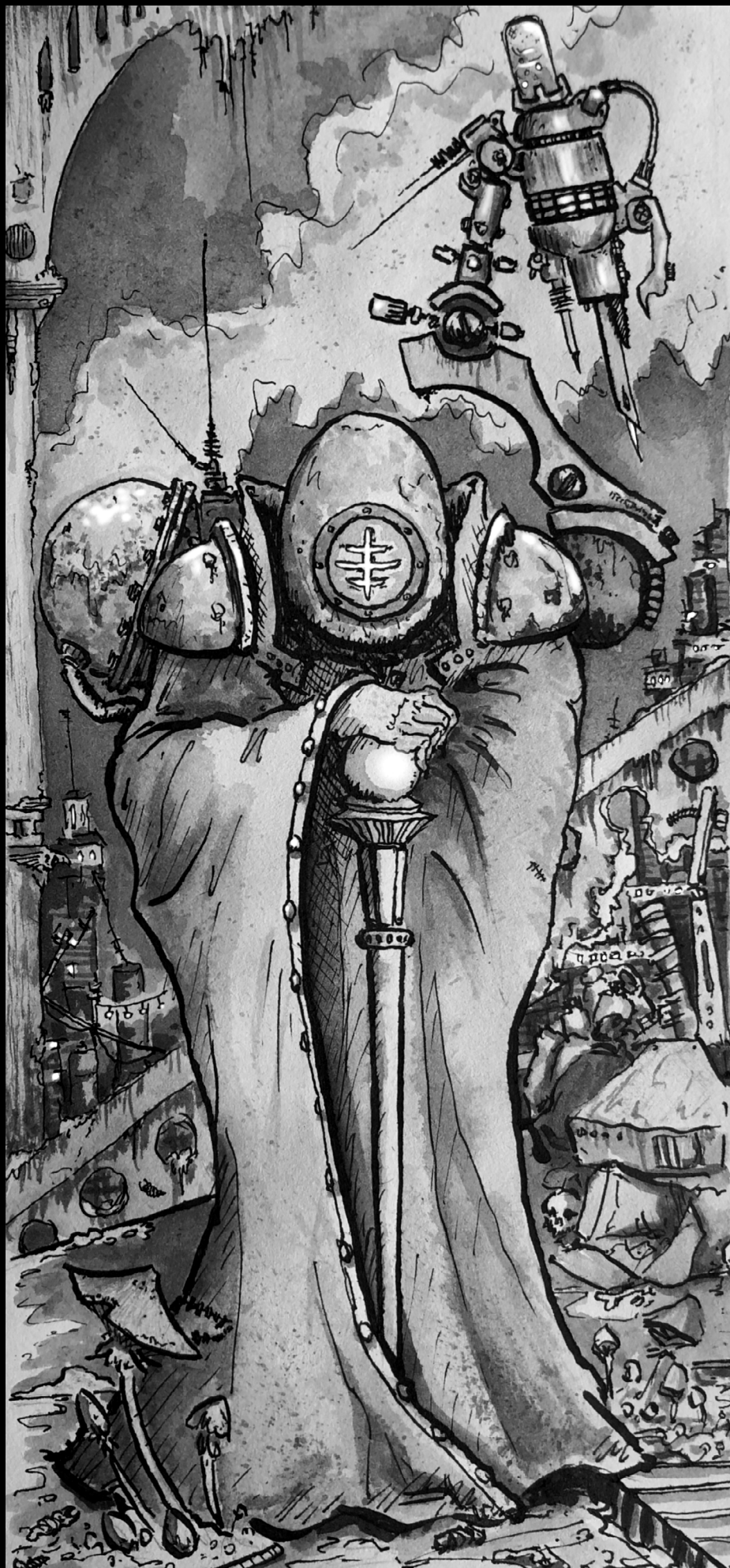
Bryan Paul Rees
// @bryanpaulreesart

EVENT // INTO THE SUMPHULK

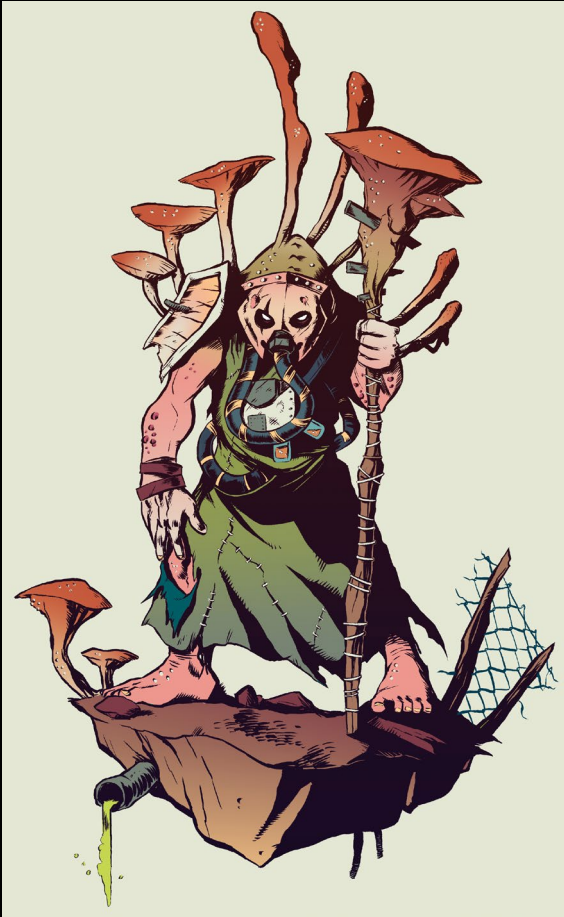
Phil aka @scrap.code, Alastair Fleming and the gorgeous art of David Bell. I have only scratched the surface of the huge amount of lore contained within the supplement - in it you will find the full background on Sumphulk, including its hierarchy, territories and several factions (such as the Spore-kin). Furthermore, you will find home-grown dramatis personae rules, campaign rules and even a map to help you navigate this unique setting. In addition to all this, there are pages of fantastically painted miniatures, artwork and terrain. Be sure to check out www.instagram.com/sumphulk for further details.

It has been a privilege to be part of such a huge community project and work alongside some of the best modellers, painters and artists in the hobby. I hope everyone enjoys the article and on behalf of the Sumphulk crew, I wanted to thank 28 for the opportunity to share our work.

See you in the Sumphulk.



