

IRONWATCH



**Issue
15**

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ABYSSAL TIDINGS**A Message from the Editor**

Welcome back to the latest installment of your favorite, the **IRONWATCH** fan magazine!

This month we have more amazing Iron Forge minis paintings, as well as a how-to article for helping to get the most out of your Undead models in Kings of War. In addition, Breach continues in another thrilling chapter; Be on the lookout for the incredible conclusion next issue! Finally, we have some short stories from some new authors, as well as an RPG set in the Warpath universe to play with you and your friends. You don't even need a Game Master!

As always, if you'd like to contribute, please feel free to either PM me on the forums ('darkPrince010'), or email me at winslows010@yahoo.com to submit your articles and/or pictures.

Thanks for reading, and whether you're new or old, Welcome to the Watch!

-Austin

Apologies to Giuseppe Aquino for misspelling your name, and thank you for letting us know!

Cover art by Boris Samec

Title art by Mark Smith

*Please note that, while we here at **Ironwatch** attempt to deliver you the best products and ideas we can, we cannot guarantee the balance of any scenarios or special rules presented herein. If you find any errors, grammar mistakes, or rule imbalances, please contact us on the Mantic Forums (Look for the discussion labeled "Ironwatch Issue X Feedback") and let us know what we could do to improve your fan-produced magazine. If you are interested in writing, illustrating, or editing for our magazine, please let us know on the feedback discussion as well so you can get in on the action!*

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THE IRON FORGE

Welcome back, and gather around the Forge!

This time around at the Iron Forge we've got :

- Matt Gilbert with a superb goblin hero
- Darren Lysenko with the completed and amazing Wip the Half-Cast,
- Nick Williams with a stunning Ogre as well as a Dwarf hero

Be sure to let them know what you think of these outstanding paintjobs!



By Paul Scott



By Claudia Zuminich

DARREN ŁYSENKO



Kickstarter logo on Wip's scroll - my own personal nod to Mantic's unofficial (i.e. in my own head) status as the Kings of the Kickstarter.

I hope you all like him - and if you do, keep an eye out in the coming months as I'm hoping to write a step-by-step painting article for this chap very soon.

Regular readers of Ironwatch (and if you're not, why not?) may remember my article detailing the creation process for this conversion of Wip the Half-Cast from last month's issue. As you can see, I've been quite busy since then - he's gone from being a glued together pile of metal, plastic and exploded Orclings to a completed miniature - and I really am quite proud of the result.

I think for most people, the 'hook' for the miniature will be the Object Source Lighting effect emanating from the flames coming from his staff, but for me personally I like the tiny background details, like the Orcling warming his backside on the ethereal blue fire and the



DARREN ŁYSENKO



MATT € GILBERT



Large Infantry models. After mulling it over for a few days and getting nowhere I eventually stumbled on the bags of goblin hero models I'd picked up in one of the Kickstarter shipments. There they were staring up at me and crying out for some colour. How could I say no?

I'll paint one of these models each month and for this first one I've opted for the champion. He's a devious looking fellow with a massive sword and a wicked glint in his eye. I decided that red and yellow might look good as the bright colours might suit his almost swashbuckling pose. Each of the two colours is present in three places on the model to provide some balance for the eye. The

metallics are nothing fancy – just gold and silver paints with washes. The green skin used a GW green wash and the yellow was done with a golden yellow tone and Army Painter "soft tone" mixed with a little orange ink. Highlights are typically the base colour lightened a fraction for the first level and then one or two further lighter stages again.

Overall I think it looks quite "old school"

After a month's hiatus due to a surprise holiday for my wife I'm back this time with the change of genre I promised. Having decided to switch to working on a Kings of War model this month I was then left with the daunting task of deciding which of my hundreds of models to actually paint.

I toyed with the idea of an ogre captain or perhaps a troll, initially fancying one of the

MATT € GILBERT

which is fine by me. It's sort of what I grew up with so I'm happy with him.

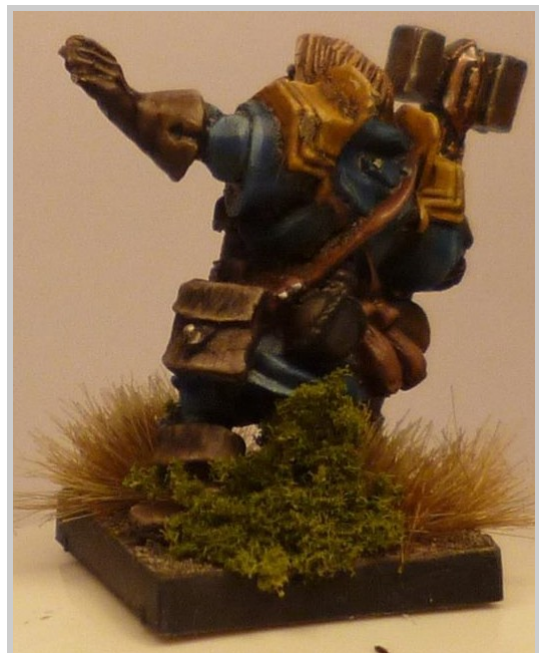
I think next month I'll tackle the goblin Wiz; as long as he doesn't insist on vanishing in a puff of foul smelling purple smoke every time I go near him...



NICK WILLIAMS



NICK WILLIAMS



ASSORTED NEWS



Ironwatch on Mantic Radio

Ohiohammer was kind enough to host our editor, Austin Peasley, on the upcoming Episode 5 of the Mantic Radio! Be sure to check them out [here!](#)

The Invasion is Almost Over

The Mar Attacks Kickstarter is ending soon! Be sure to jump in while you can to take advantage of the amazing deals on terrain, models, saucers, and all the giant stompy robots and mutated enormous fleas you might need!

For those of you of the Dreadball or Deadzone persuasion, don't forget that all of the terrain is compatible with Deadzone terrain, and that they have released both a Martian Dreadball team as well as Faction Decks for the Martians and



THE NECROMANCER

By Patrick McCabe

Aodhan flashed a devilishly handsome smile as he watched the armies clash from his vantage point on Saint's Hill, his warriors were glorious, shamboling, clumsy and certainly lacking in hygiene, but they were getting the job done and he hadn't even had to move. He couldn't ask for more.

"Master, if I may interject?" Einarr, irritating at the best of times. Aodhan's pet necromancer certainly had his uses, sadly though his wise counsel normally involved something soul destroyingly boring and rarely meshed entirely with the vampire's wishes.

"What is it now Einarr?" Aodhan rasped, allowing his fangs to show.

Einarr made a show of flinching in terror before calmly continuing. Aodhan recognised the gesture and pouted.

"The wisdom in letting your horde overwhelm Bjartr Bloodbeard is undeniable, but perhaps an example should be made? Perhaps you could brutally eviscerate him and parade his remains in front of his followers, or cut his head off and swish your hair about in his fountaining blood and let the survivors spread tales of your savagery?"

"That's a ridiculous idea! There's all together too many dwarfs down there for that!" Aodhan scowled, the necromancer was



By Michael DeFranco



By Chris Schlumpberger

ridiculous and his ideas were equally so, lords of undeath and destruction didn't do their own dirty work, that's what minions were for.

"There's not so many master, your sire, she—" Aodhan covered the withered old necromancer's mouth with one taloned hand.

"My sire isn't here is she? She's off... galavanting and... getting up to shenanagans! While I sit here on a muddy hill in a muddy field Watching dwarfs get

killed. Which I must say is an awfully good idea, better than say, oh I don't know, running down there and getting cannoned in the face don't you think Einus?" Aodhan chuckled at that. "Einus. Einus! You should change your name to that."

"I will take it into consideration master. But if I may say, our mistress would be most pleased to hear tales of how you personally drank the old dwarf dry in front of his men... remember when you did the elf hero in?"

Aodhan grinned, he did remember, he

remembered very well. His mistress had been very pleased, very please indeed because she normally refused to do *that*.

"Yes but that was an accident Einarr, I didn't realise he was a damned hero or that his family was watching from up that tree.. what is it with elves and trees anyway, I don't get it, nature is full of bugs and it smells vile."

"Master, please keep your mind on the task at hand!" The old wizard pleaded, suddenly looking centuries older.

"Fine! But she had better be grateful Einarr or I'll make a new pair of boots from your back!"

"Oh she will! She will!" Einarr practically laughed with relief, watching thankfully as Aodhan sprinted down the hill into the melee, the youngster was lazy and mostly stupid, really he had very little to redeem him. Einarr felt very, very old and hoped that once Aodhan had gotten himself killed, his mistress would choose a more suitable man to serve as her warlord.■



By Daniel King

Zombie Endless Swarm- On a Budget!

By Pathfinder Pete

Good evenink effery buddy, und velcome to ze furrst part in Necromancy 101- Raisink ze Zombies on der budget!

Ahem! That's enough of that stupid accent!!

Yes, over the next post or two I'm going to take everyone through my latest project that shows how anyone can field that shambling behemoth, the Zombie Endless Swarm, when all you have is a fraction of the 60 models required!

