

IRONWATCH

Issue
29



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ABYSSAL TIDINGS

A Message from the Editor

Happy holidays, and welcome back to the **IRONWATCH**!

It sounds like the final wave of Deadzone is ramping up to be shipped out, so hopefully all our wonderful plastic Enforcers, Peacekeepers, and Forgeguard will be arriving on doorstops soon. Don't forget to paint them up and send us some pictures, as well as any stories, scenarios, or battle reports, you might happen to have too.

One thing we would definitely like to see more of is Mars Attacks in the **IRONWATCH**. You've got the models, so send us all the stories, pictures, and other content you can think of, and we'll be sure to give it a special place here in the magazine. Pictures in particular are greatly appreciated, so fire up your paintbrushes and get those models ready for their day in the limelight.

As always, thanks for reading, and whether you're a brand new reader or have been with us since the beginning long, long ago, welcome to the Watch.

-Austin

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!

All models used in this publication are from the respective author's own personal collections, and any models displayed herein are not intended to challenge the status of the copyrights of their respective owners. All rights are reserved to their respective owners.

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THE IRON FORGE



"Sergeant Nero" Orc Flagger by Darren Lysenko

Welcome back to the Iron Forge.

On display this month for you we have:

- Adam Morrow shows off the final result of his forest Deadzone and dilapidated Mars Attacks scenery when combined into a mega battlezone.
- Boston Miniatures, with an array of great Mars Attacks heroes
- Geoff Burbidge paints an incredibly imposing Enforcer Captain.
- Matt Gilbert shares an awesome tutorial for painting Ogres later in this magazine.
- Steicy Jourdan with a stunning Mars Attacks hero

Keep tuned in next month for more fantastic models, and if you have some painted Mantic minis you'd like featured to possibly become an Iron Forge artist, please email high resolution photos of your miniatures to ironwatchmagazine@gmail.com. Please include your name and/or Mantic forum name. You can also provide descriptions of your paint jobs and titles if you'd like!



"Ice Crushers" Marauder Dreadball Team by Christian Schlumpberger

ADAM MORROW

Over this holiday weekend, I've tackled painting up my Battlezone Ruins, which I was very eager to do and see how they looked in conjunction with the Mars Attacks terrain. Suffice to say I'm very happy with the results. My ruins tiles were painted in the same manner as the rest of my terrain: various layers of colors sprayed on with the salt-masking technique*, though I ended up with a few other steps to work with the battle damaged look.

I sloppily painted matte black around the edges of the openings and then smeared it with my fingers outwards from the opening. After that there was some painting of the rebar, a Leather Brown washed with black and splotched/drybrushed silver.



I put my ruins tiles together, along with my Mars Attacks terrain, and some of my other Battlezones I already had to see how it all looked together. I'm definitely a fan of the result. I still need to get some of the Fortified set now, but here is the result!

**Editor's Note: The Salt-Masking Technique, in brief, usually involves painting the underlying "damaged" color onto a model, then spraying on some hairspray or other temporary fixative and a sprinkling of salt, and finally spray painting or airbrushing the "undamaged" color on top. Gently cleaning the model afterwards will knock off the salt and remove the "undamaged" paint that stuck to it, revealing the "damaged" color underneath, giving it a worn appearance.*

ADAM MORROW



BOSTON MINIATURES



Mars Attacks: What's not to like about that title? First I have to say I was to hesitant to jump in and spend a few bucks on it. But oh boy! This game is awesome! Keeping it true to the dark humor of the comic book, you will encounter multiple eclectic heroes that really should not fit together, but in this game they do. I have to say it is nice to paint something which is not fantasy, post apocalyptic or far ahead in the future.

Last month the Martians and the Marines were on the page.

This month, I challenged my painting skills to paint 17 heroes! Yes 17! I hope I didn't forget any!

Liking the Mantic colors, I used them on most of the miniatures and adding some variation. As a first timer video maker, I decided to make some time lapse video that I posted online for fun.'

A few alteration include:

- Don Manning the rocket man painted like LazyTown Sportacus
- Deke painted like WWE Roman Reigns

BOSTON MINIATURES

- Eva and Ashley having different skin tones.
- Bobby wearing a Boston T-shirt.

What is fun about Mars Attacks is you can paint any figurines out there and use it the game. Even reuse your favorite miniature cars. It will fit together in the world of Mars Attacks!

Happy painting, Cedric



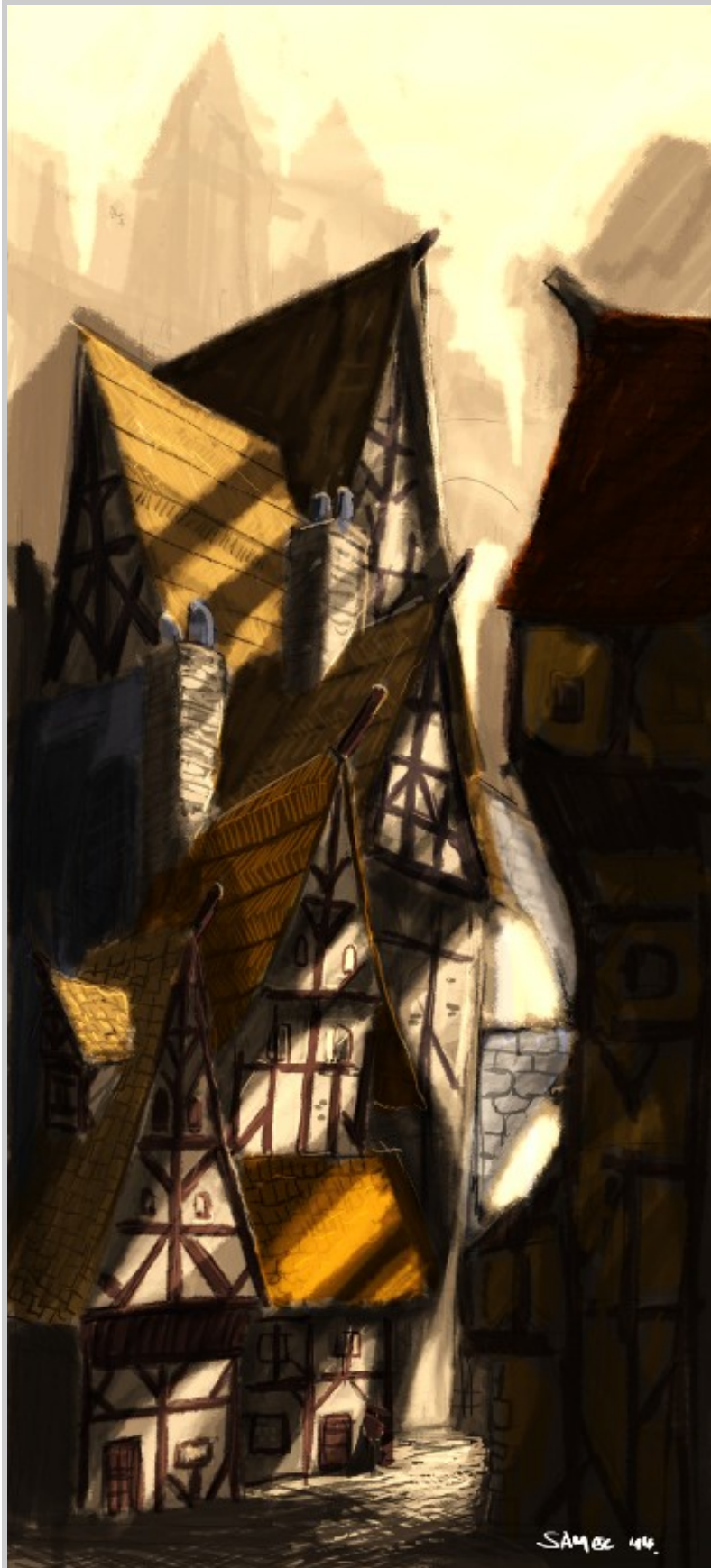
GEOFF BURBIDGE



STEICY JOURDAN



MANTIC CALENDAR



Town by Boris Samec

If you have Mantic-related events or tournaments you'd like to add, please PM Matt Gilbert or Austin Peasley on the forums or [email us](#) with your event's date, time, location, cost, a brief description, and a URL for more information.

Please note that this list is not exhaustive and indicates where Mantic games are being enjoyed, not necessarily where Mantic will be making an official appearance (Save for the Mantic HQ, of course!).

January

1/16- [BryceCon](#)

1/19 \$30 per person

Begins 1/16, 4 PM & ends 1/19, 11 AM

Dreadball demos and other games will be available at the convention.

Ruby's Inn

26 South Main Street

Bryce Canyon City, Utah 84764, USA

1/17 [Kings of War Tournament](#)

\$10 per person

10 AM — 5 PM

This event is a 1000 point Kings of War Tournament to celebrate the end of our second Escalation League.

The Hobby Shop

153 North Springboro Pike

Dayton, OH 45449, USA

MANTIC CALENDAR



An Asterian Cypher faces down a Marauder Mawbeast by Nicodemus Sandberg

February

2/13- [OrcCon](#)

2/16 \$50 pre-registration | \$60 at the door
 Begins 2/13, 2 PM & ends 1/16, 7 PM
 OrcCon is one of SoCal's larger gaming conventions. Dreadball and Deadzone tournaments will be held.
 Hilton Los Angeles Airport
 5711 W. Century Boulevard
 Los Angeles, CA 90045, USA

2/27- [GottaCon](#)

3/1 C\$50 pre-registration | C\$60 at the door
 Begins 2/27, 5 PM & ends 3/1, 6 PM
 The first Annual Canadread Cup will be held for Dreadball.
 Victoria Conference Centre
 720 Douglas Street
 Victoria, BC V8W, Canada

2/28- [Kings of War Andalucia Tournament](#)

3/1 There will be a Kings of War Tournament the first day, and Deadzone and Mars Attacks demonstrations the second day.
 Alhaurin de la Torre
 Malaga, Spain

MANTIC CALENDAR

March

3/14 [Warcon 27](#)

€5 per person

10 AM—5 PM

This annual wargames convention will feature demos for DreadBall, Deadzone, and Mars Attacks. Several crowdfunded game developers will be invited to the convention.

Dienstencentrum Gentbrugge

Braemkasteelstraat 29-45, 9050

Gentbrugge, Belgium

3/18- [Adepticon](#)

3/22 \$50 per person

Begins 3/18, 5 PM & ends 3/22, 4 PM

Mantic is running tournaments and demos of Dreadball, Deadzone and Kings of War at this event.

Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center Hotel

1551 Thoreau Drive N.

Schaumburg, IL 60173, USA



Enforcer Pathfinder by Paul Mullis



Mummies by Boris Samec

Q&A WITH CHRIS PALMER

Organized by Matt Gilbert

The Mantic Q&A feature contains questions from the community via the forum, answered by Chris Palmer, Web and Events Coordinator at Mantic Games. If you want to ask a question, you can on the [Mantic Blog](#).

The new Mars Attacks/DBX plastic is great. Any plans to make some models for KoW or Warpath in the material, possibly some larger minis?

The plastics in Dungeon Saga are made out of the same material, and those can be used in Kings of War. At the moment, nothing for either range is being designed specifically to be used in that material.

Are there any plans to include a skeleton or undead chariot option in the new KoW edition undead army list?

You'll have to wait and see – that's one for Alessio and his team I'm afraid! Personally, I'd really like to see more chariots added for different races. A Fleabag chariot would be cool too.

Is there any possibility of a Warpath themed racing game (vehicular based racing/demotion derby)?

I think this would be awesome – who knows? We love the out-of-the-box games. I think as long as the vehicles crossed over, it's a possibility. Possibly one for the fans?



"Order of Marius" Kingdoms of Men Knights by "imm0rtal reaper"

Q&A WITH CHRIS PALMER



Elves prepare for a siege by "SneakyChris"

There are a lot of very talented and creative people within our hobby community; many articles and fiction presented in the Ironwatch fanzine are proof of this. For all the great aspiring authors, artists, and game designers out there who would like to pitch their ideas to Mantic for future official publication consideration but have no idea how to go about it, what would be the correct process for them to do so? Who should they contact and how should they go about contacting them? Are there any particular submission guidelines that people should follow?

