Animosity I – The Hallowed Necropolis was a three-day, worldwide narrative map campaign for Warhammer Age of Sigmar which ran from May 31st to June 2nd, 2019. Team Animosity asked local Narrative Event Organizers, or “NEOs”, to register with Animosity as a point of contact for their players. Ultimately, 6 events in 3 countries and over 40 players contributed to Animosity I, forging a narrative which would lay the foundation for all subsequent Animosity Campaigns in the Age of Sigmar…

This document is meant to chronicle the story of #AnimosityI from beginning to end. I want to thank everyone who participated, from my fellow Team Animosity colleagues to our NEOs and their players. Each and every one of you made this possible.

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The Writhing Serpent without End

The Ur-River is thought to be the most ancient of all watercourses in the Mortal Realms, and the most enigmatic. It is believed to have no headwaters and no outlet, instead crashing endlessly from one realm to the next, its course constantly shifting as it perpetually grinds a new path through the Realms. It can often be followed for leagues, sometimes even across whole continents, but it will always drop off the edge of the world eventually. Some of these cascades are stable Realmgates, used for trade, travel, and war. Most are destructive torrents, and those who sail over them are never seen again.

When the Mortal Realms were Young

Even during the Age of Myth, there were events which had already passed into legend. One among them was the tale that told of how deep in the wylds of Ghyran, Sigmar bathed in the Ur-River and beheld a vision of the gods he would raise into his new pantheon. Perhaps he shared the knowledge of that place with his followers, or maybe just some primitive demagogue saw a chance to gain power through a tall tale. Regardless, the banks of the Ur-River in this inhospitable, mountainous region of Ghyran became revered as a place of sacred pilgrimage. So arduous was the journey, a settlement grew there to shelter weary pilgrims until they had the strength to return home.

Terrible Prosperity

In the centuries which followed, that settlement grew to become a towering edifice: Amasya, City of Worship. Now a Mecca for all races, it became common practice for the most devout servants of man, aelf, and orruk alike to journey there to die, or otherwise send their bones to be entombed in the cliffs above shrines in the sight of their gods. Thus were laid the foundations of Amasya's decline into the hallowed necropolis, a place of death in the Realm of Life.
As innumerable priesthoods and sects of faith took root in Amasya, the need emerged for a single voice to guide the city's populace, and the office of Basrahip became ordained. The greatest and the last of these priest-wardens was the Mithridates bloodline.

The Age of Myth wanes

Four generations of the house of Mithridates would reign over Amasya. Devout of Alarielle, Mithridates Uch was the first ordained, even as the insidious practices of the ruinous powers first began to corrupt the Mortal Realms. The Pantheon shuddered and splintered apart in the decades that followed, through the time of his son and into that of Uch's grandson, Mithridates Besh. With Amasya largely abandoned by the worshipers of all save Sigmar and Nagash, Besh renounces the Goddess of Life kept by his father and grandfather and converts to servitude of the Undying King.

The Crusader Capitols

With the Age of Chaos crashing down upon the Mortal Realms, Mithridates Besh reforms Amasya not as a place of peaceful worship but a mustering ground for holy crusades. The practices of Nagashizzar become commonplace, all but replacing Sigmar as the preeminent god of Amasya and dividing the city between the faithful of Sigmar and Nagash—even as the city's faithful campaign against the armies of Chaos time and again.

Having been dealt a grievous injury on the field of battle, Besh commands his son Mithridates Alti to bury him living in the cliff-side tombs above Amasya and take up his father's mantle as Basrahip. Raised in his father's shadow on the battlefield, Alti does as he's commanded, his faith in Nagash absolute.

With Alarielle missing and Ghyran all but lost to Chaos, the now-ordained Mithridates Alti is counseled by his city's Sigmarite priesthoods to abandon Amasya and withdraw to Azyr before it's too late. Alti rages at them, declaring them cowards and refusing their warriors the honor of answering Sigmar's call to do battle at the Allpoints.
Bitter Betrayal

Nagash's betrayal of Sigmar at the Allpoints is total, and in the eyes of Mithridates Alti, justified. As word of the Undying King's treachery reaches Amasya, the Sigmarites make the decision to abandon the hallowed necropolis. Taking with them only their most sacred treasures and collapsing every Realmgate leading to Amasya in their retreat, they flee before their vengeful Basrahip's return. Their actions save Amasya from discovery by the servants of the Dark Gods, yet leave Alti bereft, cleaved from his home and denied burial alongside his forefathers. The Age of Chaos overtakes the exiled Basrahip, and for a time, the name Mithridates Alti is lost to history.

By Fateful Chance

Although the Necroquake changed the Mortal Realms forever, it did not stop the wars already being waged. With the free cities known as the Seeds of Hope planted in Ghyran, the struggle to defend them is a constant. To this end, Vanguard chambers of Stormcast Eternals ceaselessly patrol the savage Ghyranic wilderness, intent on discovering where the next attack will come from.

It was one of these patrols which first rediscovered Amasya. When the was abandoned, it could be reached only by Realmgate- but more than five centuries have passed, and new paths into Amasya have opened up. These are not roads by any means, but treacherous and inhospitable badlands. Still, it was only a matter of time before the necropolis was rediscovered.

Such is Amasya's glory that, even abandoned, the Stormcasts patrol knew what they found had to be significant. They chose to cut short their mission and withdraw to Hammerhal directly- a decision they would regret. What happened next was simple back luck- or a terrible trick of fate.
The Dark Gods Know

The Varanguard are Archaon Everchosen’s knights of ruin, his mandate made manifest. Each rider is a mighty warlord of Chaos, and even daemon princes heed their demands. In the aftermath of the Necroquake, it is said the Everchosen gathered to him two score of his Varanguard and tasked them with setting to purpose the innumerable warbands of Chaos scattered across the realms.

Two among them are the Basalt Lord Qarang Sarn of the Sixth Circle and Irkut “the Spineless” of the Third Circle. Into the Realm of Life they rode, to gather what remained of those armies broken by constant wars against the Everqueen and the free cities of Sigmar called the Seeds of Hope.

In this way the Vanguard patrol accomplished its mission, of a fashion. In returning to Hammerhal, they came upon the march of a great host, servants of all the ruinous powers in their midst. This was no mere warband to be evaded, and with the alarm raised, the slaves to darkness crashed down upon the Stormcasts, leaving no avenue of retreat. All among their number were slain- but not all returned.

Irkut the Spineless is a disciple of Tzeentch, whom it is said earned his place among the Varanguard by trial of the Silver Tower. He took into his hands the lightning of a slain Stormcast’s soul, and drank from it the warrior’s mind and his memories. He beheld Amasya, and recognized a place of invaluable desecration.

To Reclaim a Birthright

Mithridates Alti was lost to the Age of Chaos, yet still survived- at the cost of his life as a mortal man. He made a devil’s deal with Mannfred von Carstein, shortly before the Mortarch was imprisoned by the Khorne lord Taka Woebringer. In exchange for five hundred years’ service toward secretive ends, Mithridates Alti would live on as a Soulblight Vampire. While Mannfred saw only an opportunity to exploit a desperate man for his own ends, the exiled Basrahip saw a chance to exact his vengeance.

His debt finally paid to Mannfred’s satisfaction, Mithridates has set into motion a plot more than five centuries in its conception. He’s swayed numerous necromancers, wight kings and vampire lords to his cause, and countless cairn wraiths and tomb banshees besides.
While the greatest of his allies are the Nighthaunt hosts mustered by Reikenor the Grimhaler, the most unlikely are the war covens of the Daughters of Khaine whose Hag Queens have struck a dark accord with Mithridates...

Echoes of Madness

Perhaps one in every several hundred Ironjawz possesses a gift. Some think of it as the thunder of Gorkamorka’s rampaging footfalls, others, Gorkamorka’s heart pounding with the fury of battle. Regardless, these warchanters can turn greenskins to violence more readily than any Megaboss. Yet, there’s only one among these rabble-rousers who heard something different: an echo.

This “gift” belonged to Wapkaput. When another warchanter in his mob would drum, the echo was silent, yet when he would drum, both could hear it, reverberating, maddening. Wapkaput beat the other warchanter to a pulp in an attempt to silence it, yet without result. When his Megaboss heard of this, all were in agreement: this “ekko” was a sign from Gorkamorka, calling out to his own come and crush something!

Lost Souls Return

Newly reforged, word soon spread of the slaughtered Vanguard patrol’s discovery and comes to the attention of Balthas Arum, a venerable and scholarly Lord-Arcanum held in high regard by Sigmar himself. Balthas scoured the Grand Library of Sigmaron for clues as to the necropolis’ identity, only for the answer to be found among the library’s own acolytes by Aderphi, the chief librarian. It was revealed to Balthas that those Sigmarite priests whom fled Amasya passed down their secret heritage in the hope that one day, the city could be restored.

Balthas petitions the God-King directly for permission to muster his Chamber and retake Amasya. Sigmar refuses, and instructs Balthas to mind his duties. Frustrated, the Lord-Arcanum has no choice but to obey his liege. Still, even Sigmar cannot account for all the machinations of mortals; knowing they’ve been found out, the descendants of Amasya begin organizing among themselves...
A Fortuitous Feast

The wandering ogor butcher-pilgrim known as “da Maw dat walkz” was considered quite mad by the tribe of gutbusters and bonesplitterz which had come to follow him, yet followed him all the same as food had become bounteous in his wake. Having made camp beside a great lake so as to better slaughter the native fauna, da Maw is come upon by a stampeding Gorefist seeking to water their gruntas. The Ironjawz boast of how they’re riding to join Waaagh! Wapkapagut and topple some fancy old ‘umie city.

Realizing the greenskin warchanter has discovered a way back to his lost mecca-where “da great maw dat will eat da wurld” resides- da Maw commands his tribe to slaughter the resting Ironjawz and prepare a great feast to sustain them for the march to come.

Spineless treachery

Waaagh! Wapkapagut, now swollen with many Ironjawz brawls and Beastclaw alfrostuns, crashes into the Varanpact legion of Qarang Sarn and Irkut the Spineless. Relishing the opportunity to exterminate so many savages at once, the Basalt Lord demanded the honor of victory and rallied a counter-attack. While the ogors and greenskins fought ferociously, whipped into a primal fury by Wapkapagut’s mad drumming, the outcome was never truly in doubt.

With only the most fearsome of his allies remaining, Wapkapagut’s Frostlords and Megabosses made ready for a final charge when ranks of Seraphon, Sylvaneth and Idoneth Deepkin appeared. Striking from the wilderness, they outflanked Qarang Sarn’s army and ground them against the forces of destruction.

The tide of battle turned against him, Qarang Sarn’s hand was forced. Loathe to share the glory, he sent for Irkut the Spineless to re-enforce him... only to discover his companion Varanguard had moved on, leaving the Basalt Lord alone to face a losing battle.

By Hammerhal’s decree

The schemes of Amasya’s descendants bear fruit, as the priests-turned-scholars bring word to the Grand Conclave of Hammerhal of Amasya’s rediscovery. A debate ensued- on the one hand, Hammerhal’s armies were already stretched thin. On the other, allowing such a
holy place to fall into the hands of Chaos was unpalatable to many, including Stormcast of the Hallowed Knights and Anvils of the Heldenhammer stormhosts.

The issue was settled by the fervent oratory of Aventis Firestrike, Stormcast Eternal and Magister of Hammerhal, and the decision made to annex Amasya as a protectorate of Twin-Tailed City. A taciturn strategist from Azyrheim named Monique von Helminger is chosen to lead the expedition; her first act as Seneschal-General is to meet with the Stormcast lords now under her command.

The Board Is Set

Somewhere above, Sigmar's brow furrows, as action he did not desire is set into motion. Elsewhere, the God of Death and the Goddess of Life take note of transpiring events. Gorkamorka bellows his approval, and Grungni works his forge-preparing, perhaps, for what may yet come.

Morathi gives a crocodile's smile, even as Tyrion, Teclis and Malerion's attention are drawn elsewhere. Grandfather and the Blood God howl and slobber, eager to cast down another bauble of Sigmar's pathetic pantheon, and are joined in their aspiration by the spawn of Slaanesh and the Great Horned Rat. Tzeentch grins, bearing needle-like teeth, at the prospect of a scheme which may have once already come to pass.

And Amasya, empty, its great edifices abandoned, its streets deserted, shudders as if stirring from a long slumber. There are none to witness this however, and no alarm is raised…

When the Grand Conclave of Hammerhal learned of Amasya's rediscovery, it sparked a furious debate. Although mighty Sigmar above had dispatched no Stormhost, the Magister of Hammerhal Aventis Firestrike spoke against allowing such a holy place to be desecrated by the Everchosen's own knights of ruin. The Magister's words served to seal the matter, and the decision was made to annex Amasya as a protectorate of Hammerhal Ghyra.
As the ruling to march upon Amasya was made by Hammerhal and not high Sigmaron, no Stormhost could be commanded to join the offensive and no Stormcast Lord tasked with command. Still, many Chambers chose to pledge their support to the coming battle, the Hallowed Knights and Anvils of the Heldenhammer most vocal among them.

This presented the Grand Conclave with a new dilemma: what mortal leader could be entrusted with such a weighty command? They would find their answer with Monique von Helminger, graduate of Azyrheim's esteemed Starhammer Academy and favored protege of the ruthless Freeguild Marshall Werner von Fleischwolf.

With von Helminger formally named Seneschal-General of the muster, retinues of Stormcast Eternals, detachments of Freeguild Guard, fyrs of Fyreslayers, and a dozen other armies of Order began assembling beyond the walls of Hammerhal, all preparing for the march on Amasya.

Curiously, the Lord-Ordinators typically entrusted with communicating with the enigmatic Seraphon could not make contact, and the emissaries of the Everqueen became cold and withdrawn. The Khainites gave the most drastic response, furiously rescinding all pledges of reinforcement to the city's many battlefronts and withdrawing from Hammerhal's political process entirely.

![Monique von Helminger](image)

The map was scattered with coins and trinkets, pebbles and knicknacks, every bit and bauble reducing uncounted lives and materiel into a single passive reference point that sat complacently among scores of peers. They trembled in place even as their constellation shifted, a bright-gauntleted hand plucking and dropping dull slate chips with a plunk-plunk-plunk around a small cluster of silver pennies.

“The ravening horde fell upon us hard and fast. My Raptor retinues were not taken unaware, as must have been the brutes’ intent, yet still our Paladins were nearly overrun as they withdrew to bring warning.” The Lord-Celestant Han Shinzong rested a finger on one of the coins. “I fear the situation is dire, and the outcome inevitable without reinforcement. If this so-called ‘Big Eat’ breaks through, we risk the entire approach. With your permission,
Seneschal-General, I wish to commit the whole of my Exemplar Chamber to thwart their advance.”

The woman so addressed leaned on the table, sharp eyes scanning the toy battlefield. Then she shook her head. “There are closer forces more than equal to the task.” Her worn face broadened into a smile, and she turned. “General Feuerbach.”

The third figure in the tent snapped to attention, armored fist to breast in a salute. “Ma’am.”

“Gather your command and march to relieve the Stormcast.” Her gloved fingers quickly pushed a handful of lustrous copper discs towards the enemy. “When you arrive, attack immediately- I’d say the guns of Hammerhal should make short work of these brutes, wouldn’t you?”

His response was cut off by an annoyed grunt coming from the fourth side of the table, as a magnificently bearded Duardin scowled down at the battleplan. “An’ where do we stand in all this?”

The Marshal’s gaze met his, and both held for a long moment, unblinking. Then she picked up a pair of golden rings and placed them to the rear of the Freeguild. “Your warrior lodge will cover the Lectors’ rear, Runefather. If there are enemies left after Feuerbach’s guns are quiet, you’ll move in and mop up.”

“A task fer beardlings, nae those wit’ Grimnir’s mark.” The Duardin was silent for a long moment, one hand scratching at his red-and-silver crest. “Mithridates Alti would grant us a fight worthy of our steel.”

“Maybe.” Her eyes narrowed. “So would Qarang Sarn. But is the sworn oath of your lodge really worth so little these days?”

The Runefather gave a snarl, and the Fyreslayer’s hand went to the haft of his axe-before he turned his head, spat, cursed her virtue, and stormed out of the tent. Unruffled, she turned to the plate-clad leader of the Freeguild once more.

“You may proceed as planned, General.”

“Ah, yes Ma’am.” He bowed from the waist. “Thank you, ma’am.” Then he turned as well and followed in the duardin’s wake.
It was a long moment before the same plunk-plunk-plunk started up again, and Lady von Helminger turned to see the Lord-Celestant bending over the table. One after another, he dropped new slate markers onto the map, until they far outnumbered copper, silver, and gold put together. She glanced down, and then up, still with a hint of a smile.

“You disapprove.”

“With respect.” Han Shinzong rose to his full height, his mask’s crest brushing against the roof of the tent. “The enemy is far more numerous than you made out, and Feuerbach’s Lectors are green. Feuerbach is green. They have no idea what they’re facing- when they attack, that will be the end of them.” He pushed the slate forward until it crowded out the copper. “The foe will then be among the Fyreslayers, and they, too, will die to a man.”

“I expect you are correct. But the General did not need to know the magnitude of the threat that awaited him, only that it was there. He will serve his purpose, and this way he will die without fear.”

“And the Runefather?”

“It’s not in the nature of the Lodges to run.” Her eyes blazed almost viciously. “And now that Goroth-Grimnir feels his pride prickling him, that’s doubly true.” She looked up. “The Fyreslayers will stand firm when the Freeguild breaks, and yes, likely they’ll die- but in the process they’ll blood the foe, take pressure off your retinues, and rid us of a line on our budget to boot.” She began sliding silver pennies away from the scrum. “Your brethren will be free to withdraw to a stronger position, and the approach will be secured for another day.” From her tone she might have been talking about the end of a close pitball match, or the solution to an aethermetric equation.

“And when-” the Lord-Celestant’s words were heavy like a sigmarite maul- “when does our turn come?”

“Your forces are of a higher caliber than what I’ve made use of today.” She looked at him intently. “When we reach Amasya, your Auxiliary Chamber will be fresh and ready to fight the real battle- while the brave soldiers of the Freeguild will lay upon the Anvil of Apotheosis, waiting to rejoin us.”

The Stormcast’s expression was unreadable behind his mask, and a long moment passed, barely broken by the muffled sounds of the camp. Then he nodded- once.
“If the Chamber is to redeploy, then I must be with them. Excuse me.” And von Helminger was left standing alone, with only the map and its tokens for company.

There is a cautionary tale told to Gutbuster whelps about a Tyrant who blamed his tribe’s Butcher for their lack of food. The Tyrant told the butcher, “You need neither your pot nor hands to use it, for there’s nothing to slaughter!” and cut off the Butcher’s hands with her own cleavers before throwing her into a stew-pot and casting him off down the Ur-River. The story goes on to say how the Tyrant blamed everybody else for his own failings before the tribe eventually ate him, but nobody ever thinks to ask what happened to the unfortunate Butcher.

Another tale, a more recent tale, is told about the campfires of Gutbusters, Bonesplitterz and more besides. In this tale, a great beast of an ogor emerged from the depths of the Ghyranic wilderness and came upon an encampment of Gloomspite Gitz. The ogor’s hands were gone, replaced instead with the tools of a butcher pressed and bound into the scarred stumps. Behind her, she pulled a great stew pot, anchored to her back by meat-hooks.

Not looking to pick a fight, the cowering grots offered him their most succulent mushrooms. The slavering ogor graciously accepted this gift, and told the diminutive greenskins of a promised land, where mushrooms the size of troggoths grew in a stagnant, rotting shadow-palace. This was the home of “da maw dat wuld eat da wurld”, and it was from whence she had come, and where she would return with them, if they chose to follow.

So the ogor’s pilgrimage began, and the tale of da Maw dat Walkz was born. To the Bonesplitterz, she spoke of an ancient mountains, the spine of Ghyran itself. To the Gutbuster and Beastclaw tribes she encountered, she told of a bounteous forest rife with beasts, and of great pits in which to herd and butcher them. It’s said she’s wandered from one edge of Ghyran to the other, forever seeking to return to this promised land.

Perhaps most surprising, her tale has spread to the ghoul courts of the Carrion King, whose noble patriarchs beheld in da Maw a benevolent ally, whose dream could feed their people for a century. Already delusional, da Maw’s supposed paradise was hardly a bridge too
far for the ravening degenerates, and multitudes have already flocked to her procession. Together, they need only follow the other armies marching against Amasya, feasting upon those stupid enough to cross their path along the way.

It was... deliciously frightful, the way all the ingredients came together, each individual piece melting and mixing into the greater whole as Sibyl and her patron looked on. The Maw would never let her touch the brew while it was under flame, of course. But years and years of faithful tasting and testing had granted her a certain... supervisory trust, and she was permitted closer than any other could have come without fear of joining the meal.

They had stopped amidst the carnage of their most recent battle, not because they were beaten but because they were hungry. It had become a sort of a ritual as their motley crusade drew closer to their goal- after every engagement, Da Maw would read the fates in her cauldron, and cast her blessing over all even as each band among them in turn carried their offerings for the soup. Against the somber backdrop of the legions of crows descending on the battlefield, the night’s meal began to take form.

Sibyl had already given her contribution unto the pot. Lord Swilric had visited her earlier, bearing with him a pair of organs- one, the heart of a Duardin, the other of a Man. “Ah, my lady.” His rough lips brushed the back of her hand, and her own heart fluttered. “Look-from the very leaders of the rabble themselves! Both lie still... and yet ours beat together.” She had blushed at that. It must have been no mean task to seek these trophies out- once, she might have been apprehensive about such a gift, but now she was ravenously grateful. It was all she could do not to consume them then and there- but it wouldn’t do to spite the Maw, so into the cauldron they went.