- 06 Carl Johnston
- 07 Vanilla Astartes
- 08 Timothy Eremin
- 09 Mark Gibson
- 10 Alastair Fleming
- 11 & 12 David Rosewell
- 13 Bryan Paul Rees
- 14 Lewis Bingol



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THE TRUE DARKNESS IN FOLKHAMMER

By Lysander Godfrey

Ever wondered why nightmares are so frightening? It is because they lack understanding, structure, and above all, reason. They are malformed segments of code which plague our subconscious minds. They are terrifying because we do not have mental control over them. The same thoughts in the light of day are not half as frightening.

In the 19th century, there were many stories written concerning folklore and the creatures of nightmares, tales like *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* and *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. These stories came about as a result of science and rational thought interacting with folklore. We all know what a vampire is, what its weaknesses are and what it does. Knowing all of this makes the monster far less scary. But what about the monsters behind these rational Victorian stories? What about the shadows that lurk in the deeper, darker and almost forgotten parts of our imaginations?

The Warhammer worlds have always made use of folklore, drawing from obvious sources, along with the more obscure. This can be seen in names, factions and the style, above all. The term grimdark is often tagged with the Warhammer 40,000 setting, though it is a term which sits comfortably in any of Games Workshop's settings (apart from the lighter-hearted Blood Bowl). The grimdark is a term which denotes a grim and dark setting (obviously) but what does this mean? There are any number of fantasy and sci-fi settings which focus on war, bloodshed and loss, so what makes the Warhammer settings stand out?

The grimdark setting can be defined as one that is unsettling, shadowy and unnatural - in

a word: nightmarish. This can be seen in the modelling, the painting and the background of Warhammer. In this essay, we shall focus on the background and how the grimdark of the Warhammer worlds intersects with folklore.

There is a word in Old English, *forscyppan*, which means 'to transform' though more accurately it means to 'un-make'. It means to change something into nothing, rather than something into something else and was a word used to describe the fallen angels in the Bible.

This concept of the unmade became a key part of Early Medieval folklore. The most obvious instance of this is the monster known as Grendel in *Beowulf*. Though many people have tried to define the origin of, or even what Grendel is, it has defied all of these. The creature that is Grendel is a thing of darkness manifest and the fact that it defies any type of categorisation is crucial to it. The same is true of Grendel's Mother, a figure which does not even have a name.

A more recent example of where this folklore theme of unmade has been used is in the Nazgul (Ringwraiths) in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. Here, these terrible creatures of darkness are described as having once been mortal men but now hollow shadows, things permanently invisible, things which have lost their names, their identities, their purpose. They are shadows, nothing more, and their weapon is fear, not might.

There is a faction in the Warhammer: Age of Sigmar setting named The Unmade. These cannibalistic, masochistic and sadistic beings unmake their own flesh in worship of the Chaos Gods. The quickest of glances at these

models reveals a gruesome image of what the grimdark is meant to look and feel like.

Another faction which makes excellent use of the unmade theme is the Flesh-Eater Courts. These once lordly and proud households have been reduced to half-dead, flesh-craving, filthy creatures. The so-called 'lords' which rule over these rotting legions are no better than the ghouls they command. Their grip on reality has slipped to the extent that they cannot see themselves as they are, nor the world around them. A good example of this can be seen in Josh Reynolds's novel *Nagash: The Undying King*, which introduces factions that eat flesh, particularly in a cannibalistic way.

The eating of human flesh is a key theme in a lot of Early Medieval folklore. It is used in religious works such as the poem *Andreas* [an Old English 1,722 line poem that tells the story of St. Andrew, as he rescues St. Matthew from a cannibalistic race called Mermedonians - Volitare] to mythological ones such as *Beowulf*. The act of drinking blood, the prerogative of the vampire, does not seem as egregious as the consumption of flesh, cannibalism being seen as the lowest level a human being can stoop to. It is a process which totally robs the human being of their humanity or soul.

Darkness goes hand in hand with the theme of the unmade. The fallen biblical angels in Old English are often described, as are their surroundings, as *blæc*. While this does mean black, or dark, it means it in the true colour spectrum sense. In this Old English context it describes the absolute absence of colour, true darkness. Darkness is one of Warhammer's leading themes.

In the 5th Edition Codex: Dark Eldar, there is a quote: "*There is a very good reason why so many of the galaxy's cultures and societies are afraid of the dark.*" This quote is in reference to one of the most sinister and unknown groups in the galaxy, the Mandrakes. These beings appear to be formed of darkness and are able to move through shadows. They are often employed by the Drukhari for various devious actions, though it is said that they are feared even by the murdering, twisted beings who employ them. Mandrakes epitomise this ever and omnipresent darkness lurking around every corner. Where they have come from, what they are, what they truly want are all unknowns, making them infinitely more frightening.

In Grettir's Saga, an old Norse tale, the mighty warrior Grettir fights a revenant named Glámr during the night. Although he eventually defeats the creature, he is left with this curse, "*This weird I lay on thee, ever in those days to see these eyes with thine eyes, and thou wilt find it hard to be alone and that shall drag thee unto death.*" It is said that "*This sight was the only one that had ever scared [Grettir]*", and that "*He had become a man so scared of the dark that he dared not travel alone after darkness fell.*" Warhammer delights in indulging in the fear of darkness. From the Night Lords, to the Drukhari, to the Servants of Nagash, to the worshipers of the Dark Gods, darkness reigns throughout the Warhammer worlds. Many factions use darkness as a weapon, a means by which they can haunt and hunt their victims. It is one thing to be slain by an enemy in the day, in the heat of battle, it is another to be dragged off blind in the night to be the plaything, or worse, for some unknown, shapeless and malevolent entity.

The Darkness of Folklore plays a key part in Warhammer settings; we have obvious references that fit in with modern trends in monsters, such as the old Vampire Counts. But, in pre-enlightenment folklore, we are presented with a far more sinister and grimdark world. One where death and darkness await just out of sight. The Warhammer worlds make key use of this from the flesh-eating to the darkness dwelling.

Folklore and Warhammer work together well, as both worlds nestle nastily into each other the Folkhammer aesthetic arises and inveigles its way into your imagination and emerges into your hobby. Let us see what old nightmares people can come up with from the dark ages of myth.

ARTIST FOCUS // JOHAN KØLKJÆR

JOHAN KØLKJÆR





01

In the Grimdark Webway...

This army started with a desire to create some grimdark Eldar. The Imperium has been explored by many talented hobbyists (Iron Sleet and the INQ28 Community etc.) and authors (Dan Abnett, looking at you) but the Eldar/Aeldari have not received as much attention, still being lost in the 'elves in space' category. I love Oldhammer and *Rogue Trader* but feel a lot of the old Eldar miniatures don't really fit with the grimdark setting.