Ah, there's several different things happening here. We look at artists and authors differently to games designers. For artists, we simply require a portfolio and an example of rates. For authors, evidence of previous writing and

maybe a synopsis for the story you want to tell in our universe – you only need to look at our shout-outs for authors for the short story compilations to see the sort of thing we're after. For games designers, we want to see a finished game set in our universe. Ideas are great, but we want to play it, and we won't make games in other IPs that aren't either our own or are licensed. Regardless of the medium, all submission needs to go to Stewart Gibbs.

Can we expect an improved forum to serve the community?

Yes, the update surprised all of us! One of the things we'll be tackling next year is reskinning it, making it easier to use, and adding some functionality back to it.

Q&A WITH CHRIS PALMER

What's happening with Warpath, and will we be seeing the Pusk, Hobgoblins, and other cool stuff from Xtreme making an appearance?

Warpath is undergoing some changes, and there will be new beta rules and a Kickstarter next year. We're starting with the basic armies first, so it's unlikely that the aliens from Xtreme will be making an appearance.

How big will the average warpath force be?

As the updated rules and army lists are still in beta and testing, it's hard to say. I played a game the other day though – about 35-40

Enforcers versus about 100 Plague figures, and it was a pretty close game. That's not including any tanks or aircraft though!

Are there any new games in the pipeline, or will the focus now be on the current games?

2015 is the year of DreadBall, and with the major launch of Dungeon Saga, and Kings of War second edition, the focus on the moment is on current games and supporting them the best we can. Of course, if a special project were to rear its ugly face, we might not be able to resist, but expect more of the same but better next year.



Dreadball Zz'or by Boris Samec

Q&A WITH CHRIS PALMER

Are we likely to see any of the KoW armies get fleshed out with new models, outside of Kickstarter?

I think the Kickstarter has allowed us to generate an awful lot of new heroes and special elite choices for the armies. If there's something we feel a range is lacking when we released the second edition, then maybe, but at the moment there's no real sense in doing anything extra out of Kickstarter. When it's so successful, why would you?

What drove the selection of units to be funded in KoW 2?

When it comes to models, there's really two tracts: miniatures for existing ranges and miniatures for new armies. For existing ranges, we looked at filling in the gaps with cool new miniatures that had plenty of crossover appeal. The Forest Shamblers are missing from the Elves but could also feed into the Forces of Nature. It's the same with the Greater Obsidian Golem and the Greater Earth Elemental. When it came to heroes, we choose miniatures of which you'd want more than one. Our necromancer sculpts are pretty old now, and we can do something better looking and give it that flexibility so you can variants. We knew before we started that we couldn't do loads of hard plastic; that also had a big impact. You'll notice we didn't do any infantry, for example.

For the new armies, well, we had to have a core in hard plastic. That's where a lot of the funding goes: plastic tooling. Each army gets two kits; the Salamander has also been added to the Forces of the Abyss, so there's a good selection on offer. We added some extra choice and

character through supporting units, Centaur Hero, Efreet, Molochs etc., and we have two very sizeable army releases.

Red, brown, or no sauce on a sausage sandwich? Would it change if it was bacon?

Personally, no sauce. And that's on sausage or bacon. I could be tempted by adding an egg...

Can you confirm or deny rumors of a missile silo being built below Mantic HQ?

We can neither confirm nor deny... What Orcy gets up to in his own time with Fisty Glue Man is his business. If he wants to build a missile silo, or the full-size model of the Mantic Bunker made of Battlezones tiles, then who are we to stop him? ▀



Orc Axes by Jonathan Faulkes



Dwarven Brock Riders by Jose Manuel Chasco Gonzalez

HAMFIST BORIN

By Michael DeFranco (MDSW)

4

Grobar made sure to get as much distance as possible between the cavern and the two of them before nightfall. However, this was not before he needed to make a number of stops along the way.

"Bugger, how much could you possibly poop?!" he exclaimed to the kicking infant as Grobar's

huge hands tried to dress the baby's bottom as best he could from fresh cloths.

"The next stream we come to, I am going to give you a good soaking," he said. Bugger just snorted and grinned to show impossibly large teeth that should not rightfully fit into his mouth. Grobar allowed the baby greenskin to eat from the pile of what looked like scraps from last week's meal, while his own stomach turned.

"You can really pack it away, can't you? Well, we have to get a good night's rest before we start off in the morning, so you just sit tight right here." Grobar fastened a length of rope around

Bugger's ankle to his own belt, a trick borrowed from Regda Mull, in case the baby decided to wander off while Grobar was asleep. However, Bugger's eyes soon closed, and he was snoring like a champion. Grobar had just the last remnants of various thoughts before he drifted off to sleep as well.

"How dangerous is this to keep hold of a baby orc, and for how long can I expect to care for it before I can find a place that I can leave him? I do not actually think it will be long before Bugger is up and walking, and maybe I should just let him fend for himself. Soon, we will be navigating around the elven territories, and that is nowhere I really want to be with the tenuous diplomacy between the two races at the moment. And what was what seemed like a family of orcs doing in a cavern in what is not normally considered orc territory?" These wildly fleeting thoughts caromed throughout his head in the final moments before sleep. It was not very ranger-like and very uncharacteristic of Grobar to not hear the far off wail in the night that came from no animal.

A couple of uneventful days furthering his trek occurred without much incident. Well, if you can call cleaning the most horrible green, snot-like substance from Bugger's rear end while taking every opportunity for a dunk in any convenient stream or watering hole uneventful. Grobar did feel terrible about defiling the small pond yesterday with this toxic orc waste, but it could not be helped. Already Bugger was toddling along with the rope secured around Bugger's waist with the other end tied to Grobar's belt.

Grobar and Bugger spent a number of peaceful pre-evening dusks watching the small fairies light up and take to the sky. Bugger's eyes



Dwarven Ironclad by Marcel Popik

watched in amazement as several of the small creatures decided to take a closer look and flittered about just in front of his nose. Bugger reached out to grab an exceptionally dainty and well-formed fairy nymph.

"Oh no, don't do that, Bugger. Ha! They don't like that very much," Grobar said with a jolly laugh. Bugger smiled and quickly fell asleep under the fairy-lit sky. Grobar soon followed suit and kept the rope tied, just to be on the safe side.

One day, while clambering down a slight incline, which was a bit steep for Bugger's wavering legs, the toddler orc took a spill that prompted a sprawling cry. Grobar scooped up Bugger with the best consoling manner he could muster and said, "Grobar's got you. Grobar will get you down OK. Don't worry."

"Grubber," said the small orc.

“Gro-bar,” retorted the dwarf.

“Grubber,” Bugger said followed by a loud resounding belch.

“Well, then,” said Grobar, “How can we argue with that?!” Grobar laughed, and Bugger smiled with his famously large teeth.

Later that day when arriving at a stream to once again to clean off Bugger’s toxic-waste creation portal, Grobar was fixated on only inhaling through his mouth and did not hear the number of soft boots approach from behind.

A haughty voice sneered, “It appears here that we have a nursemaid and her cub. I did not think even dwarfs stooped that low to sire orclings.”

Grobar turned slowly, his hammers slung into his belt always at the ready for a quick draw, but he decided it best to keep them put in place. Surrounding the dwarf and the toddler orc were a band of six tall elves with bows drawn tightly. Grobar could see their forest attire in a uniform fashion and quickly surmised this was an elf Scout party patrolling the edges of their borders, as he had for so many years along the dwarven territories. Grobar could see the keen-eyed elves peering down the length of each shaft of their drawn arrow and knew he would be punctured fatally before he could free Bold and Rock and come close to any of the elves.

“I am Grobar Borin, and I am on an honorable mission to the dwarven Lord Thiflar in Rogrim. This orc was from a family that I was forced to kill. I could not leave it – I don’t know exactly why.” Grobar started to say he would not be staying and would continue away from the elf territories, but was cut short by the only elf that

seemed to have a voice.

“We believe nothing you say in these times. It is not up to me to figure out your true intention, and you will answer to Lord Blestron in Fabendale.” The elf motioned Grobar and the tiny orc up the embankment with the tip of his arrow still pointing at Grobar’s wide chest.

“Great,” thought Grobar. “Now I need to waste time answering a bunch of questions in fancy Fabendale with Lord what’s-his-name Blustery.” Grobar was far more worried what fate was in store for Bugger than for himself. Grobar once again strapped Bugger to his chest and started up the embankment where there were six waiting elvish horses. The most indignant part of all of this was being tied onto one of the horses facing backwards. Grobar got a grand glimpse of everything as it was passing by to his front with Bugger snorting at the dust being kicked up by the quick pace of the horse’s



Elven Spearmen by Neil Dixon

hooves. “Just don’t you fill your shorts now, or I will have to smell it all the way to Fabendale.”

Fabendale was not a very large city in the terms of the elvish lands, but a decent city nonetheless. Grobar and Bigger were ushered quickly through town to the modest hall where undoubtedly Lord ‘Blusterbutt’ sat making all sorts of elf decisions. Grobar had just a few dealings with the elves since the start of the small border skirmishes between the dwarven and elven territories that started a number of years after the end of the third Great War. Grobar had entered into the Ranger units well after the end of the third war and was well versed in trying to maintain dwarven borders and territories from the snooty elves and their high thinking issues that always thought their lands should be wider than they should. However, being out of the Ranger business for a number of years, he had not kept up with

current politics between the races as much as he should have, so a quiet tongue seemed like the best course of action until he was able to see just what this was all about. After spending what seemed like the most part of the day in a small cell with Bigger gleefully tossing about the small stool, which was the only piece of furniture in the small cell, the door was finally opened and two tall and slender elf guards motioned for the two of them to come.

Grobar saw that Lord ‘Blisterbottom’ was seated behind a very large table in a grand chair. He rather expected a throne-like room, but this looked like the chamber of a working politician more than anything else. The walls were lined with bookcases with volume upon volume of books and parchments. The high ceiling did make every step into the chamber echo with a coldness that was not unlike the personality of every elf he had ever come



Dwarven Berserker Lord versus a Goblin Mawbeast by Paul Mullis



Elven Bowmen by "WeedyElf"

across. Grobar did notice with his own internal satisfaction that his boot steps did not make any sound at all. "Heh, I still got the Ranger glide after all," thought Grobar.

Lord Blestron peered up from the parchment he was reading and looked at Grobar from under his narrow brow. Besides the two guards in the room, there were what appeared to be two scribes at the end of the long table with quill and parchment. The elven Lord was dressed impeccably, as most elves always seemed to be overdressed for every occasion, and spoke in a booming voice that was quite un-elflike.

"Name?"

"Grobar Borin, son of Gimland," said Grobar in as husky and dwarven of a voice he could muster. The scribes' quills scratched in unison into their parchments. They both looked up at

Grobar with bored expressions waiting for the next painfully important item to scribble down during this encounter. Bugger had the rope fastened around him with the other end secured to Grobar's belt. The elves had removed his hammers and pack, but thought it amusing to leave the tiny orc tethered to the squat dwarf. Bugger was hiding behind Grobar and peered out around his waist to give the elven Lord a wide-eyed stare.

"Fabendale does not take lightly when dwarves are sneaking about its borders. Given the recent events and the news we are receiving from the northern territories, we can only expect that there are spies everywhere. Why are you here?"

Grobar cleared his throat, "Lord Beltbuster, I am on a mission to deliver sealed orders to the honorable dwarven Lord Thiflar in the northern

territory of Rogrim.” Grobar continued, “I am not aware of any current situations in the northern territories, and I am no spy.”

Lord Blestron stood up, peered even closer and leaned over the large table that stood like a castle wall between himself and Grobar. “I have no time to sit and figure out what an old dwarf and his pet orc are doing along our borders. Your sealed parchment will be opened and read. If you are convicted a spy, you will be killed, and I can get on with the matters at hand.”