The twin hearts had been the most symbolic contribution, she was convinced, but as size went they’d been dwarfed by what came immediately after- a gaggle of the... well, she had once seen them as brutes, she admitted, but every day they were more alike to champions in her eyes. They had come bearing the great bones of the Duardin chief’s beast, heroically slain on the field of battle, and the Maw had cracked them open to marinate and add their marrow to the brew, turning it a deep brown.
And then- Sibyl smiled at the memory- there had been the Grot. Laden down with spider eggs, he had proudly declared his burden a present “from da Unbreakable”, only for the Maw to scoop him up with one bladed prosthetic and toss him in along with his gifts. He should have known better than to come so close to the cauldron… from far off, she’d seen the Boss Git, and he’d given her a smirking, exaggerated salute even as the eggs and their silk dissolved into the soup. He was a gentleman, and a scoundrel, she reflected.

The other group of beast-hunters’ contribution had seemed a trifle… strange, to her, when she first saw it. It was no secret that the green-skinned and frost-skinned hunters had a fierce if jovial rivalry, and since the former had brought such a mighty offering she had thought that the latter’s tribute to the cauldron would be more than a single woman. But as they drew nearer she realized- it was not a Man, but an Aelf, and one who bore the marks of a priestess of their shadow-god no less. The hunters must have ranged far and struck fiercely to capture her- no wonder they thought the Hag Queen worthy tribute.

The camp stilled as she was drawn near to the cauldron- her eyes were wide, and she began to struggle, clearly realizing what fate awaited her. “No! Blasphemy! You fools- you cannot deny Khaine his due!” She was lifted bodily by the Ogors flanking her, to be dropped before the Maw. “For this, my temple will kill and kill again, until you are all tributes to the Lord of Murder!”

For a moment, Sibyl’s patron regarded the Aelf curiously, and then nodded. “Be purified”, she said in a basso voice. Then she struck, almost faster than sight, impaling the Hag Queen through the heart with one of her meathook-hands. The Aelf died instantly, face contorted into a furious expression, and the Maw nodded to herself again before plunging the bleeding corpse into the now-bubbling stew. At once, the broth began to foam and boil, and a pungent cloud wafted out of the cauldron and into the ranks of onlookers, carrying with it a heady scent suggesting sweat and offal. Sibyl’s stomach growled in an unladylike fashion, and she knew that she wasn’t the only one for whom the brew had already stoked a deep, gnawing hunger.

The Maw leaned over the edge of the cauldron, pensive, staring into its depths, and Lady Sibyl craned her neck to see as well- but all that appeared to her was broth and bubbles. Still, her patron seemed to find something more than that in the swirl of ingredients, because she smiled broadly and turned to the assembled.

“We continue da march!” A whoop escaped Sibyl’s throat, before she blushed and placed one hand over her mouth. Other members were not so restrained, though, and the camp echoed to their clamor. “We is gonna go to Amasya. We is gonna butcher all dat stands in our way, so
da cauldron tells me. An’ dere, we is gonna find da maw dat will eat da wurld. And when we wins… when we wins, we is never gonna be hungry again.”

The Big Eat roared even louder then, but it was lost to Sibyl as the Maw turned and smiled benevolently on her, nodding. A spoonful of the brew was gone in an instant, followed by another and another, until she was lapping it straight out of her hands even as it ran down her cheeks into her decolletage. It was most undignified, but she could hardly have cared less- only her patron’s hand on her shoulder caused her to pull away.

“Good, eh? It gonna get better, though. When we gets to Amasya… den, den after da final battle, we is gonna eats da gods demselves, in da greatest feast da world has ever known.” The Maw’s words sent a shudder through Sibyl, and she closed her eyes, imagining the entire world swirling down into the pot, mixing together into one rich and creamy broth. It was… frightfully delicious.

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The hunting had been good, and a butchered sky-whale even now rested in their hold, but Angeja Brasshook had not donated anything to the stew, and she forbade any of her crew from joining in the festivities. So long as the pods and herds continued to follow Da Maw dat Walks, so would they… but it was one thing to be a member of the Big Eat, and another entirely to lose yourself in the Maw’s dogma like all the rest of the army. There was something unnatural about that filthy cauldron, something beyond the Maw’s natural charisma, and she wanted no part of it.

Besides… it was more than passing strange, wasn’t it, the way their leader dragged that ghoul queen around like a faithful dog, singing her praises. No, they would follow, unto the gates of Amasya and beyond if there was wealth to be had- but the Kharadron had always kept their own council.
In life, Mithridates Alti was born the son of Mithridates Besh, and upon granting his mortally wounded father’s last wish— to be buried alive in the crypts of Rahipmezar-, he was ordained Basrahip, ruler of Amasya in faith and in war. Raised during the dawn of the Age of Chaos, Mithridates Alti spent his youth fighting servants and daemons of the Dark Gods in his father’s many crusades, and was an able commander and warrior when he assumed his father’s mantle.

It insulted him then, when the Sigmarite priesthoods of his city counseled they abandon Amasya, lest the ruinous powers should discover the hallowed necropolis and cast it down as they had done all others. He raged against their cowardice and finally, when the summons arrived from Sigmar and Nagash to muster for battle at the Allpoints, Mithridates Alti forbade the city’s Sigmarite warpriests from accompanying him.

Nagash’s betrayal of Sigmar at the Allpoints is well known; in the hour they were supposed to take the fight to the Dark Gods, the Undying King turned on the armies of the heavens. Mithridates Alti was there when the War of Heaven and Death began, his blade slick with the blood of Sigmar’s soldiers. The Basrahip felt justified in his treachery, his faith in Nagash unwavering. The deed now done, Mithridates Alti made to return to Amasya and snuff out the wretched milksops of Azyr he’d left behind. However, to his rage and mounting horror, he discovered the way shut, and his home denied to him. Mithridates Alti had been exiled.

In this tumultuous time, the Basrahip struck a bargain with the most vile of serpents: Mannfred von Carstein, Mortarch of Night. Mithridates Alti abandoned his mortal life to become a Soulblight Vampire, and in this way, survive the Age of Chaos and exact his vengeance upon the men of Azyr. The price was five centuries in service of a secret task, to this day known only to Mannfred and Mithridates Alti.

His debt now paid, Mithridates Alti has begun to set in motion a plot hundreds of years in the making. In his decades of service, he’s made allies of a hundred necromancers, wight kings and vampire lords. He’s gained the confidence of Reikenor the Grimhaler, and the Nighthaunt processions at his disposal. Perhaps most ambitious of all, he’s entered Hagg Nar and secured a tenuous accord with the Shadow Queen, Morathi. Amasya was once a place of...
worship for all Sigmar’s pantheon, and with the support of the High Oracle’s war covens, a new temple of blood may yet flourish there…

“Is this all that remains to me, then?” Mithridates Alti looked down at the shattered skull with disdain. “Scraps and skeletons. We were born for greater than this, our line and our city, but the heathen hordes are ever-tenacious.” He sighed, and cast the bone away to join its brethren littering the field.

Every day, the Khornate dogs dug deeper and deeper into his flanks, leaving scenes like this one as monuments to their passage. When they had marched from Shyish, the ranks of naked bone had seemed unending, the wreckage of a dozen civilizations fueling his war effort- but days upon weeks of encounters like this had left his still-mighty host somewhat reduced.

It was only to be the Sigmarites. If even them, this early. As he had originally conceived it, this was to be only the first step in his revenge against the mewling hosts of Azyr. Once the seat of his father’s power was reclaimed, then his hosts would fall upon the God-King’s poor, deluded sheep like the Undying King’s own sword. And now…

“It never goes according to plan, does it.”

“You would know.” Mithridates’ ally had learned humility at Nagash’s own hands, long ago, and now Reikenor taught the same lesson to any who sought to challenge the Lord of Death’s dominion over the hereafter- such as the same storm-forged warriors that now marched to claim his prize. His own objective, Mithridates reflected, was at best secondary in the wraith’s eyes- Nagash’s reaper was doubtless just as happy to reclaim Sigmar’s pawns sooner than later. But they had to reach the city first. “So tell me then, sorcerer-king, how are we to break through?”

“Armor means little and less to my chill touch. Let me ride out with my hosts against the Khornates- there will be a great slaughter, but not a drop of blood spilled.” If the wraith had had any face beyond a death grin, he would have sworn he was smiling.

“The Lord of Rage would go mad with it,” Mithridates admitted. “And yet, these are bold words coming after your humiliation by Nurgle’s chosen, and they march in step with the
Bloodbound. All Sarn would have to do is turn aside a portion of his host, and you would be
stalemated until the end of time… and his hounds would still be free to bite at our heels.”

“Do you admit defeat, then, fallen priest?”

“Never.” Mithridates smiled. “I only think that this is a poor battle for either of us to fight…
neither of our hearts lie on this field, and we ought to save our strength for the real wars to
come. It’s time for someone else to bear our burden. Come.”

It was not far, by foot or by nightmarish steed, from the edge of the battlefield to
where the priest-king’s retinue had made camp. In the center stood his own splendid
gold-and-turquoise tent, and inside there was a woman. When he was a mortal man,
Mithridates might have thought first that she was beautiful- now that he had transcended his
mortality, he saw instead that she was deadly, like a masterwork Duardin blade or a howling
tempest. Her posture bespoke utter ease concealing absolute awareness, and her hands were
clear paragons of the murderer’s craft. He dipped his head in greeting.

“Well met, Queen Aorii.” She smiled in turn. “I have a task for you.”

“Honestly, I wondered if you had forgotten us.” The Hag Queen appeared artfully
unconcerned. “Even under the God-King’s thumb, my sisters have given more sacrifice to the
Lord of Murder than we have since we joined your march.”

“Then it’s good that you are here now. I have a task worthy of your mettle.” As Mithridates
explained the Khornate threat, her eyes widened, and her cultivated nonchalance couldn’t
hide her anticipation of the battles to come. “Can the Daughters of Khaine put the foe to
flight?”

“Gladly. The cauldrons will sing with our victory.” And she left the tent without a further word
for man or wraith- but when she was gone, Reikenor turned to his companion.

“When I asked to fight the enemy, your concern was that I would break myself on Nurgle’s
warriors. And yet you spoke not a word of the Plague God to her.”

The last hierophant of Amasya shrugged. “I told you because I wanted to stop you
from plunging into a battle that would tie you to a single point. I was silent with her because
she can and will plunge as it pleases her, and I have no intention of dampening her
enthusiasm. If she succeeds against the odds, she and her warriors will have proven their
worth. If not, we have lost nothing but a noisy distraction—she will expend herself against the Horde, and when there is nothing left they will die. As do we all.”

“And in the meantime—”

“The march can continue.” Mithridates smiled grimly. “You will shepherd the Deathrattle and the Deadwalkers forward. Guard the flanks, and make sure that no one else can worry away at them before the host reaches the city proper.”

“And you?”

“Will be leading the van. It’s only right, that my Blood Knights should have the first taste of combat against the usurpers.”

“Mannfred’s Blood Knights.” Again, if Reikenor had had a face to smile it might have been smirking. “Not yours.”

“No.” Mithridates thought of all the motley forces he had begged, bribed and stolen for this army, none of whose loyalties were to him. “Not yet.”

The Horde of Rot and Rage

The Basalt Lord Qarang Sarn is a warrior-orator, a bastion of belief in the Dark Gods, a man who sows the fields with corpses and waters them with the blood of friend and foe. He was—perhaps literally—born to become a Varanguard, and his faith in Archaon Everchosen is absolute. His was a life of bloodshed and unspeakable acts, the grace of the Gods given form.

His place has always been among the Sixth Circle, the Blades of Desolation, and to them, Qarang Sarn is an exemplar. He does not simply slay his foes, but utterly vanquish them with blade and rhetoric. His moniker “The Basalt Lord” does not refer to some mighty fortress or subjugated domain, but speaks to the Varanguard’s force of personality, for his word and will are as stone.
Among the Bloodbound, the Basalt Lord is thought to cull the weak in the role of the Slaughterpriest, and forge the strong in the role of the Skullgrinder. To the Maggotkin, Qarang Sarn is a jolly father-figure, a son who sits upon grandfather’s knee and urges them to greater acts of service. Even the more warlike of the Chaos ratmen are fond of the Varanguard, as he is not duplicitious- and assurances are rare in Skaven culture.

It should come as no surprise, then, that Qarang Sarn has never cared for Irkut the Spineless. Where the Blades of Desolation extoll honorable conquest, the Scions of Darkness wear false intentions like a shroud. It was the Basalt Lord’s warrior spirit which demanded the right to bring Waaagh! Wapkagut to heel, and his mistake to believe Irkut would place service to the Everchosen above petty backstabbing.

It was this betrayal which led Qarang Sarn to abandon his task- to bind the scattered warbands of Chaos by way of the Varanpact- and choose instead to lead the righteous warriors of Grandfather Nurgle, the Blood God and anyone else who would follow him in casting down Amasya, foiling the schemes of Irkut and all others. In its ruin, he will raise up a shrine of skulls in a garden of plague and rot, watered with the blood of friend and foe. This is his oath, and it is as stone.

“Skeletons!” The worst blasphemy couldn’t have been spat with more scorn. “Mindless, bloodless, eight-times-damned skeletons!” An armored finger fished another sliver of bone out from the filigree of an ornately decorated greataxe, then paused to pick a speck off of the opposite gauntlet. “A fortnight we’ve been fighting nothing but Deathrattle and Nighthaunt, and I am dead sick of it!”

The finger’s owner paused, and glowered across the campfire. “Figuratively speaking, that is.”

The corpulentely rounded suit of rusted plate sitting opposite guffawed appreciatively. “Buboes bring pus, work brings play, slaughter brings glory. Or do you mean to tell me that the renowned Eris Bloodwrath has run out of patience?”
“Please.” There was a bit of shattered vertebrae buried in the forged mouth of a snarling hellhound. “Don’t act so-so-so sanguine. Like you haven’t felt unfulfilled, fighting ghosts that can’t even get the tiniest sniffle!”

The gross sentinel harrumphed. “But I haven’t been skulking around camp at all hours, acting like a daemonette hunting her latest conquest!”

“At least I still can!”

“Children!” The next round of barbs died unspoken as a regal figure stepped into the circle of light. “Save the bloodshed for the battlefield. We are here to make good on the test the Gods have set for us, and right now you—” he glanced pointedly at both sides of the fire—“are failing.”

“…but there’s no bloodshed to speak of.” This muttered by the renowned Eris Bloodwrath.

“We are on the cusp of grasping a prize such as will be made legend.” Behind his chipped and blackened helm, the figure’s eyes lit up with a hellish glow. “Our patrons, the Lords of Entropy and Bloodshed, have laid such an opportunity at our feet as will never be repeated. The lost city of Amasya— a battle never fought, a victory never reaped, a shining jewel from a dead age, and it has been given unto us. Truly, this can only be the providence of the Eternal Four. Our very lives have been shaped for this day.”

“Oh no.” Bloodwrath slumped, head in hands. “Here we go again.” The bloated watcher only sloshed, entertained.

“Even when I was a child, the Gods spoke to me. By their aid, I was lead to my first great victory— when I slaughtered the King of Quaterii in front of his heir, and spread out his entrails in the sun-drenched forests of Hysh.” His words rumbled ossiferously. “And though his slaves raged, they were not men enough to bring me to battle.”

“You ambushed an old man and his grandson on a walk. Then you ran away. Mighty warrior indeed.”

“And against the Nine Princedoms of Aqshy!” His voice was exultant. “Then I reaped and reaped, so that False Sigmar hid his face in fear, and the corpses were piled twelve deep—”

“—three deep, at most—"
“-and all that land was laid to waste! Truly, the crows feasted mightily on that day, and all spoke the name of Qarang Sarn with hatred and with fear!”

“I wonder why.”

“But then!” The speaker- Qarang Sarn- was only building in intensity, like a tide of earth and stone boiling down a hillside. “Truly glorious was the day when I met Tarlen the Unconquerable and his riotous horde in battle. The greatest, he accounted himself, but in three days and three nights I put his bruitish soldiers to flight and broke their ever-vaulted spirit, and on the fourth day the field and the fame was mine!”

“They were greenskins. They got bored. They wandered off. That’s not a victory, that’s barely a- draw…” Sarn had fallen silent, and was looking at the opulently clad warrior with an amused contempt. An uncomfortable silence descended, broken only by the piteous sobs of some nearby captive.

“You interrupt me. And here I hadn’t even reached the more delectable bits.” There was a certain rich, earthy smugness to his voice, and the one called Eris shrank like cornered prey. “Such it was, when I met the ninety-nine Wives of the Stag on the field, and killed and killed again until their champion threw herself at my feet and begged for mercy like a bleating lamb. How I relish it.” His eyes seemed to burn holes in the warrior’s armor, and she crumpled, defeated.

Her Nurglish counterpart hooted at this, roiling and rollicking until mirth was flowing from every orifice. Sarn turned, smoothly, and stalked around the fire. “Or perhaps it was my greatest triumph, that for which I was acclaimed Varanguard. When I broke the walls of Melas, polluted its great fountains, and corrupted its High Priestess to the service of a patron she reviled. Truly, that was a day when the Gods smiled upon me.” The Nurglish warrior sank suddenly, and lapsed into a discomfited gurgling.

Sarn turned away, pacing, hands crossed behind his back like an Azyrite schoolmaster. “Yes, I am over-proud, but in truth so are we all- vainglorious fools riding high on our delusions and the promise of rewards forever beyond our grasp. Such is the will of the Four-it’s inescapable. One of the immortal truths of Chaos is, the Gods make themselves part of us, and we in turn imagine ourselves to be the Gods.” Both listeners sat silent and still, watching him warily.

“But in truth, this is common to every faith that has been or will be- all throw themselves on the mercy of their gods, and imagine themselves redeemed. There is but a single speck of
difference- what Sigmar or Alarielle or Grungni promise is, ultimately, a lie.” His voice grew tectonic. “This too shall pass, in time- but what the Four promise is true down to the base. We have thrown our lot in with the primal realities of the entire universe.”

He paused, and then began to walk back towards the campfire. “You see? This is why we are bound for Amasya, though it means we spend ourselves on bones and vapor. When we retake it, it will be to share the truth with the entirety of the Realms- to strip away the centuries-old lies of those who would usurp the Gods themselves, and replace it with the raw, unalloyed facts of what always has been.” Sarn’s voice was rapturous, almost pleading. “And when we are done, we will have drawn ourselves closer to that which really is… and for it we shall be exalted.”

With that, he turned back towards the main camp- only to pause. “Eris.”

“Yes, Varanguard?” Her tone was wary.

“No, I as you. Not for nothing do they call me the Basalt Lord. My flesh and my heart are stone, and if you speak another word that displeases me I will slaughter you without a drop of sweat or an ounce of remorse.” He smiled beneath his helm. “But all you have done today is made me laugh. Prepare yourselves, both of you- the end approaches.”

The Skoga Grakk

There was nothing out of the ordinary about the Ironjawz warchanter called Wapkagut, until there was. Every warchanter’s beat incites violence in the offspring of Gorkamorka, but one day, Wapkagut realized he could hear something else besides the primal cacophony between his ears: an echo, hollow and mocking. It infuriated the warchanter.

When other warchanters beat, Wapkagut couldn’t hear it the echo yet when he drummed, they could hear it- and it enraged them, too. The warchanter then bludgeoned his peers to death, but it didn’t make any difference. When Wapkagut’s Megaboss came around to see why he’d killed all the other warchanters, he could hear it, too. So, they made the only sensible decision: the mob would find the source of the echo and bash it.
So, what began as a mob soon became a stampede and then an avalanche of green flesh and the chill, biting winds of Beastclaw alfrostuns- for, as Waaagh! Wapkagut gained momentum, more and more of Gorkamorka’s kin could hear the warchanter's drumming and the taunting echo which answered it.

In this way, they might have descended on Amasya unhindered and torn it apart- had the Varanpact of Qarang Sarn and Irkut the Spineless not already been on their way there. Unwilling- and quite possibly unable- to stop, the Waaagh! crashed into the sprawling Chaos encampment. However, the battle quickly turned against them as Qarang Sarn rallied his warriors and launched a counter-attack of bloated Blightkings and howling Bloodbound berserkers.

The story of Wapkagut could have ended here, but fate had a card to play. Out of the wilderness came Sylvaneth, who set upon the Chaos horde with bitter, unbridled hatred. Sweeping up from the valley in a bank of fog came blind Idoneth Deepkin, scything the Chaos ranks from the back of flying sea-steeds. Finally, from the stars came the Seraphon, whole constellations blinking into existence behind the suddenly embattled slaves to darkness.

The truth Wapkagut could not have known- and, let’s be honest, wouldn’t care about regardless- is that others had come to the conclusion that Amasya could not be allowed to stand, and would make any alliance to see the hallowed necropolis destroyed…

Like a mortuary shroud pulled across a cadaver, the night sky had disappeared, lost in a bank of fog. Pounded into muck by the iron-shod tread of two belligerent adversaries, the battlefield had once been a meadow, its gentle, babbling creeks now choked with blood and mangled corpses.

Impatient, Wapkagut tapped out a beat with his foot, his toes slapping against a puddle that was more effluvia than mud. The fight had been a proper scrap, but even an Ironjaw could see it wasn’t going well. It had been a meeting engagement, not a pitched battle. On the warpath, there was little which could impede the momentum of a Ironjaw brawl and a Beastclaw Alfrostun- yet a wall of insensate Blightkings and a thundering
counter-charge of Khornate Juggernauts were among them. Now those same foes lay slain about the warchanter, bodies heaped atop the orruk dead they’d killed only moments before.

Wapkagut grunted out percussion notes under his breath, his thick, his stikks shaking in his twitching grasp. The greenskin’s need to bash something hung in the chill pre-dawn air like a static charge.

Just as Wapkagut and his ‘ardest boyz made to take the Chaos lads with them, the sky- clear as a winter’s night, until that moment- seemed to fall and crash into the bloodied waters of the meadow. From the burning light came steam and mist, even as the forest upon the valley’s mountains seemed to close in about the clashing armies. The sound of furious combat grew muffled and distant, and Wapkagut had been left with nobody to krump, the foes he’d been at grips with moments before disappearing into the mist.