If I am truly being honest, my Eldar army probably started when I saw Jes Goodwin's concept sketches in *White Dwarf* back in 1990! That led to me building a brightly coloured Eldar army back in the nineties that has since been neglected for a long time, until I decided to bring them back on the table. I quickly realised that my current vision of the race was different

from the one my younger self imagined and I had to start from scratch. Still, I went back to Goodwin's concept drawing of the original Farseer helmet which I felt had the right feel of mysticism for the Aeldari.

That became my starting point and consequently I began looking for bits. The Drukhari and their blank facemask helmets was the obvious place to go but from there I started looking at Age of Sigmar Undead and the Daughters of Khaine, which led to the army including bits from a lot of different ranges. I tried to avoid bare heads to keep them more alien and get away from the fantasy elves reference. The helmets on the rangers are bits from a Forge World Wave Serpent used for heads, as they have a clear reference to the old Farseer aesthetic. I included death mask faces on the wraithblades to point toward

past glories or ancestors remembered through funeral masks or effigies placed on living statues.

My approach to making models is very intuitive. I don't sketch or write background stories but pick up bits and models that I like and try to make them fit into my army projects. A good example of this is my Farseer model that I have mounted on a giant cat [01]. A Mindstealer Sphiranx, a Genestealer Magus collar, a vampire dress and an Idoneth head are all favourite bits that fit into my vocabulary of the Aeldari. The cat is a nice reference to the old *Rogue Trader* gyrix, the collar had a weird mystic feel to it, the dress gave a feeling of old aristocracy or pride and the blind head fit well with a Farseer only using her psychic powers to 'see' (and maybe the cat's third eye?). She is the only model in the army without a helmet and



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counts as a Farseer Skyrunner in 40K games.

For the Harlequins I knew I had to do something special. I do stage design for theatre in my professional life, so I wanted to enhance the theatre or performative side of them. Also, I didn't want the classical theatre reference to be too obvious (you have a lot of that in the Imperium and even more in the INQ28 movement) but I wanted to make a stage for them that fit into the aesthetic of the Aeldari. A Starweaver imagined as some sort of spinning, flying web-portal they could perform and attack from. It was a fairly complex conversion, where I used the stairs from two Bloodwrack Shrines and two plastic spoons to get a mirror effect in the build. The whole idea was not to have a front and back of the model. Also, the positioning of the harlequins on it help to blur the sense of direction in the model.

The Solitaire was also heavily converted and again it started with a model I really liked - the Mistweaver Saih from Warhammer Quest: Silver Tower. The Solitaire plays the part of Slaanesh so I mixed in parts from the Masque of Slaanesh to emphasize that. Doing the Solitaire opened for more ideas and there is loads of potential in the Harlequins to explore further...

When it comes to painting, I always want to be as efficient as possible. It takes a long time to paint an army and it is crucial to get some painted models on the table fast to keep the momentum. Also, I have so many ideas for armies and models, so if I dwell too long on each model, I would not have time to make them all before I die. For this army I wanted an ancient feeling, more mysterious and more

- 01 *The blind farseer*
- 02 *The entire Aeldari warhost*
- 03 & 04 *Close-up of blind farseer*
- 05 *Dire Avengers squad*
- 06 *Guardian squad*
- 07 *Harlequin stage*
- 08 *Harlequins*
- 09 *Warwalker*
- 10 *Wraithblades*
- 11 *Rangers*



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alien. The overall colour scheme focuses on the contrast between the shiny black face masks reflecting their lost empire, the stars, and the dusty, old and crumbling wraithbone of their armour and constructs. I've added a few brighter colours for the spirit stones and unit specific markings to make them pop on the tabletop. Pretty simple and effective.

I start most of my models with what I call an expressive undercoat. It is a normal zenith undercoat with a darker colour from below and a lighter colour from the top. On top of that I use an old coarse brush or toothbrush to "stain" the model with similar colours. For this army I used a brown and white spray for the zenith and a brown and sand colour for the stains. This gives a nice texture to work from and was the base colour for the wraithbone. I proceed to block in the rest of the colours with thinned

down paint to keep some of the texture from the undercoat. Then the whole model is given a brown/black wash (Army Painter Strong Tone). I do a maximum of two highlights for each colour painted on with a loose hand to keep the paint job alive. I'm not really interested in the perfect smooth blend or super crisp edge highlight and even though perfect technical skill can be fascinating I find it's not necessarily interesting. I always prefer a suggestive visual approach in painting, and concept, to keep the model alive with some room for interpretation.

I am, first and foremost, an army painter. I usually get an idea for a model and then I think "wouldn't it be cool with a whole unit of these" and then "I wonder what the rest of the army would look like..." and from that point there is no turning back. So, looking back it is nice to see the initial idea expanded to a whole army and

see how themes and aesthetics become clearer and evolve for each unit added. Eventually, I will definitely add the old Farseer model to the force as an homage to Jes Goodwin's work and to complete the circle.



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THE FORGE // PAINTING SKIN ON HORROR MONSTERS

PAINTING SKIN ON HORROR MONSTERS

By Doug Mueller



Hello. My name is Doug, but you may know me from Instagram as @sleepykamistudios, or as Kamigoye across various 28-related Discord channels. I got my start in miniature painting as an exercise of therapy, but now I paint and model full-time. My favourite subjects are horror and grim dark. In this article I'll be guiding you through my process of painting skin on horror monsters. With a clear plan and end-goal in mind, we can get great results in a few simple, easy steps.

Materials & paints used

- Black & White Primer
- Dark, Saturated Purple (Vallejo Model Air Hexed Lichen)
- Bright, Saturated Pink (Citadel Emperor's Children)
- Red Ink (Vallejo Game Ink Red)
- Pale Skin Tone (Citadel Pallid Wych Flesh)
- Medium/Dark Skin Tone (Citadel Reikland Fleshshade)
- Magenta Wash (Citadel Carroburg Crimson)
- Dark Oil/Enamel Wash (AK Interactive Streaking Grime)
- Miscellaneous other paints, depending on your own model.

We begin our model by applying a fast and loose zenithal highlight [01]. This is as easy as spraying or painting the entire model in black primer and then spraying white from above at about a 45 degree angle. Feel free to exaggerate the lighting a bit at this stage - we just want a good baseline to see where our highlights and shadows will go as we progress. I like to take a photograph at this stage to refer back to as I continue, and recommend you do the same. It will come in handy later.

Next, we're doing a process called undercoating. This involves coating the model with the colour we'll be using as our deepest shadows [02]. I'm using Vallejo Model Air Hexed Lichen, a highly-saturated royal purple. This will keep the recesses of our figure dark, but still maintain a depth of colour that will add interest. Any dark, saturated colour will do! Try green for sickly skin, blue for cooler or dead flesh - the list goes on. Just be sure that your coverage is smooth and consistent.