Pet orc? Grobar had nearly forgotten poor Bugger hiding behind him and peeking out. “I have told you, I do not know what else is going on in any other territory. I have been in the wildlands for nearly a week, and I already explained to your men that this orc was left over from a family that I killed. I... I just could not leave him. Please let me return to my journey with my parchment and belongings, and I will be gone from your borders within the day.”

Lord Blestron walked quickly around the closest end of the table until he was standing directly in front of Grobar, who always disliked having to crane his head up to look at men and elves. Their tall manner seemingly thrown into the faces of dwarfs, they relished their height superiority. However, this elf stooped over so he was looking directly into Grobar’s face. This move surprised Grobar, and he could see in his quick stride and build that Blestron was no mere low ranking royalty or politician, but a dangerous foe, indeed.

“Do you mean to tell me you have not heard of the stolen Talisman of Ardol and its recent arcane use to raise the dissidents of death?



Dwarven Ironclad by Matt Gilbert

Anyone spending nights in the wildlands would surely have heard the wails of the foul banshees at night. Already there are towns and villages to the north that have been stripped and the residents drained clean of life,” Lord Blestron said with urgency.

“I know of no such news!” Grobar said with sincerity. “If this was true, and I have no doubt you speak the truth, then it very well may be that my journey to Rogrim should not be delayed any further.”

“I will decide that,” said Lord Blestron. “Although I do respect the official seal on the parchment you carry, it will hold no matter if it must be opened and read to discover its contents and whether you carry the news of a spy regarding any of the elven kingdoms. And you, traveling with this tiny orc? For what possible purpose?” Lord Blestron could see the real closeness that the small orc seemed to hold towards the sturdy dwarf. Why was it hiding behind this dwarf like a frightened child? What kind of odd connection was this that mocked the order of things? With this, he reached down

and picked up the tiny orc and lifted him up face-to-face as if to inspect him closer.

“Nothing good can come of this. Poor Bugger,” thought Grobar. Bugger’s eyes opened wide and a pained look came across his face as Lord Blestron’s expression seemed to turn from curiosity to almost disgust. That is when the eruption occurred.

As if in glorious, synchronic harmony, a simultaneous belch of such impressive power as to render the heartiest of dwarfs to shame, coupled with an expulsion of methane from the small orc’s rear, equally as loud and resonant, echoed throughout the chamber. Not only did the eviction of gas from both ends occur with massive force, but the duration was so long that Grobar thought the deafening event might never end. Grobar could not dare even look into Lord Blestron’s face to see what would come next.

The noble elf was stone silent, as if struggling just exactly what to say. Was it rage? Indignation? Suddenly, a booming laugh burst forth from Lord Blestron and continued until true tears rolled down his cheeks. Even Grobar started to chuckle as did the two scribes and even the guards ventured to share a giggle, then a guffaw. Lord Blestron gingerly set Bugger down, where the small orc just turned to look at Grobar and flash a small smile from a mouth that still had a long way to go to fit his still oversized teeth.

Lord Blestron used the sleeve of his shirt to wipe the tears from his face. “Truly, you are a special one!” he exclaimed. “I will not insult your character enough to say that you have shown this orc a fine example, but I will not be the one to delay your important task. You will

be released with your belongings and your sealed parchment intact.”

“You are a wise leader, and your city benefits from your example,” said Grobar with ever so slight of a nod of his head.

“Take heed, Grobar Borin, do not delay in removing the both of you from elvish lands. And, take heed of the events that are stirring around us now,” said Lord Blestron in a commanding tone.

Quickly ushered out by the tall guards, Grobar and Bugger took back their belongings. Grobar’s two hammers felt extra nice to be in his belt again, and they found themselves escorted to the edge of the border where the two disappeared quickly into the dense forest.

To be continued...▪



*“Order of Marius” Kingdoms of Men Standard Bearer
by “imm0rtal reaper”*

DEATHTIME STORY

By Gerry Lee

The boy was dying. Consumed and eaten up by the plague, he was little more than a rag doll skeleton to the grim men filling the common grave. It had once been the basement of an old manor house long ago on the outskirts of the little town the boy had lived in... I will not say 'grown up in', as he was very young yet. The manor had burned down years ago, and now the stone lined pit that remained served as a mass grave for the bodies of the plague's victims.

The plague had been killing people for three long weeks in the town. The men that were forced to dispose of the dead no longer had any tears or remorse. Perhaps they had once been

good men, men who laughed and loved and cared about their neighbors. Perhaps they had even known the boy. But now they were hard hearted, stony-faced and performed their duties ruthlessly and haphazardly.

It did not matter to the men that the boy lived. He was good as dead, and they had no time to wait around for him to expire. Too many bodies waited their turn for burial. Too many dead. Callously the men tossed the boy and the other corpses they were carrying onto the piles of the dead and headed back the doomed town for more bodies.

Soon the night swallowed up the receding lanterns of the corpse men, and all was dark and silence.

In time the boy's fever broke as it is want to do just before the plague finally kills it's tormented victim. The boy woke, and whimpered softly.



Undead wolves by Christian Schlumpberger



Undead Zombie Horde by Guiseppe Aquino

"Mama... mama..." he called in a thin, wavering voice. It was so cold...

The boy was blind, for the plague had eaten out his eyes, but that scarcely mattered in the near perfect dark that shrouded the lands. Only the faintest glitter of a handful of stars shining weakly high above were any light at all. That, and in the corner, there was the gleam of yellow eyes.

The tall woman sat amongst the corpses, silent and unmoving. Since nightfall she had been patiently waiting for night, invisible to the eyes of the living, taking her leisure and waiting for the witching hour.

Her face was long and lovely, but her hair was wild and swept back in points, and a mask of bone covered the top half of her face. Her lips were turned down in a habitual frown. She was very pale, like the corpses she kept company. Her robes were tanned skins of the ghastliest kind and her breastplate armor human bone.

One might have mistaken her for a corpse

herself if not for her bizarre garments and her ancient gleaming yellow eyes.

"...mama ...mama?" the boy whimpered plaintively, writhing weakly but unable to rise or even sit up.

The night wind swept through the ruined cellar, and time passed in agony. Eventually, the boy's calls turned to feeble whimpering and then soft choking sobbing.

Did those wicked old eyes soften? Did the hard gleam of malice become gentled to a woman's pity?

They did. Impossibly, they did. The tall woman rose soundlessly and floated to the boy's side. There she knelt, looking at the ruins of his face. After a long moment, she took the boy into her lap.

"Mama...?" he wept.

"Shhh..." the woman whispered hoarsely, rocking the child gently.

"Mama...!" the weakest ghost of a smile touched his parched and cracking lips.

And so they sat for long hours in the dark of the night, and the boy slept. But in time the fever began its final assault, and a spasm of pain woke him shrieking.

"Mama!" he sobbed "Mama it hurts...!" he cried out in agony. The woman whispered harsh words that hurt the ear to hear, and the pain began to subside.

It was no healing prayer or priestly magic, but dark necromancy. With dreadful spells she bought his solace by filling him with the numbness and unfeeling like unto the dead. This spell would eventually kill the boy, but that didn't matter. She knew this plague; he would be dead before the curse killed him.

Sighing, almost rapturously at the cessation of the torture, the boy snuggled against the woman and whispered "Sing for me mama...?" The woman blinked, embarrassed. She could not sing, not well. Years of incanting forbidden spells had harshened her voice most

unnaturally. "Hush... I will tell you a story," she whispered.

*

"Long ago there was in a magical kingdom a great King. He loved to make toys to amuse his Queen and Princes and Princesses and all the royal court. Most of all he liked to make dolls. Not just any dolls but magical ones that could walk and talk and sing! Little soldiers, dancing ballerinas, funny dwarves; he made a miniature little toy kingdom!

But even the best of toys wear out and break with too much play and time. The King could have repaired them, but his sons and daughters got bored with their old favorites and always wanted new toys. The princes would make the soldiers fight against each other, and they would break off pieces and bits, and the boys would roar with laughter, and throw the broken parts away. The Princesses would get tired of their dolls that were wearing last year's dresses and fashions and toss them aside when they got worn out and threadbare.



Undead Skeletal Spearmen by "imm0rtal reaper"



Undead Zombie Horde by "left64"

Outside the castle walls, a big pile of broken toys grew and grew as the years went on.

Now, there was another toymaker who lived in the town outside. She had no children and wished she did very much. One day she was passing by the gates and she saw the pile of worn out dolls. They reminded her of little people, and she felt great pity for them. So she sought an audience with the King and begged the King to restore them.

The King was angry! "What? Make toys that never break or wear out? Fix them up so they last forever? Why they would be like my own sons and daughters then! These are not Princes and Princesses; they are only toys! Begone!"

He threw the woman toymaker out of the palace and told her never to come back.

For a long time, the woman stayed away. But at night, she would dream of the broken toys and weep and cry. At last she crept back to the garbage heap and tried to fix the dolls.

She was very skilled but not like the great King. She couldn't make them talk and sing, but they could walk a little. She painted the worn out faces and glued pieces back on, but they were never quite the same. Sad, she started to cry. But then an idea came to her.

'I will march these broken dolls past the Kings window everyday! Then he will remember he once loved them, take pity and fix them up

again!' she cried gaily."

*

The ruined boy giggled weakly in the woman's lap. "Like a parade?"

The woman smiled to see him forget his suffering for a moment. "Yes. Yes, it was a parade of broken dolls..."

*

"The King's sons and daughters gathered on the balcony the next day to see a strange sight.

Their old toys marching in the garden! But where the woman toymaker had been moved to pity by the broken toys, the Royal children were outraged. Some were missing limbs and parts or had their paint missing or patches of missing hair. Instead of gracefully marching, the dolls could only shuffle and hop.

'How ugly! They are grotesque!' they cried. 'We wish they would stay broken!'

The Princes sent their new soldiers, gleaming knights and warriors and toy cannons, into the yard to destroy the parade of toys. The old toys were destroyed, and some of the new ones too.



But the Princes did not care. They had more; their father would make as many as they wanted! The more they hated the broken dolls, the more they enjoyed seeing them destroyed!

Even so, the woman toymaker did not give up. As the pile of broken toys grew daily, she worked harder and faster to fix them. The Parade went on and on, and so did the toy wars.

And all the while the King watched from his window..."

*

"...and what did the King do?" the boy asked breathlessly. Then quietly, gently, he died in her lap.

The woman tenderly stroked the boys face, eyes glittering with tears.

"...I don't know child. The wars go on and on..."

The hour was very late. It was almost daybreak then. The tall woman rose to her feet.

And the dead rose with her. ■



Undead Skeleton Spearman Regiment by Martin Geibner



Ogre Warrior by Nick Williams

AN OGRE ARMY IN 7 EASY STEPS

By Matt Gilbert

Way back during the first Mantic Kings of War Kickstarter, I decided that I was going to assemble an Ogre army. A number of us all pledged on the campaign, and when everything arrived in numerous boxes, a fun evening was spent swapping bags of plastic around depending on what we all intended to collect.

The trouble was that I got so much more stuff that evening to add to my insane pile of models already lurking embarrassingly unattended in the games room. As a result, the Ogre project did not get started for over a year. My time was increasingly taken up with things preventing me from painting at all (bar the single model each month for Ironwatch), and so a new army was looking very unlikely. If I don't paint for a while, I lose the enthusiasm to do it, and the thing I really loathe is getting a model started and painting all the base colors. I've also, to date, had a real aversion to letting anyone else paint my models. Realism kicked in though at some point, and my friend Alex provided a solution.

I'd slowly gotten around to assembling a good chunk of what I had of the army, and Alex offered to take my Ogres away and do all the base coating. In return, he wanted me to order him a load of the Deadzone scenery using my Pathfinder credits. Win-win for me. Someone else does all the boring stuff, it doesn't cost me real money, and Alex will be showing off Mantic terrain at his club!

We discussed the sort of colors I wanted and so I gave him some brief direction: blue for any clothing, a dwarfen flesh color for the skin, darker brown leathers, and dark metal for the rest. I mentally committed to having a "good enough, gaming standard" for the army as a whole and had no intention of doing much more than ink washing them once Alex had finished, and I did the bases.