Confused and angry, some of his Waaagh! had found their way back to Wapkagut through the mists. As what remained of the Sovanheng Alfrostun came up behind him, the mist began to freeze and fall, melting as it settled on the still-hot bodies of the recently slain and adding to the bloody quagmire.

The Sovanheng Frostlord gave a bellow of alarm and urged his Stonehorn forward as four figures emerged from the mist before Wapkagut- only to yank back the reigns at a snarl and a raging glare from the Warchanter. Looking back to the strangers, the warchanter sized them up, the cunnin’ of Mork piquing the greenskin’s curiosity.

One was of the sea-aelves, a Tidecaster of the Isharann; another, a splinter-git Branchwraith, the type to turn an orruk’s entrails into extrails with a screeched incantation. Beside them was a small lizard-creature bedecked in feathers: a Starpriest of the Skink breed, and behind him, a Sunblood of the ‘ard Saurus breed. Wapkagut grunted in acknowledgement and stood his ground.

The Branchwraith’s voice was stern and sharp; the creak of old branches, swaying in the wind. “You trespass upon a glade sacred to the Gnarlroot, yet the Old King decrees our interests align this day.”

Her voice thin, fleeting like an ocean breeze, the Isharann’s words were clipped, unsteady- as though speech were not familiar to her. “It same with enclaves of deep and constellations above. We are all share common purpose.”
Wapkagut snorted, and spit on the ground between them. “You ‘ear it too, dat it? Da big hole, were da drummin’ echoes?”

The Brachwraith and the Tidecaster nodded, while the Skink chirruped in agreement. The Sunblood behind him looked away, appearing distracted, agitated, as if listening to a sound that couldn’t be heard. Wapkagut could relate.

“It is a forgotten place, barren and hollow.” The Starpriest intoned, “a monument to death in the realm of life, yet discarded even by the king whom cannot die. It is a gnawing place of black and white, emptiness in the shape of civilization.”

“We’z gonna knock it down, we iz,” Wapkagut barked, his patience for talk wearing thin. “Me an’ da lads, we gonna wreck it good. We gonna crash and bash, stomp an’ smash, ‘til they iz nothin’ left ta kick no more! Den we gonna toss all da rubble into da hole an’ shut it right up.” The twitching Ironjaw leaned forward, beady eyes narrowed, darting between the newcomers. “You’z lot in?”

Bowing in deference, the Starpriest stepped aside, its brawny Sunblood companion heaving forward to take the skink’s place. Wapkagut could feel the Waaagh! energy charge about him, the army at his back ready to crash down upon the Seraphon like an avalanche.

Yet the Sunblood gave no challenge, and instead raised up his maul and shield. With an ear-splitting roar, Saurus crashed them against each other and snarled a bestial call to arms.

“SKOGA GRAKK!”

Wapkagut’s features turned from a scowl to a gleeful, rictus grin, and with a throaty bellow, he took up the battlecry, his morkstikk and gorkstikk punctuating with ground-shaking force.

“SKOGA GRAKK! SKOGA GRAKK! SKOGA GRAKK!”

An icy wind whipped up, the first real breath of an encroaching Everwinter. The Waaagh! had lingered too long, and now surged forward like some great, charging behemoth, stampeding over the spot their new allies had appeared to stand mere moments before. They gave no thought as to why the strangers wanted Amasya destroyed, or how this alliance would fare once it was. There was only the next scrap to be had; what came after, didn’t matter.
Irkut “the Spineless” lived mortal life as the son of a Darkoath chieftan. The youngest of half a dozen siblings whom turned up dead throughout Irkut’s youth, his father demanded a great deed in the eyes of their gods to prove him worthy of leading their tribe. Always greedy and ever deceitful, Irkut’s choice of trial was fateful: he sought out a Silver Tower of Tzeentch and willingly entered it.

In that nightmare labyrinth where time has no meaning and fate is the most fickle of things, Irkut chose not to serve the tribe of his birth, but the master of the Silver Tower- and soon after, the one to whom the Tower’s master pledged fealty: Archaon Everchosen, Grand Marshal of the Apocalypse.

Thus, Irkut’s reward for surviving all the Silver Tower’s trials was elevation into the Varanguard- for who could be more worthy than a warrior vouched for by one of Archaon’s own dutiful Gaunt Summoners? Now granted more power than his lowly barbarian birth could have ever afforded him, Irkut applied his mind toward new conquests- of both the ego and the flesh.

Since Sigmar unleashed the Stormhosts upon the realms, Irkut’s fascination has been with the binding and shaping of soul-stuff. This pursuit has led him to make many friends- of a fashion, at least- with the servants of Tzeentch, Slaanesh, the Great Horned Rat, and even some among the Beasts of Chaos. All trade in twisting the mind, body and soul of living things, and all provide unique tools for doing so.

In Amasya, Irkut believes there is an opportunity to gain insight into the magics which allowed Tyrion, Teclis and Malerion to take Slaanesh captive. With these secrets unlocked, it’s possible he could release Slaanesh from his bondage- or perhaps even bind the gods of his
enemies. Regardless, he is not alone in his mad ambitions, for such are the aspirations of those who serve the ruinous powers…

Irkut the Spineless

_Eight of flesh, one of tree_

_From the gods of earth and sea_

_Four almighty hear our plea_

_Chaos’ grasp shall set us free_

The music of Slaanesh rose above the Varanpact encampment, the rhapsodic, animating, maddening harmony of a thousand servants of the Chained Prince all rendering worship through voices and bodies and instruments of immortal bone and sinew. Even as the symphony swelled, it was met and matched by the constant, lonely wind of the valley that had dogged their path and filled the quiet moments for a week or more. Desire and despair, sensation and emptiness combined, all set in counterpoint in a perfect fugue of Realm and Empyrean to which the camp inexorably danced.

For Irkut Thousandeves, it was all noise. What use was the dance, when the center was all that truly mattered? Mounted on his war-steed, he need not spare a glance for the daemonettes, nor the gibbering horrors that added their own insistent hoot-chirp-grumble to the mix. Like the carpet of vermin that swirled about their feet, the dancers would move or they would be crushed. The center was all that mattered.

And what a center! Flesh and bone, shoot and stem had been woven together, such that they who had entered his unwilling service as ten prisoners taken from the Skoga Grakk had become a single oracle, channeling counsel and warnings direct from the lips of the Gods. There were orbs of warpstone where their eyes once lay, and he wondered what it was the amalgam now saw- but only briefly. What was important, he would know soon enough, what was particular, he need never know. The center was all that mattered.
Let us see, let us see
Past and future your decree
All that is and what will be
Truth beneath reality

“Oracle!” His voice echoed over the camp, and he was pleased that the ever-present noise still muted somewhat. The center was what mattered. “Show me the future. Tell me what lies ahead in the city.”

The construct heaved, individual parts writhing around the great wooden beast that made up its center, before one of the creatures suspended on the periphery opened its mouth. “Seneschal, they call her. Starhammer and Commander and Queen, they honor her, but she bears only steel, and what she wields hangs by a single thread.”

“Yes.” The warhosts of the God-Who-Failed were as conniving as a sorcerer’s palace. “Tell me more.”

Light flared in another pair of empty eyes. “He strikes, and he hears, but where he strikes once he hears twice, and it drives him mad. We heard and we followed, but now we hear and follow the same voice but a different master. Coming, they are coming, earth and sea and green, coming to destroy.”

Irkut smiled. Had the beasts known that what he took from them would be their undoing? “More. What more do you see?”

A third struggled to escape its fellow parts, as though some remnant of individuality remained. “The great foe beheld a vision once, but he did not see this place. What is painted has become real, but what is real is just a memory. But memories stand grander than ruins, and this one towers. It was a hall, but now it is hollow. Yet even empty things may hold secrets inside, and this one is rife with them.”

Was this how Khornates felt, when they scented blood? He urged his mount to circle the oracle, peering into its distant gaze, waiting expectantly.
“What is known can be false, and what is closed can be open, and what is forbidden can be free- and so it has become. Once it was whole, but now it is crumbled, once it stood tall, but now it is stooped, once it was white, now it is stained. Drink a little, and it will teach- drink deeply, and it will damn, but damnation is only a danger to the weak.”

“And I am strong.” He bared his teeth, and despite himself his heart pounded in anticipation. “Continue.”

“Sixth and last.” This part was smaller, and had perhaps only been a child when it was fused in to the greater whole. Irkut had to lean in to hear its fading voice. “From Heaven, his line fell, but death swallowed him willingly- and to what end? Only power, but he names it righteousness. He waited from dawn to dawn, and now he comes in darkness, blood within and blood without, and in darkness he will be met at last. And yet-”

“-not all who fall can rise.” The next piece of the oracle took up the phrase seamlessly. “Tombs within tombs, houses on houses, living stone to contain dead men. Once many voices sounded, but now only one is heard, and silence lays thick within the earth. He will emerge, and when he has come he will reap, and the last shall know joy and despair in equal measure. Know it to be true.”

They were speaking faster and faster now, and the words had barely entered Irkut’s mind when the seventh piece of flesh spoke.

“In darkness they have waited, and in darkness they shall be met- earth and sea, earth and heaven. A palace it is called, and a palace it remains, no longer fit for a king but perhaps enough for a priest- but which priest shall take it?”

“Enough!” The piece’s voice came to a halt. “Tell me of something else, something besides long-dead holy men.”

“Earth and sea, yet he is stone.” The eighth and final had an almost... sly look to it, and Irkut knew better than to believe he was seeing things. “He speaks, and they laugh, they speak, and he laughs, and yet they follow him the same. Why should they vary, when he has the gods’ voice? Wrath and ruin, he is coming, they are coming, but he comes in blindness and in ignorance.”

“Ha! Oh, Sarn... Aptly described.” His thoughts were drifting elsewhere when the Oracle spoke again.
“The center bends until the whole breaks.” The bound tree-beast holding up the other parts flexed and shook, and the whole oracle shook with it. “The center bends and strays, and the whole is lost. He sees all but cannot see himself, for he has not vision. Thousandeyes he calls himself, but he will be named Spineless, for he bends, he bends, he bends as he searches, and he hates, he hates, he serves what he hates…”

“He hates! Spineless, he serves, spineless, he hates!” All the parts cried out in unison, echoing through the camp, and like a thunderhead boiling out of a blue sky Irkut’s mood fouled.

“Tear it down!” Daemonette and horror alike leapt at his command, and the oracle burst into flame- but even as it died, it screamed after him-

“Spineless he bends, spineless he strays, spineless he hates!” But it was all noise, in the end. Let the accursed thing spit its invectives and curses. The center was all that mattered.

*What will be, what will be

*Truth will bind and set us free

*Through fiery animosity

*Nemesis’ sovereignty

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Part aqueduct, part dam, part fortress, Grungni’s Threshold has stood sentinel over the upriver entrance to Amasya since the Age of Myth. The whole structure is imposing and beautiful in the way only Duardin construction can be- and it bears not the mark of any beardling craftsman, but the God of the Forge himself, for only a god would dare attempt to harness the Ur-River for mortal ends.

The dam itself is a seamless bulwark of unyielding rock, topped with a broad stone causeway many miles in length- wide enough that an army could march along it, as some in earlier times have. On both sides it is lined with the proud, unsmiling figures of a thousand revered ancestors, and some whisper that these were meant as more than sentinels. Either end of the dam is guarded by a gatehouse built in the shape of a snarling griffon, which could be opened or closed in time of need to keep unwanted guests off of- or on- the causeway.

The dam has been assailed before, and doubtless will again. While there were Duardin or Men or Aelves to defend it, it was never breached- so cunning were the defenses built into its mechanisms and depths, it could and did withstand the wrath of many great and fell beasts. Abandoned, though, and with its sluice gates partway open, it was infiltrated during the centuries of the Age of Chaos- not by any monster, but by riverine Troggoths, many of whom have now built their foul nests in its hallowed halls. If they could be cleared out and the defenses readied, it would once again be an impenetrable bulwark.

The mechanism to control the sluice gates is lost somewhere in the heart of the great works adjacent to the dam itself, into which a portion of the Ur-River is still diverted. If there were people left with the knowledge to operate it, the roaring waters could still be put to use in a hundred marvelous and terrible ways. Sadly (or perhaps fortunately) the Troggoths care nothing for the cunning mechanisms and industries that relied upon the torrent, and thus the river flows unimpeded and the devices sit dry and unused. Future occupants may have different plans.

The tomb of the Priests of Nagash stands opposite Nagaskahip, and between the two of them they frame the constant Ur-River. This place is- or was- not solely dedicated to the Lord of Death, as the necropolis has always been. Instead, it served as a burial ground for the members
of any of the multitude of religions that flourished in the Age of Myth, safeguarding the souls of dead Priests. In latter days, though, as the tide of Chaos grew and the Pantheon fell into ruin the priesthood of Nagash occupied the central areas of the tower solely for themselves.

The grounds of the grand tomb are funereal, but immaculately kept- even abandoned for so many centuries, the passage of time does not rest on them at all, and one new to the city could be forgiven for thinking that their patrons had only momentarily stepped away. This is aided by the fact that there is nothing truly living within the complex- even the ancient yew trees that line the walkway leading to the entrance are, upon closer inspection, fiendishly clever replicas of glass, stone, and steel, and no birds nest within their branches. For all this, though, the berries are just as poisonous as those of the living plant.

The outer chambers of the tomb itself are somber and splendid, the graves of generations of priests of a multitude of gods enshrined with all possible pomp and ceremony. Amid the holy symbols of the entire Pantheon, the walls are lined with hundreds of thousands of tiny figures, lifelike apart from their size. Though few who’ve seen Amasya in its former glory yet live, it’s believed that each of them is a representation of someone entombed here or across the river. What is strange is that each figure looks carved by the same hand- and yet, there are tenfold more than any mortal could have made in all Amasya’s history.

Sealed behind the Great Gate, the inner chambers of the tomb hold only the high priests of the Basrahip and their closest disciples- in the final days of Amasya, this meant that this was exclusively the domain of Nagash’s followers. If one could pierce the ancient seals, if one could walk those deathly halls, the sense of foreboding would be almost palpable. Something stirs here, something ancient and wrathful, and it thirsts for vengeance long-denied to it.

For many centuries, these cliffs and the necropolis at their feet served as the final resting place for thousands upon thousands of saints and sinners alike. The residents of Amasya had their burial places, but by far the majority of those were outsiders- pilgrims, who made their final trek to the city or had their bodies delivered to rest here, close to eternity. It is known that some did not wait for death to usher them into the tomb, and chose to seal themselves away in order to curry the Undying King’s favor, offering themselves prematurely in the hope of a better afterlife to follow.

The highest reaches of the cliffs are also the oldest- although many must have been buried at the cliff’s roots in earlier days, these must have been washed away by newer construction, their inhabitants all but lost to time. Far up the cliff face, the air grows thin and
passage treacherous, as paths become worn away through the thousands of feet that came before. If there is any wealth to be had here, it is well hidden or well protected- most of the tombs have been picked clean, but some have a reputation for housing primeval terrors (as well as powerful treasures.) The Shrouded Men who once watched over the graves are long gone… or so it seems… but it still takes a strong heart to risk disturbing these ancient ones’ slumber.

Lower down, the tombs become more accessible, larger and more ornate, housing the dignitaries of a more tangible age. The cliff face itself has been refashioned in the shape of mausoleums, and in places replaced entirely by frescoes showing scenes of gods, champions and monsters fighting across the Mortal Realms. Inside the tombs themselves, there are shrines to the dead, commemorations of their lives and hints of the future each deceased hoped for for themselves.

While Amasya itself was alive, these places were guarded by mortal priests and soldiers- now that the city is dead, so too are they, and yet the wards around those laid to rest are newer and stronger than further up, and hence more dangerous. Too, as close as the tombs are said to lie to the Realm of Death, some whisper that there must be at least one powerful guardian stalking its depths.

Finally, at the foot of the cliff there is a sprawling necropolis- mortuaries, columbariums and field upon field of gravestone mark the humble last testament of those too poor to aspire to a place in the cliff. Walking among them, one gets the inescapable feeling that someone is watching- whether it be the benevolent spirits of the dead or something far more sinister is unknown, but speculated upon by students of this place. Whatever the presence, it pays to watch one’s step- there may or may not be a ghost, but the shadow-weed that thrives in neglect has grown fierce and hungry with its nearness to so much mortality, and is not averse to hastening a particularly troublesome or tempting visitor along that path.

Legendarily, this cathedral-palace is built upon the very spot where Sigmar stooped to drink from the waters of the Ur-River, and beheld the Pantheon that was to be. Built in the same style as the soaring edifices of Azyrheim, in gentler times this complex housed a coterie of priests giving praise to the God-King and was thronged with worshippers of every description. When the Age of Myth darkened, it served instead as a mustering-ground- first,
for those crusaders ultimately denied the chance to fight at Sigmar’s side by Mithridates Besh, then for the last chaotic evacuation of the city in its final days.

The years have not been kind to Azyrhol- five hundred years of wind and rain, which in other places has had curiously little effect, has worn away at the building until it is only a shadow of its former grandeur. Many of the ancient statues of saints and martyrs that once stood atop the walls have fallen to the ground, and the roof covering much of the central building has collapsed. Once, standing inside and looking up, one could see a spectacular simulacrum of Azyr frescoed into the ceiling- now, at dusk and dawn an observer can sometimes see the Realm of Heavens in their own glory spread out overhead.

The center of the cathedral was and is a great throne, built supposedly upon the precise spot of the Heldenhammer’s revelation. The throne always stood empty, except for on the rare occasions where Sigmar himself came to sit in judgement and meditation. Cautionary tales still abound about the fate of mortals reckless enough to try to usurp the God-King’s seat. In these fallen days, the halls of worship are haunted by feral Azyrite star-hounds, who can smell taint and death in the air.

Beneath the complex, there lie catacombs stretching deep into the earth, home to the remains of those priests, saints and martyrs unwilling to submit their mortal shells to Nagash’s care. Descending into them, one could believe they had descended into a charnel pit- but the bones of the departed are arranged here with greatest care, and the Lord of Death has no dominion. In earlier days, the existence of the catacombs was a source of tension between the priesthoods of the Undying King and the Heldenhammer- in this day and age, it’s said that the spirits of the saints still haunt the subterranean chambers, defending it against incursions by the tainted.

Isik Kulesi

Ancient place of study, in gentler times Isik Kulesi stood highest in Amasya’s skyline, proudly illuminating the streets in day and night. Here, students of the arcane came to learn, to study, and ultimately to teach and practice their art under the benevolent supervision of some of the greatest sages of Ghyran and beyond. In these days, much of the tower’s upper floors have fallen into ruin, subtle architecture ultimately unequal to the tide of years and perhaps the influence of more malevolent beings as well.
The grounds of the Tower are scattered with stone, all that remains of the pinnacle that fell calamitously into the Ur-River during its long abandonment. Much of the topmost floors was lost into the waterway, but much still lies half-hidden by overgrown lawns and gardens. The vaults once held within these upper floors shattered with the fall, their containment breaching and allowing the strange energies of the devices and artifacts within to leach out again. Creatures and vegetation around the riverbank have grown unusually active of late, manifesting peculiar and unnatural tendencies- but this is nothing next to the monstrosities that occasionally crawl out of the Ur-River itself, bolstered by now-untamed power.

The study halls that made up the base of the tower are less damaged, though only just- rain, roots and wind have destroyed all but the most resilient of the furnishings, and ruined the tower’s once-magnificent libraries. Still, the eldritch defenses of the library sometimes flare into life all the same, and the empty rooms and halls can at times be seen to spark with life and energy years after they should have fallen silent and cold. It would be dangerous to venture into the Tower, and yet if the wards are still active there must remain something worth protecting.

There are dungeons beneath this place of learning, secret and built to last until the end of time- places of storage and imprisonment set down by master mages of ages past, perhaps even with aid by Teclis himself. What is imprisoned here is unknown, save to a few, but widely speculated upon- dragons, demigods, daemons, devices of malign and rarely surpassed potency no doubt. If the damage dealt by the collapse of the upper vaults has been severe, the consequences of these lower vaults being broken would be cataclysmic. Fortunately, there are few with the arts and patience remaining to try and breach the depths.

Standing opposite the Tower of Light, in Amasya’s heyday Karanlik Saray ate up its sibling’s illumination as quickly as Isik Kulesi threw it out. This foreboding construction is gloomy even beneath a noonday sun, and perpetually hides secrets within its shadows. Most pious folk avoided the temple during the Age of Myth- though its residents were sanctioned and in some ways respected residents of the city, they were never loved, and there was always someone telling stories of a friend or relative who ventured inside, never to be seen again.
The palace itself is deliberately ominous—beyond its unnatural darkness, monstrous and alien beasts of ebony and ruby crouch on its parapets, watching and judging all who pass beneath their gaze. Though these stone beasts are inanimate—as far as anyone knows—there are a multitude of openings through which one could watch and not be seen, hunting without spooking the prey. The hallways and chambers themselves are immaculately clean, save for five centuries of dust, but on close inspection traces of dried blood can still be found in some of the gutters. Walking the halls, one cannot escape the feeling of being livestock wandering a slaughterhouse.

Outside, the district immediately adjacent to the palace was the center of vice and iniquity in the city’s halcyon days. Though the city was built for pilgrims, many of them that came had mortal needs and desires, and saw no contradiction in partaking of the multitude pleasures of the flesh in the evening and shriving their sins in Azyrhol the next day. Sitting in Karanlik Saray’s eternal shadow, these streets were easy to get lost in even when they were filled with life—now that Amasya is dead, it seems that they have taken on a malign intelligence of their own, and take cruel joy in leading travelers of any description astray.