More saturation is what we're focusing on next [03]. We accomplish this with bubblegum pink (Citadel Emperor's Children), which will act as a



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warm mid-tone and also simulate sub-surface scattering. For this model I'm going for a paler finished look. If you prefer a medium skin tone, you can substitute a red orange - for darker skin you can use a reddish burgundy. Again, we're looking for as saturated a colour as we can get. Whichever colour you choose, we're applying it in a zenithal manner once more. If you have an airbrush it's as easy as applying at a 45 degree angle again. If you don't, grab a drybrush and refer to the photograph of your zenithal prime. Go fairly heavy-handed at this stage - we're still early in the process and fixing mistakes as we go. You're looking for a smooth transition from your dark tone to your mid-tone.

With the pink on, we should have a clear gradient between light and shadow [04]. Now we're going to add some more depth to the skin by taking a thin glaze of red (Vallejo Game Ink Red) to the undersides of the model and the recesses. The end goal may look a little overdone at this point, but once we add oils later we'll be thankful for this step. Now is the time to basecoat the rest of the model and clean up overspray if you used an airbrush. I kept it simple with mine, as we're primarily focusing on skin for this tutorial.

Time to make the skin look like skin [05]. I took a very thin glaze of Pallid Wych Flesh (think more dirty water than runny paint) and applied it over multiple layers. You want to be painting up toward this colour, focusing gradually toward the high points of your model. Your paint should be thin enough that you can see the guiding layers underneath, but you can also refer back to your zenithal guide photograph. If you take your brush and swipe it on your hand or paper towel after getting paint, it will still apply thinly enough for our purposes but not take ages to dry. I was applying subsequent layers approximately every 15 seconds or so. You can also use a hair dryer to speed up the process, but make sure you're on low heat and from quite some distance. Our paint is thin and we don't want it to ripple out away from the model.

To round out the skin, after the previous step is completely dry, we're going to pin wash [06]. This follows the same principle as using a wash as normal, only here we're focusing on specific places. Take a skin tone of your choice and thin it to the same consistency as the previous step. You can use whatever colour suits your needs



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- I went with a darker tone (Citadel Reikland Fleshshade). Again, we're applying multiple layers, this time focusing on nipples, knuckles, elbows etc. Basically anywhere that has a high flow of blood or naturally has more skin pigmentation.

Here we arrive at a good stopping point [07]. If you're happy with how your model looks and want a clean, pale hide, you can clean up and highlight the non-skin parts. Throw a brighter highlight across the top of your figure's skin, and pat yourself on the back. If you want to continue on and give your work a grimmer, grungier mood, grab some enamel or oil wash of your choice.

I used AK Interactive Streaking Grime, but any colour with a red-ish or brown-ish hue will work. Have a couple of cosmetic sponges or an old, soft rag handy - we'll be swapping quickly between painting and wiping from here. I applied my enamel in a thin layer across the entire model with the airbrush, but anything will work. Quickly take your cleaning rag/sponge and dab away, removing most of the wash. You can leave more on the model's clothes, metallic areas and the like, but the skin should be mostly cleared off when you're done. The end goal for this step is lightly-tinted skin and heavily-weathered grunge elsewhere.

The penultimate step is to look at your model with scrutiny [08]! Clean up any missed areas or misplaced paint. If your skin looks too desaturated, consider a second oil wash of something like magenta, or a careful drybrush of a more saturated skin tone. For mine, I pinwashed some Carroburg Crimson across the knees, face, and deeper recesses of the model. If you want to apply any final touches, such as blood, mud splatter, dirt, etc. now is the time.

Finally, paint your base rim in a colour of your choosing, slap some matte varnish on your model if you like and congratulate yourself on a job well done. If you followed my tutorial, I'd love to see your work! Tag me at @sleepykamistudios on Instagram or @Kamigoye#2367 on Discord. Thank you very much for reading my guide.



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INTERVIEW // JOHAN EGERKRANS

JOHAN EGERKRANS



Q. How did you originally get started in the hobby and can you recall what it was that first interested you?

A. I remember the exact moment I first laid my eyes on a Games Workshop miniature. I was ten years old and visited a friend's house, and he and his brother had some of Kev Adams' old space orks. They were the coolest things I'd ever seen. And then they showed me the old Ork sourcebook *'Ere We Go* and their modest collection of White Dwarf mags, and I was hooked.

A lot of the appeal was the illustrations. The mind-bogglingly detailed pencil drawings of Paul Bonner had a huge impact on me. These were images that told stories - instead of just showing a bunch of bellowing monsters with explosions in the background like modern GW art, they often focused on ork life outside (or just to the side) of the theatre of war. Images full of character and that special wry sense of humour that have always made orkoids so dear to me.

Later on I started to appreciate the other stuff - Chaos, the Imperium and all that. The weird daemonic hellscapes of John Blanche, Adrian Smith and Ian Miller. But the Space Orks were my first warhammer love and my gateway into the hobby. It was very much about the lore and the books for me initially - painting the actual miniatures came second.

Q. You are known as one of the originals in the INQ28 scene. What was it that attracted you about the INQ28 style?

A. It was the Blanche-ness of it. The older I get, the more I've come to appreciate how integral John's artwork is to Warhammer 40,000. He's the Alpha and the Omega of everything Warhammer. There's just something special about John's artwork that has always captivated me - it's like the images are bursting apart at the seams with an overload of sheer insane creativity.

I painted miniatures on and off since my early teens, but always felt a certain disconnect between the gritty insanity of the illustrations in the source books and the models themselves. And then about ten years ago, I stumbled upon this bunch of maniacs that converted and painted models that actually looked like they had stepped right out of a John Blanche painting. I was tremendously inspired and slipped into something of an INQ28 frenzy.



I started up my blog The Convertorum (back then called Officio Convertorum) and in the first year I published over 160 posts. It was one of the most creative periods I've ever experienced - not just concerning hobby output - but also professionally, as it's the same year I wrote and illustrated my first book, *Vaesen*.

Anyway - through the blog I got invited to join the INQ28 group over on Ammobunker where I got to know all the main players on the scene - not least John himself.

Q. Over the years you have taken part in some fantastic collaborative gaming events, do you have any great stories and highlights you could share with us?

A. There's been so many it's hard to choose one in particular. The big events like Pilgrim or the Mordheim MMXX in Helsinki, where basically everyone in the scene shows up, have been amazing. They're like small conventions where everyone hangs out, chats about Warhammer

lore and have games with our tiny scraggly miniatures.