The picture below is a picture Alex took while he was part of the way through what he had taken away.

The painting is fairly basic. There's a lot on every model. I would have painted very differently had I done it myself, but I know that I'd have gotten sucked into spending 6-8 hours on each model making them display standard and then never completing even a single unit. But it was what I had committed to in order to get it all on the table and looking like a decent cohesive whole; not only as a new army for our group to use but also something new with which to demo.

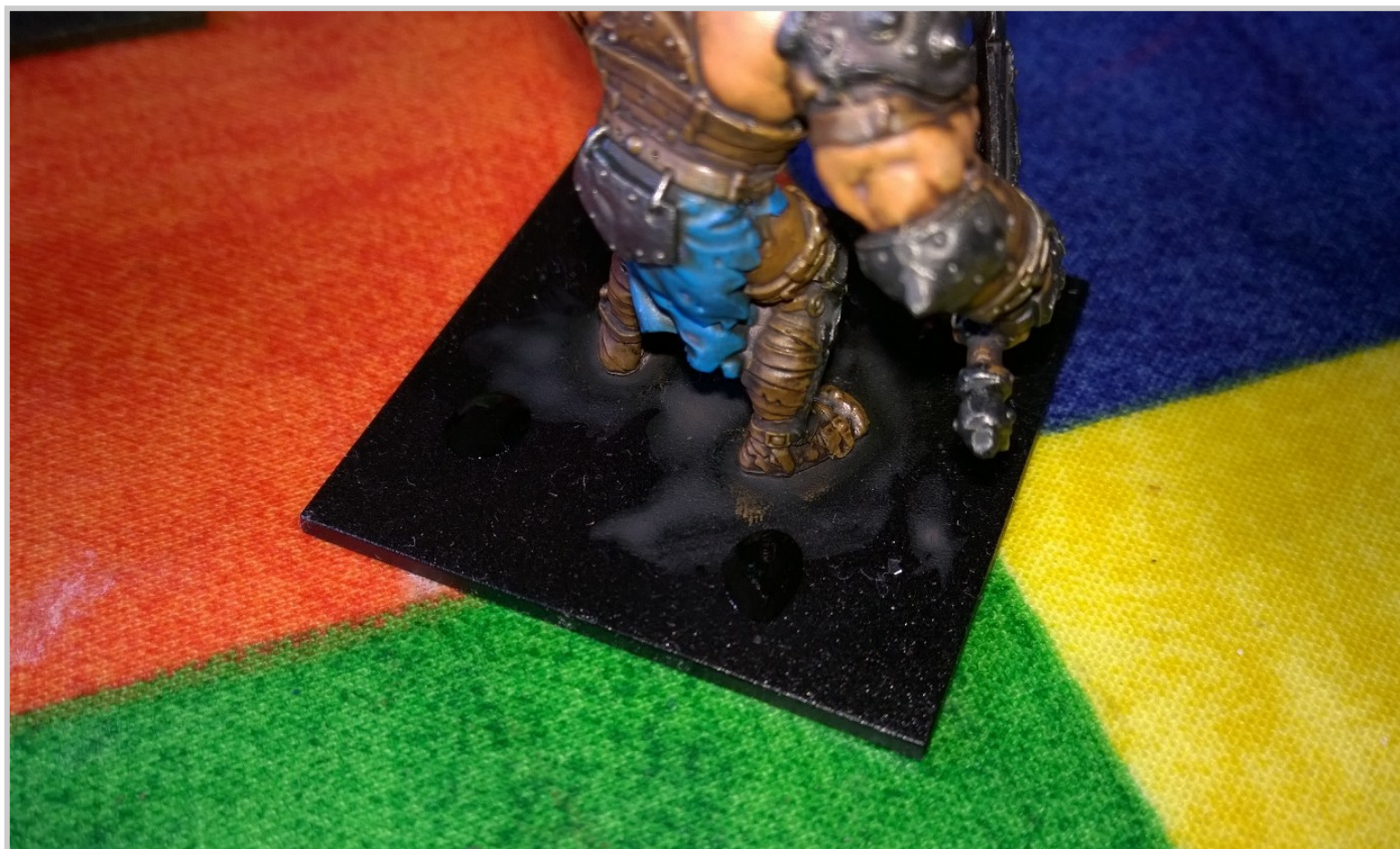
Once I had everything back, every model was given an all over wash with dark brown ink. I actually used some GW Devlan Mud I had left but could have just as well used Army Painter Strong Tone ink. You can see everything here looking a lot darker in these pictures. It all lived on the tray which moved around the house for quite a few months while I found rare evenings to chip away at the remaining tasks.





Next, I added a few small rocks to each base, simply attached with a spot of superglue for each.

The stones were then drybrushed light grey and white to pick out their texture.







Next, the bases were painted Vermin brown and then the GW texture paint Blackfire Earth

was painted on (or stabbed on a pushed around) using an old, tough brush.

The bases were then drybrushed with a mix of Vermin brown and Dheneb Stone and then pure Dheneb Stone. The whole of each base, including the stones was then washed with AP Soft Tone and once this was dry, the models were sprayed with AP Anti-shine mat varnish. Finally, different coloured grass tufts were stuck to the bases, mostly close to the rocks.

Here's a good shot of the army tray with a mix of completed bases, ones only painted Vermin brown and some with only the rocks done.





And another with the whole lot finally completed.

So all done? Objective achieved? Sort of...

What's on that tray is probably about 70% of what I have for the army so far. I'm assembling the rest over the Christmas period, and Alex will

pick up more chariots, more ogre units and three regiments of red goblin spitters in the New Year. Then there's the additional units from the latest Kings of War Kickstarter, two warlocks and twelve braves, and of course there's all the new units in the updated Ogre army list to put together down the line.





So I've made a great start and one I'd never have made without Alex's much appreciated assistance and relaxing my standards on who can paint my stuff and to what standard it should be. Having said that, at a distance I think the army looks pretty good, and I'm happy with how it's looking so far.

So what about the next steps then? Well I had intended to do some sort of magnetic solution for movement trays, but I changed my mind and just took delivery of a variety of the close order trays from Warbases in a range of configurations depending on what the army will need. I'll paint the edges of these to match the models' bases, but I'll skip the rocks though.





A nice big box of warbases



Warbases in action



Leading the force? Well, I have a few guys on foot, but how about this for a counts-as Ogre captain on chariot?

I'll continue to take pictures and record the

army's progress and will do a follow up article or two when there's more to show. So until next time, farewell, and I hope this inspired you to build a new army yourself, or at least start one... an army is never complete! ▀



THE SIXTH RUSH

By Gareth Humphreys

The Rat's Head was the kind of place where the drinks were served in safety glass beakers from behind steel shutters. As Omar walked in, the stench of the place hit the back of his throat. It was the odor of a hundred indentured laborers at the end of a hot day and fifty gallons of cheap booze with an undercurrent of industrial diesel.

He wasn't noticed. Huge, high definition screens all over the bar were showing the game, and almost everyone was watching. Their cheers drowned out the commentary as well as any attempt at conversation.

Omar made his way to the bar. The bartender was a Teraton, a ten foot high lizard with a beaked snout and a mane of horns. This one had mustard-colored scales with orange specks around his snake-like eyes. Above the bar hung the bleached skull of a Veer-Myn rat-man. Omar signed that he wanted a drink. The bartender pulled a pint of pale beer, slid it down the bar to Omar, and offered him the pay terminal. Omar swiped his card, the readout indicating that he had been charged three credits. Omar sighed and picked up his drink.

There was a general cheer, and Omar looked up at the screen. The Starbrite Slyphs were playing the Whitesun Myrmidons, and the Slyph's star striker Jennis Hillsworthy had just put her team



Dreadball Veer-Myn by Geoff Burbidge

three points up. The game was, of course, DreadBall. Fast, exciting, violent, and extremely well financed by the Corporations behind the teams. Players like Hillsworthy counted their salaries in megacredits, and although the game could be dangerous, those that survived could retire with untold wealth at an early age. It was a life that Omar had come so close to experiencing for himself five years ago. Now what? He was counting the credits left over after his rent had gone out, his bills had been paid for, and the interest on his brother Yusuf's bail loan deducted.

Omar took a large swig of his beer. Watery and revolting. Where was Yusuf? Omar made his way into the back room where there were booths and a pool table. From the corner, a dark haired man in a duster coat and a wide brim hat with dayglow green eyes stared at him over a respirator strapped over his mouth. Omar shifted uncomfortably and broke eye contact, but he could feel the man still scrutinizing him.



Marauder Dreadball Team by Grant Mahoney

A familiar figure clattered to the ground at Omar's feet. Striding out of the crowd came a hulk of a man with a shaved head, a petrol stained vest covering his torso, and tattoos covering his arms. He was sliding a brass knuckleduster on as he advanced. The figure at Omar's feet turned over, revealing the boyish, winsome features of Yusuf. There was blood on his top lip and terror in his eyes.

Omar had only a split second to act. He raised his beaker towards the nearest screen. Hieronimo Kurakin had just scored for the Whitesun Myrmidons.

"Go on Myrmidons! Come on!" he yelled.

In an instant, every conversation was stopped, every cheer was silenced, and every person in the Rat's Head was glaring at Omar with burning hatred.

Yusuf's quizzical gaze said 'Do you have some kind of plan?' Not a smart plan, thought Omar in silent reply as he scanned the room for a way out. The windows were reinforced with steel mesh, but one of them was slightly open. Just

like a game of DreadBall. There was his strike zone; he just had to beat the Guards.

As he leapt forward, the man with the brass knuckleduster lurched towards him. Omar shifted his weight and checked the man with his shoulder. Taken by surprise, his haymaker went wide of its mark and Omar slid past, handing off a pink mohawk wearing youth to his right. A curved dagger swung in front of his face. Omar ignored it and grabbed the owner's forehead,

pushing his thumb into the man's eye socket. As he went down, Omar sprang past and vaulted over the pool table.

He'd made perhaps ten feet. A gnarled hand gripped his shirt. Omar twisted the wrist, eliciting a shout of pain, but it had slowed him down, and there was a large Grogan in front of him spreading his wide, powerful arms ready for a tackle. Unlike the others, he was going low. There was no dodging this one. As the pug-faced alien creature dived for his feet, Omar made the only move he could and leapt. To his amazement, he managed to plant his left foot firmly on the dome of the Grogan's head and pushed off, launching him into the air and over his last attacker. He landed awkwardly, and his right knee exploded in pain. In that moment, he was back on the hexagon-marked, floodlit, neodurium floor of the DreadBall arena five years ago.

"It's the sixth rush, and newcomer Omar Nasif is the first to the ball. It's a great pickup, but he's been blindsided! A cynical foul on the new Jack, and he will be out of the game. What a disappointment..."

Omar dived for the window, pushing the pain out of his mind. He managed to slide out, tumbling clumsily onto the tarmac outside, and kicking the window closed with his good leg. There was a satisfying click, which would buy him a few seconds as his pursuers struggled with the handle. Omar hauled himself to his feet and limped off as fast as he could, but he was not followed.

By the time he got near his place, the adrenaline was wearing off, and the knee was getting unbearable. Omar began almost to regret stepping in to help his brother out of yet another deadly scrape.

"Hey! Bro!" came Yusuf's voice. The boy jogged up behind Omar and patted him on his back. "Thanks, my friend. That was a close one! I owe you."

Yusuf's carefree chuckle made Omar's jaw

clench. "What the hell were you doing in a place like The Rat's Head?"

"Oh, just a short con. Needed a quick boost."

"A quick boost? That guy was about to put you in the ground!"

"I'd have been fine!"

"Fine? Like the time you got caught posing as a bookmaker for the -"

"I'd have made a megacredit from that if it had worked!"

"You know how much your bail cost?"

"Please, Omar, I don't want to have this conversation."

"Why can't you get a proper job, Yusuf?"