The city’s dockyards form the final curtain between the vice district and the Ur-River itself. These wharfs were once thronged by merchants and pirates alike, as they returned from a season of plying their trades. The air stank of fish guts and tar, and it was said that if anything could be found in Amasya it would be found here. Today, though the docks are unstable and in many cases have collapsed altogether and the smells of industry have been replaced with a constant deathly stench, there are still many treasures hidden among the ruins. The erstwhile treasure seeker will proceed at their own peril, though—the half-flooded streets and sewers are full of beasts natural and unnatural, and it may be that the murky waters have a life of their own…

On the fringes of the city, this coliseum and menagerie stood as monument to the power of Gorkamorka, a sort of temple to the Twin-Headed God where his worshippers could bring him their trophies from across the Realms. Beasts of every possible description and talent roamed freely through the pits, and their keepers eagerly awaited the times when two or more would come to blows. Though the keepers may have abandoned the pits long ago, the walls are deep and sheer, and it’s easy to imagine something surviving still trapped inside.
When the Pantheon was united, the fringes of the pits served as part casino, part racetrack, part open-air bazaar. Hundreds if not thousands of people of every possible race and description gathered to bet on the fights to come and their results, to hold various and sundry sport of their own devising, and to buy and sell away from the constant danger of the Palace of Shadows and the watchful eyes of Azyrhol. Now, it is merely a threshold- whatever fences or walls kept spectators from falling into the beasts' lair have long since crumbled away, meaning that walking too close to the edge is a precarious course indeed.

The pits themselves are host to teeming wildlife of all kinds, as well as the apex predators that feed upon it. Descending into the depths is a profoundly dangerous move- it is difficult to quickly ascend back up the pit walls, and once on the ground the thick underbrush makes it hard to spot potential threats before they become urgently important. If there is a reason to walk this earth beyond bravado and the thrill of the hunt, it is in search of the ancient warding-amulets left behind by the architects of the pits, crude but effective guards against mighty beasts such as rule this sunken land.

During the Age of Myth, it was believed that the pits served as an effective containment for its inhabitants- rage as they might, the fearsome creatures could not escape to trouble the rest of the city. While there were monster-hunters and followers of the Twin-Headed God patrolling the fringes, this was maybe almost true- now that they have gone or been exterminated, though, this has been shown for the lie it always was. There are caverns beneath the pits, some flooded, some dry, by which particularly clever or stupid but lucky creatures may make their way into the Ur-River or the depths of other parts of the city. Even the beasts are wary of this place, though, for in its lightless depths dwell the albino rockwyrms, ever ready to leap out and consume the careless and the bold.

Teselli Alari

In the Age of Myth, this was an arboreal suburb of Amasya, primarily occupied by Sylvaneth and what are now Wanderers. Now, it has been almost completely overgrown, buildings and parks turned into trackless forests by the passage of years. Only the strongest mortal constructions remain, and even these are under siege by the sea of green. One day the forest will have its due.

Once, the community was centered around a leafy temple to its patron goddess, where the mortal races could come to honor and worship her. In the course of more than five centuries, though, the trees and vines beloved to Alarielle have undone much of what was
wrought in her name- the mighty amphitheatre has been turned into a woody hollow, the
altar split apart by the trunk of a massive oak, monuments and images washed away as the
forest performs truer worship than even the Wanderers ever could.

The pattern of the streets has long been subsumed, but some of the major
intersections can still be identified by the proud waystones and statues that stood at their
center. Each of these ancient monuments still crackles with power, which has driven off all
but the hardest roots and shoots and kept them intact throughout the years. Though the
plants hate them, they have not yet been able to overcome the inbuilt defenses, and thus the
stones still stand- but their power is finite, and left to their own devices they will crumble
along with everything else before the relentless tide of green.

The heart of the forest has always been the tree called Hyperion, a giant goldwood
pine stretching five hundred feet into the air. In Amasya’s heyday, the tree was revered by the
Sylvaneth as a direct manifestation of their goddess- this reverence has continued among the
spites that are now the sole inhabitants of Alarielle’s Solace. At night, they swarm like fireflies
around Hyperion, bathing it in their luminescence. Few, if any, have seen this and lived to tell
the tale, though- the spites have grown mad with abandonment, and would readily strip flesh
from bone or bark from stem of any who dared trespass in their sacred grove.

Just as its pair upriver, this combination highway, mustering ground and fortress
defends the downstream approach to Amasya. Beautiful only in its functionality, in better
days Yol Grimnir served to maintain Azyrheim’s control over the city, serving as a gateway by
which taxes could be levied and trade routes kept open. At the dawn of the Age of Chaos, it
rediscovered its role as a strong point, and served to defend Amasya until the last day. Now it
stands deserted, but ready to be reclaimed by whoever wins their dominance over the city.

Furthest upriver stands the Unforged Gate, gaining its name both because it was
wrought out of solid rock and because of Grimnir’s love of his orange-haired children. A
massive bulwark stretching almost one hundred feet wide and half again as high, clever
Duardin engineering meant that the gate could nonetheless be closed at a moment’s notice
by the defenders. Its gate is dented but stands proud, having defied more than one siege in its
day- but it was last closed by Mithridates Alti when he marched forth, to deny the Sigmarites
the chance to follow in his wake. It’s sometimes said that the angry ghosts of the denied still
haunt the works, ready to avenge themselves on the servants of Nagash.
Just downstream lies the Grand Mustering Grounds, from whence the legions of the city would march to war. Here it was that Mithridates Alti gathered Nagash’s warriors before the battle at the Allpoints, and here it was that he looked upon his ancestors’ city one final time before it was hidden from his sight. The mustering grounds are paved with massive stone slabs, and though grass has begun to grow in the cracks the stones themselves remain unmoved, as resilient as the Duardin that laid them. In happier times those who devoted themselves to Grimnir above all others chose to be interred on the edge of the grounds, from whence they could oversee all the musters to come- as a last gesture of defiance to the enemies he hated, though, Mithridates tore many of the old tombs and monuments down. It’s said that the spirits of those whose graves were so disturbed still stand watch, awaiting the final muster where they can avenge themselves upon their foes.

The furthest part that could be said to lie within the city, the Great Hub marks the boundary between Amasya and the Realms beyond. From here, roads stretched to every point on the map, bringing in pilgrims and trade in equally vast measures. In gentler times, a massive market stood here, traders seeking to sell their wares before paying their dues at the Unforged Gate. Center to this was a statue of Tyrion, casting his blessing upon the wayfarers before the perilous journey ahead of them- the traders are long gone, though, and the statue became a casualty of Mithridates’ final wrath as he left his city behind. All that remains is rubble, scattered across the flagstones.

Grung Esik

The great bulwark stretched out beneath the Delegation’s van, at this distance forming a shining slate ribbon stretching across the placid blue river. There was no sound save the gentle susurrus of the water, but for all this Han Shizhong was wracked with nerves- his commander’s eye saw a hundred different places along the dam’s length where enemies could wait in concealment, and properly manned the works could hold until the end of time with a suitably determined defender.
A single figure rose on shining wings in the distance, waving excitedly at the Lord-Celestant. Tornuri Goldensire beat her way over to land hastily before him, eyes shining through her helm.

“Empty, sir- the entire length, I flew it twice, not a single soul. We’re first!”

“It worked.” Monique’s face had the vicious look of a predator, enough to set Shizhong at unease thinking of all the lives they’d spent to make the march so quickly. “Open the gates and begin rebuilding the walls- we’ve no time to lose.”

—

“A proverb, Dame Goldensire.” They walked through the dam’s depths. “Haste will earn back double, but care always reaps tenfold.” At the sight of her downcast face Shizhong could not help but smile. “Fear not, though. This place might not have been entirely empty… but Troggoths are no great foe, and it was high time Santi and his men earned their way.”

“What do you think they found, Lord Han?” But the Lord-Celestant only shook his head.

“Santi knows that, the Marshal will find it out from him, and until then Oberon Brightblade will keep the information from spreading.” But he’d heard the rumors. That the sellsword had uncovered the control mechanisms for the ancient works, that could even now be ready to come back online. If that was true, the reservoir and the sheer power it held was the Delegation’s to command, and the city was far closer to their grasp than it had seemed mere hours before.

Nagaskahip

There is a path through the caverns and cliffs on the hubward side of the Ur-River, leading from a place outside the city’s defenses into its heart, deep in Amasya’s primeval tombs. It was through here that Mithridates Alti had come, never breaking stride until he stood at the tomb’s mouth and gazed out at the city of his birth.

“So close.” If he had tears to shed, he had no doubt they would have come then, with his birthright laid out before him once again.

“And yet so far. There is still a river to cross.” The Grimhailer dogged his steps even now, and Alti cursed his moment of sentimentality. Of weakness.
“Reikenor. Take your host and search the caverns. Leave the deadwalkers to fortify the entrances, muster whatever strength lies within, and convince any who imagine themselves beyond Nagash’s reach.”

“And what of your own goal, fallen priest?” The Grimhailer’s words stung, but only a trifle- the palace of the dead was close, so close, the Rahipmezal sitting just across the mirrored waters.

“Send me Felthik the Watcher.” The Guardian of Souls would do the job if any could. “I have a task for him.”

—

“Has this city made you a fool, or just careless?” For all that mortal emotion was centuries behind the Grimhailer, Mithridates reflected, he seemed gripped by a bitter rage.

“How was I to know the Arcanites and Hedonists would be here too?” He had thought himself to have left the servants of the Dark Gods behind in the hinterlands, and yet Felthik had still broken his teeth on their divine sorceries and blades. Not that any could have carried the day alone, against those odds.

“If you are going to name yourself our leader, everything is yours to know and prepare for. Now you’ve thrown away a tithe of our strength on a forlorn hope... for what, exactly?”

He was silent for a long moment, weighing secrecy against the Grimhailer’s rising impatience before sighing. “My father.”

“What?” He smiled, as his companion seemed genuinely taken aback.

“I entombed him, still alive, before the city fell. I swore I would return to him... and now I have.” Again, Mithridates turned to the perfect lifeless garden across the waters. “Rally our forces. We strike again, and this time I will take back what is rightfully mine.”

Rahipmezal

The one-sidedness of the carnage only barely began to assuage Irkut Thousandeye’s foul mood. The day’s disasters had been twofold, and nearly three- first, his ravens espied the Prince of Azyr’s host already dug in at Grung Esik, only to be spotted themselves and driven
off in a hail of shot and star-fated arrow. Second, when they entered the city proper it was to
find that brute Sarn's mob already occupying the Tower of Light, with the first clashes leaving
none in doubt as to who held its grounds.

If they had been in a little worse order, they might have been taken by surprise by the
spirit-host that then boiled from across the water, smashing against his serried ranks- but
they were not surprised, and so they had carried the day there in that strange lifeless garden,
destroying or scattering the unquiet dead.

Not for the first time, he almost wished that he hadn't burned the Oracle- maddening
and even insulting as its prophecies might have been, it was still better than this… this
blindness. He wondered how it was that someone like Sarn could live in it every day, and
marveled that he should be so stupid as to not know what he was missing.

He was saved from further rumination by a chittering noise by his side, and glanced
down to see a rat-man in what looked like hasty supplication. “What is it, vermin?”

“News from the scouts, oh master-sage! Grim-terrible tidings and strange report-squeakings,
yes-yes!” At the Varanguard's silent gesture, the Skaven bowed even deeper. “Yes-yes, many
twistings and turnings there were- and much kill-slayings and fear-tremblings, but good-good
Zuaqzelk is returning-victorious with news *urk*”

He held the giant rat's throat in one armored gauntlet. “You are a coward and a fool,
do you understand?” Irkut held on until he smelled the musk of fear rising off the creature.
“Now, what did you find?”

*kaff kaff* “Ancient-terrible danger-fear, most glorious master! Power that rent Zuaqzelk's
company-host to shreds. Power that could be yours to possess-control.” Irkut nodded
thoughtfully, setting the rat down gently at his feet. Power his for the grasping- even if only a
tenth of what was said can be believed (and that was generous) it still meant that a
gods-given prize was in sight.

“Changers and Despoilers! We have a new target!” A third objective to take, and the
possibility of great might when they succeeded.

The released rat watched Irkut carefully, until he had gone out of sight. He had not
mentioned the worst of it- power was there, true-true, but it was just as easy that he would
encounter the evil-bad monster-thing he had felt deep within the tomb… a tomb-horror that
was now soon to be released into the world.
Isik Kulesi

It had been a very good day, up until now. The Yensk River had lead the Horde of Rot and Ruin march almost unobstructed to the city proper- the only thing that could have made it better would be if they had come sooner. As it was, much of the field was filled with enemies… which Sarn and the Horde had encountered no sooner than entering.

First it had been a mere spite and the creature’s horde of followers, fighting tenaciously to hold Gorkoyuk from the Horde. That had been a worthy fight, though, and much blood and sap was spilled before he called his vanguard back. Then they had come across this place- the ancient ruins, already picked over, doubtless held enough trinkets and knowledge to be worth their while, if only to spite his fellow Varanguard.

Yet staring at the eldritch citadel, Qarang Sarn was now feeling a twinge of apprehension- not least at what was coming out of the citadel. He’d sent some of the proud retinues of Talaha the Butcher and Madrax Kane in to destroy the ruined tower- only for what looked less like warriors of the Gods and more like gibbering madmen (not that there was much difference, sometimes) to come stumbling out again.

“Eris.”

“Varanguard?” His disciple’s voice was suitably deferent, and the Varanguard smiled.

“Round up these… creatures.” He gestured dismissively. “Find out what has become of them. The ones that you judge still of use, put to a task. The rest go to the sword.”

“Yes, Varanguard.” Eris paused. “Are we to depart, then?”

Sarn fixed her with an amused glance. “I am the Basalt Lord, child. Not the Spineless. I do not bend so easily. I will not give Irkut his pleasure. No, we will learn what we can, and then…” He cast a bemused glance at the collapsed Aelf tower- “Then we will try again.”

Gorkoyuk
“WE’Z GOT DEM ON DA RUN, LADZ!!” Wapkagut bellowed, his stikks flinging mud as the warchanter pounded a rhythm in the soft ground. The fat, soft Gutbusters and their makeshift rafts had never stood a chance. He knew they’d come for this place— they were children of Gorkamorka too, after all, but Gorkoyuk wasn’t theirs, not really. Might makes right— that’s the way of it— and they don’t come any stronger than an Ironjaw.

—

Wapkagut was kunnin’, and no doubt about it. At first warning of da Big Eat’s approach, the warchanter had withdrawn his brawls and alfrostuns from the shore where they’d been watering, and gathered them within the half-collapsed, half-submerged beast pits the Ur-River had been eroding for the last five centuries. The gambit worked, and lulled into false confidence, Wapkagut’s horde struck the disembarking ghouls and gutbusters like a mailed fist to the face.

Still, they wouldn’t have won the battle without their strange allies. Even as the greenskins tossed their wayward cousins back into the river, the Idoneth Deepkin had risen from it, herding them back against the choppas of Waaagh! Wapkagut. A number of flying corpse-beasts had attempted to break out, but found themselves driven into the freezing bellows of Thundertusks by Akhelian Allopexes instead. In the end, it was numbers which saved them; there were simply too many in da Maw’s congregation to kill, and those still making their way up-river slipped the noose.

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The Ionrach Tidecaster scowled as the primitive greenskin chanted and shouted, his brute fellows hacking apart fellow offspring of Gorkamorka without a second thought. Life was cheap to their kind, and the Isharann wished she could drown them all for it.

“How do you know they will not despoil the Everqueen’s precious Solace?” The Tidecaster asked, and the gnarled water-level growth beside her twisted with newly-spring life in response. “It is known, for we shall never allow them to tread within it,” the Gnarlroot branchwraith answered.

“Your kind’s rage did little to impede the Plague God’s grandchildren, while your goddess hid away in forgotten places.” The Tidecaster felt the branchwraith bristle with anger at the insult, its blood-sap burning hot. “And you are not one to lecture another on cowardice and forgotten places, withered soul,” it snapped, “and our lady is no longer of a waning season,
but a red dawn, promising violence. In this, we are not unlike those spawned of the green beast with two heads.”

“Yet still, trusting their loyalty is a desperate measure, is it not?” The Tidecaster finally turned to her counterpart. “This is a task we should have undertaken ourselves, no matter the Starmaster’s counsel.” At this, the branchwraith gave a sharp, rattling noise, which the Tidecaster soon realized was laughter. “Misbegotten child of Teclis, you carry your conciever’s hubris. If the constellation of Zectoka cannot complete this task alone, then all of us are already in mortal peril, no matter the greenskin.”

As if in answer, the stars above—unusually bright for this time of evening—twisted and writhed, as if a great serpent were uncoiling to strike…

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**turn 1 results**

The Sigmarsmacht Delegation **defended** Grung Esik  
*(uncontested)*

The Varanpact **defended** Rahipmezar  
*(contested by the Reclamation)*

The Reclamation **defended** Nagaskahip  
*(strongly contested by the Skoga Grakk)*

The Sigmarsmacht Delegation **captured** Azyrhol  
*(uncontested)*

The Horde of Rot and Rage **lost** Isik Kulesi  
*(contested by the Horde, the Varanpact, and the Delegation)*

Da Big Eat **defended** Karanlik Saray  
*(strongly contested by the Varanpact)*

The Skoga Grakk **defended** Gorkoyuk  
*(contested by the Big Eat)*
The Horde of Rot and Rage **captured** Teselli Alari  
*(strongly contested by the Delegation)*  
*Yol Grimnir was not contested*

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**Rahipmezar**

“**Victory.**” The marble trees of the necropolis had been shattered by malefic magic, and its grounds were scattered with the corpses of marauders and deadwalkers alike- but the Varanpact yet held the broken walls and the ruined grounds, triumphant yet again over Mithridates Alti’s tottering alliance.

K’jaana Feathertouch exulted in the delicious irony of it. The old man who had ruled over this corpse-city last had been the Gods’ sworn enemy… and now he stood in defense of it, against the very same man’s desperate son. He shook his head in rueful amusement, and then turned his steed towards the central tomb. It still stood proud over the devastation that had once pretended to be a garden, and still held secrets inside- and K’jaana would find them. Victory was sweet, yes, but the fruits of what lay inside would be sweeter still.

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“**Never-never.**” The fear-musk hung heavy around the Stormvermin, but they stood their ground nonetheless. Behind K’jaana a crush of his fellow cultists loomed over the rat-men, their desire for what lay inside almost palpable. “**Never-never**, the beast repeated.

“You’re genuinely afraid, aren’t you?” Afraid enough of what lay beyond the steel doors that the white-furred monstrosities were more willing to face down a swarm of the Prince of Pleasure’s children than risk whatever was behind the door.

“Yes-yes. Much-many dangers in the darkness, whisper-lies in the night, monster-things hiding in the shadows.” The Stormvermin was almost comically fearful even for one of its
kind, eyes flicking from the inner portal to the Hellreaver and back again. “Must keep safe-secure.”

“Safety.” K’jaana snickered, and the rest of the cultists murmured with him. “Security. These are the final refuges of the weak, but I am strong- strong enough that the future holds no fear for me… only rapture.” He stepped forward so that his lean frame towered over the lead rat-man. “Make your peace with uncertainty now, creature, because in the end I will know what lies beyond that gate.”

Nagaskahip

It had been a day of slim victories, and frustrating defeats. The ancient graveyards below the mount itself were littered with the unhallowed dead, the corpses of the Skoga Grakk practically carpeting the ground in places. For all that, though, they had come very near ascending the mount itself, and only at the eleventh hour had the intervention of his Blood Knights turned the tide… though they never had been his, had they?

“You are melancholy.” Mithridates cursed inwardly at the sound of the Grimhailer’s voice.

“Just… reflecting, on the task ahead. How close we are to victory.”

“And yet how far away.” The worst part of it was, Reikanor was right. All he had done so far was tear up some of the scenery- the tomb itself, and what lay inside, was yet beyond his grasp… and he could feel power slipping through his fingers by the moment. The coalition he had so carefully built was falling to pieces, and the destiny he had appointed for himself with it.

“We must capture the Rahipmezar if we are to have any hope of victory. This is of paramount importance- indeed, it might be the only thing that’s of any importance now.”

“Why? Because that will serve Nagash? Or is it just because it will serve the line of Mithridates?”
Rage flashing in his eyes, the priest spun. “Hold your tongue, unquiet spirit! My father is one of the Undying King’s greatest servants. If anything will reverse the course of this war, it’s his release.” The two paused for a moment, Mithridates’ all too human one matched by Reikanor’s empty eyes and face. Then the priest shook his head. “Rally my host. I will lead them against the necropolis and retake it myself, as I need.”

Reikanor inclined his head respectfully. “As you command.” Still, he stared out at the Rahipmezar after his charge vanished, and wondered. Truly, what was it that the priest desired… and what was it that lay inside? And what would be the consequences when he found out?

Isik Kulesi

“This place was in a sorry state when we found it, and it’s only gotten worse.” Eris Bloodwrath shook her head, looking at the distant ruins between the three armies. At least this way, having lost the vicinity of the tower, they wouldn’t have to deal with the bodies of the insane occasionally wandering out… or the predations of the shadow-beasts living in the river.

“Pfft. Small comfort, though.” Instead of beasts and madmen who may try to kill you, they were facing not one but two armies, both of which wanted nothing more than to see them- to see her- dead. It was a sobering thought, to be sure, though hardly an unfamiliar one. At least she knew how to deal with human foes rather than monsters and test subjects.

“Fascinating.” The structure of the beast’s innards was entirely abnormal, and shouldn’t even be possible- as though there was some malign force in the area specifically warping the environment. The marauders they’d captured from Sarn’s horde hadn’t been much use, sadly- three of them were stark raving mad and had to be put down, and the rest were genuinely clueless.

Still- whatever lay inside must be exciting, not to mention potent, for so many people to come after it. Powerful enough to twist these beasts in such a way, even through rock and earth- when Irkut had confirmed his hold over the shattered tower, and uncovered its secrets, his might would be vast indeed.
“Did you see anything?” But Tornuri Goldensire shook her head.