But if I have to choose one, it's got to be my first trip to Nottingham in the summer of 2013. It was a much smaller, more intimate affair. But just getting invited after only having been on the Ammobunker for a few months meant so much. And then seeing Warhammer World for the first time, meeting John and some of the others from the Ammobunker forum in person, and getting the chance to play a game on the then already legendary Yggdrasilum-board was so much fun. I had a smile on my face the whole weekend.

Q. Nowadays you mostly paint space marines (with little detours here and there), what is it about the space marines that you like?

A. For one thing it's their 'iconicness'. They are the poster children of Warhammer 40,000 for a good reason - it is a very strong design with an instantly recognisable silhouette. From a



background perspective they also embody 40K's main themes of a satirically regressive authoritarian future dominated by religious orthodoxy and militarism. They are basically medieval knight templars with guns, which of course is awesome but also a bit silly if you stop and really think about it (which is what Warhammer is all about).

They're also really fun to paint. They're pretty simple models with large flat surfaces that you as a painter and modeler can choose to embellish as much as you want. I vastly prefer nice clean models like marines or nighthaunts, that I can 'clutter up' myself, compared to more overworked designs covered in details straight out of the box.

Q. And finally, if you could add one thing to either 40K or AoS, what would it be?

A. I kinda miss the humour and eloquence of the older publications. I used to love reading the codexes. They were brilliant books with well written, highly entertaining prose and stuffed with interesting concepts. I always hated it when people dismissed them as 'fluff'. These days I feel the sourcebooks have indeed devolved into mere fluff - there's not enough thought put into them and they lack that style and jet black humour. It's just page after page listing different battles.

Warhammer should be darkly funny. Not necessarily whimsical and silly in the way of the space orks of the Rogue Trader era (even though I love that stuff myself), but I feel the writers of the current source books have forgotten that Warhammer in general, and 40K in particular, started out as intrinsically satirical worlds, cut from the same cloth as the 2000 AD comics of the same time. Warhammer 40,000 is part of an inherently British movement within science fiction, like *Doctor Who*, *Judge Dredd* and *Nemesis the Warlock*, and they all share a similar undercurrent of dark wit. But that's sort of become lost along the way.

As for adding new factions... GW is revisiting so many of the old Rogue Trader era concepts I really can't complain. We're about to see the release of a new Squat range for the first time in 25 years for chrissakes. From what I've read so far, they have put a lot of thought into the stuntie's background, so my interest is well and truly piqued.



CHAMPIONS OF THE SKULLSPLITTERS ARENA

By Nic Evans

Welcome, champions, to the Arena of the Skullsplitters. Only the most skilled, most cunning, most skullsplitting warriors can hope to survive and claim the title of Archsplitter, Bane of Skulls, Ruler of the Tower of Pain!

Champions of the Skullsplitters Arena (COTSSA!) is a tactile, tactical game of gladiatorial combat for two or more players. To play COTSSA! You'll need a few things:

- A copy of these rules
- The board and game pieces provided over the next few pages
- A miniature for each champion (beads, tokens or the teeth of the slain also work)
- A coin of some sort (taken from a defeated enemy is preferable, but not essential)

The Game

In COTSSA! each player controls a team of champions who have come to fight in the Arena of the Skullsplitters. Each player is trying to kill as many of their opponent's gladiators as possible to bring them one step closer to claiming the title of Archsplitter.

Building your Champions

Before a game, each player must build a team of champions - fierce warriors who will fight to the death for glory. Each player has 18 points to build their champions with.

Each champion has the following stats:

- **SKULLSPLITTING** (S)
- **DODGESPLITTING** (D)
- **MOVING** (M)

Each of these skills has a level between 1 and 3. A champion's points cost is the total value of all its skills - so a champion with the stats:

S3 D3 M3 would cost 9 points.

S and **D** represent how many times a champion

may attempt to land or block a hit during combat. **M** represents how many spaces a champion may move during their turn.

Each character also has 10 skulls (to be split!) that represent how much damage they can take before they are out of the game.

Setup

Once both players have built their champions, they are placed in the arena. Each player takes it in turns to place a champion in one of the empty hexes of the arena until all champions have been placed. The player with the lowest number of champions goes first. If both players have the same number of champions, the player with the most letters of the word Skullsplitter in their name goes first.

The Turn

During a turn, starting with the player with the lowest number of champions on the board. Each player may activate half of their champions (rounding up).

An active champion may make 3 actions per turn. Champions may make their actions in any order they like.

Moving

During an action, a champion may move as many spaces as their **M** score allows. Champions can move in any direction. Champions may not move through other champions and cannot occupy the same space as another champion.

Skullsplitting

During an action, a Champion may attempt to split the skull of any enemy Champion in an adjacent space to them (direction doesn't matter).

To do so, the attacking champion should place their coin on the bottom of the skullsplitting

meter. The attacker then decides which section of the target they intend to hit and must then flick their coin, aiming to land on their target spot. If they land the majority of the coin in the target spot, the attack is a success and splits that number of skulls from their opponent.

If they fail to land on their target spot, the attack has failed.

A Champion has as many attempts to hit their target per action as their **S** score. So a champion with **S1** may only attempt to hit their target once per action, whilst a champion with **S3** may attempt 3 times to hit their target.

Once the target is hit, the attack ends - you can't hit multiple times in a single action. The coin must land on your CHOSEN target. Too far or not far enough are failures.