Deadzone Rebel heavy weapon teams by Nicodemus Sandberg

"I don't want a proper job! I don't want to give up on my ambitions, Omar. Not like you did."

Omar clenched his fist, but before he could swing it he was jerked backward. A well muscled, tattooed forearm was pressing on his throat, and his right arm was pinioned to his back by an indomitable grip. In the corner of his eye, Omar could see a brass knuckleduster. The edges of his vision started to turn grey. Yusuf was remonstrating with the man, but Omar couldn't hear the words.

There was a deafening crack, and Omar was released. His attacker fell to the floor, the side of his head a mess of torn flesh. Omar put his hand to his face and realized that there was blood all over it. Yusuf's expression was one of uncomprehending horror.

A figure strode from the twilight, a large caliber pistol, blue smoke rising from the muzzle, held loosely at his side. Omar saw his green eyes first; it was the man who had been watching him in the Rat's Head.

"My name is Tarquin," he said, in a voice like an iron rasp file. "Please, do not move, Omar and Yusuf Nasif. Let me assure you that I would regret killing both of you a good deal less than I regret shooting this unfortunate man, who has never done anything to hurt my interests."

"Have we met?" asked Yusuf levelly. "I think I would remember you."

"You presumably remember the offworld shipment you illicitly redirected last month? I lost

considerable capital on that stock."

There was a very long silence.

"Listen, Mr Tarquin," said Omar. "My brother is an idiot. I'll make sure you are paid back in full."

A strange noise, like a ratchet screwdriver, came from Tarquin. It took Omar a moment to realize that he was laughing. "Omar Nasif, latterly a Jack with the Ruskin Renegades. Your first and only professional game was five years ago against the Broadsphere Barbarians. Sucker punched by an Orx Guard in the sixth rush. Retired with serious damage to the cruciate ligaments in your right leg." Tarquin walked over to Omar until he could hear the noise of the



Sgt. Howlett by Paul Mullis

respirator. "Oh yes, Mr Nasif. You will indeed make sure I am paid in full."

*

The elevator was made from very old tech. It was basic, rusted, and suspended from an old fashioned steel chain. The emblems stamped onto it in bright yellow were unlike any Omar had seen before, but he was sure that they were safety warnings. He glanced around at his seven teammates in their archaic armor, their DreadBall gloves more like improvised daggers than the energy field projectors Omar was used to. Would they all fit in the elevator? Were they really going to play a game of DreadBall at the bottom of a mineshaft?

"Are there going to be any spectators down there?" he asked.

Kleves, the huge black Guard in the bronze scalemail cuirass, laughed. "You really are a greenhorn, aren't you? This is a great venue. The miners used to play on it, so the whole arena is already built. The crowd get down there by teleport from ordinary terminals. They punch in hacked destination cards. Sends them right down there. The online system records a phony end station. It's completely untraceable."

"Why can't we get down there by teleport?"

"Too easy for the opposition to tamper with. Get us all killed before the game."

'That was not comforting,' thought Omar as he stepped onto the elevator and felt it sway gently with his weight. The others followed, and the contraption shook as it descended diagonally slowly into the darkness below.



Dreadball Referee-bot by Pete Kijek

Omar heard the venue before he saw anything. The roar of the crowd, chanting wordlessly, echoed from every rock.

Kleves exploded with laughter. "No rules, no ref, no mercy! No corporate sponsorship, no advertisement breaks, no men in suits pushing contracts. Just you and the crowd. This is real DreadBall!"

There was a glowing light ahead, which slowly became an archway. The elevator shuddered to a halt and Omar gratefully stepped off onto the firm, unyielding rock. The team stepped through the archway into the light. Omar found himself in a vast, floodlit cavern with a whole DreadBall pitch carved into the very rock beneath his feet. Here and there were stalagmites and even whole columns which interrupted the playing area. Cheap strike posts stood at either end. The other team was already facing them. The crowd surrounded the pitch with nothing but an iron rail to keep them back. Above the crowd was alcoves cut into the rock where more spectators kept watch. The noise was electrifying; the rhythmic chant echoing around the cavern like a rolling thunderclap. It



Veer-myn and Forgefather Dreadball teams by "TSNC"

was unlike anything Omar had experienced in the professional game.

The crowd suddenly began to count down. "3...2...1!" A klaxon sounded, the ball appeared from somewhere in the crowd, and Omar's team broke into a run. Swept up by the moment, Omar ran too, his muscles immediately remembering a time when the future was golden and it was all about the game.

*

Inspector Crispian stared at the unkempt man across the table from him. He had at least two days' dark stubble; finger-run black, greasy curls; sallowness; dirty jacket; dark-rimmed

eyes; and a faint smell of body odor was discernible even at this distance. He stroked his moustache and wondered what it cost to be clean these days. Interstellar travel and teleportation were possible, human augmentation available, and instant entertainment at hand anywhere you were. And yet some people wouldn't even observe basic personal hygiene. Of course, this individual was dirty in other, more fundamental ways.

"Mr. Yusuf Nasif?" he asked.

Yusuf looked up at him as though he was noticing him for the first time. "Yes?"

"I assume from your record that you are familiar with our procedure?"

"Yes, inspector." The voice was barely louder than a whisper.

"You've bitten off somewhat more than you can chew this time, Yusuf. How does a low rent con artist like yourself get mixed up with a character as dangerous as Tarquin?"

Yusuf visibly shivered at the mention of the name.

"Well, Mr. Nasif?"

"I did a hack for some other people about a month back. Redirected a freighter. I didn't know the cargo was his!"

"Who was behind the job?"

"Just a guy I met on the street. Don't know his name. He paid me cash. Instructions in person. Wore a headscarf over his face."

"Do you know what the cargo was?"

"No."

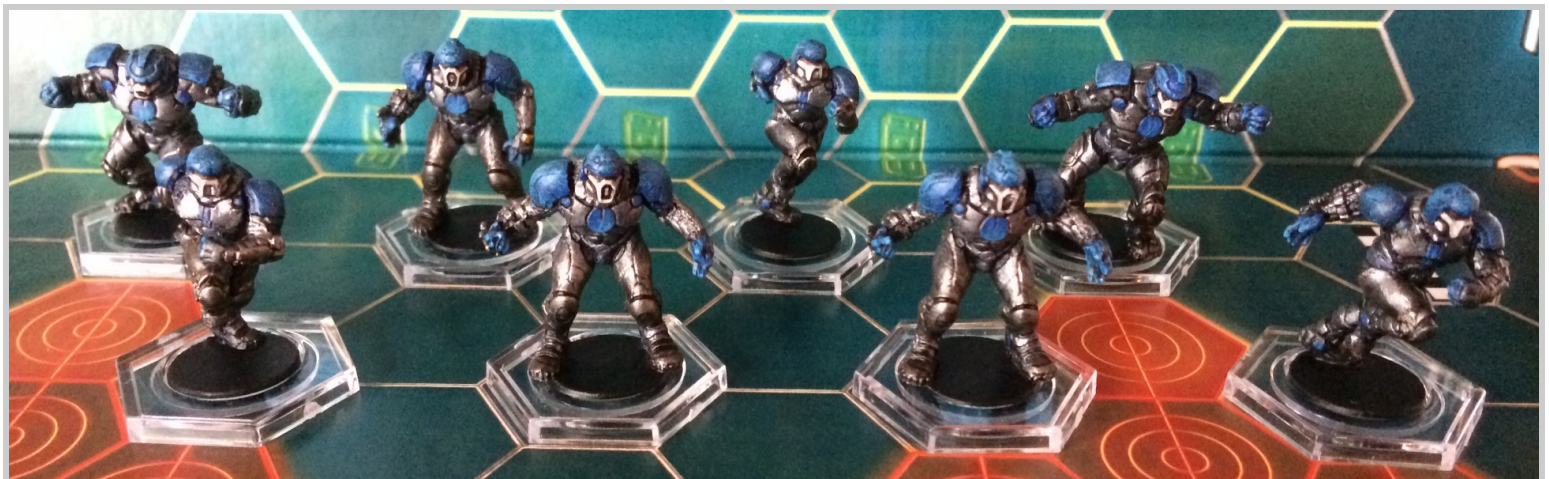
"Brokkrs, Yusuf. Lowlife Forge Father scum. They're a slave caste. Indentured to local gangs. Sure you knew nothing about any of this?"

"I really didn't inspector. I'm sorry I can't be more help."

Crispian smiled and leaned forward. He liked this bit. This was the part where he played his joker. "You like to portray yourself as a victim of circumstances, Mr. Nasif. Arouse my sympathy. No doubt you knew you were going to be picked up at some point, so you haven't washed for a few days. But I've put away so many incompetent grifters that you guys barely register to me anymore."

He paused until Yusuf started to fidget nervously. "Unfortunately for you, I have the rest of your lousy, amateur con squad in prison right now, and every man jack of them is ready to point the finger to you as the ringleader. You knew what was in that cargo, and you knew who you were screwing over when you hacked into that freighter. Now I know that you and your brother are helping Tarquin to run his illegal game of street DreadBall. I want you to help me string this son of a bitch up."

Yusuf gripped a handful of his own hair tight, and sucked in a deep lungful of air. At last he exhaled and put both hands on the table. "I can give you the time and location of the next game."



Corporation Dreadball team by Wes Shupley

"No dice, Yusuf. As soon as Tarquin gets wind of it, he'll go to ground. You are going to lead me and a fire team there in person. If you double cross me, I will kill you."

Yusuf looked him straight in the eyes for the first time. "My brother is in that game!"

"It's you or him, Yusuf."

"I want a writ of immunity. From all past crimes. With your signature on it." Yusuf gasped the words.

Checkmate. "You got it, Mr. Nasif."

*

"Rush Thirteen!" came the strange voice that echoed around the cavern, carrying over the roar of the crowd. Omar looked at the score tracker: a series of colored lights cut into the cave wall at either end of the arena. They were one point down. Omar had made two strikes already; the only strikes his team had managed in the game. The opposition had made three, but they seemed to have been told to go for blood rather than points.

Omar's team was down from eight players to five. Mina, their nimble Striker, had her brains dashed all over the floor in almost the first rush. Their second Striker, Jared, was stomped not long afterward. He was taken off alive, but his arm was probably broken. It had fallen to Omar and his fellow Jack, Nym, to score, until Nym had his throat slashed. He had staggered off on his own feet, although Omar knew he

would bleed out soon unless he was treated.

Kleves had been in a state of euphoric bloodlust. He had broken one of the opposing player's necks and crushed another's skull with his huge fists. Every slam he made seemed to heighten his frenzy.

Omar knew he had to score now to save the game. Handing off an opposing Guard, he snatched the ball from the ground with his glove and changed direction. Two of their Guards opposed him and with linked forearms went to clothesline him at the neck. Omar dived between them and came up in a roll. Keeping his momentum, he charged down their defensive Jack, hoping to knock him over. The wiry little man grabbed onto Omar's shoulder



Zz'or Dreadball player by Christian Schlumpberger



Injured Marauder markers by Darren Lysenko

pad, threatening to drag him down. Omar thrust his forehead at the man's nose and was rewarded with a crunch and a wet slap as the blood splashed his face. The man went limp and fell away.

It was an open strike post. Omar knew he could get two points if he made the strike from behind the line. Pausing only a split second, Omar launched the ball, and knew as soon as he did that it was good.

One point ahead! Omar could feel victory was within their grasp. The opposing team seemed to sense this and ignored the ball as it was launched back onto the field with the strange echoing voice announcing the final rush. Instead, all four of their Guards surrounded Kleves, who was cackling like a madman. He laid about him with his fists but could not hold all of them off. One pounced on his face and started to beat him senseless.

Omar ran for the ball, knowing that if he threw it, the rush would end and the game would be over. Out of the corner of his eye, he could see them lifting Kleves into the air, still thrashing about in his frenzy and whooping jubilantly.

Omar dived for the ball and swiped at it with his glove. The rock scraped the skin on his nose and face as he fell, and he heard the klaxon go for the end of the game.