One of the things I love about Kings of War is the lack of casualty removal. Nothing upset me more about Warhammer Fantasy than spending ages lovingly painting all your Skaven, setting each one up meticulously on the tabletop battlefield, and then from the get go of Turn 1, you're removing them back off the table into your case! What a waste of time!! Kings of War thrives on multi-basing your units, and this can be a great opportunity for those of us rather

strapped for cash to field those truly epic units in the Rulebook that we've always dreamed of, but can't quite afford, even at Mantic's prices!

As an avid Undead player since Kings of War first came on the scene three years ago, never has a chance to really go to town with a modelling project been so enticing. I mean, who wouldn't want to field a unit with a Nerve of 30 (highest Nerve score in the game!), 40 Attacks to the front (that's a whopping 120 Attacks in the rear!) and all for a measly 200 points? That's cheaper than most Hordes of 40 models!!!

I only have 20 Zombies with which to create my Endless Swarm, and some Ghouls spares, a complete pack of Modular Movement Tray and some filler.

Let's get stuck in!!



By Boris Samec



Stage 1

Stage 1:

The important thing with using few models to make a mass unit is to ensure you have the correct unit footprint. In order to count in the game, it has to at least take up the same amount of space. The simplest way to do this is to use Modular Movement Tray (as you can count 10 models' width along the front rank, and make it six deep) although of course you can use any stiff material (plasticard, foamcard etc.) and measure using tape or rule. Once you have your footprint cut out, it's a good idea to give the

footprint a rim. This is not 100% necessary, but will help to create the illusion of multiple models as I will describe later.

Once you have cut out your footprint and edged it off, you should have a "movement tray" that resembles something like this (*above*). Don't worry if there are gaps in your edging as we can fill those in later using a little filler or greenstuff/modelling putty. Now that you essentially have the footprint of your unit, , we can start to add our Zombies.

Stage 2:

It really isn't important how you arrange your Zombies within the confines of the tray. As long as you have one in the centre to act as your unit leader- the model from whom you take Line of Sight for Charges etc. Personally I think it best to arrange the Zombies in such a fashion as that they appear the Shambling Endless Swarm you want them to be- would they really all rank up shoulder to shoulder? You'll notice (*below*) that I have glued the models into the bases (for as many as I had bases for) and then glued the bases onto the tray. This is to ensure that the models will be "stood on the ground" and not just under it- the reason for this will become evident in the next stages. For now, it is enough to make sure that the Zombies are arranged where you want them, allowing some gaps for extra details to be added.

Once the plastic glue has dried, and the Zombies are all fully fixed in place, it's time to move on to the next stage- building the terrain that they are shambling over!

Stage 3:

This is where we need to use the filler, and get a little dirty! I have a large tub of All-Purpose Filler, that set me back less than a tenner, but you need a tub- NOT a tube! Using a greenstuff sculpting tool, I scooped out the filler and started to slap it on the tray in the gaps between the Zombie bases. Don't worry if you go over the bases a little. This is no major problem as the ground outside is somewhat uneven, but wipe off any filler that ends up on the Zombies themselves or on the edging of the tray. Use the sculpting tool as best you can to pack down and smooth out the worst of the filler to try and get the surface relatively even. This isn't always that possible, but you should be at



Stage 2



Stage 3



Stage 4

least trying to make sure the filler isn't higher than the rim of the tray.

This stage will probably take some time, but it's worth it! Remember, you don't have to make it perfectly neat, but don't be too messy either!

Stage 4:

Once the tray has been completely filled, use a tool- I use a knitting/crochet needle- to create holes and slots for whatever spare arms and gravestones, tree branches and corpses you have in your bitz boxes. These will need gluing down to the tray itself, which is why we make the holes, as the filler isn't strong enough by itself to anchor the spares and decoration to the piece. Some you can get away with supergluing to the surface once the filler is dry.

By the time you have followed all the steps,

you should have something looking similar to this (*See prev. page*). It's a good idea to leave this overnight to dry, as we can't always guarantee awesome sunshine-y weather to quick dry the filler and glue.

Stage 5

You may remember from last time we had left the filler to dry overnight? Once the filler is dry, we need to cover the filler areas and the tops of the bases with PVA and cover with modelling sand. Once the Sand has dried, give the whole piece an appropriate undercoating and leave to dry. I have chosen a black primer- specifically, I'm trying out Modelmates Matt Black. This gave an awesome finish, and did not require me to alter the angle of the models in order to get to some of those hard to reach areas! I heartily recommend this- and it also appears to be cheaper than even Army Painter primer! Great for army building on a budget!



Stage 6



Stage 7

Stage 6

Normally I would paint the models, and then work on the movement tray/multi-base. But given that the main technique on the base will be drybrushing, I decided it would be better if we tackle the base first.

Starting with Oak Brown, I overbrushed the base fairly heavily using a large brush. This really doesn't have to be neat at all- after all, the ground is not all one blanket color, not even in Mantica! If paint winds up on teh Zombies, that's fine, as they will be repainted in a later stage.

Once this is dry, I drybrushed Monster Brown followed by a drybrush of Necrotic Flesh. Normally I would have used Skeleton Bone, but the putrid green of Necrotic Flesh helps areas look mossy, and ill- both great qualities for a unit of Zombies!

As you can see from the photo (*prev. page*) the ground really does look necrotic and tainted. If it seems too much, don't worry

because we will be adding some Dead Grass at the end, but if you want to leave it like this then that's fine too. It all comes down to personal taste and the theme of your army, after all it wouldn't do for the Zombies not to match everything else!

Stage 7

Now it's time to get some color in those Zombies! Previously, I have tried to capture a leathery brown quality to the flesh of my Zombies, but for this unit I decided to go with Necrotic Flesh. I usually argue against other manufacturers using green flesh on their Zombies, and I think this is because they look *too* green. The Necrotic Flesh is a very pale green, which seems to fit very nicely against the dark base. Be careful not to paint the areas that will be cloth or bone, just so you know that those areas will need to be a different color!

Once the flesh is dry (*can Zombie flesh ever be described as truly dry?*) we can start on the material and clothing they have draped

about them. I have used Monster Brown to tie them in yet again with the palette of color I'm using, but you can use any color that ties them in with your own army colors. Yet again, I've not been especially neat. This serves two purposes. Firstly, it's true that it's hard to get to some of the models on the base. But also, it helps to maintain an untidy appearance to the Zombies themselves. Paragons of personal hygiene and grooming, they ain't!

This leads into the next two steps, being to paint the bone areas- I define these as any spinal cord pieces, and on random jaws, arms, legs and other body parts. Once that is dry, blood and gore can be added by using Dragon Red. Apply this in a rather haphazard fashion, but in particular to the gut area, lower jaw, back of the head (on some) and the arms and hands. Anything else is a bonus, but- and this might sound strange- try not to go overboard. Think about zombies in films. Most don't have a massive amount of

blood splatter on them. So apart from these main areas I previously listed, and maybe some drips and spills leading from those areas, keep it to a minimum. Above all else (and this sounds strangest of all) make it look natural. Blood doesn't flow up, and all that!

Stage 8

When all your base colors are dry, apply a liberal Dark Tone Wash over all of them. Try not to get any on the "ground" where possible, but don't have a meltdown if it does. Left overnight to dry, this will perfectly shade the Zombies, and darken the flesh a little, which just gives them a sense of dirty realism. It also helps to blend the blood stains with the flesh. What I mean is, they don't look like the Zombies have been playing with red paint!

Now for the coup de grace! Once the wash is dry, take some gloss varnish and apply it over all the bloodied areas. Zombies always look



Stage Eight

more horrifying when the blood is fresh, and the gloss varnish helps create the illusion of the blood oozing from the Zombies' gaping wounds and gashes.

Stage 9 and Finished!

With the varnish dry, the last touches are to paint around the rim of the base- black is my color of choice, but you can use whatever color you like- and, using PVA glue, affix patches of dead grass and/or woodland detritus.

And there you have it, a Zombie Endless Swarm unit ready to take to the tabletop battlefield- and what's more, made from a fraction of the models required in the

rulebook!

Whilst writing this blog post, my new Orc army has arrived, and already my brain is whirring and ticking, thinking of ways to maximize the amount of models you get in the recent £50 army box (including the new Trolls and Chariot)!!

So I'm off to play with new toys designed to destroy the new Zombie unit we've just made! As always, please leave your comments below! I love to read everything you write, even if I don't always comment to each person separately!!

Til next time!! ▀



By Chris Schlumpberger

STORM BORN

By Jake Messingham

Rain hammered down on an alien jungle. Scans had picked up massive thermal indications earlier during the day. Something was down there and it was moving.

A fleet of Rooks burst through the clouds, heat shields still glowing orange with the stresses of planetary entry. Rain fizzled and boiled on the bare metal. "Five minutes till contact," the pilot shouted through his helmet link. "Acknowledged. Stow your gear and make ready for immediate deployment. Expect resistance and use all force necessary to neutralise any and all threats. I want to quit this world before the Corporation notices we are in this sector," the hulking mass of armour spoke back to his squad.