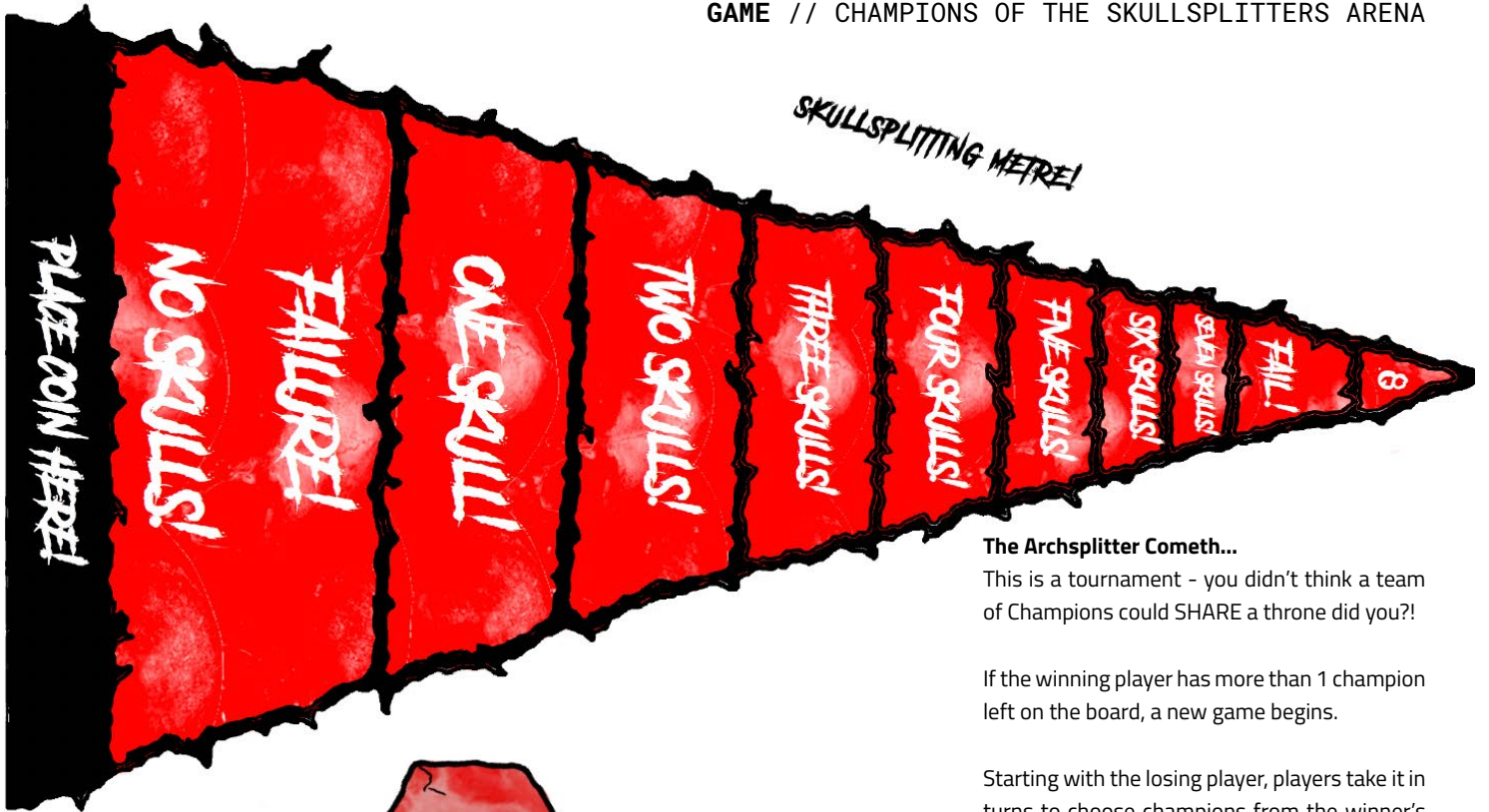
The champion being attacked may use an action to defend if they haven't acted already (this does use up their actions for the turn).

To do so, they must attempt to flick their coin at the same target as their opponent - if they succeed, they have successfully blocked the attack and their skull remains unsplit.

A champion may make as many attempts to block per action as their **D** score.

DAMAGE

Each target on the skullsplitting meter has a skull rating. A successful attack by one champion removes that number of skulls from their enemy. Once a champion has lost all their skulls, they have been **Skullsplit** and are removed from the arena. The player with the most champions left on the board after 10 turns is the winner.



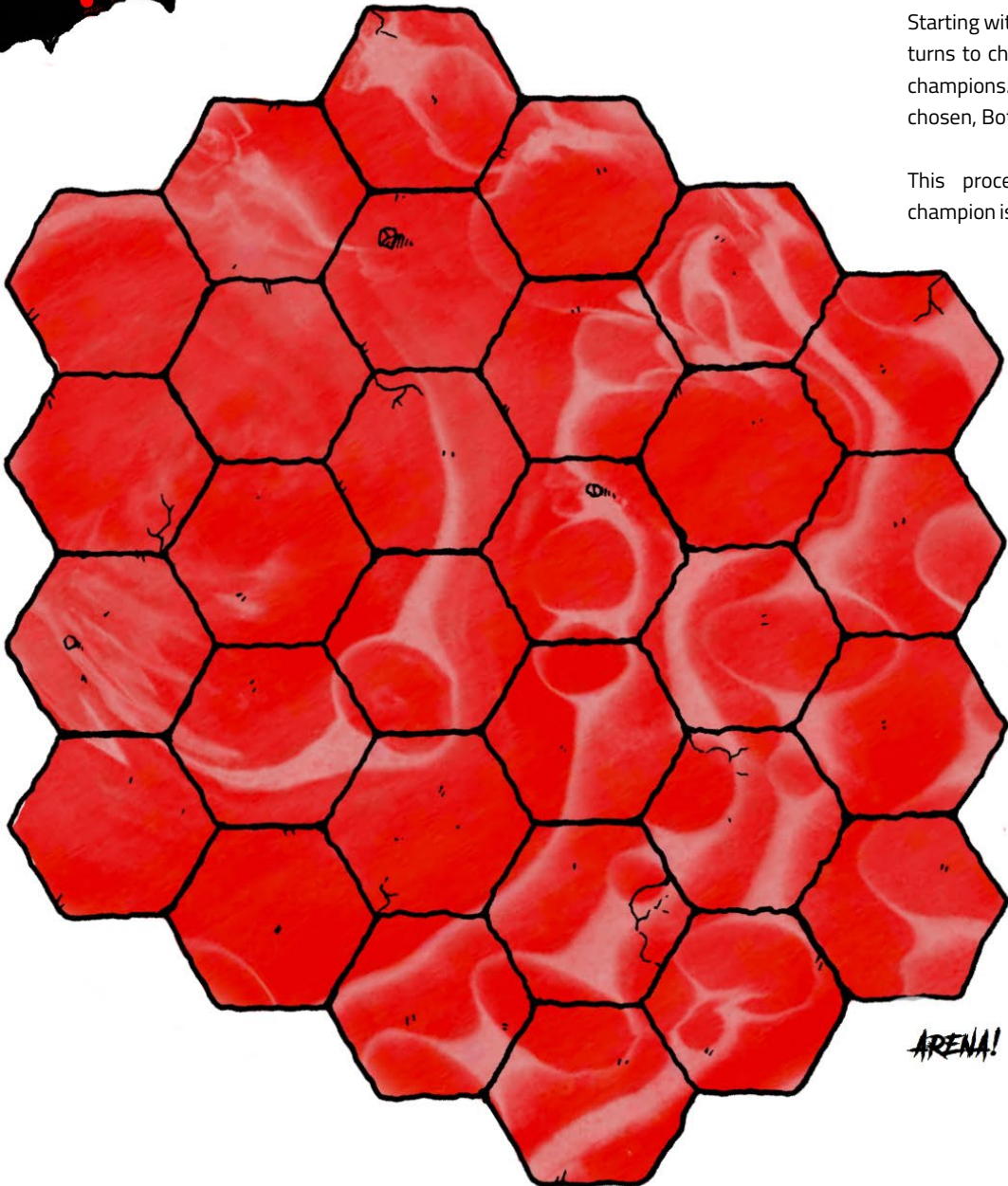
The Archsplitter Cometh...