As he got to his feet, Omar saw that he was too late. Kleve's body was impaled on a large stalagmite. The rock all around was slick with blood and torn viscera. The rictus grin on his upside down face was fixed, like some dreadful phantasm from a nightmare. The Guards who had done this to him hoisted their teammate onto their shoulders and waved at the crowd as though they had won the game, and the crowd seemed content to agree with them.

*

"How is your knee?" asked Tarquin.

"My knee? Did you not see what those bastards did to Kleves?" exploded Omar.

"Indeed. A great spectacle, and one which will, I fear, eclipse the memory of our victory today, for which you are chiefly responsible, Mr, Nasif."

"We would not have stood a chance without



Dreadball Judwan player by Geoff Burbidge

Kleves."

"Guards do not score strikes, Omar. Guards do not win games. You, however, do. I ask again - how is your knee?"

The knee hurt like hell, but Omar's blood was

still up. He would have rather cut his leg off than show any sign of discomfort to Tarquin.

"Did they ever tell you why they had not fixed it?"

Omar frowned. "Knee injuries are tricky."

"Ha! For proletariat medical practices, no doubt. Not for the DreadBall Governing Body. With DGB money, no injuries are particularly tricky. For God's sake, they can even reattach limbs, resuscitate clinically dead patients, and grow new organs inside the host body in a matter of seconds. For the right price, that is. I believe you know why your knee was not treated, Mr, Nasif. You were an inexperienced player. Not a sound enough investment for their Corporation underwriters."

Omar clenched his jaw and balled his fists. If he had still been wearing his DreadBall glove, he would have stabbed Tarquin in that moment.

A bald man in a black business suit announced himself by knocking on the open door. Omar's rage was derailed by the sudden realization that he recognized him. "Please, come in," said Tarquin. The man did so.

"Thanks for the tip... What do I call you here?" he asked.

"Tarquin, if you please," said Tarquin stiffly.

"Of course. And I will make sure that our deal proceeds according to schedule. My partners are very keen."

"You have my thanks."

"Good to see you again, Omar," said the man,

and he walked out.

*

"I know him! He works for the DGB!" said Omar.

"Of course. Our worlds are not so unconnected as you might think."

Omar could not believe what he had just seen. How could a DGB official be mixed up with this seedy, highly illegal version of DreadBall?

"Now, permit me to change the subject," Tarquin was saying. "Mr. Nasif, you are, to me, a sound investment. I am going to repair your knee. Tomorrow."

It took a good few minutes before Omar felt awake enough to start to remember what had happened to him that day. He had been under a general anesthetic, he was sure, and he was in a hospital. The rest was a bit of a blur. Memories kept floating up in his mind in a jumbled order. There was the fight at the Rat's Head. The conversation with Tarquin about his leg. The look on Kleve's dead face. The day he scored his first strike in the little leagues. The time Yusuf tried to kill himself. The day he found out that his Pro DreadBall career was over... that had been in a room very much like this one.



Dreadball Alpha Simian MVP by Matt Gilbert

A pretty young doctor with caring blue eyes had come over and manipulated his leg. Omar had tried not to wince, but the pain had been too much, despite her gentleness. She had put her hand comfortingly on his shoulder and assured him that everything was going to be alright.

There had been a painting of an otter on the wall adjacent to his bed. Why an otter, of all things? He must have stared at that thing for so long that every brushstroke was painted directly onto the canvas of his memory. Eventually, an elderly man in a grey suit and spectacles had come to his bedside with a clipboard, announcing himself as being from the Ruskin Corporation, and enquiring after his wellbeing.

Omar had replied that he felt very well indeed, thank you.

Was Mr. Nasif aware of the extent of his injuries?

He was aware of a not inconsiderable discomfort in his right knee.

There followed a clinical description of the medical situation.

Omar had remained silent.

It was with the utmost regret that the elderly grey-suited man informed him that the Ruskin Corporation were not able to assist him financially towards the treatment of such a tricky injury. Under the terms of his contract with the Ruskin Corporation as an athlete for the DreadBall team, he was entitled to a redundancy payment equal to three months wages. Please could he sign this affidavit to indicate that he understood.

The present started to come back a little into focus. Omar looked down at his leg. It felt strange. That was nothing new as there had been many times when Omar had felt like his leg did not belong to him, but when he bent the knee, the dull throb which he was used to was not there. He had carried it with him for five years, like a chronic case of toothache: always there in the background, sometimes pushing its way to the foreground violently with a click of cartilage whenever Omar twisted it just the wrong way. Now he felt nothing. It was like having a completely new leg. No. A completely new body.

A tall, grey-skinned Judwanese alien in a medic's coat appeared at his bedside. "Please not to move the leg before healing is occurring," it said. "Kindly to rest now." It played with the console by Omar's head, and a feeling of tranquility blanketed over his mind. Omar turned onto his side, and noticed for the first time that Nym, his teammate with the cut

to his throat, was in the next bed along.

"Still alive," he whispered hoarsely. "At least one more game for us, hey Omar?"

"Sure, one more game," said Omar, before he drifted off to sleep.

*

It was the next morning. Omar was reading a news report on the local info hub without much interest. Truthfully, all he wanted to do was to go for a run. It had been too long since he had experienced a real runner's high without the



Dreadball Marauder players by Paul Scott



Veer-myn Dreadball team by Vincent Pascaud

accompaniment of excruciating pain, but his Judwanese doctor had forbidden him to leave his bed for the rest of the day to ensure that the treatment had taken. Omar knew in his marrow that it had. He felt ready for anything and containing his excitement was now his biggest struggle.

"Hey, bro!" came the familiar voice of Yusuf. There was a certain swagger about him today. He was clean shaven, and his hair had been cut. He was wearing a clean shirt and a black suit, although he still managed to wear it with an air of youthful nonchalance. "How is the knee?"

Omar smiled. "Best it has been in five years. And how are you doing?"

"Great. Being a fixer suits me. Better than grifting by a long way."

"The way you do it, they're probably the same thing," said Omar.

"Well, the people I'm working for are not the GCPS Central Bank, you know."

"So," Omar lowered his voice. "Do you know how many more matches I have to get through before Tarquin lets you off the hook?"

"Please don't say his name, Omar. Enforcement patrols are listening everywhere."

"Did you see the last game? It was a bloodbath. How many more do I need to survive?"



Deadzone Marauder Mawbeast by Boris Samec

"I know, I know. Just tell me - how many more games?"

Yusuf paused. "Listen. The next game is special. Something big is going to go down. If we both keep our heads, we will be able to walk away from this in less than a week."

"What do you mean, something big? What has Tarquin got planned?"

"Don't say his name! Just trust me, Omar."

"Trust you?"

Yusuf checked his watch. "Listen, I have to meet a sponsor in ten minutes. Remember what I said, brother. Bye."

"Yusuf!" Omar called, but his brother didn't break his stride as he left the ward.

*

"I thought you'd be happy, Omar. You have a new knee. You're playing DreadBall again."

"Happy? Look, Yusuf. It's not that I'm being ungrateful for what he's done for me. But I don't want to end up spitted on a rock!"

"Kleves knew what he was getting into. He was a volunteer."

"I know! These people are crazy, Yusuf. They don't seem to care if they live or die, just as long as they get to play one more game! I'm not one of them."

"Look, I'm sorry. I didn't mean for things to turn out like this."

There he was at last. Omar had waited in the alleyway by the Rat's Head for hours for a glimpse of Tarquin, and there he was. The brim of his hat was angled low to obscure his eyes, and the collar of the duster turned up. Omar waited until he was a discreet distance away, then fell into step behind him.

Within five minutes, he found himself in the interstellar dock district. Huge, dirty space freighters like oily hornets roared overhead every few minutes. The buildings here were packed close together made up of warehouses made from cheap, puce-colored prefab plasterboard held together over iron girder skeletons. Piles of steel shipping crates of

various colors littered the area haphazardly. Everything here was coated in the grime generated by engine wash.

Tarquin stepped inside a small office outbuilding, and Omar slowed down his approach. The only window was blackened almost to the point of opacity, and Tarquin had closed the door behind him. Crouched beneath the window, Omar could just about hear a conversation. The second voice, Omar quickly realized, was the DGB official Omar had seen meeting with Tarquin after the match.

"Is everything set for the game?" Tarquin was saying.

"Everything. The mine venue has been perfectly brought up to spec. Do you have a viable team for this level of competition?"

"Don't patronize me. I've put together an excellent side. I even have one or two ex-professionals."

"Nasif."

"Yes, he will be playing. As per our agreement, you will provide me with DGB grade equipment."

"It's already delivered."

"Good. Now, as we discussed, there may be a small problem during the sixth Rush, but I have the matter well in hand. It will not interrupt proceedings. Here is how we will manage the situation."

Omar decided to have a look in through the



Dreadball Referee-bot by Paul Scott

window. The DGB man had his back to him, and Tarquin had taken off his hat and was leaned over the table in profile. Only, it wasn't Tarquin. The eyes had turned from green to blue, but the respirator was still there. But without the hat, he looked very different. His scalp did not have dark hair but strange, brown spikes, and the shape of his forehead was... inhuman. Tarquin was an alien for sure; one that Omar had never seen before.

"Did you hear that?" The DGB man said as he came over to the window, but Omar was no longer there.

Inspector Crispian tightened the strap on his armor and loosened his sidearm in its holster. If all went to plan, he would not have to use it this evening, but he was prepared to if circumstances demanded. He nodded at the Sergeant whose face was obscured beneath the all-encompassing pale blue helmet. The Sergeant shouldered his assault rifle and gestured to his men, five of them, all armed and armored in the same way. They took positions around the entrance to the mine.

Crispian turned to Yusuf. "You had better be right about this, Nasif. A DreadBall game in an abandoned mine? You have got to be kidding me."

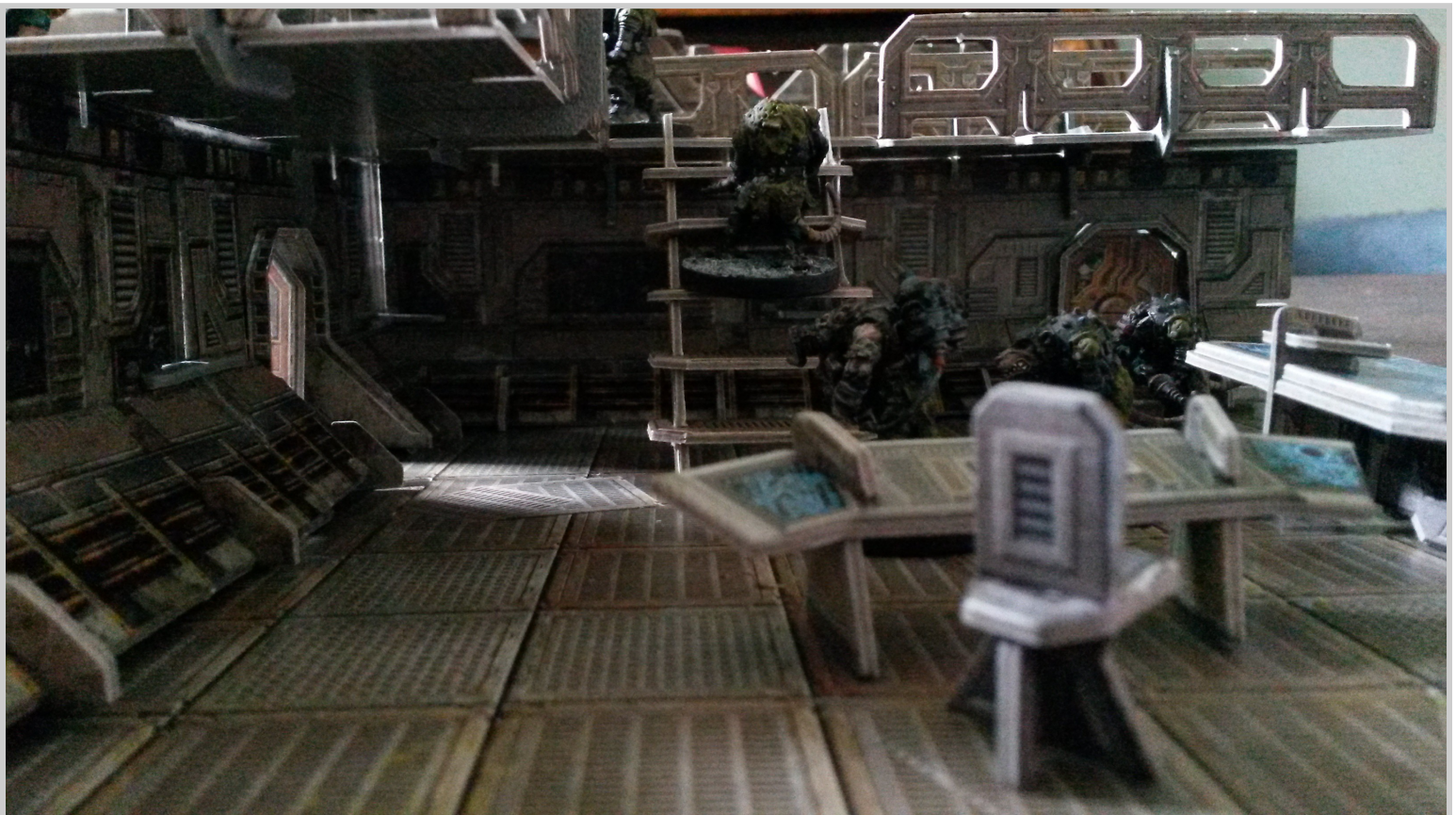
"It isn't so far fetched, Inspector. In the early days of DreadBall, venues like this were commonplace. Troopship holds, warehouses, shuttle landing pads... anywhere you got a large enough space near a manual workforce."