“They are watching the skies, and it was all I could do to avoid becoming pigeon-pie. Besides… if there is anything, it’s hidden pretty well… probably underground.”

“I see.” Shizhong considered thoughtfully for a moment. “Very well. I will write a dispatch to the Seneschal-General. You’ve done well.”

But as he turned to walk away, the Knight-Azyros fluttered nearer. “Sir…”

“Yes?”

“What do you think is inside?”

“Hmm.” He smiled. “Probably a bunch of old books, some trinkets, and mountains of dust. Anything else is for me to know and you to find out about.”

“Yes sir.” She looked downcast enough that he sighed and shook his head.

“The desire to know more is a good thing. But remember also that knowledge is a sword with two blades- it must be wielded carefully, and should not be lightly taken up. Yes, I have some pretty good clues as to what must be within- but none of my conclusions are relevant yet. In the meantime, I think we have a battle to fight.”

“Yes sir.” She still sounded curious, but it was hidden behind the iron mask of duty. And as he watched her take to the skies Han shook his head again.

“You’ll find out eventually. But you may be sorry you ever asked.”

Karanlik Saray
For over five hundred years, the temple to Malerion had stood cold and empty, in mute defiance of the sun and the rain and the light of its brother across the river- but now, finally, it had recovered its true purpose as a slaughterhouse.

Albeit, its builders probably wouldn’t have expected it to be at this particular set of hands. If any Aelfs walked its halls, it was as sacrifices, not as lords- the masters of the Palace of Shadow were now Ogors, ghouls and Grots, and everyone was on the chopping block.

Lady Sibyl now stalked through the chambers, sampling a bit of each of the sacrifices offered up in every chamber. True, none of them were prepared in a way a lady of noble standing would recognize, but that just added to the appeal of it- like making love in the grass, sampling the ichor and entrails laying about on the floor was deliciously rustic and delightfully crude. Truly, they were partaking in deadly decadence in a way the previous occupants would have grudgingly appreciated.

And, she thought, all in defiance of the war raging just outside their walls. The hordes of the Varanpact had been repelled again and again by the brave warriors of the Big Eat, mad cultists broken on ranks of serried steel led by the Maw herself. Under the prophet’s guidance, they had grown as strong as she promised- strong enough, Sibyl thought, that from here the city, and perhaps the Realm beyond, was theirs for the eating…

Teselli Alari

“When I was a child, I used to love playing among the fountains.” The one who had once been High Priestess of Melas leaned over creakily, open sores weeping pus onto the verdant ground. “All the crystal clear waters bubbling up, flowing through marble and silver to sparkle in the sunshine. I have learned a great many things since then, but I still look back at those days with fondness.”

She cast a sidelong glance at the crowd of prisoners huddled before her, each held in place by a Plaguebearer. “There was one fountain among the ninety-nine that I did not like, though, and that was the last among them. You see, the water would flow from each source to another, and be cast into the air and then recovered into the mechanisms to be purified and flow onwards- until the ninety-ninth would cast it into the air to land on the dirty ground
below and flow back into the Ur-River. That seemed a great shame to me, to lose such beauty.”

The former priestess smiled, revealing toothless and rotten gums. “But then the High Priest at the time explained to me- the other fountains were sterile and cold, but this one brought life and growth and nourishment. That revelation opened my eyes, and I saw the complex in an utterly different light- performance and beauty are well and good, but it was the end step, the passing-on, that was most important.”

Step by ponderous step, she advanced on the huddled captives until she stood before their leader, a noble Prince of the Wanderers. He tried to jerk away from her reaching hand, but the daemon tightened its grip and she rested her fingers on his cheek, thoughtfully.

“You have to understand, that’s what is happening here. You think we’re polluting your precious forest, but in fact all we have done is to generate life and grant Papa Nurgle’s blessing.” Even now, new fungus had begun to bloom and twist the foliage around them into more beautiful shapes. “You try to resist, and that is good. Our grandfather loves those who are strong. But it’s time to stop fighting- you thought you could keep us out of the forest, could hide behind your wards, but no one can ever resist the end.”

Her thumb idly stroked the Aelf’s cheek, noting the incipient pox-marks. “Just let go, and let the change overcome you. You’ll be glad you did.”

Azyrhol

The cathedral was much reduced from the years of Amasya’s glory, its domed roof collapsed, its statues and ornaments worn away by centuries of rain and wind. For all this, though, Sigmar’s throne still stood in its center, towering over everything else in the building- towering over everything in the city beyond, throwing all of Amasya into its shadow.

Cai Leonas smiled in wonder. “We’ve returned.”

Yol Grimnir
The lonely winds blew over the Unforged Gate and the Grand Mustering Grounds, chasing clouds of dust like eager hounds. In contrast to the battles raging through the city beyond, Grimnir’s Road was quiet and empty, with only the ghosts of the dead to stand their silent witness, watch, and wait.

**turn 2 results**

The Sigmarsmacht Delegation **defended** Grung Esik
*(contested by the Horde)*

The Reclamation **captured** Rahipmezar
*(strongly contested by the Varanpact and the Delegation)*

The Skoga Grakk **captured** Nagaskahip
*(strongly contested by the Skoga Grakk)*

The Horde of Rot and Rage **captured** Azyrhol
*(strongly contested by the Delegation)*

The Varanpact **captured** Isik Kulesi
*(contested by the Horde, Delegation, and Skoga Grakk)*

Da Big Eat **defended** Karanlik Saray
*(contested by the Varanpact and the Delegation)*

Da Big Eat **captured** Gorkoyuk
*(strongly contested by the Skoga Grakk)*

The Horde of Rot and Rage **defended** Teselli Alari
*(contested by the Delegation and the Skoga Grakk)*

Yol Grimnir was not contested
The Anvil of Apotheosis

Clang. Clang. The Smiths’ hammers fell again and again, remaking the souls of fallen heroes in the God-King’s image. Andorian Sparkhand would have found the noise deafening as a mortal, but to the Sacrosanct it was like a heartbeat, ever-present and ever-comforting, an audible reminder of Sigmar’s constant preparations for war in the Realms beyond.

One such war had brought Andorian to the Sigmarabulum today, and it was a strange one- for the God-King had sworn to take no part in it. The battle for Amasya was being fought outside of his master’s influence, but that did not mean that Sigmar and the Conclave weren’t hungry for every scrap of information concerning its course- and where better to get it than from the souls of those who had fought and fallen?

“I was Duncan Charles, Sergeant of the Ash-and-Blood. We fought the ghouls at Azyrhol- the Green Man and the Protector were with us, and we made the enemy pay for every step, but there were too many. They sent a beast behind our lines. We were slaughtered, but we never broke. Sigmar would be proud of us…”

Clang. Clang.

“I was Brother Alexius, Anvil of the Heldenhammer, Liberator. We made to stand against Talaha the Butcher, but we were crushed, and the avenue to the cathedral opened. I must return to my comrades in the field…”

“Not today, friend.” Andorian shook his head, and the reforged soul passed on its way.

Clang. Clang.

“I was Sister Carola, Liberator, in the service of Lord-Celestant Vale Lotherine. We held Grung Esik against Talaha the Butcher, and though I died he broke on our shield wall. The dam will not fall while we defend it.”
Andorian smiled at the bit of good news, but then the hammers fell again.

Clang. Clang.

“I was Seymour Nicolus, soldier of Hammerhal. We fought in the cathedral against King Gurloes, and we could have won too- but Usidore was deep in is cups, and began throwing spells around every which way. It was too much… we ran, and the wizard got himself eaten by a plague bat for his troubles.”

Andorian winced.

Clang. Clang.

“I was Robert Edward, Knight of Lileath and protector of the Realms. I watched as the Enemy entered the Cathedral… we charged, and we cut them down in number, but in the end there were too many.”

If Andorian Sparkhand had blood instead of lightning, he would have said it ran cold- and then the soul spoke again.

“All was lost then. Azyrhol has fallen…”

Rahipmezar

“Victory.” It tasted both sweet and bitter on his lips. The necropolis was theirs- Felthik the Watcher had proven himself victorious by conquering where others failed, sweeping the Hedonites before him. Too, at the final hour two full ‘courts’ of deluded ghouls had shown up to clinch his victory… it rankled with Mithridates Alti to truckle and parley with one such as the Pale Saint, but he had done worse in his days and would do so again.

And the necropolis was theirs. For the first time in five centuries, he could walk its sacred halls and look upon the graves of all the High Priests before him. It was a homecoming, of a sort… even if Nagaskahip had fallen to the greenskin, he comforted himself with the thought that this was the center of his power, and once he’d done his duties inside he could rend apart all the enemies who sought to stand against them.

“You thought that I was weak, and you were strong.”
A voice echoed faintly through the halls, and Mithridates hurried on, fearing and hoping what it might be. There was an iron door deep within the complex, and he paused at its threshold- it was choked by the corpses of the dead, Stormvermin and Hedonite in equal number, but his forces had not reached this far- indeed, it looked like they had fought the battle amongst themselves.

“You thought that I could be plucked from my eternal rest, and put to your service.”

He stepped carefully onward- there in the hallways lay more of the Slaaneshi marauders, mutilated beyond recognition by an unknown hand- but as he peered closer, it seemed as though the hand was their own. Yes- some had plucked out their own eyes, others seemed to carve off their fingers and hands. Many had died, all, it seemed, of their own devices, but many were still alive- yet even if they could have fought they made no notice of his presence.

“You believed I would live again, bound in service to the Undying King as you are.”

Further down the hall the carnage grew greater- some among the Hedonites looked to have tried to flay themselves alive, and many seemed to have gotten far in the process before succumbing. But still, there was no sign of battle, or even struggle- it was as though the marauders had suddenly fallen into this, as though gripped by a moment’s mad whim.

“You thought I could be swayed by the promise of power, or wealth, or love, to fight alongside you.”

Mithridates paused at the final threshold. It had been five centuries, half a millennia since he had left this place, swearing then to return in a few short days or weeks- he who had before faced down all the horrors of the Realms paused to rally himself.

“You thought that I was the same as I had always been.”

He knew that voice. The last High Priest of Amasya thrust the door open, and strode inside- and then stopped short, dumbfounded. He had thought to find a body in a casket, or at most a feeble revenant starved by the centuries- but what stood before him was a man, still glowering down at a marauder chieftain splayed against the frescoed wall of the chamber. Alti was well aware that he was old- he had been in his middle age when he had left Amasya behind, and the centuries since had not reversed time’s ravages. And yet the man he found
looked in the bloom of youth, as full of life as he might have been when Mithridates was but an infant.

“Father?” At the sound of his voice, the man glanced up, looking upon his son with eyes that flashed full of malice.

“You thought all these things… but you are a fool.”

Isik Kulesi

The final battle had been short, brutal, and utterly victorious. Irkut smiled at the memory- one of Sarn’s followers, Madrax Kane, had thought himself able to challenge the Varanpact for control of the tower ruins, but the Cachinnating Claw had shown him the error of his ways. At the height of the battle, the Keeper of Secrets that led the Claw had torn a Bloodthirster into a dozen equally-sized pieces, putting the followers of Khorne to flight and decisively securing Isik Kulesi against all comers.

Free of distraction, then, Irkut could proceed against the real obstacle here- the ancient defenses built into the tower’s depths, a foe real and as cunning as any faced on the battlefield. That was what he was doing now, matching wits with a god and trying to break a lock never meant to be opened. It was refreshing, and utterly invigorating.

From a distance, to the dull-witted or the entirely mundane, the wall before Irkut seemed a blank and featureless slab of marble- but those with even a modicum of arcane talent, or a speck of common sense, would realize that it housed a web of magical energy meant to be fatal to any who sought the secrets held behind. They who had a bit more refinement- like him- could almost see the pattern, the warp and weft of power flowing through the stones.

The wall itself seemed to twist and shimmer ever so slightly as a team of sorcerers worked on it, gently persuading the eldritch strands into a newer, more accommodating shape. As he watched, the magic flexed, bent, growled, and then spread apart- and as a hole opened in the web, so too did a dark emptiness appear where there had seemingly been smooth stone.

Irkut nodded. “Send another one.”
A slave, once a soldier of the Delegation, was brought forward before the halberds of Irkut’s minions. Twenty feet before the wall, the guards took a step back- aware of the sudden absence of the steel points, he glanced behind her, then forward towards the door taking shape in front of him. He glanced back again- and then was running, sprinting towards the thin hope of salvation.

Two feet before he reached the door, the web of magic flexed and folded. It seemed to Irkut that a massive arcane hand reached out and seized him, and he vanished with a ‘pop’ into thin air. The room froze for a moment- and then sighed.

“We’re making progress.” However slow it might come, he thought. “We continue.”

There was power on the other side of the barrier, power at the fringes of his wildest dreams. Once, the gods of the Aelves had used the secrets of this place to bind something of awesome power- and when he had broken down the barrier and whatever other defenses lay beyond, he would be master of those same secrets. And with them in hand, he could imprison the so-called gods of the Realms, those creatures who thought themselves the equals of the true Gods.

And then, the Three-Eyed King could remake the Realms as he willed.

Teselli Alari


“Da flames?” The snotling standing next to it was looking down, openmouthed, at the carnage wreaked before them.

Allarielle’s Solace was dying, and something ugly was being born out of its corpse. Nurgle’s rot had spread deep within the trees, and where just a few brief days before stately pines and majestic yews and goldenwoods and all other manner of trees had bloomed and towered, now there were only rotting stumps and a few gnarled, ravaged survivors. Where once spites had swarmed, now clouds of bloatflies covered every surface. Even grand Hyperion was under threat, the amethyst wargrove assailed by the forces of decay unleashed by Baldaflax and his ilk.

“Da flames.” One green finger stretched out, pointing at two figures creeping through the corrupted undergrowth- a woman in an officer’s uniform, and a man with the bearing of a hunter. “Da flames!”


“Burn it down! Burn it down! Da flames! Da flames!” And the greenskin’s hooting and hollering marked the end of the day.

Nagaskahip

The deathrattle legionnaire exploded as Wapkagut clubbed it with a stikk bigger around than the dead soldier’s torso. Nearby, Akhelian King Tralnor’s tide-magic swept away a screeching pack of grimghast reapers even as his Ishlaen Guard held their own against an overwhelming Nighthaunt counter-attack.

“DAT ALL YOU GITZ GOT?!?” The warchanter shouted, genuinely enraged. The echo was the worst it had ever been here, a pounding, aching sense of emptiness that washed over him in waves. Gorkamorka’s heartbeat was faint here, and he felt the power of his own warchant waning. It was a most uncomfortable sensation- and greenskins don’t like being out of their comfort zone.

“WAAAGH!” Wapkagut attempted, but it came out weak, the timeless warcry faltering in his throat. Fortunately, his brawls and alfrostuns didn’t need Waaagh! Energy to carry them forward; the absence of it had caused a dark mood to settle over the mobs. Even now, two Sovanghen Thundertusks were bellowing at the grim mortuary columns, their breath causing the ancient stone to freeze and crack, collapsing under their own weight within moments.

Wapkagut snarled through clenched teeth as Wight King with a two-headed axe big enough to make a warboss proud squared up against him. He’d promised to knock it all down, and by Gork and Mork, he hadn’t come this far not to.

The branchwraith and the tidecaster walked side by side, deep in the labyrinthe of Nagash’s Graveyard. There were no dead left in these tombs; the petulant child-king Mithridates Alti
had seen to that, and thrown them all against Wapkagut at the labyrinthe’s gates. This did not mean there was no danger, however.

“You feel it, Isharann, do you not?” The branchwraith intoned, “the endless emptiness, gnawing at the hole where your kind used to have a soul.”

“I would have you still what passes for a tongue,” the tidecaster spit, “For you cannot know of what you speak.” The branchwraith laughed once more, the harsh bark of the sound grating on the tidecaster’s nerves. “This cancer grows in bones older than even my wargrove, little aelf. It is time; we must see to our task, that the Slann can see to theirs.”

The tidecaster nodded, once, and stood in still concentration, summoning an ocean which would sweep through this place. Around her, she could hear the roots of the ancient trees far above reached deeper than ever before, splitting apart the mortal-made masonry of the tomb.

That it would mean both their deaths, did not matter, and in the mid-day sky beyond, the stars of Azyr grew suddenly close and bright.

Gorkoyuk

Da Maw dat Walkz trod the sacred ground of Gorkamorka’s pits. All around her was the bustle of devout worship, the air thick with the heady incense of the recently deceased, their dismembered and disembowled corpses cooking in the hot Hyshan daylight.

She had made a holy decree: her pilgrims had eaten well on their long journey, and now, it was time for da Maw dat will consume da Wurld to feast. To this end, they would drag every corpse to Gorkoyuk; the long dead, the unburied slain, and the living yet to die. The souls of those whose bodies were lost, the bodies of those whose souls were pledged to the Four. All these and more, da Big Eat would toss into the pits, and in turn her messiah would drink deep and eat hearty.

Nearby, Sibyl screeched commands, her shrill voice directing the mobs of ghouls, bonesplitterz, troggoths and others whom returned with tribute. One such faithful, the Spiderfang scuttleboss Spiderbite the Unoriginal had returned empty-handed, with only scorchmarks about his spider's head to show for the Lord-Celestant he’d slain. Another hadn’t returned at all, the ghoul king whom fashioned himself a pale saint having been lured
to Mithridates Alti’s cause by whatever silver-tongued promises Mannfred’s whipped dog had made him.

The betrayal amused da Maw, for the ghoul king had simply traded one prophet for another. She had met the empty man in the hollow mountain, when first she’d washed ashore in the Rahipmezar’s wharf long ago. She knew he served the same purpose as her, in his own misguided way.

The beast pen before her yawned wide, the spikes that once kept creatures from escaping the pit looking like so many bloody, jagged teeth. Yes, she smiled, her worship was pure.

turn 3 results

The Sigmarsmacht Delegation **defended** Grung Esik
*(contested by the Horde, Big Eat, and Varanpact)*

The Reclamation **defended** Rahipmezar
*(strongly contested by the Varanpact and the Delegation)*

The Skoga Grakk **defended** Nagaskahip
*(contested by the Reclamation, Big Eat, Varanpact, Delegation)*

The Sigmarsmacht Delegation **captured** Azyrhel
*(contested by the Horde)*

The Varanpact **defended** Isik Kulesi
*(contested by the Horde, Delegation, and Skoga Grakk)*

The Varanpact **captured** Karanlik Saray
*(contested by the Big Eat, Reclamation, and the Delegation)*

Da Big Eat **defended** Gorkoyuk
*(contested by the Skoga Grakk and Varanpact)*
The Horde of Rot and Rage defended Teselli Alari
(contested by the Skoga Grakk, Delegation, and Varanpact)

The Sigmarsmacht Delegation captured Yol Grimnir
(contested by the Horde, Big Eat, and Varanpact)

Grung Esik

The enemy had savaged both sides of the mighty works over the past days. Northward, the followers of the Dark Gods had mounted a furious assault on that griffon-fortress. To the south, the Big Eat was in the midst of a smaller, but still dedicated offensive against their end of the dam. For all this, though, Lord-Celestant Han Shizhong seemed perfectly calm.

“He who abides absolutely in Sigmar need not fear a legion of the faithless.” Tornuri Goldensire couldn’t tell if the Lord-Celestant was smiling or frowning behind his mask. For her part, she wasn’t sure if she could be said to absolutely abide- Sigmar was mighty, but Qarang Sarn’s horde was numerous, and had tried twice now to scale the walls with their bare hands and stubborn fury.

“So long as the walls and the men on them agree with you, sir,” she concluded diplomatically, “I’m sure you’re right.”

“They do. We have sufficient supplies inside the works to last for months, and the enemy has already begun to suffer for their lack of preparation. Besides.” Now she was sure he was smiling. “They didn’t bring any artillery. All they can do is what they’ve been doing- attempt to gain the walls, and suffer for it. In a day, or a week, or a month, the children of Chaos will be forced to withdraw, and Grung Esik will remain secure. But we need not wait so long.”

Turning his back on the besiegers, Shizhong raised a fist in the air, signaling to someone further down the causeway- from deep within the works, there was the sound of mighty engines in motion, and then the constant rushing of waters rose in volume.
“The dam’s mechanisms have been re-enabled. We can control the balance of water on both sides of the dam, both where it flows and in what volume. And look.” Slowly but constantly, the moat around the griffon-fortress was beginning to flood, creeping closer to the siege works of the attacking army. The Bloodbound and the Rotbringers realized this too- as the foaming Ur-River consumed their palisades and earthworks, they were forced to retreat or drown. The elevated stone causeway running to the mouth of the fortress was soon choked, a milling mob unsure of whether to stay or run away. Some were not lucky enough to have either choice- they were forced off, and swept away by the increasingly turbulent current.

“Our faith is sufficient.” Tornuri saw then- packed onto the causeway, the Horde was a perfect target for Delegation artillery. “And our gunpowder is equally so. Open fire.”

Azyrhol

In the Age of Myth, it was said that Azyrhol shone like the heavens above, eternal light sparkling off of its cupola and ornamentation, the mirror-polished surface of the plaza glittering and shining like lake water or freshly fallen snow. Today, the glory of the cathedral was much reduced- the dome long collapsed, most of the ornaments cracked or toppled, and the plaza tarnished, covered in mud and littered with bodies and the detritus of battle. For all this, though, Monique von Helminger thought it was still magnificent, a tribute to Sigmar in its own right.

“Bring me up to speed, Phineas.” Her aide looked slightly queasy at the sight of so much carnage, even as the Seneschal-General strode confidently across the square. “Tell me what’s going on here.”

“Um, yes ma’am.” He cleared his throat and checked the sheaf of notes, nearly stumbling over the corpse of a Khornate warrior still sprawled across the flagstones. “Well, there was heavy fighting over the cathedral, and both sides took major losses- but in the end, the Delegation was triumphant. Clean-up is still in progress…”

“Really, Phineas?” Monique snapped. “What happened that I can’t see?”