This is a tournament - you didn't think a team of Champions could SHARE a throne did you?!

If the winning player has more than 1 champion left on the board, a new game begins.

Starting with the losing player, players take it in turns to choose champions from the winner's champions. Once all champions have been chosen, Both players begin a new game.

This process is repeated until only one champion is left to be crowned **ARCHSPLITTER!**



ARTIST FOCUS // LUKASZ KOWALCZUK

LUKASZ KOWALCZUK





I am almost 40 years old and feel like I have been travelling in some kind of circle. When I grew up, we had less access to pop culture because of the political and economical situation in Poland. I come from the generation that consumed everything 'Western' in sight: books, comics, movies, cartoons, music, video and tabletop games. Access slowly improved and by the beginning of high school, after playing *Talisman* bootlegs and some RPGs, I got into wargaming.

This was a short romance though. The choice of the game was bad - *Warhammer Fantasy Battle 5th Edition* was expensive and played on a large scale. Most teenagers do not have the sort of disposable income to sustain the hobby. By the end of 90s I had almost forgotten about the whole thing. I still have the box with Bretonnian archers and knights somewhere...

Fast forward a quarter of a century. Some time ago I started to play RPGs again and recently I've got into wargaming. Again. But this time my approach is (hopefully) smarter. For someone who loves independent stuff and do-it-yourself (DIY) spirit, tabletop games have a lot to offer. While I write these words there are a pile of sprues and figures lying next to me, waiting for assembling, kit-bashing, painting and whatever I would like to do with them. It could be *Frostgrave*, *Mirliton/Grenadier*, *CP Models*, *Warlord*, *Wargames Atlantic*, used *Games Workshop* or even some *Keshi minis*. My soon-to-be armies for *Space Weirdos*, *Sword Weirdos* [both miniature skirmish games written by Casey Garske - *Volitare*] and any other skirmish or role-playing game.

SPACE WEIRDOS

A SKIRMISH HEARTBREAKER





The Island OF LOST SOULS

3

COMPATIBLE WITH
**DCC
RPG**



Since 2017 comics and illustrations are my main source of income. At some point (probably when my interest in RPGs came back) I decided to try my luck illustrating tabletop games. I think that too much art in this field looks... nice. Just nice. I mean stuff created by talented and skilled artists who can't show their full potential because of market restrictions. It's safe and polished but also generic and really boring. Art becomes content. I can't say who painted what, even if I like certain illustrations, because often the artist is not even credited. Thankfully there's still a need for style, slime and sorcery. It was a good idea to show my art outside the comics bubble. Despite my initial concerns I am doing fine and the work you see here is only beginning!

So, the circle I have made is not regressive. In my case, it's brought me to a wonderful place of creativity and it is a great feeling.

MARBLE TO SPRUE: MINIATURES AS ART

By Cole Griffin



01

Two warriors stand with weapons and wills readied upon battlefields separated by immeasurable oceans of time and space. A boy fighting a giant, and a son betraying his father. Their steely gazes are set upon sworn enemies, and although the foes are unseen, the very air surrounding our combatants is thick with the ethos and myths of their titanic duels. Larger-than-life hands grip instruments of war, displaying strength beyond that of a mortal man. Visages amplified, so that all may see the very souls of these fighters burning with the fires of war. So legendary are our warriors, so vivid are their endeavours in our minds, that no one could deny the tension and energy their effigies instil in physical form.

This is the power that artwork has over the minds of humanity, no matter the medium nor the scale. Whether marble or resin, oil or acrylic, hero or villain, the depiction of the world around us and the unseen vastness of human imagination has poured from human hands for millennia. The self-same inspiration to



02

- 01 Michelangelo, David, Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence, Italy, 1501
- 02 Samsonosmas, Warmaster Horus, Redacted, 2010s
- 03 Francisco Goya, Saturn Devouring His Son, Museo del Prado, Madrid, 1819
- 04 Mermeboy, Crypt Horror Conversion, Redacted, 2019

capture these titanic moments of myth in the tangible world that gripped an Italian sculpture from the 15th century are identical to a contemporary miniature artist in the American mid-west. Miniatures today are used for tabletop wargaming, role-playing and display purposes. However, no matter the manner in which the miniature is employed, its most core identity is that of artwork. In this article, we will examine the validity of classifying miniatures as art through the lens of objectivity, providing examples of artistic evolution throughout history and how they mirror the changes we have seen to miniatures in the last half century.

Miniature painting, as it pertains to tabletop wargaming, has been a hobby and an art form for approximately the last four decades. Artwork, on the other hand, has arguably existed for the past forty-five thousand years. What fascinates me is that the evolution of modern miniatures so closely mirrors the evolution of art throughout history, just on a smaller scale. The gradual improvements made on previously established techniques and skills, as well as cultural shifts in mindset and mood are as evident in museum galleries as they are on hobby benches worldwide.

Early statues found throughout the world depict static images of ancient kings, queens and warriors. Likewise, early miniatures have a static, 'mono-pose' air about them. Everything seemed to be smooshed together and still - stoic and eternal. The importance of what or who is depicted far outweighed the how, generally ruling out any life-like semblance and high levels of detail in the iconography in favour of characterised and representational appearances. It was just as important for ancient civilisations to have physical representations of their peoples as it is for us to have models on the table, in spite of 'mundane' appearances.

Further along in our parallel time lines, sculptures of antiquity and modern miniature sculpts began to take on more dynamic appearances. Hips and shoulders tilted, heads inclined, joints bent and lifelike weight distribution breathe life into the pieces. This is a term referred to as *contrapposto*, meaning 'counterpoise'. The addition of tension-filled kinetic energy can infer the sculptures mid-action or in a natural relaxed state. What is important to note here is the shift in



03



04

appearance and approach to the artworks. While the who and what remain important to the pieces, the how has become the critical and interesting distinction in their appearance and presentation. This revolution in sculptural mastery, which brought the subjects to life, now allowed for a greater creative freedom to start expressing movement, action and naturalistic presence.