Kjell turned to his squad member on the left. "Is he always like this?" he asked on a direct private channel. "He takes some getting used to runt, but you're new here. Once we make planetfall we are likely to be outnumbered 20 to 1. Even with these fancy new prototype shields and Huscarl Alfinn's shiny heavy armour we can still get ripped apart out there. Pay attention to your Huscarl and your surroundings, and let's just get the job done fast. Last thing we need is the Corporation sticking their ugly noses in things here," spat back Godvar.

The Rook finally reached tree level. Coming

in on a clearing the pilot finally got a visual on the enemy. "Looks like we have got an infestation of Orx here," the pilot warned. "Permission to neutralise all targets and create a perimeter granted," replied Alfinn in a neutral tone, his armour powering up with a groan and whine. The giant underslung Hailstorm autocannons under its wings began to whirl, and within seconds were spitting red hot shards of death into the horde below. In under a minute the clearing was a mound of bodies and broken limbs.

Alfinn was the first to leave the Rook. Even before it had landed he jumped out, leaving a small crater in his wake and striding to the edge of the clearing. "Looks like we are following our fearless leader into the unknown again," muttered Claus, his large Heat Cannon clutched to his chest already letting off steam as droplets of rain landed on its casing.

One by one the members of Storm Born Squad jumped from the Rook, landing on

ALFINN - HUSCARL AND COMMANDER OF THE TIN BEARDS CLAN, WEARS EXPERIMENTAL ARMOUR AND CARRIES 2 HEAT HAMMERS

EDBJORN - THANE OF THE STORM BORN STORMRAGE VETERAN SQUAD

CLAUS - SQUAD MEMBER OF STORM BORN STORMRAGE VETERAN SQUAD

GODVAR - SQUAD MEMBER OF STORM BORN STORMRAGE VETERAN SQUAD

HAFTOR - SQUAD MEMBER OF STORM BORN STORMRAGE VETERAN SQUAD

KJELL - NEWEST SQUAD MEMBER OF STORM BORN STORMRAGE VETERAN SQUAD

their short squat legs. “No casualties so far. A lack of any anti air or orbital platforms almost makes this a walk in the park,” stated Edbjorn. “All units have disembarked and reporting in planet wide. Steel Warriors, Mining Teams and Reclamation teams are making planet fall as we speak. Scanners have also picked up a large thermal output several miles to the east in a dense jungle region with a smaller thermal output about halfway between it and us. Could be an outpost of some sort,” he reported to the squad. “That’s our target. We will destroy this outpost first, then onto the larger thermal reading. Move out,” Alfinn replied.

Chapter 2

On a rocky cliff edge Storm Born squad was busy double checking armour and weapons whilst their leader observed the orxs hastily built outpost bellow. “They will see us approaching if we attack head on. Prepare your servos for rapid drop and power up shields and close combat weapons. Guns shouldn’t be needed here,” stated Alfinn.

Minutes later they were falling through the air after stepping off the cliff, Heat Hammers in hand and shields rippling as rain danced on them. Landing in the middle



By “TSNC”

of the outpost with heavy thuds, they smashed skulls and broke limbs in a whirlwind of blood and gore. Within two minutes there wasn’t an orx left alive, just messy blood stained walls and lumps of flesh and ruined bodies on the floor. Not even a shot had been fired by either side.

“Area clear,” exclaimed Edbjorn. “There are only minor thermal readings on scanners between us and the large reading to the east,” he reported.

“Lets move,” Alfinn stated simply.

As they marched on, faster than it would

seem capable for creatures of such small stature, they encountered several patrols. Given advanced warning from their scanners, they managed to ambush and kill all that they came across.

After an hour of clearing a path through dense jungle they came across an ancient crumbling ruin. "Looks like some kind of temple. Massive thermals coming from behind that door and a massive energy reading coming from inside too. Our prize is in there," reported Edbjorn through his helmet link to the squad.

"Inside we go," said Alfinn, sounding almost happy. "Prepare Heat charges. We will turn the door to slag and anything behind it will either be vaporised or killed by shrapnel," he laughed cheerfully.

Kjell approached the door nervously waiting for any sign that the orx behind it were going to burst out at any second. Carefully, he placed the heat charges from his armour

onto the door in five separate places and ran back to the rest of the squad. Taking cover, Kjell pressed the detonator at his belt, and with a dull thud followed by a wave of heat and molten metal the door was nothing but a misshapen lump of metal.

After waiting for a few minutes for any further movement Alfinn spoke. "Move in, secure the area, and try to find where that energy signature is originating from"

"Acknowledged. Storm Born, move out," commanded Edbjorn.

Within seconds they had vaulted over the solidifying remains of the door and had secured the room. "Area clear," said Edbjorn as Alfinn strode in, ducking to get through the hole made by the charges. Glancing around, there were no orx bodies, just lumps of half green burnt flesh sticking to the walls and ceilings. "The energy reading is coming from below. There is a large underground chamber, and a large thermal



By Grant Mahoney

reading coming from down there too,” he stated.

“Claus, fire your heat cannon at that spot there. The floor seems to be weaker and there,” commanded Alfinn.

With a massive Dull thud and a spray of molten rock that bounced and ran off their shielding, the heat gun had created a large hole in the floor. “Looks like a long way down. We are really pushing our servos to the limit on this raid,” Claus reported.

“I don’t care if your servos give out and you

have to walk back naked. Our prize is too close to give up,” retorted Alfinn.

Moments later their helmets were giving them a grainy green visual feed of a massive gladiatorial subterranean arena. Stripped and aged bones lined the ground everywhere.

“There at the end of the hall. A massive thermal and unknown energy reading,” remarked Edbjorn. Without a word the rest of the squad stared slowly crossing the massive open expanse carefully, powering

up all their weapons and armour systems. After what seemed like an age the suits feed starting picking up a sound. A gentle wind was blowing past them.

“Easy. Don’t attack until we know what that thermal is,” whispered Alfinn into his helmet as his hammers powered up to full power, instantly illuminating the arena. Ahead of them a massive shaped stirred uncomfortably on a giant throne made of exotic otherworldly gemstones, its arcane machinery visible through multifaceted stones. “ORX WARLORD,” shouted Edbjorn, not even needing the helmet link to be heard. The warlord slowly



By Paul Scott



By "TSNC"

rose from the throne, picking up a great lump of metal that has been beat into the rough shape of a sword and a massive pistol that seems lost in its massive hands.

"Why is it so big?" retorted Kjell. "Look at the throne. Who knows what secrets it holds. Now stop asking stupid questions and open fire; this beast isn't going down quietly," Alfinn shot back. Good to his word the warlord roared an intangible series of sounds and charged them, picking up massive speed in a short space. The squad opened up fire, ripping out huge chunks of flesh with their Hailstorm auto cannons and seared huge areas of flesh with heat cannons. "He isn't slowing. Looks like we just made him angry," spat Haftor moments before the warlord reached him.

The warlord hit him without a seconds thought, bullets bouncing off his force shield. The sword hit next, shorting out the force field completely with a massive bang of pressurised air. Within seconds the

warlord had Haftor in his hand, and had bitten his head clean off. Laughing the warlord looked round just in time for one of Alfinn's massive glowing hammers to hit him clean in the side of the face. Instantly half of the warlords face was incinerated as he stumbled back, Alfinn's second hammer connected with the monsters chest armour. The armour instantly melted and started running

down the creatures flesh, burning it at the same time.

"Its wounded; open fire and don't let up," shouted Alfinn. The squad replied with the bark of auto cannons and whine of heat guns powering up and firing. Slowly but surely the creature dropped to one knee under the weight of fire the squad was dealing out. "Keep him occupied," Alfinn commanded as he crossed the room with a massive weapon started moving into position from his back. Slowly it moved to sit over his shoulder as the massive power plant in his armour began to shine a brighter and brighter shade of blue.

In an instant the whole room turned from blue to a brilliant white. everyone's helmet feed immediately shorted out. By the time their helmets rebooted, there was nothing left of the warlord. Just a molten pool of cooling rock. "Stick a teleport beacon on Haftor's body. We won't leave his body for the orx to chew on. Get a few beacons on

that throne too. The rest of you get some lines up to the surface so we can get out of here and back to the forge ship,” commanded Alfinn

Chapter 3

Making their way out of the temple, their hearts sank. Sitting right outside the doors in a massive circle surrounding them was every single orx on the planet.

Raptors. Juggernauts. Ripper squads and stunt bots surrounded them at every turn. “OPEN FIRE ON ALL TARGETS!” shouted Alfinn, weapons whirring up to full power as they set their backs to the temple doors. Within moments they started hurling death at the orx forces, but it was soon apparent that they stood no chance as the orx war host began to charge. Within moments they would be overrun and hacked to death.

“Don’t s’pose we can teleport out of here,” retorted Godvar. “Doesn’t work like that. The forge ship is now in the wrong position for a teleport,” Edbjorn replied curtly “However if you just wait a few more seconds, I have a way out of this mess.” True to his word, a fleet of Rooks came in over the trees, opening fire with their auto cannons glowing red in the setting sun. One broke off from the attacking force and set down meters in front of the squad “In, quick. We have a payload ready to drop and detonate in less than a minute,” shouted



By “SneakyChris”

the pilot.