“Ah. Lord-Celestant Oberon Brightblade coordinated the initial attack on the cathedral, and then oversaw its defense against the Horde’s counterattack.”

“Good. Schedule a meeting with him- I wish to give him Hammerhal’s gratitude.”
“We received word the Moondaughter’s Warrior Chamber was marching to provide reinforcement, but never arrived. Presumably they were bogged down further downstream.”

“Understandable. What else?”

“Jak Vorpal and the Free People of Hogsface were here, but after the tide turned they advanced on Yol Grimnir to establish contact with the Moondaughters.”

“Good initiative. Send a messenger with my commendations.”

Phineas swallowed and flipped through his pad of paper. “That’s all that’s important, ma’am.”

“Right. Everyone!” Their conversation had carried them onto the steps of the Cathedral itself, and the Seneschal-General pitched her voice to draw the attention of the multitude of soldiers swarming about. “You have won a great victory for Hammerhal today— a great victory for Azyr! Three cheers for the Delegation! Huzzah!”

“Huzzah! Huzzah!”

“This army was never meant to face down as much opposition as it faced during these past weeks, but your bravery, ingenuity and sacrifice has managed to secure two of our major objectives. You have done all and more than was asked of you, and you have done it without flinching. Hammerhal is proud of you. Sigmar is proud of you. And I am proud to have been able to command you.”

Yol Grimnir

A wave of nostalgia and pride struck Gram Orkhide as he surveyed Grimnir’s Road. The aftermath of the hundred tiny battles which had swirled around the Unforged Gate lay scattered on the ground like rubies on dust, but the defenses themselves still stood strong, defiant of whatever its enemies could toss at it.

The Duardin felt justifiably proud of how his work had held up in the face of the enemy, even all these centuries after it had been constructed. Today had assuaged a long-held fear of his— that what he had done would not truly last, that the things he had in
part wrought would fall to pieces with age instead of truly enduring as great art did. But the gates and the works had held, on both sides of the city, and as a result the Sigmarsmacht Delegation was triumphant.

The Delegation’s victory here had only been by a hair, true. Had their enemies united to present a single front, even with these mighty fortifications at their back the soldiers of Hammerhal could not have prevailed- but the Varanpact, the Horde, and the “Big Eat” hated each other just as much as they hated Sigmar’s people.

True, it had not come easily. As many soldiers of the Delegation lay lifeless on the flagstones as did they of the foe, waiting for their comrades or the crows. Hero and infantryman alike had fallen to the enemy- Gram had watched as Jak Vorpal had been grievously injured by an Exalted Deathbringer, only for a peasant soldier of Hogsface to vanquish the Exalted Deathbringer. Elsewhere, he’d seen an entire column of Stormcast ambushed and shattered by the Arch-Gut, a gluttonous fiend loyal to the Maw that Walks.

Ultimately, though, he had to repeat that these defeats were ultimately insignificant on the grand scale of things. Brightly as they had burned, brightly as the battle had raged, ultimately they were the matters of moments or days- and Yol Grimnir had stood for centuries, and now would stand for centuries more. With both ends of the city secured, and its center firmly held, the Delegation had proven itself dominant- though threats still remained inside, these could be burned, sponged or starved into submission. The soldiers of Hammerhal held the balance, and thus in the end they would hold the totality.

What mattered in the end were not the deeds of a day, but the legacy left behind. And with that comforting thought in mind, Gram faded away to nothingness, another ghost finding its peace.

Isik Kulesi & Karanlik Saray

It had been… a good day.

Two enemy armies in all their glory had been unable to break the Varanpact’s frenetic defense. The Hedonites of the pretender U’latlii and the Cachinnating Claw had proven themselves the masters of every battlefield they had stood upon, shattering first the Orruks styling themselves ‘Da Big Uns’ and then the Choir of Kadroth Neverforged as an encore. Such unbridled zeal as they possessed would make a Devoted of Sigmar green as a Megaboss with
envy, and it had given Irkut Thousandeyes time to claim the prize at the Tower of Light's heart: an Enlightenment Engine of Teclis, untouched by Sigmar's meddling.

Isik Kulesi held the prize, but in the end it was Karanlik Saray that had been the key to unlocking it. The light-magics that had fueled the Enlightenment Engine's defenses had stymied his sorcerers again and again, but when exposed to the undiluted shadow they'd brought from the rubble that had been Malerion's ancient palace, the ancient wards had simply... ceased to be. Sarn would have found a poetic irony to this, that the power of one god overcame the power of another to bring about an end neither would have wanted, but Irkut Thousandeyes was simply pleased with the result.

The task had not been easy. As well-defended as the Tower of Light had been, the Palace of Shadow was even more foreboding, in its way. True, the thoughtless monsters of the so-called Big Eat had cracked it open easily enough, but they had not cared to venture into the fortresses' innermost chambers. There, the long-dead fleetmasters of Malerion had hidden their greatest prizes and most secret artifacts. It had taken a legion of Godseeker Hedonites to pry them out; many had fallen to the unseen dangers embedded in the chambers, and those that remained were left frothing, driven mad by the scent of their own absent patron. But the result had been worth the losses.

It was beautiful, the ancient device now resting before him, looking just as it had on the day it was crafted by Teclis' own hand. The Enlightenment Engines had been intended by their maker to fuel humanity's ascension to a higher level of understanding, and in a way this one would fulfill its purpose- with the knowledge contained inside, Irkut would understand how the Aelves had once bound a god away from the Realms. In time, perhaps, he could accomplish the same against the pitiful usurpers to the Dark Gods' glory- but first he had to ensure that there would be time at all.

“ Summon the Tzaangors.” A Kairic acolyte shuffled away to carry out his command, and Irkut smiled. Moving Teclis’ engine would be difficult, but with the Sigmarites in control of both ends of the city and its center, doing so was necessary to continue his work. It was almost a shame about the Beastmen, though- few could withstand the presence of such a device and its truths for more than a brief span, and moving it would be an exacting task. Given the choice, he would have much sooner set the Horrors themselves to the task- if Daemons could even exist in proximity to these engines of primordial truth to begin with.

Irkut allowed himself a sense of satisfaction, looking on the wondrous machine before him, the key to so many future victories. Ultimately, the sacrifice of a few pawns meant little next to a chance to alter the tempo of the conflict so dramatically. Besides... the Tzaangors
and their leaders were absolutely gluttonous for knowledge of the arcane. Really, all he was giving anyone was what they really wanted.

Teselli Alari

“Azyrfire!” The daemon sword flew from Qarang Sarn’s hand to embed itself in a massive Nurglish fungal bloom. “Misbegotten sons of a false god! Blind wretches, faithless scum, children of dust…”

“Are you done?” Eris Bloodwrath cocked an amused eye in the Basalt Lord’s direction. The growth the daemonblade had landed in was slowly smoldering, unable to absorb the weapon’s intense heat. After a moment more, it burst into flames, and Sarn retrieved the sword with a sigh.

“Not hardly. I will make those deluded saplings pay for the champions they killed and maimed. The Hamadreth will rue the day she crossed the mind of a Knight of Ruin!”

“I expect they’ve already come to. I mean…” Eris gestured at her surroundings. Even the greatest of the trees had been utterly consumed, and in their place diseased constructions of mold and mildew like the one the Basalt Lord had just injured had taken root. “You’ve successfully destroyed a place sacred to their patron goddess, slaughtered successive armies, and put one of their greatest champions to shame. I would call that vengeance enough for Ranaker Wrath-Bringer and Harrgorath Korr.”

Now it was Sarn’s turn to give a funny look. “Quite the pacifistic words, for a Khornate.”

Eris shrugged, the motion exaggerated by her heavy armor. “Call me rational. We maim, we kill, we burn, and we do not easily dismiss each day we are given to do so. Mighty Khrone cares not from whence the blood flows… but I certainly do.”

“Hmmmph.” Sarn was silent for a long minute, considering. “The tree-folk do not shed true blood. More’s the pity.” Eris had to laugh at this, and after a moment Sarn laughed too.

“Would you be this upset if I had fallen instead of your pet Priestess of Melas?” Eris’ tone was searching.

“Of course. Why wouldn’t I be?”
“Because, not scant weeks ago you threatened to kill me if I displeased you.”

“Eris.” Sarn smiled the smile of a parent speaking to a favored child. “What I said then is still true today. I would gladly offer your skull to Khorne here and now if I thought it the most worthy course- but only I, and Archaon above me, have the right to put you to the sword. For another to do it- that’s an insult, and I think you know I cannot stand to be insulted.”

“It was becoming evident, yes.”

The Basalt Lord drew himself up to his full, towering height, and sighed again with contentment. “You are right, as it stands. True, two worthy skulls rest at the foot of the Blood God’s throne, and I will split the Hamadreth in twain for their untimely deaths. True, the High Priestess fell to a cowardly assassin, and I will make her murderer suffer at least a dozenfold for what he has wrought. But we have taken the victory all the same. We have shown the pathetic offspring of Alarielle what the servants of the True Gods are capable of... and even when we leave this place, our work will remain as a promise of what is yet to come.”

Nagaskahip

The battle had lost all shape. The Skoga Grakk grappled with their enemy high and low, from the stony shallows at the river’s edge to deep within the tombs behind the towering cliff faces. Where first the Waaagh! and their mysterious allies had only fought pawns of the Reclamation, others had joined the scrap. Warbands loyal to the Varanpact hunted champions of the Horde amidst the fray whilst scavengers of the Big Eat stole away corpses from every side for their own nefarious ends.

Despite his headache, Wapkagut was having a grand time of it.

By this point, the Reclamation’s defense had all but crumbled, yet the warchanter felt they’d gained little ground- no matter how fun it had been bashing the interlopers. Nagaskahip still stood, despite the appalling violence echoing through its halls and chambers. Worst of all, Wapkagut could still hear that damnable echo.

Well, perhaps not worst of all, the greenskin noted.
Despite his siege of the Rahipmezar, the Skoga Grakk’s assault had not gone unnoticed by Mithridates Alti. Rising from the river as though it were overflowing its banks had come a great spectral host, a scythe-wielding horror of howling bale-magic atop a corpse-pegasus at their fore. They crashed against one and all, none among the living spared their ghastly attention.

The wave of terror crashed over Wapkagut, and he was in the thick of it, fighting not to win now, but simply to keep from joining the growing number of dead. For a moment- and to his pleasant surprise- his stikks did wonders breaking apart the ghostly apparitions, yet were dashed from his grip by a fearsome axe.

“Felthik the Watcher names me Keldrek,” the vision of a dead man had intoned, a mockery of flapping cloth where his legs ought to have been, “Felthik passes judgement, and Keldrek carries out the sentence.” Far from being fearful, Wapkagut simply looked puzzled. Then he grinned, and leaned in toward the Lord-Executioner before bellowing, “SKOGA GRAKK!”

The Constellation of Zectoka had arrived.

The Nighthaunt legion was consumed by an inferno of white-hot starfire, great scaled beasts roaming the blinding hellscape with impunity. It seemed to Wapkagut as though the sky itself was falling, and after-images danced across squinted vision as star after blazing star slammed into Nagaskahip. Masterwork carvings, which had stood guard over the sacred dead for millenia, were blasted to superheated dust in moments. In minutes, the mountain itself had begun to give way to the bombardment, the Deepkin and Sylvaneth’s efforts to undermine the tombs finally coming to fruition.

With the grinding groan of a hundred million tonnes of stone breaking apart all at once, the mountain gave way- and the hallowed necropolis was no more, seeming to simply vanish as it fell into the footprint of its own ruin. To Wapkagut, it seemed as though some great emptiness pulled itself free of the mountain’s cadaver, drifting with the dust on the wind toward the Rahipmezar- but perhaps that was simply a trick of the fading starlight.

The warchanter tapped the toes of one foot on the blood-slick ground; then he stomped, fashioning a crude, stamping beat. The echo was gone. Satisfied- and grinning like a right maniac- Wapkagut moved off, eager to rejoin his Megaboss and his old brawl for the next proper scrap. After all, they’d came, they’d seen, they’d bashed… what more could an Ironjaw want?
Rahipmez

Mithridates Alti watched the ruin of Nagaskhaip with impotent fury from the grand plaza of Rahipmez. Since his earliest memory- a babe, sat on his father’s knee- all he’d wanted was his birthright. To rule Amasya as Basrahip, and rest alongside his forebears until the pantheon saw fight to return them unto new life to wage war against the Dark Gods once more.

“I did this all for you, father,” Mithridates Alti said, his voice strained, torn between panic and madness. “You asked that I bury you living with my buyukbaba and yours. You witnessed my oath to return to your side, and thereby return you to mine. Everything I have done, I have done for you.”

The blood-witches of Morathi had abandoned him, he knew. Perhaps they’d betrayed him when they saw Sigmar’s lapdogs tightening their stranglehold on the city, or perhaps their pledges had meant nothing to begin with. It didn’t matter; the result was the same. He’d made a promise- to return to their kind the Palace of Shadow, that a new Temple might be raised in this holy place- and they’d turned their backs on him without a second thought.

“This was your desire, and now it is turned to ash in your mouth,” Mithridates Besh intoned, stepping forward to stand beside his son as the first clouds of dust washed over them.

Reikenor the Grimhaler had failed him, too, the counter-attack proving to be too little, too late. It gave Mithridates Alti some grim satisfaction that the many lesser soulblight, the wight kings and the necromancers, all of whom had had agreed to fight for him only to further their own ambitions, were now trapped alongside him within the Rahipmez. It would take a Stormhost to successfully besiege the tomb now- but far less, Mithridates Alti knew, should he attempt to retake the city without reinforcement… and such aid was unlikely to arrive.

For better or for worse, Mithridates Alti had come home. The vampire lord rounded on his father.

“You claim to know my past, and my purpose. I buried you a vampire! You were to return a Soulblight, as I’ve become! Never did I abandon you, not after five hundred years. You cannot abandon me now.”
“What will be, will be,” Mithridates Besh quietly answered, stepping forward and breaking into a stride, walking away from his son and toward the enveloping cloud of dust and disaster. “Truth will bind, and set us free…”

And then he was gone, leaving his son with no choice but to reap that which, by his own hand, he’d sown.

Gorkoyuk

The Skoga Grakk had been single-minded, mused da Maw dat Walkz, but perhaps that was to be expected from the puppets of a Slann Starmaster. The puppets had accomplished what the puppet-master wanted. They had destroyed Nagaskahip, and the emptiness which had resided there was no more. Yet this was nothing, no matter, not relevant, immaterial and of no concern. Da Maw dat wud Eat da Wurld was no longer there; she and the empty man of Rahipmezar had seen to that.

For the puppets of a Slann weren’t the only servants with single-minded purpose. The pawn-kings of the bloated grandfather and the farce they named everchosen had sought to claim Gorkoyuk as their own, and scatter da Big Eat back into the forest. All who paid tribute stood equal before the Maw, and thus she had sent Groinbiter-Boss Slogg and da Grey Tide to unmake them. They cast down two of the three Varanguard sent against them, and worse still, allowed the third to withdraw in dishonor.

Soon, however, there would be nothing for their enemies to retake. The beast pits, once meant for the holding and breeding of exotic animals, had become ravenous creatures of their own, an untold number of great gaping maws in the muck of the swamp. They would consume each other, she knew, until only the greatest of them remained- da Maw dat wuld Eat da Wurld.

The irony pleased her; in victory, she would once more walk the realms an exile, and too everyone who followed her. Thus, she had made a grand decree, every word hung upon by Sibyl and all those of devout faith. Only hunger is a constant, she told them, and where once they had devoured in search of this place, now they would starve, so pure was their worship of the Maw. They would do again as their kind had once done, long ago; they would hunt and they would pillage, and bring their prizes back here to Gorkoyuk to feed da Maw- so that someday, it might devour all Amasya, and then, the whole of the Mortal Realms and their silly, petty gods, too…
The Varangaurd masters of the Horde and the Varanpact did not long rest on their laurels. In the shallows of the River Yensk, that ancient tributary which splits Isik Kulesi from Teselli Alari, their armies did meet for the last time. Once again Madrax Kane did meet the pretender U’latlii in battle, and each exacted a tithe of blood and depravity from the other.

Irkut sent a champion of Tzeentch against the Horde then, a creature whose name could not be pronounced by mortal tongues, yet it too was cast back across the river by King Gurloes the Good and Talaha, the Butcher of Galaza. Finally, Grey Seer Snihrgrin attempted to circumvent the Horde’s line entirely by way of dastardly gnawholes, yet he too was repulsed by a Great Unclean One bound in service to Splatchlos Carrionclot, leprous plagueweaver of the Effluvient Mire.

So it was that both Irkut “the Spineless” Thousandeyes and the Basalt Lord Qarang Sarn knew there would be only one deciding factor between them: the death of one, or the other. The next day, they mustered their armies, and each prepared to cross the Yensk, eager to finally slay the other. Yet, as they made to charge, they discovered a visage standing between them; another Varanguard, dressed in black, sat upon a pale steed.

“The Everchosen has passed judgement upon you,” the newcomer intoned, its voice a whisper heard by all, “and I am to serve as its deliverance.”

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Zectoka stirred, restless, the Slann’s dreams troubled. Those he’d tasked had done as they were bidden, and the Skoga Grakk had ensured the hollow place was no more. Yet, the dream was never certain, and even a Starmaster could not weave every thread of fate at once. The old nemesis had escaped its doom by the virtue of a dutiful son, and now grew in strength by the exhortation of a true zealot.

The starmaster shifted again, and opened its eyes, abandoning slumber in favor of action. If the consequences were to be undone, the Slann knew it must find common ground with an undying king…

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While the dust had soon settled, the mist and roar of a great waterfall which had not existed but a day before had seemingly replaced it. With a gaping hole where the mountain which once held Nagashkip had stood, the Ur-River had bifurcated, pouring down into the depression- yet never filling, which had predisposed the Seneschal-General to a terrible suspicion.

A suspicion Lord-Celestant Han Shizhong had been tasked with confirming. He picked his way through the imposing towers of rubble from the back of his Dracoth, Xinglong. Not for the first time did he wish his command included a Vanguard-Hunters, or perhaps that Xinglong would simply transform into a Stardrake by some whim of Dracothian so that they might simply fly.

Finally, they could descend no more, and Han Shizhong was taken aback by the smell of death- not of fresh death, nor the long dead; he knew well the stench of both. No, this was the smell of decay on a terrible scale, as if the air had been swept up from the earth of a freshly-dug grave…

The Lord-Celestant’s breath caught in his throat. It was as if the wind had blown up from Shyish, the Realm of Death.

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The lake is still as glass; indeed, much of its surface is frozen over. For an age, its headwaters have been little more than a trickle. The air itself is stiff with chill, Hysh’s light closer to that of a distant moon on a clear winter’s night. Impossibly large, the bones of some vast, aquatic megafauna stand sentinel over the water, the shadows they cast long and foreboding.

Suddenly, the waters churn, steaming; a shock of vitality ripples through the lake. Ice cracks and buckles, snapping and hissing with a malevolence that seems more than natural occurrence. Fish desperately attempt to navigate between the shards, only to quickly die regardless- for these waters were never meant for the living.

Mithridates Besh is smiling as he pulls himself from the water, seemingly unaffected by its clawing grasp, and beholds a land undisturbed for centuries, yet which he knows will soon be ravaged by war.
“Through fiery animosity, Nemesis’ sovereignty,” he murmurs to himself, and sets off. Had any been there to see him, they might have noticed his passing left no mark, nor did his body cast any shadow, as though he had never been there at all.

**final standings**

The Sigmarsmacht Delegation

**Dominant Victory**

*Captured all 3 Objective Locations*

The Varanpact

**Strategic Victory**

*Captured Primary + Secondary Objective Location*

The Horde of Rot and Rage

**Tactical Victory**

*Captured Primary Objective Location*

The Skoga Grakk

**Tactical Victory**

*Captured Primary Objective Location*

The Big Eat

**Tactical Victory**

*Captured Primary Objective Location*

The Reclamation

**Tactical Victory**

*Captured Primary Objective Location*
These tales were written before and during Animosity I by our players about their characters, and have been organized by author.

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Talah Take to Battle, by Rob C.

Where: Galaza Dreadhold, Chamon

When: Four months ago.

"Tell me Crone, where shall I find worthy adversaries. Where shall I find worthy skulls for our blood God's throne."

The Seer was gazing lovingly into her scrying pool. Her old and weathered face concentrated into staring at the vat of blood before her. Her eyes having turned completely black while using the blood incantations to communicate with the dark gods. The fresh blood of many victims mingled with spices from around the realm, the hot tendrils of vapor wisped around her and gave the appearance of a mockingly angelic Halo. Her aged withered hands held sacred palms that were lit on fire above the vat made from the hollowed skull of a mammoth.

Dancing above the vat of vapor, one could see smokey images and dark symbols. All who were gathered could see what was happening, but only the Seerer could interpret what was before them all.

"A great time of war and tribulation is upon us. Very very soon you will have all the blood and skulls you need to worship Khorne. " But alas what you seek is not here, it lies behind a great gate. You will need to travel far from here and offer your services to a great Stone Warrior, then, and only then, will you be able to start your great path to Glory."

Talah, The Butcher of Galaza had something that passed for a smile crossed his scarred and tattered face. The remnants of which showed the results of a lifetime of countless battles.

"Yeeessss, yeeeesss this is what I seek. Tell me now where shall I go." He hissed beneath his horned helmet.

"Before I give you what you desire, you must pay me what I desire." The old Crones face lifted from her dark work to gaze at Talaha.

Talah motioned to the gathering of Blood Reavers behind him. They thrust forward two young women. Both were dressed in the ceremonial clothing of Sigmar's priestesses. Both priestesses clothes bore the runes of the Temple they'd been stewards of just a week before.