For years, it seemed that mankind would strive for more and more lifelike appearances in their artistic depictions of the world. Oil paintings and marble sculptures were becoming photo-realistic even before the invention of photography. Meticulous detail and care in every brush stroke and chisel groove was rendered a golden era of what most would consider 'high art'. For centuries, a single defining characteristic was the goal of artists: perfection. So too, in miniature painting, were artists striving to capitalise on new materials and media in which to create perfect blends, perfect volumetric representation and perfect universal lighting (commonly best represented in the 'Eavy Metal style'). While there is certainly nothing wrong with this approach in either conventional/classical or miniature art, the seemingly endless chase of the golden-ideal inspired contrary movements in impressionism.

Lighting and colour remain paramount in both styles, but the shift from focusing effort on a realistic interpretation of a piece to a greater sense of emotion, mood and tone through colour and dramatic lighting. Evocative, thought provoking and exploring the *why*. The use of strong contrasts between light and dark is referred to in art as *Chiaroscuro*, which is obviously important in miniature painting due to scale/contrast, but when pushed further in conjunction with more stylised painting styles, it also emphasises the mood and tone of a piece. More contemporary art, both traditional and miniature, also saw a marked shift in focus to worldly subject matter, seemingly tired of the years spent idealising gods and kings. Instead, they began choosing to be inspired by the mundane and the macabre. And the why.

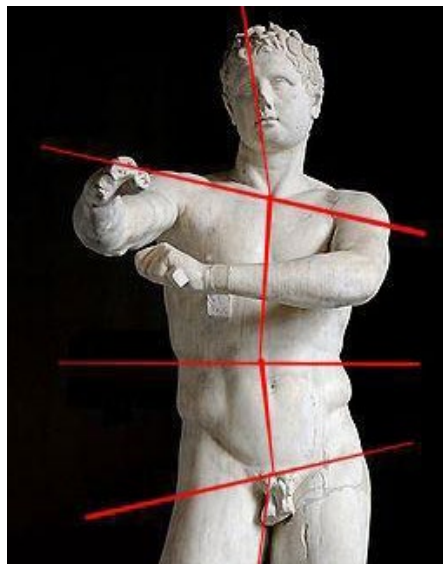
Every time you roll a ball of Milliput between



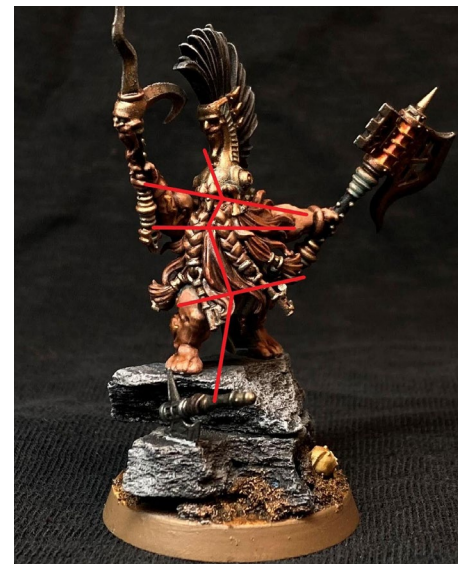
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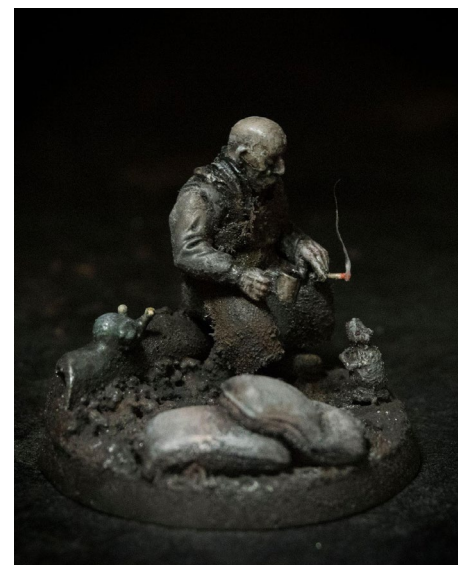
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your fingers and envision its final form as a writhing tentacle or a flowing cloak, are you not as visionary as a renaissance artist studying a block of marble? When you consider the lighting and basing of your warband, are you not as a director, setting the stage of a theatrical play? Let us briefly turn the tables and take into consideration once more Michaelangelo's 17 ft tall statue. Is this statue, for example, not a 'miniature' in the larger cultural idea representing the story of David and Goliath?

I have obviously painted with very broad brush strokes in my summary of miniatures as art. I wanted to try and summarise a very condensed history of art and superimpose it over the time line of table-top miniatures and the hobbies of sculpture and painting. The more I tried to find minis to suit my juxtapositions to examples of classical art, the more I came to realise my exercise in futility. I don't simply view miniatures as art - they *are* art. They are a visual and physical medium through which humans express concepts, emotions and ideas. The notion that scale has anything to do with labelling them as art or not is a ridiculous idea and should not be entertained.

05 *Statue Group of Nen-kheft-ka and His Wife, Nefer-shemes, Egyptian, ca. 2350 BC (Old Kingdom) The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, United States*

06 *Rogue Trader, Arbites, England, 1980s*

07 *Lysippos 'Apoxyomenos', Vatican City, Roman copy (1st century BC) of a Greek bronze statue from 320 BC*

08 *colecifer_xxviii, Slayer, Redacted, 2021*

09 *Vincent van Gogh, Skull of Skeleton with Burning Cigarette, Amsterdam, 1885*

10 *ikletu_miniatures, The Litany of Mandatory Respite, Redacted, 2021*

11 *12kouga, Vermes, Redacted, 2021*

12 *Katydid (Umaoi-mushi); Centipede, (Mukade), from the Picture Book of Crawling Creatures (Ehon mushi erami), Japan 1788*

13 *Christopher Richard Wynne Nevinson, Returning to the Trenches, London, 1916*

14 *symptomatic_chaos, Ordo Pikers, Redacted, 2021*



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Once again, may the blessings of the Machine God be upon all our contributors.
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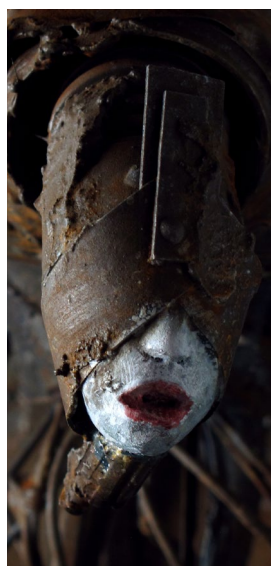
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