The squad scrambled into the Rook and immediately the Rook took off at speed and powered up its massive oversized engines boosting it into supersonic speeds. The Rook launched into the upper atmosphere as a second sun was created on the surface of the planet and every orx on the planet was wiped out in one single explosion. Edbjorn had his helm off and was speaking to the forge ship on the other side of the planet. “They have the throne in storage. The forge masters are quite confused. Its giving off some unusual energy readings. I’ve also just learned there are three incoming fleets of ships. At least one of them is Corporation, the other two we can’t get readings on. We need to get back to the ship and get out of the planets gravity field to make a slip-space jump,” he told Alfinn quietly.

The last of the Rooks start docking procedures. Looking out the view ports, the massive slab of green and tin colored metal sat like a great unwieldy predator, its massive weapons swivelling and moving into position to fight off the multiple enemies that were incoming. Its massive

engines were starting their power cycles, the massive exhaust ports glowing brighter and brighter with the pent up power.

The Rook made for the docking deck straight away. As soon as they passed through the force field protecting the deck workers the massive metal shutters started sealing behind them as the last vacuum hissed off of the Rook's warm hole. As soon as the rook touched down the team made straight for the forge ships mighty bridge as claxons wailed and alarms pulsed on walls.

At the bridge Alfinn sat in his mighty throne, his armour instantly interacting with all of the ships systems, correcting errors, calculating a flight plan to the edge of the planet's gravity well, and setting up fire zones for all the ships mighty and ancient weapons all at once. "Prepare for sub light thrusters to fire. Inertial dampeners active. All hands brace for ship to ship combat and immediate slip -activations," Alfinn spoke over the ships com system.

The ship lurched slowly, gaining momentum away from the green rock they had just been in orbit around. Within seconds more alarms were sounding. "Inbound FTL and slip-space signatures. We count 10 Corporation ships, 30 Marauder Orx ships, and 3 unknown ships showing some kind of infection among its crew. The Corporation flagship is hailing," stated a deckhand at a sensor panel.

"On screen," commanded Alfinn. The main view port turned to static, and then resolved into the image of an overly plump human "Forge father Huscarl. You are



By "Daedle"

trespassing in Corporation space. You will be dealt with. power down your weapons and engines, and we will board you as soon as the plague and marauder threats are dealt with.” The view screen cut out, and returned to the view of the expanse of space. “How long till we can make slip space at this speed?” asked Alfinn. “Two minutes,” replied a deck hand.

“Cut power to the sub light engines, but keep the slip space engines active. Make the jump as soon as we hit that mark. Open up fire on any ship that gets within five thousand kilometers of us,” commanded Alfinn as every ship in the fleet opened fire. Within seconds ships were turned into fiery graves, listing in every direction. The forge fathers shields start glowing under the weapon fire and massive chunks of debris glancing off of them.

“Thirty seconds to jump. The Corporation cruisers are hailing us, demanding help, and there is a plague ship coming straight at us at speed,” the deckhand at the sensor station remarked. “Open fire. Blast that hulk out of the way before it brings down the shields,” Alfinn briskly commanded.

Every weapon on the forge ship was bought to bear on the plague’s ancient corroded hulk. Massive Hailstorm mega cannons, heat lances, and giant torpedoes were launched

at the plague hulk. Within seconds, there was nothing left in their way but small fragments of hull plating that harmlessly glance off the shields. “Slip space in three... two...one.....”

End ▪



By “Paul Scott”

BREACH

By Michael Grey

PART FIVE

```
Containment Protocol
- Incident Ref#:
0000037[ ]..Time Stamp
[ ] plus 739:02
//Evol. Phase [ ]4[ ]//
Alert Status [ ]CRITICAL
[ ] CRITICAL [ ]
CRITICAL[ ]//
```

It had been one day. Or perhaps two. Without seeing the distant red blur of the Gaian star passing across the sky the hours bled into each other for Cole. He was leaning towards two days, although he would not be surprised if it had been more.

Since he had woken, and Cas and Cabal had given their revelations, he had thrown himself into helping the rebels. It was that or think about what he'd been told.

That he no longer existed.

That his own culture didn't want him.

The injustice made him seethe so much his hands shook. So he put his mind to any task asked of him.

He fetched, carried, sorted, catalogued, packed and carried some more. He'd remained in the network of cellars and sub-rooms he had woken up in, which seemed to be several basements knocked into one sprawling tunnel system. When he asked



By Mantic Games, Used with Permission

any of the rebels where he was they would give a grid designation which meant nothing to him. He was somewhere within Gaian Prime, that was apparently all he needed to know.

The act of asking was not easy. There were too many of the rebels to count, and they were in constant motion. Arriving from patrols out into the city, bringing back scavenged supplies or intel. But they were



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not all human. If he had to guess, Cole would say most weren't.

On his first day he watched a group of three in one corner. Individually they were the size of a small human, but were simian in their look and build, with downy fur and short snouts. They chattered in some high pitched language until one noticed Cole staring. It nodded to him and flicked two fingers from its forehead in a greeting so human Cole found himself returning it.

Another alien he had already met but not realised had sought him out shortly after his conversation with Cas and Cabal. Cole had felt the floor rock under his feet and turned to find what he first thought to be the largest man he had ever seen. That was before he took in the pallid yellow skin and the stubbed tusks pushing through its jaw. It had

extended an open hand and Cole felt the urge to run, until the creature introduced itself as Bendramin in a shockingly mild voice, and apologised for hitting him the night before.

Cole had been so surprised he thought nothing of the creature pulling up crate and sitting to talk with him, asking about his life in Prime and what the planet was like. It was not until Bendramin apologised and said he had duties, hefting a cannon as tall as Cole onto his shoulder, that

Cole was overcome with the absurdity he had spent twenty minutes complaining about bureaucracy with a creature of another species.

He had also found Jean in one of the rooms, staring into space and drinking the foul liquid the rebels insisted on calling coffee.

"Hey." She continued to stare forward until he sat directly opposite. "Hey," he said again, forcing a tired smile.

She nodded then shifted her eyes to the canteen in her hands.

He moved his head around, trying to catch her eye without success. "You, er, you want to give me a hand with these?" He patted the stack of boxes he just placed on the ground.

She shook her head without looking.

Cole let the silence drag for a minute before asking, "Are you okay?"

When she answered her voice sounded empty. "Were you told about the deadzone?"

"Yeah. Every conspiracy theorist's wet dream, eh?"

She looked up, giving him the full glare from her red rimmed eyes. "And you find that funny?"

"Of course I don't," he said, modulating his tone.

"I had family, Cole. Me, my sister and mum. I'm the youngest. My sister stayed home to look after mum, letting me go to school. I was the earner. I was the one who was supposed to pay the bills. Why do you think I came to a shithole like this?! I came for the money, because I was supposed to support three. And now what? Central didn't just kill me when they cut us off. They killed my whole family."

"Hey, you're not dead." He reached across the table but she pulled her hand back.

"As good as. Even if I get back to Sphere space I can't work. My SC number will have been erased with the rest of me. And mum, and Diana..." she choked back a sob. "They won't stay quiet, they'll want to know what happened to me. They'll make a fuss and won't take no for an answer, and..." she put a hand across her mouth, as if keeping the words inside could avoid the inevitable.

In the future, when Cole would be asked why he did what he did, where he found his strength, he would think back to this moment. When he felt something inside harden, and he decided the voiceless should be heard.

Over the days he learnt there were teams of rebels slipping throughout the city, spreading like a net, bringing back anything which a resistance movement could use, from food to clothing to the marine weapon caches the armoured troopers had strangely left alone.



By Paul Scott

"They know the weapons are there, they just know soon no one will be around to use them," said Bendramin when Cole asked. The big alien had stopped by to continue his conversation, but Cole had some questions of his own.

"And who are they?"

"The Enforcers? They're bad news is what they are, my friend."

"Are they human?"

Bendramin shrugged. An expressive gesture with shoulder so big. "Perhaps. I've never seen one up close. I don't know anyone who has and has been in any state to talk about it. Let me give you some advice; if you see them, run, and keep running. That's the only sure defense we have against them."

On what could have been the third day there were less rebels coming back, and those that did were empty-handed more than not, and now before they left they would shake their comrade's hands and wish them luck. A few even clapped Cole on the shoulder on their way out. On top of that, there was a change in their air; an expectation, like the pressure drop before a storm. It set the hairs on Cole's neck on end.

With no more packing to do he set about looking for Bendramin to ask what was going on when he walked into Cas. He almost apologised at first, not recognising the weapon-clad woman he nearly bumped into. Then he saw the eye patch. On his second look he saw a woman in combat fatigues that could have been tailored for her, armed

with pistols and knives and a smile that said the wearer was as comfortable and in control now as she had ever been in her life. It was pleasing to see his friend was obviously happy, and it must have showed on his face as Cas slapped him on the arm hard enough to bruise.

"Been busy, I hear," she said.

"Likewise by the looks of it." He rubbed his arm. "Where have you been?"

"Getting up to speed. Cole, there's so much



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out there! So much more than reality vids and dreadball and Central!”

“I know,” he said. A guilty thought of Jean made him wonder how much of a good thing that was. He changed the topic before Cas could carry on. “Is something happening?”

Her expression turned serious. “Yes. And I think you would want to see this, come with me.”