"You have truly surpassed my expectations. I shall now Divine what you want and need."
The Crone dreamily gazed at the scrying pool, and began to chant the dark incantations necessary for the ritual, her body rocked in time to a dark dance that only the Crone could hear the music for. After about 20 minutes she lifted her head and smirked at Talaha, her semi toothless smile showcased her rotting teeth.

"A great warrior plans to cast down one of Sigmar's creations, you will join him by journeying north to the realm gate of Shan A'zon, then follow the old road south." The Crone drew a long breath and then continued on. "You will find victory and glory. You will also find defeat and shame. Finally, you shall never return here. Ever."

"I care not to return, I care only to serve the Lord of Blood and Hate."

For a moment Talaha was worried, scrying is never so direct or clear, this might not be a good omen.

Talaha turned from the Seer, he motioned over to the two Blood Reavers. The Reavers stepped forward each with a cowering prisoner under their control. They shoved the prisoners to the ground in front of the seer. Both prisoners started crying and begged for their lives. The Crone seized the closest one by her red hair and pulled her over the edge of the scrying pool. A crooked smile crossed her wretched face as she pulled out a ceremonial obsidian dagger. The redheads green eyes filled with terror.

"Enjoy your payment." Talaha and his men strode away from the Temple as the the cries turned to screams and then abruptly ended.

"Gather all that wish to taste glory and victory first hand!" He glanced at his men for a moment. Then quickly raised his Gorecleaver into the air. "FOR CHAOS! BLOOD FOR THE BLOOD GOD!"

At once the assembled Reavers began chanting!

BLOOD FOR THE BLOOD GOD!BLOOD FOR THE BLOOD GOD!

BLOOD FOR THE BLOOD GOD!BLOOD FOR THE BLOOD GOD!

BLOOD FOR THE BLOOD GOD!BLOOD FOR THE BLOOD GOD!

BLOOD FOR THE BLOOD GOD!BLOOD FOR THE BLOOD GOD!

Yes, Talaha smiled, Khorne shall be pleased.
A Crusade of Knights, by Kaleb K.

Ser Baldaflax whistled a cheery tune as he ambled slowly northwards.

He and his merry woodsmen had met little resistance on the road. Ser Baldaflax felt his heart soar the closer he came to his destination, the lord of plagues was returning home. Back to Ghyran where all true knights of the order belonged. Shyish was dead. And while he and his kin had labored endlessly to bring some meagre imitation of grandfather's garden to the sterile land, the efforts of the rotbringers had proven largely fruitless. Thunderous hoofbeats broke the jolly knight from his homesick ruminations.

"Duke" Spolio and his knights.

Ser Baldathrax frowned, and turned to face his self-proclaimed superior.

"Hail Spolio. What brings you from the Rothold, eh?"

Though his fellow Nurglite gave no outward show of displeasure, Ser Baldathrax knew it rankled Spolio to be greeted without his new title. Spolio had named himself the Duke of this fledgling duchy months ago, but Ser Baldathrax and his men would need to hear it from the Lady herself before they accepted him as a liege.

Besides, Ser Baldathrax thought eyeing his famine thin peer, I could take him.

"Urgent news. There has been a change in plans." The duke's sneer, though invisible behind his iron faceplate, was audible. "You will not be returning to Cankerwall today."

The haft of Ser Baldthrax's ax creaked in his grip, and the plague knight felt something tighten in the pit of his bloated frame.

"Excuse me, brother knight." Baldathrax spat " but I don't believe you can stop me." As Baldathrax spoke he could hear his men lumber into position around him, awaiting his order to attack. Just as he could see the Duke's men loosen their blades from aelf-flesh scabbards.

This is not how knights of the order should conduct themselves, he scolded his short temper. Shyish had worn on him, the land had barbarized his manners and differences in philosophy had opened a rift betwixt himself and Spolio. Foolishness. Base foolishness.

Violence barely restrained could be felt between the factions.
Suddenly Baldathrax began to laugh at the absurdity of it all.

"Apologies, cousin mine," the knight gasped between laughs "I let my longing for home get the better of me. Cankerwall can wait. She shall stand proud as she has ever stood."

"As our grandfather ordains, cousin."

"Where am I to lead my merry men, most chivalrous duke? Back into the Bonewood?"

"No, you are still to enter the Gate of Broken Hopes into Ghyran, but you are being diverted to join a new crusade."

Ser Baldaflax smiled widely.

"Bubonicus leads the knightly hosts again, yes? Ha, a fine day, I have longed to war by his side again."

"No. Bubonicus will command the defense of the duchies. You will join the crusade of Varanguard Quron Sarn."

Ser Baldaflax stared dumbly at the Duke for a moment.

"I am to march with the Basalt Lord?"

"Aye. Our lady has given him our allegiance for his quest."

Ser Baldaflax chewed on his thick chapped bottom lip, thinking on this news.

Qarang Sarn, The Basalt Lord was a truly mighty warlord. A corrupter and blood spiller of such renown that few could be said to match him as a warrior.

It was Qarang Sarn that had shattered the Crystal Gates of the Dream Lords. Qarang Sarn that had broken and scattered the hordes of the Fedithir Blood Pact.

And Qarang Sarn that had abandoned the newborn duchy of Shyish over a century ago, leaving Spolio and Baldaflax isolated and overextended without promised reinforcements from the Varanspire.
"This... Is what our lady demands?"

Baldaflax rasped after sometime.

"Our service to her cannot always be of our choosing, brother knight."

"As you say, cousin mine."

"I'll be sending some of my knights with you... Ser Baldaflax?"

"Aye, duke?"

"I look forward to seeing you again. Return with tales of glory."

"Aye, duke."

The plague knight turned and trudged his way along the road to Ghyran, ax haft creaking in his grip.

*The Great Golden Tree, by Kaleb K*

Ser Baldaflax stood before the great golden tree that dominated the wood.

Hefting his great ax the Plague Lord walked towards the tree.

All around him his loyal band of knights battled with men of lightning and freeguild regiments.

Ser Baldaflax knew what he had to do, he knew what Nurgle wished for him. What would bring the most glory to The Order.

The tree shimmered a soft golden light that stung his eyes, somewhere deep in the tree's heartwood a humming emerged it gave him a headache.

Ser Baldaflax pulled his ax back and swung with all his might.
He felt the satisfaction of the axe biting deep into the wood before being flung across the glade by a burst of magic.

The corrupted axe was lodged firmly in the tree's bark.

Its rot began to spread, slowly ever so slowly. But it began to spread nonetheless.

Perhaps the corruption could be reversed.

If the ax could be removed.

If the Pox Worshipers could be slain.

Ser Baldaflax wobbled to his feet and chuckled wetly.
He hurt. The rot had been cleansed from his left side in the blast, but Nurgle's blessings were already reclaiming his flesh.

The Rotbringer scooped up a discarded blade and prepared to join his brother knights in battle against the storm worshipers.
Snotgrin and Bloodblossom, by Peter C.

“Drum, drum, drum, tum-tum, tum-tum, tum-tum!” The giggling speck of green wound its way through the marching horde, provoking mirth and derision in equal measure from the members of they that called themselves the Skoga Grakk. “Stab it, kill it, break it, smash it, murder mangle grab-an-bash it!”

Most of the mirth came from the greenskins. Most of the derision came from the Deepkin. The Seraphon and the Sylvaneth, if they noticed Snotgrin at all, were unruffled by the diminutive poet’s manic chanting.

“Free, key, earth, sea!” He darted between massive feet- boots that might have crushed him were carefully turned aside, feet and fins that might have joyfully stabbed him gingerly drawn away. The Orruks had no desire to incur Wapkagut’s wrath by harming the unusually eloquent grot, while the sea-aelves still remembered what had happened to the Namarti who had thought to shut Snotgrin up. It had taken hours.

“Scramble, bramble, up da tree!” Following his own advice, the greenskin made his way nimbly up the trunk of a mulberry tree, coming to rest in the fork of two branches. There he sat, surveying the army passing below him, feet kicking happily back and forth- until a knob of the tree detached itself and crept down towards him.

“Ichor.” The spite’s skin was barklike, and its eyes red and downright malevolent. “Chyme.”

“Flower, rain, dirt an’ mud. Power, pain, guts an’ blood!” With that introduction behind them, the two settled into a companionable sort of silence for a moment, before-

“Thorns.” The spite- Bloodblossom- extended a single twiggy finger to point at the towers barely visible on the horizon. “Buds. Pus.”

“Maws gnash, claws slash, thunder crash, hammer bash!” The pair shared what might otherwise have been called a knowing glance, before turning back to the city in the distance.

“Roots.”

“Roots, shoots, stones, caves…”
“Rot.”

“Rot, hot burnin’ blaze!” Snotgrin began to giggle incessantly again, loud enough that some heads in the camp turned briefly towards him. “Da flames! Da flames!”

“Blossoms.” The spite’s face twisted into a vicious smile. “Flowers.”

“Blood an’ mud! Blood an’ mud!” Overexcited, the snotling jumped down, landing nimbly on the ground and dancing in a circle, whooping and hollering. “Blood, mud, snot and green!” Behind him the spite crept down the trunk, and then sprang deceptively quickly after the tiny green ball of energy. “Gore an’ guts, wipe it clean! Da flames! Da flames!”

And if any had thought to look closely at the shadows of the pair capering on the edge of the mob, they might have seen that the snot’s silhouette had two heads, and there were massive leafy wings spreading over the spite...

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**A Forbidden Trespass, by Peter C.**

Once, in the Age of Myth, this city belonged to Sigmar. Then it belonged to no one but the howling wind. But now it would belong to the Dark Gods, as all things must. So Sayel believed, and so it was proving. Already Irkut Thousandeyes was on the verge of unlocking the secrets by which they could bind the so-called gods of the Realms themselves- with them, he would gain the favor and the power to bring the dog Sarn to heel, and grind down the city street by street, driving all before him.

Once, in the Age of Myth, this end of Amasya belonged to the Duardin. Then it belonged to nothing but the ever-driving rain. But now it belonged to Sayel. It seemed that in all the desperate fighting and dying, no one had been bothered by the barren mustering grounds- and then suddenly the peace enjoyed by the ghosts of the long-dead Duardin was shattered, several warbands meeting in half a dozen small engagements that stained the ancient stone crimson. Hers had bested every contender, though, and she knew by the bony spikes growing from her spine and the feathery down sprouting on her skin that she was in the eyes of the Gods.
By the Gods, though, it itched. Spur and down would grow into marks of power and pride, but for now they were slight deformities and near-constant irritations. Her fellow marauders thought it was very funny, watching their nigh-fearless Chieftain driven to near-distraction, but they wouldn’t have thought it nearly as funny if they were the ones who felt like they’d rolled in a patch of Ghyric fireweed.

Bone and down had not dulled her warrior’s instincts, though, and Sayel felt the enemy’s approach even before she saw the strange-helmed Aelves marching across the square. Maybe a dozen of them, each wearing a ridiculous headpiece in the shape of two enormous wings. Even as she screamed for her warband, a part of her mind wondered when her own incipient feathers might grow to match- but only a small part. The rest was focused in on the battle to come, and the potential for the kill.

There were nearly twoscore of them, all of them men and women judged worthy to join the ranks of the Varanpact, and they were not slow to come to arms. Quickly and methodically, they spread across the square, moving to surround the interlopers. If the Aelves were aware of the danger they were walking blithely into, they didn’t seem at all fazed by it, and for a moment Sayel wondered if there was something afoot- but it was too late to turn back now. She screamed again, and delighted in how it sounded like a raptor’s call.

They closed like hunting hounds on a hart, and suddenly the Aelves came alive- with a sort of precision that put her warband’s years of practice to shame, they pivoted, halberds dropping to perfectly meet the charge. Then the marauders were among them, lashing out with muscle and steel and a barely-restrained fury, even as almost every blow seemed to land harmlessly or barely slip aside. Out of the corner of her eye Sayel saw one of the Aelves fall, a blade lodged in his throat, but for that one casualty she had lost a dozen or more of her own. She opened her mouth to scream out another order, to curse the enemy, to urge her followers on to blood and glory.

Then the sun was blotted from overhead, and everything vanished into ice and snow.

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Sayel tried to open her eyes, and found she couldn’t- the lids were bound in place, tightly shut. Above her, something far larger than she was moving, and she could hear great wings beating out a boreal wind.

I am Splendor, and you are the speck who has trespassed against my children.
So this was it- this was how she died. At least when she faced the Gods she could claim that the match she’d met was terrible indeed… and yet the monster did not strike her down, even as her flesh turned to ice and the stone beneath her burned cold.

**Pride cometh before a fall.** I knew Amasya when it was young... **you are nothing more than interlopers, treading on a canvas you could never comprehend.** She felt rather than saw the great bird’s head leaning in, and her very breath seemed to freeze in her lungs. **Take a message back to your masters for me- Amasya and what it contains was never for them, and fate will frustrate their grandest designs.** Her chest heaved, and then failed to move- and with a crack, she was lost to the world again, dragged into deathlike dreams of a neverending slumber and a monster that feasted at the edge of reality.
A Merc’s Tale, by Ron H.

It was early morning somewhere in Ghyran. The camp was already bustling with life when I opened my tent. The heat worsened my headache, caused by the small party I had held last night. I made my way towards a barrel filled with water to get rid of my dry mouth and freshen up a little. The scenery that greeted me as I walked was the same as it had been for the last few days. A camp filled with blacksmiths, tanners, shopkeepers selling food and trinkets to people, men and ladies selling themselves for labor or more intimate things, it was like a small town. Not far away was the Hammerhal army camp, filled with soldiers doing drills, cleaning weapons or just standing guard. And they were all surrounded by massive trees and plants of many different kinds, blocking out most of the sunlight.

The trees were a sight to behold for the first few days, but after a week you had seen them all, figuratively speaking. When I arrived at the barrel with water, I quickly held my head in it, as to soothe the headache. It didn’t help much, as was to be expected. So I drank some water using my hands as a cup, as I had left my actual cup in my tent, and went back. When I arrived at my tent I saw a soldier standing by the entrance, holding something in his hand. I approached him and greeted.

“Hello can I help you?”

“Yes, are you the mercenary Gabriel Santé?”

“It’s Gabriel Santi.”

“Like in…”

“Yes, like the noble family.”

“So you are…”

“Yes, I am.”

“Well then ‘Lord’ Santi, you are to support the Darkbull regiment of Captain Bröchin in General Feuerbach’s coming battle against the ‘Big Eat’ and our assault on Amasya.”

“What about my pay?”
The soldier sighed, his disdain for me was obvious and he didn’t try to hide it. He grabbed a pouch that was hanging on his belt and tossed it to me.

“This is 50 gold as advance payment, the rest will be granted to you by Captain Bröchin after we have taken Amasya. Any questions.”

“Yes, how do I recognize the Darkbull regiment?”

“They have a red banner with black bulls head. Anything else?”

But I wasn’t listening anymore as I was counting the coins and just nodded.

“We leave in an hour, be on time or be left behind.”

And the soldier walked away. I quickly went inside my tent, gathering my belongings and put on my armor and equipment. I also went by a shop to buy two medium field flasks filled with wine, as I had finished up the wine last night and I could feel my hands starting to shake.

An hour later the Feuerbach’s Lectors moved towards the front. I wasn’t keen on walking that whole way with the hangover I still had, so I decided to hitch a ride on one of the supply wagons. I paid the driver a gold coin to let me drive with him and he agreed. The driver and I didn’t talk much, and I was happy with that as my head was killing me. Though the silence that I was enjoying didn’t last long, as a woman on horse back started to ride beside us at the same tempo. She had long black hair, which was braided, blue eyes and tip-tilted nose. A scar on her cheek betrayed that this wasn’t going to be her first fight. She wore a breastplate and underneath a red tunic, I couldn’t see the emblem. She had a spear and shield tied to her back. I tried to ignore her, taking a swig from my flask and averted my gaze. It didn’t take long before she started talking.

“From which regiment are you?”

Her voice was soft, but her accent was from Aqshy side of Hammerhal. I didn’t respond at first, but then she poked me with her spear and asked again.

“From which regiment are you, because I don’t recognize your uniform.”

“None.”
I answered short and blunt, making her known that I wasn’t interested in talking right now. Normally I would be interested, for I never say no to a lady, but now my hangover was upsetting my charm and my stomach. My bluntness didn’t stop her from continuing.

“So militia?”

“No.”

“Then you must be the marksman Gabriel Santi.”

My eyes widened, how did she know that. I hadn’t even introduced myself, let alone tell her my profession. I looked at her, she was staring at me with an inquisitive look.

“How did you know?”

“Well, like I said your tunic doesn’t match any current uniforms. It does match with the old uniform from the Hammerhal Ironweld Arsenal, and so do your pauldrons. Your helmet was a prototype, used by the Ironweld to protect the face from shrapnel and other projectiles. As you were a former sniper from the Ironweld Arsenal, that checks out. Your rifle is custom made by a duardin smith, that is something only someone with a lot of money is able to buy. Here your high birth shows itself. The fact that you wear leather under your tunic, means you want to be mobile and you either dodge a blow or have other means of protecting yourself. In your case the latter, as I saw you loading a pavise in the back of the wagon. Which you also use as a standard for your rifle. All those things put together makes it the only logical conclusion that you are the marksman Gabriel Santi.”

And she finished it with a proud smile. I on the other hand was baffled, my mouth almost fell open. I wasn’t expecting such a thorough investigation in just a few minutes. I wasn’t able to form any kind of reply. So she continued.

“How much did you pay for the ride, Mister Santi?”

It took me awhile to answer as I was still lost for words, and that was something that had almost never happened to me.

“One gold piece.”

She turned her head towards the wagon and gave him a stern look.
“Johnson, what did I tell you about overcharging strangers for a ride?!”

“Sorry madam, he was the one offering it. How could I refuse?”

She shook her head. In the mean time I was confused, and my hangover wasn’t helping. Who was this woman riding beside the wagon, and how did she know the driver aswell. And as if she had read my mind she answered.

“I haven’t introduced myself. The name is Caitlin Bröchin, captain of the Darkbull regiment. And you are sitting on my supply wagon.”

I started to laugh. The captain was surprised by that reaction, but didn’t react. I took another swig from one of my flasks and reached out my hand.

“Well then nice to meet you captain. May I ask how you know so much about me, have you been stalking me?”

The look in her eyes changed from joyful to stern in a second.

“I want to have the best, Mister Santi. And for that I have to do my research.”

“Well, no pressure then.”

I laughed again, she laughed a bit but the look in her eyes never changed. I continued.

“It seems I the chance to show you my skills sooner than expected.”

This time the captain looked a bit confused.

“How so?”

And I pointed forward, where several cavalrmymen were riding and shouting something. The enemy had been sighted and battle was to commence soon. I jumped of the wagon, while the captain rode back towards her troops. It was almost time to earn my payment.
Another fire bomb was dropped down into a nest. I could hear the screams of the Troggoths as they burned alive. Those screams weren’t a real ear pleaser, and don’t get me started about the smell the corpses leave behind, it might even be worse than the smell they already left behind in these damp halls. As usual I try to nullify the smell and screams with a good chuck from my trusty canteen filled with wine, you should never go troll hunting sober the dwarves say and I agree with that statement. Of course the mercenaries were sent in to deal with the Troggoths, as it was more a tunnel fight then a regular battle and no honors could be gained from the few Troggoths you fight. That doesn’t mean it is any less deadly, those Troggoths are hard to bring down and hit hard up close. The twists and turns of the hallways mean you only have time to shoot once or twice before you have to draw sword and spear. We had already lost several mercenaries so far, but we learned from those mistakes and adapted like a good merc would.

“Make sure they are dead and mark this place. These halls are a maze and I intend not to get lost.”

I called out to several of the mercenaries. I have earned myself a place of leadership through my smart thinking, charm, killer instincts and survivor skills, after all I was the one who came up with the fire bombs and survived Feuerbach’s folly. Though, the fact that I am noble born might have helped acquiring the position more then I like to admit. I took another chuck of wine and moved on. The next few halls were mostly empty, except for a few large rats. A long dark hallway followed, of which our light couldn’t reach the end of it. We moved carefully forward, my rifle aiming into the darkness, resting on the shoulder of a mercenary walking in front of me. We all stopped when we heard grunting coming from the darkness. Troggoths might be stupid, but they possess a bestial cunning when it came to defending their lairs. I grabbed a grenade from my bandoleer and threw it into the darkness. The resulting explosion lit up the hallway, revealing the silhouettes of several Troggoths. Their primitive huts caught fire and the shrapnel ripped through the skin of those closest to the explosion. We readied ourselves as the Troggoths, four of them, charged forward into the light, their shrapnel wounds already regenerating. Me and two other fired our rifles into the closest Troggoth, as the mercenaries in front formed a spear wall with their spears and halberds. We aimed for the legs, as to cripple the monsters, and the Troggoth fell down as our shots hit their mark.

“Light up the bombs!”

I called out, as I was quickly reloading my rifle to fire another shot. One of my accomplishments was being able to fire five rounds a minute, but I could only squeeze out
one more shot before the Troggoths would reach us in these close confines. I aimed my rifle again, and as I did I saw that the Troggoth we had crippled was already trying to get up to his feet, his wounds healing rapidly.

“Throw those damned bombs already!”

I was getting frustrated. I knew that the damp was making it hard for us to light any kind of fire, but these cloths were drenched in oil, they should light up with a single spark. The Troggoths were getting closer and closer, and were almost upon us when a bottle, with a flaming rag and filled with oil hit the ground before the Troggoths, cracking open and spilling burning oil. One of the Troggoths was sent a blaze, while the other two stopped and took a step back. The screaming started again, but this time I was quick to end it, firing my rifle and hitting the Troggoths on his giant forehead. The Troggoth dropped to the ground, his wounds no longer regenerating as the fire burned out any remaining life that monster might had. After the first, several more bottles were thrown, setting almost the whole hallway on fire. We could hear the three remaining Troggoths screaming, first in terror then in pain, as the flames caught them. We waited several minutes for most of the fire to burn out, and then we moved on. We didn’t walk for very long, for as we walked through the remains of the Troggoth’s nest we were blocked by two large doors. The doorframes were made of solid gold, the door itself was made of stone, and there were dwarven runes carved into the stone.