"I don't need the history lesson, Nasif. Just know that if you are wrong, this is a great place to hide your body. OK, Sergeant. Move out!"

The tunnel was long and dark, and the eerie green glow from the night vision incorporated into the helmets of the men was barely enough to see by. Crispian, despite himself, kept his hand on the grip of his pistol. After a couple of minutes, Crispian's pulse began to quicken at the distant sound of hundreds of voices chanting. They'd found it.

By and by, the tunnel widened into an antechamber. The place was lit, and several suited men sat at portable tables operating laptop computers. A game of DreadBall was displayed on a large screen screwed into the wall. It was from a cave nearby.

"Is there a problem, officer?" one of them asked.



Veer-myn by Paul Mullis

"This is an unauthorized DreadBall game!" announced Crispian. "Everyone here is under arrest!"

"There's some mistake, officer," said the man, calmly. "This is not an illegal game. This is the annual Sphere 29 DreadBall Heritage Exhibition Game, and it is completely authorized by the DGB."

"What?"

"Please, sir. Feel free to inspect the paperwork."

*

It had been a glorious game. Omar was wearing standard DGB Jack armor in the black and gold of the Starbrite Slyphs. Their opposition was the Slyph's B Team, playing in the red 'away' colors of the side. No one had died that game, although there had been a couple of nasty injuries, and he had been benched himself for a few Rushes to recover from a nasty slam. The Sixth Rush had come and gone, and despite Omar's misgivings, nothing had happened. In the final phases of the game, Omar had even managed a three point strike that, for awhile at

least, had put their team ahead. Best of all, the knee had held up perfectly. Afterward, Tarquin's DGB contact had handed him a business card and asked him to get in touch about trying out for a professional side.

Most of the post match buzz was now about the venue. How had this arena, from the very roots of DreadBall itself, been forgotten? How had they rediscovered it? Didn't it go to show the universality of DreadBall, how it brought together people from all walks of life? How far had the game come since its humble origins? The pundits went on and on in this kind of vein for some time.

A mustached man in a police uniform approached Omar. "Mr. Nasif? Inspector Crispian. I need a word."

Omar followed him to one of the teleport pads which had been used to transport the crowd in. The policeman pressed a destination card into his hand. Omar punched the card into the terminal, and stood on the plate.

With the blinding flash and the stomach drop which was customary during teleport, Omar



Dreadball Corporation team by Pete Kijek



Zee Dreadball player by Geoff Burbidge

found himself in a police station.

The inhabitants of the station turned around and stared at this strange man in the DreadBall uniform for a second, then continued with their business. Crispian followed him a moment later.

"Mr. Nasif," he said. "I have your brother in custody. He has caused me a lot of problems today. I was supposed to make the arrest of my life, and then I discover that the illegal game of DreadBall I was tracking down is, in fact, legit. Yusuf claims not to know anything about it, but even if he's lying, I can't prosecute him, because he has been given a Writ of Immunity. So what I am going to do instead is this. I am going to shoot him in the stomach and let him bleed to death slowly. Then I'm going to kill you as well, unless you give me Tarquin, now."

*

The door of the office building flew off its hinges under the weight of Inspector Crispian's kick. He entered a split second afterward, pistol held before him. The lights were out everywhere. "Tarquin!" he yelled. "Where are you?"

"Over here, Inspector," came a calm, mechanical voice from an adjoining room. Cautiously, Crispian approached. The door was open. Rounding the corner, he caught a momentary glimpse of Tarquin inserting a destination card into a teleport terminal, before he disappeared. Where had he gone? Quickly, Crispian brought up the previous destination station on the terminal's computer screen. For a second, the screen went blank, then it flashed up a message. Crispian cursed and smashed his fist into the screen, cracking the glass.

The message had read: "Nice try, Inspector. Warm regards, Blaine."

*

Omar arrived, panting, at his own front door, and checked his watch. Five miles in less than half an hour. Not too bad, and absolutely no pain from his knee. He went inside and mopped the sweat from his face with the towel he had hung there before he left.

"Hi, Omar," said Yusuf from the kitchen area.

"How did you get in?" asked Omar.

Yusuf grinned disarmingly. "I thought I'd drop by to say thank you for everything you've done for me. For the past few years, in fact."

"Yeah? In the last few days I've been in a bar fight, and an extreme game of DreadBall. I've



Dreadball Goblins by Grant Mahoney

been employed by a hardened criminal and threatened by a police officer. So please, Yusuf. Spare me the thanks and just stay out of trouble, okay?"

Yusuf was quiet for a moment. "Tarquin, or Blaine as he also seems to be called, is off world. My sources tell me he won't be back for a long time."

"Well good. Hopefully he won't look me up if he needs an extra Jack when he returns."

"Me too. Look, I know I won't be able to make good with you just by saying sorry. But anyway, I want you to have this." He handed Omar a charge card.

Omar didn't look at it. "What's this?"

"It's half my winnings from the first game. I put everything I had on you scoring the winning strike. The bookie had never heard of you, so I got really great odds. Should be enough to keep you going until you get a place on a DreadBall squad."

Omar smiled. "And what about you, bro? How are you going to spend your winnings?"

Yusuf laughed. "One credit at a time!" he said.

After Yusuf had left, Omar took out the business card he had been given by Tarquin's tame DGB official. With a sigh, he turned it over. On the reverse were three handwritten words.

"One more game." ■

The Ambush

By Rob Allen, aka "Brionmar"

"This patrol has been an easy one," thought Sergeant Bryan McCain. "Haven't seen a single brainy the whole day. Not even any of that weird stuff that's been reported by other patrols. Giant flying bugs — yeah, right!" Sergeant First Class McCain and his platoon, if you could call it that, were tasked to head deep into Greenville to link up with two civilian survivors who were in possession of some possibly significant intel.

The patrol reached the link-up with no problem and found the two civvies, a punk kid named Troy, and a police officer called Eva. Eva had several objects in her knapsack, though she didn't show them to Sergeant McCain. Neither did she or Troy tell him what they knew that was important enough for him to risk his men to bring them in. "Well, as my friend Rob in the S-2 always reminds me, intel is on a need to know basis. Guess I don't need to know."

With just over a klick and a half to go until they were back inside the lines, Bryant started to relax. His men did as well. SGT Sherer had eased his SAW down from a constant high ready, to an easy-slung position. SPC Davis started humming tunelessly to himself. even Craigs up at point had started moving less cautiously.

"Dammit! This ain't right," thought Bryan. "We're close to home without contact. I've seen this before where we get too cocky and something goes wrong." He called his men to a halt, and reminded them, "Boys, we're still in dangerous country. Remember that patrol from



Mars Attacks Human Soldier by Adam Morrow

deuce-four last week got zapped within sight of the wire. Stay sharp! Be alert!"

"The Army needs all the 'lerts we can get these days," he added humorously, to the chuckles of his men.

Bryan wasn't really kidding at all. When the invasion started, his platoon was deployed to Greenville along with the rest of the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team. When they arrived, SFC McCain had 32 able Soldiers, including a lieutenant in his platoon. He was now down to seven able to go out on patrol. Four were down due to combat injuries but would be back to duty within the next week or so. All but one of the Strykers was damaged beyond repair as well. It was just as well. Bryan knew that any time a Stryker rolled out into the war zone, the

saucers would descend on it and shred it, killing all aboard. He had even heard that the brainies had a giant robot which had reportedly picked up a Stryker and ripped it in half. He wasn't sure he believed that little tale just yet, but with these advanced enemies, anything was possible.

"Enough reflection; focus on the mission, dammit!" he told himself. That was the real issue wasn't it: the mission. Getting these two civvies back to the FOB had somehow gone really smoothly. He wondered where the brainies were. Usually, about two kilometers in, you found at least a Martian patrol, but on this one, nothing. "Where'd they all go?"

"ZZZAAAP!!!!"

"Well, hell! I guess that answered that question." Without warning, the air around the patrol started exploding with disintegration rays. God how he hated those things. They could reduce a building to ruins in short order, and a direct hit would leave a man either in pieces, or simply gone without a trace except

for some ashes and dust. "Everyone take cover!" Bryan shouted. It was a moot point as the guys he had with him were all veterans now, and they did so without thinking. The lead team jumped behind the ruined walls of what appeared to have once been a store. He and the rest jumped behind a wall as well. "Second squad, get over to the right and watch for any brainies trying to maneuver up on us." The first squad was already laying down some fire; they had even hit one of the brainies so far. But damn! There's a lot of 'em.

The brainies started moving in on his right flank; half a dozen of them ran across the street into the ruined buildings. "SGT Sherer, get your guys over there and keep them from flanking us!" Bryan yelled.

Sherer shouted out, "Follow me, boys!" and started maneuvering to cut them off. He made it to the cover on the other side of the road as did Davis, but not Griggs. Half way across, a freeze ray shot down the road and stopped him dead in his tracks.



Mars Attack Scenery by Adam Morrow

Rapid firing from Craigs and Smitty had taken down three more brainies as they maneuvered up on the first squad's position. Suddenly, Bryan heard a strange droning sound coming from nearby. He turned to find the source, thinking maybe it was one of those damned saucers. He knew how to take them down, though. To his abject horror, a strange creature dropped from the sky, grabbed Smitty in a crab-like claw, and flew off. As they passed overhead, Bryan could hear Smitty screaming, but all he could do was



Mars Attacks Big Stompy Robot by Matt Gilbert

think, "Damn! There really are giant, mutant bugs after all."

As he returned to his senses, he realized about five Martians were trying to cross the road where the first squad couldn't see them. "Legion 5-2, this is Bulldog 2-6. Immediate suppression tango romeo papa 1-3. Danger close, over," he shouted into his radio. He was gratified to hear, "Bulldog 2-6, this is Legion 5-2. Immediate suppression tango romeo papa 1-3. Danger close, out." Then three seconds later he heard the familiar whistle of incoming mortar rounds.

BOOM! Two more Martians dropped to the ground, hopefully never to rise again. Sherer had three of them by him, one just on the other side of the wall. He pulled out his knife and dove over the ruined building, slashing the brainy three times. The other two responded almost immediately, rushing him almost as one. He took down a second, but the third got the drop on him. As Davis saw his sergeant go down, he spun into action, spraying down the Martian with his M4 carbine. The brainy

dropped after being riddled with bullets. Just as he was moving to see if Sherer needed help, a freeze ray blasted down the street, and Davis was no more.