She lead him off, through rooms left bare of boxes and sleeping pallets, passing only a few soldiers who nodded to them as they passed, smirking when Cas responded with an automatic salute. She led him through a hole knocked through to another basement, and from there through a heavy metal door

showing signs of recent spot welding. The other side was bare concrete steps, bending back on themselves, climbing up a building Cole had no idea was right above his head the whole time. At the landings the windows had been blacked out with cardboard taped across the sills, allowing through a square halo of angry red light. The fire exit doors had been welded shut and reinforced by piled stone blocks until Cole wondered if a truck would have been able to come through.

He lost count of floors around eighteen. Eventually they reached the final landing with a single door across the steps. Cas rapped a three beat knock followed by another two. The door opened and bathed Cole in a light which stung his eyes after days



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spent underground.

He stepped out into the oppressive heat and humidity he found so familiar, knowing he must still be in Prime, but not recognising the city before him.

The domed framework which had held the Bubble was still there, but the charged membrane stretched between the struts had been punched through or had been carried off by the wind. Without that the Bubble was just a skeletal frame, the remains of some legendary colossus spread above the city. Birds flew through the metres-wide gaps and jungle creepers were already climbing the struts, dangling their vines down, reclaiming the land lost to the human invaders.

The city below fared no better. Some of the taller buildings appeared as if they had been

felled, their towers ending too early in ragged stumps, or else were missing entirely. Others had walls blown out, leaving their insides open to the air and choking the streets below with broken masonry.

And now even here, in the centre of Prime, the ever present forest of Gaian insisted itself onto the landscape. Vines already wrapping lampposts and roots splitting foundations. Off in the city he heard the distant rumble of a building coming apart, the sound like an avalanche lost in a glacier field.

It could have been years. It had been days.

“Makes you think, doesn’t it? If something so big can be undone in so little time, what’s the point?” Cas was beside him, sharing his view and his thoughts.

“Ah, Private you’re back. Welcome topside Mister Cole. I’ve been told you made yourself indispensable, thank you.”

Cabal was at the roof’s edge along with a dozen other rebel soldiers. They hunkered down below the shallow safety wall, some peering over the top, looking through vision enhancers across the ruined city. Cabal crab-walked away from the edged, and stood to dust his knees before shaking Cole’s hand.

“It’s the least I could do. I mean, you’re getting us out of here.”

“We are, but the least you could have done was sit in a corner and shake with the revelation of learning everything you took for granted was a lie. That’s the most usual

response, you've stood up quite well Mister Cole, you should be proud."

"I did say," said Cas.

Cole shot her a look, wondering if she would expand on the quizzical statement. Instead she kept her eyes from his and Cabal said, "Yes you did, and you were quite right," and to Cole, "But to say thank you I thought perhaps I might give you a choice."

Cole frowned. "A choice?"

Cabal nodded. "We're leaving, Mister Cole. I do believe we have everything this city has left we can use. The majority of our forces

are already in orbit."

"But *you're* not," said Cole, wondering where this was going. "Why is that?"

"A direct man. I like that. I told you when we first met there was something we could learn on this world, and we shall stay down here until we do. Come with me."

He moved back to the roof's edge, squatting lower as he went until his profile was fully below the wall. Cole followed as best he could.

Cabal turned to his soldiers. "How are they doing, Yndrel?"



The rebel that answered was looking over the wall using image magnifiers, only exposing what it needed to. "They're still gathering, boss." It pulled back and handed the magnifiers to Cabal. Only then did Cole realise it was one of the furred aliens, and that he'd heard the name before on the night he stumbled across the rebels. The alien offered him a nod before crouching and crawling cat-like further along the wall.

Cabal looked through the glasses and then handed them to Cole. "Have a look down there Mister Cole, tell me what you see."

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Cole raised himself and looked through the glasses. The view expunged the red glare from Gaian, mellowing the image with a green shade. It auto-focused on the view as he looked around, wondering what Cabal was talking about.

And then he saw it.

The viewfinder rested on the heads of dozens of people. He fumbled with the focus, zooming out until the number became hundreds, and then thousands. It seemed many of Prime's remaining citizens had gathered together, pressed up against each other, and all facing in the same direction. He zoomed further out until he could see where they were.

Of course, he thought, *it would be Landing Square*. There was a sickening inevitability to it. Everything which seemed to have happened over the past weeks had begun in Landing Square and the Governor's Mansion. At that thought he panned the view up to the hill where the mansion had stood. The hill was still half there, now a hollow caldera, and surrounded by a loose ring of armoured figures. Cole turned to Cabal, the question obvious on his face.

"Odd, isn't it?" Cabal said.

"What's going on?" he asked.

"They Enforcers have allowed people out the buildings for hours now, but fired on anyone walking down the wrong street. Ever so slowly, perhaps enough so they haven't realised it, the populace have been channelled into the square."

Cole looked down on the milling sea of heads, wondering how many people he knew had survived this long were down there. "Why?"

"We have our suspicions, but won't know until whatever it is happens." He turned to one of the human rebels, "Are we ready?"



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The soldier inspected his wrist-mounted computer and tapped a few buttons. "All feeds are clear and recording properly, sir."

Cabal nodded. "So we wait. And this is where you make a decision Mister Cole. We have one more shuttle leaving here soon, after that we're waiting here to see what Central has planned. You can go now, or wait and see."

Cole turned to Cas, "You're staying here I take it?" She nodded with a mischievous grin. Cole sighed. "Then I suppose I'm staying too."

Cabal gripped him by the shoulder and smiled. "Good man! That's what I like to hear, tenacity. Welcome aboard, Mister Cole."

Cole smiled in returned, but wondered if he would come to wish he left on the shuttle.

The wait was interminable. As exposed as they were to the sun on the rooftop, Cabal would permit no shade to be put up, nothing that would make a profile against the skyline. Instead the soldiers were sent in teams into the stairwell to cool down and rest. Cole had been tacitly slotted into the rebel's structure with Cas as his handler. He shared Cas's team's break from the



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unrelenting sun. He thought they were much too far apart, but he was apparently alone in that opinion as the soldiers shared jokes, a few ribbing him for his sweat-sheened face. All too soon he would be back outside, the heat pressing his damp clothes uncomfortably against his body, the back of his neck rubbed raw by his wet collar.

There were more people down in Landing Square now, even a cursory glance showed that, and more slowing coming in through the corridors allowed by the Enforcers.

"Why are they doing this?" he whispered to Cas.

"The Enforcers are gathering something from where the Governor's Mansion was. The bombardment was some kind of bunker cracker, designed to destroy fortifications but leave anything belowground more or less



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intact. Since then they've been hauling things out to carry away. I spoke to the other guys and they reckon it's something to do with what caused everything at Fourthree."

"But why the people?"

She shook her head. "I asked Cabal and he said he didn't know." She turned away from the sight and slid down behind the wall.

"You don't believe him?" Cole said, without really knowing where the question came from.

Cas thought before she answered. "I don't know. But what reason would he have to lie? This whole situation is..."

"Fubar?"

She grinned. "Yeah, fubar."

He hunkered down beside her, welcoming

that the small mercy that he could still share a joke with his friend after the world had come down around them.

A noise intruded on the moment, a great bellow of sound which cut through the silent city, echoing between Prime's buildings, seeking out all ears. It came strong enough that Cole could feel it all over his body, juddering through him like a ship hull grinding against rock.

The others could not fail to hear also. One soldier dozing against the wall shook awake, instantly alert. They all looked up and around at the other buildings, as if they could see the sound's source.

By degrees the echoes died away, each iteration weaker than the rest until the quiet returned.

Cole looked over the wall's edge, wondering but not believing the noise had come from the Square. He was not surprised to see nothing much had changed on the ground. The mass of people were still there, although now their heads bobbed about, belying the collective uncertainty they all felt.

The Enforcers also changed their behaviour. Those on the hill stop moving, looking off in the same direction, away from where Cole could see. At some unheard order they all began moving again with purpose. They quickly formed a human-chain into the hole at the bottom of the crater. Almost immediately they began passing up objects too small for Cole to see, up to a pile which was then transferred in a similar manner to shuttle nearby, its hangar open to allow

the troopers to enter.

"Boss?" Yndrel was looking down at the Enforcers through his view finder. Cabal came over, not bothering to crouch as he did, and took the finder, focusing them on the scene.

"As the old saying goes, *so it begins.*" He gave the finder back to Yndrel. "Is everything ready?"

"You bet, boss. Checked it five minutes ago."

"Check it one last time if you wouldn't mind."

"You're the boss-boss, boss."

"What's happening? What's beginning?" said Cole.

"We're about to find out, Mister Cole. This is what you chose to wait and see."

There was another bellow. It was louder this time, allowing Cole to identify an animalistic nature. No machine could reproduce such a defiantly guttural roar. This noise came from a throat, and it was worryingly closer than the first.

That factor was not lost on the people in Landing Square. A few on the edge of the crowd began to shout. There were cries, a scream. Hands reached up from the mass, trying to claw through or over the people that were in their way.

There was a third bellow, closer again, easier to guess where it came from; away, just out of sight from the rebels on the roof, but obviously not from the people on the ground.

The dam broke. With a collective cry the crowd surged against itself, the edges furthest from the hill pushing against the main body. The result was



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a concertina of bodies as hundreds of people tried to push thousands.

The panicked cries easily reached the rooftop now, conveying the collective fear.

Staggered flashes of automatic gunfire erupted from along the first and second floors bordering the Square. Balconies which once held upmarket restaurants giving expensive views of the Square now offered uninterrupted lines of sight for the troopers stationed there.

Cole watched this, removed by hundreds of metres, and could not understand what he saw. The Enforcers were not targeting the crowd, but whatever they were firing on they took no care to find cover themselves. They stood in the open or climbed on tables, resting a foot on the balcony balustrade to get a better view of what they could see and Cole could not.

There was a break in the barrier holding the crowd at the Square's eastern edge, and then people were streaming from it, escaping from what came the other way. It was as if Cole was watching an egg timer on a massive scale, the sands of humanity poured through a tiny gap and ran among the ruins.

Cabal turned to Yndrel and calmly said, "How much do we have?"

"All cameras have enough for a full minute loop, boss," the alien replied after checking his wrist computer.

"Good, good. We'll try for another minute

before evac. Let me know when that happens."

Cole looked at Cabal. He could not comprehend the contrast between his composure and the scenes of chaos unfolding on the streets. "What's happening, Cabal? What are you doing?"

"This is the latter stages of the plague your erstwhile governor unleashed on this world, Mister Cole. He killed himself and everyone here when he unearthed whatever he found



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in Fourthree, the same artefact I presume the Enforcers below are so keen on extracting from what remains of his mansion.”

“But the people, you have to help the people!”

Cabal shook his head. Cole thought he saw a flash of regret brought quickly under control. “They are already dead.”

Cole looked dumb struck between Cabal and Cas. His friend could not meet his gaze.

“You’re fracking kidding me, right?” he said to Cabal.

“We don’t have the space to take even a tiny fraction, Mister Cole, and even if we tried the Enforcers would sooner engage us than the monsters which are coming. And even if we did, there is not enough known about this plague yet. Anyone down there could be infected. I will not risk my people.”

Cole stared. An attempted response came out in an exasperated huff. Cabal broke eye contact and looked down on the street.

Cole shook his head. Disbelief and a sense of helplessness cursed through him until one of Cabal’s words rose from his memory.

Monsters?



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He looked back down. The scene was almost the same as before. Hundreds coursed through the break in the Square’s barrier, but the sheer number of people meant the square was still as packed as before.

But there was new ingredient in the mix.

Figures, just specs at the distance, darker than the people and the pale armoured troopers, began to pepper the crowd from behind. The moved into view much too quickly than should be able, and slowed only when they reached the people fleeing.

He looked about him, searching for a view finder, seeing one in Cas’s hand. He snatched it before she could stop him and turned the screen on the crowd. The view was shaky and turbulent while the finder sought a still object to focus on. Then all too quickly it did, and Cole almost choked on the gasp trying to escape his throat.



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It showed him a scene from the worst horror vid, direct from the pages of the most debase religious texts from Old Earth. Only now the demons moved, swung, clawed and let forth with roars robbed of sound by distance.

The view finder came to rest on a frenzy of movement. A man fled, scrambling between overturned market stalls and park side benches, finding a path between the people around him. Just as he came to a stretch of open ground one of the monsters leapt through the air, clearing what must have been five metres to land heavily on his back, bringing him down like prey.

The force knocked the bandana tied across the man's face up over his eyes. He was blind as his head struck the floor. That was the detail which stayed with Cole. The man was blind, unable to see the monstrosity on him, yet still he tried to crawl away, mouth open in a silent scream as his hands tried to find purchase on the concrete. He still tried to escape as the claws swung down and hacked into his back and ripped outwards, spraying blood and broken bones.

Cole was locked on the sight, shock or dumb fascination made him watch as the thing punched clawed fists into the man's back below the shoulder blades, and with a roar Cole could not hear, tore upwards, spreading the ribcage open giving the man obscene wings of bone and blood. The thing leapt from its crouch, taking it from the viewfinder but leaving the leaking pulp of its prey behind.

Cole flicked the view around, searching for the monster. Instead he came to rest on one of the balconies above the square. The troopers there were still firing their oversized rifles, a discipline of short bursts at selected targets. Aim, fire, aim fire. Behind one came another trooper. This one carried a different weapon, a long tube hefted on one shoulder. It took up position behind its comrade and sighted down the street.

"Rocket launcher," Cole whispered.

Cas's head snapped around. "What?"

"Rocket launcher," he pointed, "Down there."

Cas's reaction was immediate. "Sir! We have rocket launchers! Possible Progenitor contact."

Cabal strode up behind Cole as the launcher fired, a brief burst of light and trail of smoke, disappearing out of sight among the streets. There was a dull concussion and a second hand flash as the rocket exploded, followed by a roar, the same deep bellow Cole heard earlier.

"Yndrel, how much do we have now?"

"About a minute and thirty seconds, boss."

"That'll have to do. Okay everyone, we're leaving. Leave everything none essential, calmly but quickly now."

"That's our cue, partner," said Cas as she shook Cole's shoulder.

He wasn't listening. Through the 'finder he was tracking the people as they ran screaming from the square. They flowed like water, hundreds heading toward the building he was on, and behind them came those things.

"Cole?"

Some ran with speed that was inhuman, chasing down men and women as they fled. Others leapt, jumping along the tops of abandoned trucks and low roofs, using walls as springboards to launch themselves on top of victims. Everywhere they landed there was blood, blood and a fury of teeth and claw.

"Cole, now!" Cas hauled him up by the shoulder and he allowed her to shove him at the door. Some of the other rebels were already running down the stairs, a few waited for he and Cas to pass, their agitation palpable for them to get down the stairs.

"Where are we going?"

"There's a flyer waiting for us at the waterfront," said Cabal from further down the stairs.

The memory of the things on the street rose unbidden in his mind. "We have to walk there?"

"That's the idea, Mister Cole. But in this particular case, I would highly suggest you run."

....END OF PART FIVE...

*For more stories like this, visit
Michael's blog at
www.michaelgrey.com.au*



By Mantic Games, Used with Permission

ROGUE AGENTS

A Warpath RPG, by Austin Peasley

The Manticverse is a big place. Underneath the veneer of civilization, nearly all of the various factions and races participate in a shadow war, of agents and spies that can help give them an edge in their next engagement. This subterfuge is commonplace, despite being unseen to the common citizen of the 'Verse.

Occasionally, after a mission goes bad or an employer attempts to "tie up loose ends," one of the various agents will go rogue. These independents typically join the greater criminal underbelly, becoming black market smugglers, mercenaries, and hitmen. Some join local police and regulatory forces for a bit of order, but all of them keep an eye over their shoulder for the sound of a laser pistol being primed or a knife being slid out of a sheath.

In **Rogue Agents**, you and one or more friends play as agents who have banded together, fighting for each other and or themselves as they try to just fulfill their deepest desires.

Space is a big place. Make it yours.



By Grant Mahoney

Making a Character and the Party

First determine who your character is: their background, their fears, hops, dreams, etc. This will help with figuring out later steps if you have a clear idea of who you are and what you want to become.

Next, get 8 notecards and record on them your character's name. Then, fill out a Background card with:

- A Rival for your character: Someone they are a nemesis or opponent of
- A Contact: A neutral person who might ally with or against your character depending on the scenario



By <insert name here>

- An Ally: Someone who is a dear and trusted friend of your character
- An Object: Some physical thing important (Good or bad) to your character, whether or not they possess it with them currently
- A Location: Some place important to your character (Whether good or bad)
- A Goal (One per card): Goals that are very important for your character to complete at some point, either short or long term.

- The remaining 2 cards are the player's choice from the above style of Background cards

*For Example, Billy's character Morean might pick Galvan the Cursed as his **Nemesis**, who he determines is a fearsome pirate. He's from the Farian Gash, a huge nebula that becomes his **Location** card. Planetary Governor Hilgan is Morean's **Contact**, a man of quite a bit of reputation who has helped Morean on more than one occasion. Captain Nathaniel is a smuggler, and is put down as Morean's **Ally** as he is a longtime friend. The Ion Cannon Launch Codes are put as Morean's **Object**, as it can tie in other cards by being what Nathaniel helped him smuggle and what he used to help the Governor during an invasion. One of Morean's **Goals** is to Kill Galvan the Cursed. For the last two cards, Billy picks another **Goal** of Become a wealthy planetary governor, and an **Object** of Morean's spaceship The Dauntless.*

Mark at least 4 of the Background cards as Negative (-), and no more than 4 of them as Positive (+) (You must mark each Background card as one or the other). Positive Background cards give a bonus to the Scenario check equal to the number of +'s on it, while Negative Background cards give a penalty to the check equal to the number of -'s on it.

*Billy decides that Morean's **Nemesis** (Galvan the Cursed), **Location** (The Farian Gash), **Object** (Ion Cannon Launch Codes), and **Ally** (Captain Nathaniel) are all negative (-) cards. He then decides that his **Contact** (Governor Hilgan), **Object** (The Dauntless), and **Goals** (Kill Galvan the Cursed and Become a*

Planetary Governor) are all positive (+) cards.