When Bryan met these two, he was duly unimpressed. A lady cop and a punk kid in street clothes. What could they possibly know that was so important? He introduced himself and the members of his squad as their 'escorts to the ball.'

"Just out of curiosity," Bryan asked, "What is this great secret you have?"

"Troy, why don't you tell him the story," Eva replied. Troy stepped up, "I work at a record store. Big surprise, I know. Well, the day the Martians landed, I was in the store, and a couple of little teeny-boppers were wanting me to play this new song so they could hear it. Just then, two of the Martian scouts came into the store, just looking around at the time. We were told they were our friends, so I just sort of glanced at them, and tried not to stare too much. Anyways, the two girls still were asking me to play the song for them. I'm gonna tell ya' that song is really awful, and I was doing everything I could not to play it, yet again. My manager was in the store that day, and ordered me to play the song, so I guess I had to. Whatever. Did I mention just how awful that thing is?" Troy paused and looked at Bryan.

"Yeah, we got it, it's a terrible song," Bryan replied dryly, "So what?"

"Well, I put the CD into the store player, and as soon as the song started, the Martians reacted really strangely to it. They tried to cover their ears, which they couldn't get to through those fishbowls on their heads. One of them drew his

disintegrator pistol, but they other stopped him, and they both sort of staggered out of the shop.”

“I guess they didn’t like the song either,” Sherer said.

“No, it’s more than that,” Troy said, “It actually was causing them physical pain. I kind of wondered about that but wasn’t going to do anything more at the time since they ‘came in peace.’ I didn’t forget though, and once they started shooting the place up, I grabbed a CD player and set it up in a hidden place. When the Martians got near, I turned the song on as loud as it would go. Three of those ugly things actually died trying to avoid the sound; finally, one of them zapped my player with a disintegrator, and the remaining Martians, who

had been writhing in pain on the street, got up and staggered away. Well, as you can imagine, I was really shocked, I mean, I know the song is awful and all, but I never thought it was so bad it could kill something. I snuck away from my hiding place and found Sherriff Eva here. When I told her what had happened she was amazed. We snuck back to the music store and grabbed as many copies of the CD as we could, then Eva contacted you guys on the radio, once you got here.”

“Your commander, or General, or whatever the heck he is, told me I was a crackpot at the time, and that I shouldn’t be wasting his time with this BS.” Eva recounted, “But apparently that all changed as you started getting your butts handed to you. One of your patrols saw us take down a saucer with nothing more than a boom



Mars Attacks Human Truck by Adam Morrow

box and a CD, so your commander got ahold of me on the radio and set up this meeting.”

“Now, we’re out of time, and the Martians have destroyed everything that plays music in the whole town except a couple of iPods. So we need to get these CDs back to your headquarters. ‘The Psyopers’ want them, I’m told,” Eva finished.

Bryan and Sherer were literally dumb-founded. Neither could believe that something as simple as music could be an effective weapon against the brainies, but orders was orders, so they decided to go along with it.

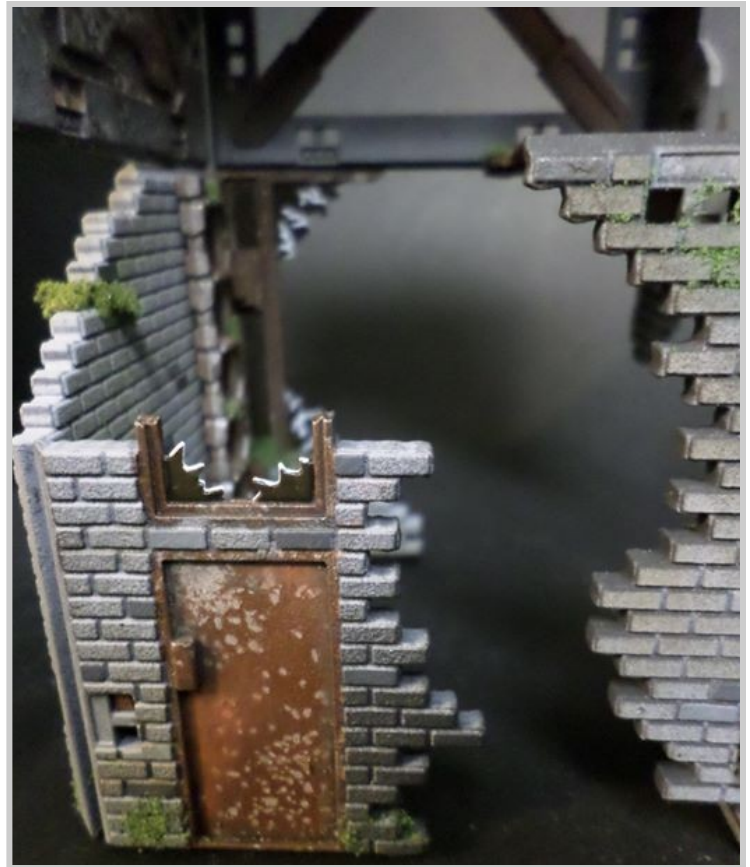
That was two hours ago, though, and the situation had drastically changed. Sherer was dead, as were most of his men. There were still six or seven brainies out there trying to get to them, and time was running short. “Come on, we’ve got to get up there with Craigs!” He told the civvies.

They dashed forward to the ruined corner wall Craigs was firing from. Another Martian went down to a barrage of SAW fire. “Good, now there’s only a handful of them left,” thought Bryan.

“We’re going to have to make a run for it,” he told them. “Once we get across the main street, you head down that lane. It’s just over a kilometer to the camp, just in case we get split up. They know we’re coming, so they won’t shoot at you, but they will give us cover fire if we’re coming in hot.”

“You ready?” he asked.

“Yep,” was the reply from all three.



Mars Attacks Scenery by Adam Morrow

“Wait!” Troy said, “There’s still three of them over on the right: one in the street, and two in the candy store. If we go two directions at once, we stand a better chance.” Putting action to words, Troy leapt from cover and started across the street.

“Damn! Stupid kid! Craigs, get after him!” Bryan ordered. Just as Craigs was moving to try to intercept, Eva took off running across the road as well.

“God, I hope this is worth it,” thought Bryan, and he ran out from cover after her.

Time all seemed to slow down for him. He saw Troy in the middle of the road shoot one of the brainies with his crossbow, but he was gunned down before he could reload. Craigs blasted away at the brainy who killed Troy, and knocked him down before being rushed by another one.

Eva was almost to the other side of the street when a brainy jumped out at her. She dodged his attack and fought back using her shotgun like a club. He rushed in, knocking the Martian back, and shot him point blank in the chest. Craigs was down, bleeding out in the street, and the Martian who did it was coming for him.

He turned to face the attacker, knife in hand. "Thank God combatives works," he thought. He took that brainy down, and turned in time to get rushed by another one. He barely got himself into position and threw the Martian over his shoulder. The last one broke from cover, coming straight for Eva. She dodged the attack and kicked him out of the way before

tearing off down the road. Bryan grabbed for the brainy before it could pursue her and stabbed it in the back.

Eva was clear, and running like the wind. She was gonna make it. "Wait! What the hell?" Another Martian stepped out from the ruins, and made a beeline for Eva. Just as he was watching, the other Martian who was down, got back up, and stabbed him in the shoulder. "Oh, God! I'm not gonna make it," Bryan thought. "It doesn't look like she is either. This whole thing was a wasted eff... Wait, oh my God!"

Eva saw the Martian moving to intercept her. She realized it was down to her or it and tucked

her head down, tightening every muscle in her body. It was right in front of her. She smacked into the Martian with all she was worth, turning as she hit him, and spinning away like a world class running back.

"She knocked him on his ass!" Bryan cheered. "She's clear! Run, Eva! Run!"

The Martian knife descended once again, this time through Bryan's throat.

Eva didn't stop running until she was safely inside the barricades and concertina wire. Out of breath, and heaving with exertion, she looked back, but couldn't see anyone coming behind her. "Crap, I thought he'd get through," she lamented. "Take me to your commander. I have valuable

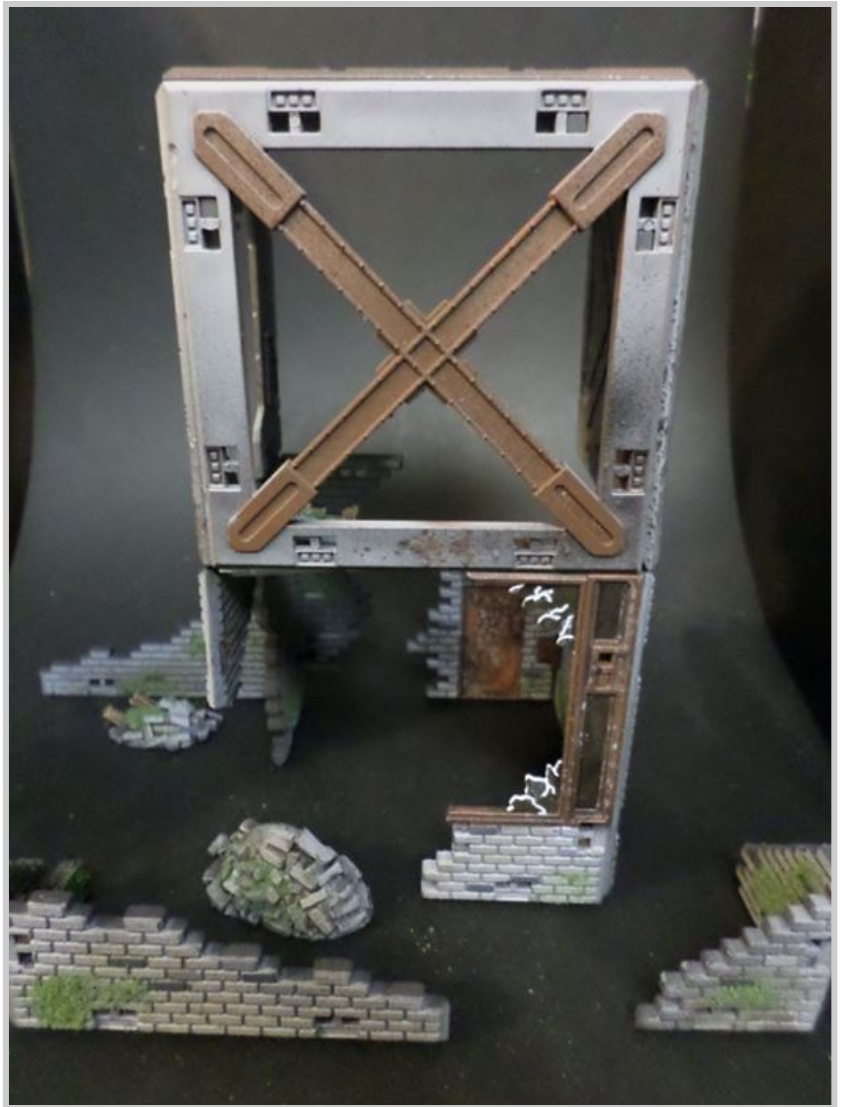


Mars Attacks Big Stompy Robot by Matt Gilbert

intelligence on how to kill those bastard brainies.”

The idea for this story came to me from two sources. My daughter and I were playing Mars Attacks scenario two. That should be obvious. The game ended in a draw with the Martians getting all four critter counters and killing Troy, but the humans had two alien intelligence counters, and Eva made it off the board at the six point column. It was a real nail biter of a game. I drew a reinforcements card on that final turn and attacked Eva in the deployment zone, but my daughter rolled to evade and was able to get off the board. The Sergeant had taken out three out of four Martians in close combat but died in that last turn as well.

The second source for this story is that three years ago, in November, two friends of mine, Sergeant First Class John Bryan McCain and Sergeant Thomas Sherer, were killed in Afghanistan on patrol in the Zabul Province. I wanted to honor their sacrifice as well, so I made them the heroes of the story. ■



Mars Attacks Terrain by Adam Morrow



Mars Attacks Human Soldiers by Adam Morrow



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