In addition, every player must have a Relationship card to another player for every two players in the game (So a 3 player game has 1 Relationship card, 6 player would have 3, etc). This is not annotated as + or -, and is unique in that at least one Relationship **must** be used in every Scenario. Relationships are not shuffled in with a character's Background cards.

*If this is a seven player game, this means Morean has to have three **Relationships**. Billy agrees with to have a **Relationship** with Jane's character Thrinio the Elder, as Thrinio was Morean's mentor before he became an agent. He also decides to have a **Relationship** with John's character Tasha, as they worked together on several missions before Morean defected. The final **Relationship** is with Sasha's character Kina Sunheart, who was a former crewman of Galvan the Cursed and who saved Morean's life.*

Then the players pick their race and determine their Skills:

- Human: +1 to any 4 Skills
- Corporation: +2 to Social, +1 to any 2 Skills
- Brethren Legion: +3 to Social, -1 to Martial, +1 to any 2 Skills
- Cultist of Pharma: +2 to Toughness, +1 to any 2 Skills
- Space Marine: +2 to Martial, +1 to any

2 Skills

- Marauder: +2 to Martial, +1 to any 2 Skills
- Forgefather/Contoss: +2 to Toughness, +1 to any 2 Skills
- Veer-Myn: +2 to Social, +1 to any 2 Skills



By "TSNC"

- Aun-Tai: +3 to Marksmanship, -1 to Martial, +1 to any 2 Skills
- Cor-Tai/Asterian: +2 to Agility, +1 to any 2 Skills
- Swarm: +2 to Psychic, +1 to any 2 Skills
- Shell-Soul: +2 to Equipment, +1 to any 2 Skills

Skills are used to give bonuses to Tests during a Scenario that pertain to the Skill. Players allocating points to Skills can either increase existing Skills (All Skills start with a value of 0, and less than 0 is treated as 0), or fill in one of the blank spaces with a new Skill of their choice with a starting Value of 1. Skill advances are gained through using that Skill in Scenarios or from finishing a Campaign (See below)

Billy decides Morean is a Corporation soldier, giving him +2 to his Social Skill and +1 to any 2 other skills. Since Morean's a shoot-first, talk-later kind of guy, Billy gives him +1 in Marksmanship and +1 in Firearm so he can end a fight quickly with his custom-made laser pistol.

When a player uses a Skill in a Test, fill in one of the 5 Experience bubbles below that skill. Once all 5 are filled, empty the Experience bubbles and increase the Skill by 1. If a player rolls an 11 or a 66 for a check, a player automatically increases in that Skill by +1 (It does not affect the Experience bubbles)

After all of the players have created their characters, they need to develop 6 Background cards for the party as a whole:

- The Civilization: The main setting or nation the party is in

- A Location: A place important to all of the characters or the party as a whole, good or bad.

- An Object: A thing important to the entire party as a whole (Good or bad), whether or not it is in their possession

- 3 Goals (One per card): Goals that are very important for the party to complete at some point, either in the short or long term.



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Party Background cards are never noted as + or -, but are marked with their Significance, starting at 1.

*The party decides that since most of their characters are Corporation-affiliated or involved, their **Civilization** card will indicate Corporation Inner Sphere. The **Location** is picked as Thanos-8B, a planet currently in unrest and a hive for criminal smuggling and infighting. The **Object** they pick is Kerian's Fury, a massive battleship that has been converted into a travelling grey market and shipyard. For the **Goals**, they pick Disband the Green Bone Gang, a rival gang they've had skirmishes with in the past; Take Over Kerian's Fury, as they could rule the sector with ease if they had complete control of the massive starship; and Steal the Asterian Spirit Diamonds, an incredibly valuable array of jewelry on display in the Thanos-8B Cultural Heritage Museum.*

A note on Background cards:

If a Player ever gains a Background card that brings them to more than 8 Background cards, they may choose to immediately destroy or otherwise permanently discard one of their Background cards.

If Morean has defeated Galvan the Cursed, and gained a new background card at the



By Grant Mahoney

end of the campaign, Billy could choose to destroy Galvan's card, as Galvan has been permanently dealt with. On the other hand, he could destroy a different card, and leave Galvan to possibly rear his head at a later point after he licks his wounds.

If the Party ever gains a Background card that brings them to more than 6 Background cards, they may choose as a group to immediately destroy or otherwise permanently discard one of their Background cards.

Likewise, the party could choose to destroy the Disband the Green Bones Gang card to represent the gang going their separate



By Matt Gilbert

ways or falling foul of the police, or they could leave them in place to encounter at a later point in time.

You can never elect to discard a Background card you just earned.

Campaign Creation:

To start a Campaign, first shuffle the Party Background cards and draw 3. Place these in front of the group and determine a story that the Party will be interacting with, with an eventual goal or endpoint based off of the Background cards drawn.

*For example, if the party draws their **Location** (Thanos-8B), **Object** (Kerian's Fury), and **Goal** (Disband the Green Bones Gang), perhaps the overall plot centers around pursuing members of the Green Bones gang into orbit as they flee Thanos-8B and attempt to hide aboard the Fury.*

Next, starting with the player with the lowest sum total of Skills and going upwards, each player takes their Turn. On their Turn, a player can choose to either:

- Outline the Scenario
- Detail the Scenario

All of the other players then collectively perform the other part of fleshing out the Scenario.

The Scenario:

For Outlining the Scenario, a Background card is drawn from the deck of the Player who's Turn it is. Whoever is Outlining this Scenario then determines an idea for a situation that ties the subject of the drawn Background card to the drawn Party Background Cards and at least one of the current player's Relationships.

*If Billy draws Morean's **Object** (Ion Cannon Launch Codes) and chooses to **Outline** the*

*Scenario, perhaps the Scenario is of Morean trying to get to a secure terminal through some security guards so he can use the Ion Cannons to shoot down the Green Bones' fleeing starfighters. He decides to use his **Realtionship** with Thrinio the Elder to help, as Thrinio is a well-respected speaker and Judwan diplomat.*

For Detailing the Scenario, the situation described in the Outline of the Scenario is described in greater detail, specifying what the Scenario will entail and choosing what Skill would be used for it. In addition, whoever Details the Scenario can choose to increase or decrease the Difficulty of the Scenario Test, up to a 65+ needed to succeed at the Test. Every +10 the Difficulty is increased beyond the base 35+ increases the Conclusion Tokens yielded by a successful Test by +1. If the Test Difficulty is decreased to 25+, then the Test only yields 1 Conclusion Token if the Scenario has Drastic Consequences (See below). This Token is not doubled.

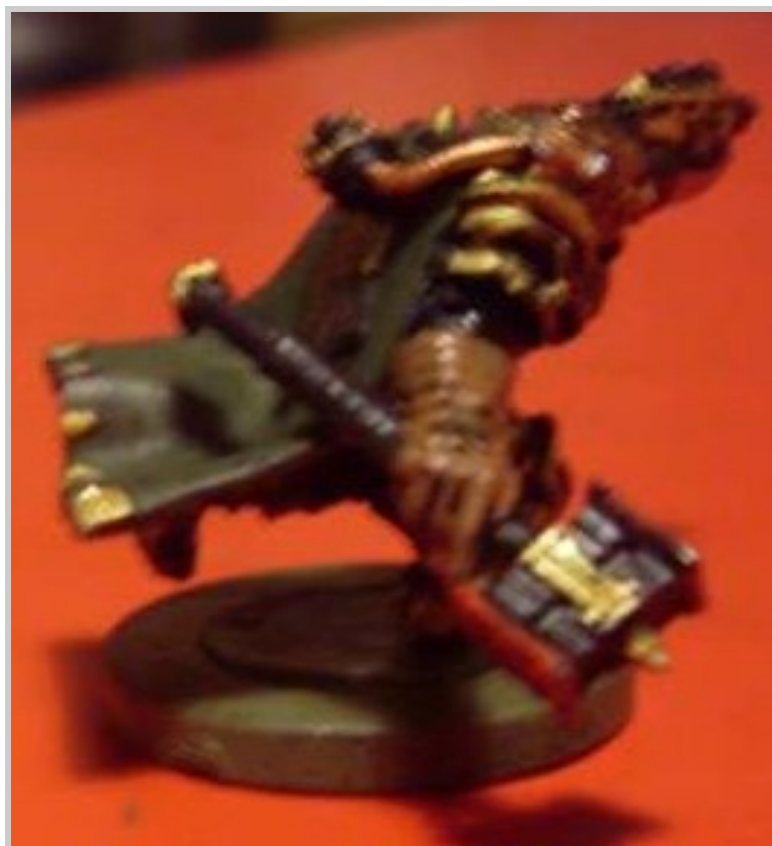
*The other players decide to **Detail** the Scenario by having Morean's guard's be looking to shoot first and ask questions later. They choose Marksmanship as the Skill to test, and since Morean and Thrinio are outnumbered the Difficulty is increased by +10.*

Finally, the current Player can always elect for the Scenario to have Drastic Consequences, indicating that serious injury, humiliation, imprisonment, or similar penalties would occur in case of failure. This means that any Conclusion Tokens they earn from the Test are doubled, but Failing the

test results in 1 Damage to the Skill instead of none. If the current Player does not elect for a Scenario to have Drastic Consequences, if the other players agree it can have Drastic Consequences anyways.

*Morean decides that getting to the Ion Cannon terminal is worth possibly getting perforated, so he aggressively decides to accept **Drastic Consequences** should he fail to take out the guards. Needless to say, the unarmed Thrinio isn't pleased by this turn of events!*

Once the Outline and Details of the Scenario are set and the Drastic Consequences are determined, if any, then the Player attempts the Scenario Test. They roll 1d66 (Two 6-sided dice, one representing 1s and another representing 10s), and succeed if they get



By "TSNC"

above the Test Difficulty (Usually 35+, but this can be increased or decreased in during Detailing the Scenario). They get a bonus to their roll equal to the value of their Skill, minus the Damage to that Skill. If the Skill has a Value of 0, they must reroll the test if successful (The "Penalty" is simply a narrative description of their general state of being when their Skill Damage is equal to their Skill Value). In addition, the player gets a bonus to the check equal to the number of +’s on their used Background card, and a penalty equal to the number of -’s on the same card.

Morean rolls for his Marksmanship test, needing to get at least a 45+ (35+10). He rolls a 41, getting +1 from his Skill and -1 for his Object card for a total of 41, and Fails the Test.

If a player rolls a natural 11, then the Test is automatically failed regardless of their Skill

value and suffers 1 Damage to the Skill they were using. If the roll was a natural 66, then the Test automatically succeeds regardless of their Skill value. In addition, the Player gets +1 for the Skill they were using and immediately make a new Player Background card related to the Scenario for either a roll of 11 or 66.

If they equal or beat the Difficulty, the test is a success and the player earns the indicated number of Conclusion Tokens (Usually 1, but this can be increased with Drastic Consequences or higher Test Difficulty) and the player Background card is marked with a +. If they fail to beat the Difficulty, then they gain no conclusion tokens and may have Damaged their Skill, and the player Background card is marked with a -.

If the test is failed, the player connected to the active player via the Relationship(s) may attempt to pass the same Scenario check with the same Skill. If successful, both that player and the current player get half the indicated number of Conclusion Tokens, rounded down. If the test is failed on an 11, both players suffer that Damage to the applicable Skill. Successes or failures from Support rolls still give +’s or -’s to Background cards as normal.

Now Thrinio gets to try her luck at disarming the guards. She rolls a 46,



By "Daedle"

getting -1 for the Background card and no bonus from her Skill value of 0, but she still manages to successfully complete the Scenario. Morean avoids damage for his Drastic Consequences, and so both he and Thrinio get half of the total Conclusion tokens (2) for this Scenario, resulting in one token each. In addition, the Ion Cannon Launch Codes are marked with a +, evening out the bonus/penalty to +0 to later Scenario Skill checks.

If Thrinio had failed this test, both she and Morean would have taken 1 Damage to their Marksmanship Skills. Since Thrinio has 0 Marksmanship, she would have needed to apply this damage to another Skill instead. This would have also marked the Ion Cannon Launch Codes with a -, perhaps indicating the increased security to prevent further incursions.

For any Scenario check, a player can discard one of their earned Conclusion Tokens to reroll a Scenario check.

Regardless of the outcome of the Scenario and the Support, their Turn is over after those checks and it goes to the player with the next-least overall Skill value. Do not return the Player Background card to their deck, but instead place them to on side. If a player has no more Background cards they can draw, they no longer take a Turn for Scenarios, although they can still Support other players as normal.

If a Skill ever gains Damage equal to it's standard Value, further Damage to this Skill is instead applied to other Skills with Damage less than the Skill Value of the



By "SneakyChris"

Player's choice.

If a Player ever gains Damage equal to their Skill Value for all of their Skills, they must discard half of their current Conclusion Tokens, rounding up, every time they fail further Scenario checks. If they are unable to discard a Conclusion Token, then their character Dies, and the Player should make a new character in order to continue playing after the Campaign concludes. In addition, the circumstances that resulted in the character's death should become a new Background card, either for another Player or the Party as a whole, as determined by the Player of the late character.

Campaign Conclusion:

Once every Player has attempted at least 3 Scenarios, then if at any time every Player has conclusion tokens equal to the total Significance of the revealed Party Background cards, plus one for each



By Paul Scott

additional Scenario they have attempted past the first three, then the Campaign concludes successfully for the Party.

The current Party Background cards, Thanos-8B, Kerian's Fury, and Disband the Green Bones, each have 1 Significance, making a total of 3 Significance. If Morean and all of the other party members have attempted at least 3 Scenarios each, and they each have 3 Conclusion Tokens, then they complete the Campaign successfully.

If all Players have three or fewer Player Background cards and every Player does not have Conclusion Tokens equal to the total Significance of the revealed Party

Background cards, plus one for each additional Scenario they have attempted past the first three, then the Campaign concludes unsuccessfully for the Party.

In either case, every Player may fill in 5 Experience bubbles for any Skill or Skills they like, divided how they please, or they may elect to instead to instead fill in a blank Skill with a starting Value of 1.

Afterwards, each player gets a Background card related to the Campaign, annotated with a + if the player had Conclusion Tokens equal to the total Significance of the

revealed Party Background cards, plus one for each additional Scenario they have attempted past the first three. Otherwise, the background card is instead annotated as with a -.

In addition, the Party also gains a new Background card (Either a Goal, Civilization, Object, or Location), and all other Party Background cards gain +1 Significance. Damage is always reduced to 0 at the end of a Campaign.

Use in Warpath and Point Insertion:

A Player can use their Character in a Warpath game as a non-Solid unit of 1

model, with a base statline of Spd 5, 6+ Hit, 3+ Def, 1 Att, 7/9 Ne, and base value of 5 pts. For Point Insertion, the To is 4/5.

The player determines the statline by allocating points from their Skills into the represented Subskills, with 1x indicating that that Warpath stat or ability can be increased by 1 if they have a 1 in that Skill, increased by 2 if they have 3 (1+2), increased by 3 if they have 6 (1+2+3), etc.

For the ones without an 'x' value, they can only increase that Ability once with those Skill points. For values with a "-", those actually increase the Skill points you can spend on other Skills (But not the same Skill). Note that for the Point Insertion, Nerve increases cost "2x" instead of "1x"

Increases for Nerve increase the Nerve score by +1/+1. Hit cannot be improved beyond 3+, and Def cannot be improved beyond 6+. In addition, unless the character is Large, they always count as having the Stealthy and Tough (3) rules. Large characters always count as having the Bulky and Tough (3) rules.

Point cost for the Character is equal to the character's sum Skill values, divided by 5 (Rounding up). For Point Insertion, the cost for the Character in cr is equal to their sum Skill values.

For a Character Sheet to use in Rogue Agent, please see the Appendix on the next page!▪



By "Daedle"

Name: _____

(2x), Expendable (1), Undying (1),
Regenerate (1x)

Race: _____

Equipment: () / () [Exposed]

O O O O O

Subskills: Stealthy (1) Crushing Strength (1x),
Def (1x), Decaying Strike (1) , Drone
Controller (1), Plague (1x)**Firearm:** () / () [Unarmed]

O O O O O

Subskills: Range (12" per 1x), Fire (1x),
Piercing (1x), Blast (D3 per 1x), Saturation
(1), Sniper (1), Reload (-1), Pistol (1), Indirect
Fire (0), Howitzer (1), Thermonuclear (10),
Markerlight (1)**Other Skills:**_____ () / () []
O O O O O_____ () / () []
O O O O O_____ () / () []
O O O O O_____ () / () []
O O O O O_____ () / () []
O O O O O_____ () / () []
O O O O O_____ () / () []
O O O O O**Value/Damage [Penalty]****Agility:** () / () [Crippled]

O O O O O

Subskills: Spd (2 per 1x), Jump Troops (3),
Fast (1), Lumbering (-1), Def (1x), Move
through Cover (1), Stealthy (1), Infiltration
(1), Recon (1), Immobile (-1), Dodge (1)**Martial:** () / () [Defenseless]

O O O O O

Subskills: Hit (1x), Att (1x), Crushing Strength
(1x), Elite (1x), Vicious (1x), Craven (-1),
Clumsy (-1), Dodge (1)**Marksmanship:** () / () [Clumsy]

O O O O O

Subskills: Hit (1x), Att (1x), Elite (1x), Vicious
(1x), Sniper (1), Piercing (1)**Social:** () / () [Humiliated]

O O O O O

Subskills: Nerve (1x), Inspiring (1), Very
Inspiring (2), Craven (-1), Pack Mentality (1),
Headstrong (1), Steadfast (2), Taskmaster (1),
At Any Cost (1), Brutal Discipline (1)**Psychic:** () / () [Drained]

O O O O O

Subskills: Zap (2x), Jump Troops (3),
Expendable (1), Undying (1), Decaying Strike
(1)**Toughness:** () / () [Weakened]

O O O O O

Subskills: Def (1x), Shield (1), Nerve (1x),
Large (2), Headstrong(1), Steadfast (2), Tough



By Daniel King

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