Unfortunately none of us spoke dwarvish, but my mercenary senses were going haywire, as such a decorated doorway only meant that there was something valuable behind this doorway. All of us rushed towards the door, preparing to use all our strength to push open this heavy door. We were quite surprised when the door opened rather smoothly, I should have expected though, it was after all dwarven masonry. The hall itself was dark, but the echo of the door opening betrayed the size of the hall, a constant sound of moving water could be heard in the room, which I hadn’t heard in any other room. My eyes couldn’t see any glittering of golden coins or shiny jewels, which was a bit disappointing. Others were starting to investigate the hall, so I started to do so as well. I must have dazed by the smell of burned Troggoth, because I didn’t notice a large rock lying right in front of me. I tripped and fell, my torch fell out of my hand onto a raised platform. I cursed my luck, until I saw a small fire rushing away from where my torch had landed. Then light after light went on it the hall, illuminating a giant mechanism. I was stunned and lost for words as I saw this magnificent mechanism.

“You, Richard! Run towards the Marshall, and only her. Tell her we found something big and to send some engineers down with her!”
“You want me to go there?”

I read the scroll again, hoping it said something different. It didn’t.

“This is suicide, what makes you think we can take that place?”

“My lady orders you too, so you have to obey. We don’t question her decisions.”

“Well you’re not the one send in to die.”

The messenger remained indifferent, those stupid Aelves with their stupid, emotionless faces. I took another chuck, the canteen was getting empty, even though I had refilled it 10 minutes ago. The message was making me nervous, and when I am nervous I drink even more. I continued.

“Who is this anyway, someone important?”

“This is the former High Priestess of Melas.”

“Wow, then she must have seen better days.”

Not even a smirk from the Aelf. I think he just didn’t care as he only saw a dead guy standing in front of him. I emptied my canteen, shaking it a few times to get those last drops. The Aelf before me wasn’t really a talker, and not so keen on telling me much. But I still had questions so I continued.

“I don’t really have a choice do I?”

“The other option is the firing squad.”

“Hmm, tempting. You serve quite the generous lady.”

More like a stone cold bitch, but I kept that to myself. I wasn’t ready to lose my head for free after all. Again the Aelf didn’t even respond.
“Well for such a high profile target, I expect to be well paid. I also need a witness to confirm the kill, otherwise I won’t get paid.”

“Serving my lady should be reward enough, but she had expected you wanted to be compensated. The bounty that is on her head shall be paid in full to you on your return, and will be doubled if it is done within reasonable time. A witness has been provided for you and shall wait at the exit of this camp.”

“Is that all?”

He just turned around and walked away. I muttered some curse words and moved to grab my gear and refill my canteen. It was going to be a long track from Grung Esik to the last location of the Priestess, which was in Teselli Alari. Not to mention five enemy armies roaming the city don’t make it any less long, quite the opposite more likely. One thing was sure, I wasn’t going to sacrifice my life for this city or the Delegation, and the moment it looks like it might go out of hand, I’d bail.

At the city exit of the dam I found my witness. At around 10 meters of the exit I recognized the braided, raven black hair, a spear on her back, shield in hand, wearing the colors of the Darkbull Regiment. It was none other then

“Captain Caitlin Bröchin, what nice to see you in this lovely city. You joining me for the tourist tour? First stop going to be Teselli Alari.”

“Mister Santi, I am surprised that you are so cheerful for someone who has essentially been sent on a one way trip?”

“Well, someone else would never have made it to Teselli Alari in the first place. So I see it as a compliment to my skills. The real question is, why are you my witness?”

“If I wasn’t, then you would never have made it more than a mile from Grung Esik.”

I laughed, the captain was an excellent fighter and the possibility of success seemed to have grown some with her as my witness. I took a good luck chuck from my canteen, and then set out. The captain quickly followed and so we started the long track towards Teselli Alari, with the aim to kill the corrupted High Priestess of Melas.
I took a deep breath and slowly exhaled. I drowned out all the flies that were buzzing around me, the foul smell of the trees would not hinder my aim. Beside me, Captain Bröchin was coughing. The trees had turned into something foul, the stench was sickening. The magic of Chaos had taken its toll. I really hated to be here. The captain and I sat upon a small hill, less than half a mile from a large battle that was taking place in front of us. The uncorrupted trees were fighting the forces of plague and rage. The trees were not alone though, they were supported by hordes of greenskins, and even the sea and stars seemed to be on their side. They were slowly pushing the hordes of Chaos back. I took another deep breath, the foul air being neutralized by a wet cloth before my mouth. It was a simple trick, but quite effective most of the time. I searched the battlefield looking for my prey. She hadn't arrived it seemed.

“What makes you so sure that she is here? You saw that large horde going towards Azyrhol, we should go out and help there, she is most likely there.”

“No, these troops have need for a leader, and I don’t think Qarang Sang will let an opportunity slip to ransack another temple.”

I laid down my rifle and took my eyes away from the battle below me; they were getting tired from looking and scanning at such a distance. I lowered my cloth a bit so I could take another chuck of my wine.

“You think it is a good idea to drink now?”

I shrugged my shoulders.

“What, it takes the edge off and keeps my hands steady. Besides, I can shoot better when I am not sober.”

She rolled her eyes, clearly not in the mood to argue with me on the whole drinking thing. She had tried to on our way here, but that didn’t work out so well.

The noise down me changed, so I looked down through my spying glass. It seemed the Chaos forces had received some reinforcements, as a new force freshly arrived from the flanks. I gave the spyglass to the Captain and grabbed my rifle.

“If you see her, tell me.”
My rifle had a special sight of its own, functioning as a spyglass of sorts, but it didn’t have the range that a normal spyglass had. Still I did scan on my own as well. But the captain was the one to spot her.

“I found her. She is on a palanquin, flanked by grotesque looking monsters, clad in yellow, greenish armor.”

“Anything more, because I have three potential palanquins with that same description.”
“There is a hunchbacked giant to the left of her, 30 feet away.”

“Alright, I spotted her as well.”

Again I took a deep breath, but the stench and taste of the air had grown worse with the arrival of the High Priestess, or so it seemed. The air burned the inside of my mouth it seemed, the cloth was working anymore. I had to finish this quickly. I hold my breath, trying to keep my hands steady. I looked through the lense, trying to get a good aim at the High Priestess. I blocked off all noise that was going on around me, the plague flies, the screaming of the battle below. The only thing I heard was the beating of my own heart.

*Boe boom*
I have her in my sight.
*Boe boom*
I put my finger on the trigger.
*Boe boom*
I pull the trigger.
*PAF*
I feel the knockback of my rifle.

I follow the shot through my scope and a second later the head of the High Priestess burst open like a popped zit. Blood and puss spilled out and the hunchbacked Priestess dropped down from here palanquin, in between her monstrous bodyguards.

“Kill confirmed!”

“Good, then let’s get the hell out of here. This shot can be heard from a mile away.”
The Search Begins, by Rob W.

The din of battle was dying, along with the remnants of the Great Waaagh that had once prowled the Flamescar Plateau. Madrax Kane allowed his flesh hound, Gnasher, to lead the way through the piled bodies of Bonesplitterz and Ironjaws. The spilt blood from both Bloodbound and Orruk soaked into the dirt creating “Holy Mud”. Crag Gorespittle, one of Madrax’s Slaughtpreists, was starting the ritual of covering himself in it. Bloody hands smeared the dark red/brown muck all over his face and head. He was laughing hysterically. Madrax knew soon he would be wallowing in it like a pig in dung. He did not see the other priest in his Pilgrimage but the Warshine loomed hulking above the far side of the battlefield. In between him and the Warshine was glory to the Blood God like he had not seen since his days with Khorgos Khul.

He found what he sought. His flank attack smashed into a pack of Boarboyz led by a Maniak Weirdnob. The boars and their boyz lay scattered and in heaps. The Maniak was not far off. His boar had reared and ran when Madrax’s axe cleaved its jaw off with most of its face. A glancing blow that Madrax meant to remedy. The Maniak was pinned under the dead boar. He was trying to free himself. Pitiful. Still caught in the emotionless haze of post battle frenzy Madrax looked at the Orruk as one would contemplate the best way to tear the wings off a fly. Gnasher snapped at his face. Madrax let the beast get close, toying with the spineless wretch. Madrax suddenly grabbed a handful of dark hair and pulled hard. The Maniak’s neck stretched. Madrax let go of Gnasher. The flesh hound’s teeth sunk deep into the Orruk’s neck. Madrax twisted the Maniak’s head with both hands. His gurgling scream was suddenly silenced when his spine was snapped. A moment later Madrax ripped the head completely off and held it high to the frenzied cheers of the gathered mass of Gorehorde Pilgrims.

The harvest of skulls began in earnest. The Gorehorde set about the dead chopping and hacking the heads off and throwing them in piles. Brief but violent fights were breaking out here and there over the rights to the worthier skulls. Vorak, the Aspiring Deathbringer that led the attack on the center smashed his hammer into the breastplate of an Ironhorde warrior, defending his rights to the skull of the Big Boss Vorak had killed. The rest of the Ironhorde warriors backed off when Vorak’s bloodwarriors backed his claim. These things always worked themselves out. Vorak claimed the Ironhorde warrior’s skull as well.

It has been said that after great battles, great storms soon follow. It began to rain. Blood. Every face upturned to bask in the glory of Khorne, for He had turned his gaze upon Madrax and the Gorehorde Pilgrims.
There was something manifesting from the pools of blood now. The pools began to shift, unnaturally starting to coalesce in the center of the battlefield. The pool bulged, bubbled and spurted rising in an amorphous tower of gore growing ever higher. Lightening cracked, and thunder boomed. The wind roared. The torrent threatened to sweep the Horde away. The tower of blood loomed higher and higher. Suddenly the tower lost cohesion and blew outward knocking everyone off their feet. The Warshine was toppled and men wrestled to get horses and gorebeasts under control. As the bloodstorm subsided, Madrax pulled himself to his feet and stared at what stood before him.

Black wings pulsed and glowed red. A huge barbed tail lashed back and forth menacingly. Dark eyes chillingly regarded Madrax. He had never seen a manticore before. His awe matched every other member of the Gorehorde. The manticore was saddled and a massive scabbard hung from the pommel. As he approached, the manticore knelt and bowed its great maned head.

Madrax Kane claimed his prize.

The Realmgate they had captured in the battle would lead his vast pilgrimage out of this place to new lands to soak in blood. A day after the battle he sent scouts through. When they returned he was informed that it led to the Realms edge of Ghyran. How appropriate a place to bring the teachings of the Blood God. A wry smile touched his face. He would bleed the life from the Realm of Life.

The scouts reported back a small skirmish between rats and spirts. They had seemed to be squabbling over a swarm of glowing insects. Magic. Repugnant. They reported that the Nighthaunt were able to wrest the magic away from the rats and were about to make off with their prize when they were run down and scattered by a charge of the patrol’s light horse. A flesh hound with the patrol was able to eat the fowl energies and disperse the swarm. Upset at the loss of the magic, the Skaven reformed and attacked the patrol. The fight was short and brutal. The only rat left alive was their leader, who was now kneeling, chained before Madrax. Gnasher’s slobber dripped down onto the warlock.

“Speak, wizard.” Madrax demanded. “explain your presence in Ghyran.”

Even chained in bronze the Arch-Warlock held himself with an air of superiority.
“I do not recognize your authority” he rasped bluntly. Gnasher snapped his ear off. Blood trickled down his face. He touched the stump wincing slightly. Chains rattled.

“What authority do you recognize?”

“The authority of The Basalt Lord, Qarang Sarn, Varanguard of the Fourth Circle, Reaver of Chaos.”

Madrax started. His expression did not change but his mind reeled. Qarang Sarn was in Ghyran? In the ranks of the Gorehorde there was no other lord amongst the Varanguard who was regarded with as much respect as Qarang Sarn. His name was spoke with reverence at campfires and at the Services of Slaughter held by his priests every eight days. The opportunity to lead the Gorehorde in battle alongside Qarang Sarn was irresistible.

“VORAK!” Madrax shouted for his Aspiring Deathbringer. “bring me the Gorechosen!”

Madrax considered the rat wizard. He had been ignored while Madrax had sent his Gorechosen off with orders to assemble the Gorehorde for a recon in force through the Realmgate. There was not much choice in the matter. Another skull for the skull throne.

An hour later, mounted on his manticore, Madrax Kane, Butcher of Flamescar, Mighty Lord of the Gorehorde Pilgrimage, led them through the Realmgate to Ghyran to seek out The Basalt Lord.

On the Trail to Amasya, by Rob W.

On the Trail to Amasya

Madrax Kane sat his manticore on the side of the trail the Gorehorde Pilgrims used to make their way through the Realm of Ghyran. Sweat ran in rivers down his chest. A biting fly worked at the back of his neck. After the dry harsh heat of Ashqy, the humidity of jungle they now found themselves in was almost unbearable.

SMACK! The fly left a smear of blood on his hand that he licked away.

“Careful, some might consider that blasphemy here.”

Madrax grunted a laugh “I doubt that fly was a faithful Grandchild”
Noxious Bilerot, Lord of Afflictions chuckled. A wet crackling gurgling sound.

They had found Noxious Bilerot two days after passing through the Realmgate. He had lived in Ghyran his whole life. His tribe of Maggotkin had tended Grandfather's garden for generations. Their cultivation of rot and decay was a wonder to behold. Their dedication to Nurgle was unfaltering. When the Gorehorde's scouts found him on the side of the trail, alone and bleeding, he was tenderly caring for a colony of maggots that was eating the rot from a festering wound in his side. Bilerot proclaimed that when he died his rot would birth a great forest of decay that would bolster the beauty of the entire realm. However, he did not die there on the side of the trail. The Ruinous Powers smiled upon Noxious Bilerot. The maggots cleaned the wound and grew into the flies that now buzzed around the both of them.

The army that Noxious was a part of had been destroyed. They had been ambushed by a great many Orruk’s. What made the battle so one sided is that an Orruk fist had never been in that part of the Realm. Their presence was completely unexpected. So, when Noxious and his companions stumbled upon them the Orruk smashed them to pieces. Noxious rambled about how a fog came over the field of battle and the only thing that saved him was his rot fly.

They were slowly making their way to the interior of the realm. The Realms Edge was a tangled jungle of huge trees and vines with undergrowth so thick a man vanished from site if he strayed from the path. Violent magical storms raged every day, hurling arcane energies in all forms above the canopy or bursting from the ground. Once a huge purple skull threatened to annihilate half his host. If it were not for the combined powers of the Slaughterpriests chanting madly his entire crusade could have been undone before it even started.

And a crusade it now was. He may have led the Gorehorde through the Flamescar Realmgate to Ghyran to find Qarang Sarn. To fight beside him, to learn from him. To grow as a faithful disciple to the Blood God. He did not need to find him now. He knew he was going to Amasya. He had never heard of the ancient necropolis before Bilerot told him of it. At the time he did not care. But as Noxious Bilerot told Madrax of the ruins of Amasya; how a Temple of Skulls once stood, and fountains of blood flowed to honor Khorne, and how the Grandfather's garden grew around

the temple from the offerings of body and blood. How Garden and Temple coexisted in perfect chaos, a true tribute to rot and rage. Madrax knew that coming here was not mere chance, not a mere whim to meet a great Lord of Chaos. No, this was divine intervention. Khorne himself set him on this path. To bring glory back to Temple and Garden. Noxious
admitted that Temple and Garden could just be a myth, but they both agreed that it should be, and it would be if they had anything to do with it.

The armed host of the Gorehorde had past. Madrax and Noxious now watched the tribespeople move past. Crag Gorespittle was carrying two small children, a boy and a girl. He was telling them with great zeal how Korghos Khul killed the Daemon Prince of Orb Infernia. Crag always had time for a story with the little ones. They would grow hard, strong and brave under his tutelage. The boy might grow to be a great orator of Khorne in his own right while the girl would certainly bless the tribe with many strong warriors. He looked at the faces of the tribespeople as they past. Women of childbearing years known as he Mothers, children not of age, slaves, captives and overseers. One of the older boys, not quite old enough to start the Trial of Skulls, oversaw some captives. The miserable lot was chained by the neck. This group of sixteen were headed to the alter tonight. A great honor for the young man to hold. Madrax did not see old faces. The old had no place in Khornate society. There was no such thing as an old warrior. Everyone dies in battle. Even the Mothers rode in battle to die honorably once their motherly duties were over, aside from the Elder Mothers of course. Those eight women managed the tribe.

An outrider was approaching quickly from the head of the procession. The man tumbled out of his saddle before the horse had fully stopped and knelt before Madrax.

“MY LORD! We have spotted the enemy!” the man panted heavily. “a large column of Seraphon is moving along the edge of a swamp less than a league from here! They did not see us.” he finished proudly

“Very good.” Madrax turned to Noxious. “These could be the bloodless lizards who destroyed your host. Care to take a look?”

Without waiting for an answer Madrax heeled his manticore. With three beats of its wings it was soaring above the heads of the tribespeople. He paused to tell the Elder Mothers to stop and make camp. Noxious caught up as Madrax was deploying a rear guard to protect the tribe. With that done they both flew to the front.

The flight was short. They landed in a small clearing where a vanguard of heavy cavalry was forming.

“My Lord,” the Skullhunter from the lead unit of skullcrushers approached. “Khorne has granted us a great opportunity to claim many heathen skulls today.”
“Where are they?” Madrax demanded gruffly.

The Skullhunter turned his juggernaut and led them to the edge of the clearing where he dismounted and started down a narrow path through the trees. Madrax and Noxious also dismounted and followed. Abruptly, their guide got down on his stomach and squirmed through a small hole in the undergrowth just in front of them. The Lords did the same.

Vorak was there on the other side of the hole, up a short incline. Hunkered down and hidden behind a long, low hill he was peering intently across a large expanse of tree dotted hillside. About a quarter mile way was the column of Seraphon. It was a fairly large host moving parallel to the Gorehorde’s path heading to the interior of the Realm.

“Report.” Madrax demanded of Vorak.

“They outnumber us by half, at least. Nothing we can’t handle.” Vorak said with wry smile.

“What do you propose?”

“We have them outmaneuvered already. If we attack the tail end of the column, they can only turn one way to face us because the swamp denies them a left-hand turn. Once they commit the front of column we hit them from the flank.” Vorak expertly deduced the tactical situation.

Madrax nodded in approval. The Hunter had left and was now leading Roc Shatterhammer the Skullgrinder of the Gorehorde and Crag Gorespittle up the low hill. When they arrived Madrax laid out the plan.

**Battle at the Realm’s Edge Pt. I, by Rob W.**

Opening Sortie

The Gorehorde attack on the rear of the Seraphon column went according to plan, initially. Madrax led the cavalry in a devastating charge that completely crushed a hastily formed rearguard line. The ranks of lizard warriors reformed quickly but Madrax continued to push hard. Gore Drinker, Madrax’s Chaos forged daemon blade rent bone and pierced flesh. The manticore was tearing lizardmen apart with blood dripping claws. Outrider spears fell in a deadly rain of steel. The Skullcrushers wheeled and charged again, punching a hole through the line. The Ironhorde knights were right on their heels. It appeared as though his attack was
about to roll the whole Seraphon column. Madrax stood in his stirrups and studied the land to his front. The main host of the Seraphon was turning to the right to form lines of battle. Just as Vorak had predicted the swamp prevented any other movement. They formed a line of attack but were not advancing. They just sat at the far end of the shallow valley. The remains of the rearguard were in full retreat to that line.

A strange stillness settled over the battlefield.

“Kane,” It was Noxious. He reined in his rot fly next to Madrax. “This is not right. This is what happened when my host was destroyed.” He pointed to their left at a bank of fog starting to roll in from the swamp. “There is death in that fog. We need to regroup.”

Madrax wheeled on Bilerot, however his derision for cowardice froze on his lips. Noxious Bilerot’s black eyes pierced Madrax. There was determination in those hard eyes, concern yes but not fear.

“Tell me, QUICKLY” Madrax demanded. The lesser lord knew his place and gave a quick account.

“During a fight with Orruk, we were flanked by a force of aelves that came out of a fog that looked just like THAT.” He pointed his sword hatefully at the fog to emphasize his point. “It was a trap.”

Well, Madrax considered, a trap must be sprung.

“Noxious,” Madrax spoke quickly. “find the Gorechosen in the clearing. Tell the Slaughterpriests to lead the bloodreavers in the center. The Deathbringers will take the heavy infantry and secure our left flank. Tell them to attack when the trap is well sprung. You make sure they come quickly. I will be hard pressed by that time I think.”

Madrax knew the gamble he just made. He was putting a lot of faith in his new companion as well as the rest of the Gorechosen. It was a prime opportunity for a coup. His infantry could have been spotted already, the enemy in the fog could be of any size. He felt a strange confidence though. Like everything was going to work out the way it was in his head.

He watched Noxious Bilerot fly off and disappear behind the hill. It was time. The fog was getting close to the edge of the swamp. Waves of mist seemed roll in as if on a rising tide. The tang of salt and the rankness of a wharf filled the air. A black shape broke the surface of the fog then
disappeared back down below. Madrax thought it looked like a fin. He swore he heard the tolling of a boat’s bell.

Madrax set his line of cavalry. From right to left in a wedge; Ironhorde knights, himself and gorebeast chariots formed the tip of the wedge, then the skullcrushers on juggernauts. The marauders were in the middle of the wedge to provide fire support.

He set off at a walk, then a trot. 300 yards, 200; halfway to the Seraphon line. The fog began to hasten its advance. Whoever, whatever was in command of the fog was certainly licking its lips at the sight of its trap being sprung.

“CHARGE!” Madrax bellowed as he spurred the manticore into the air.

The entire line lurched forward at full speed, heading for the enemy line. Madrax climbed then dove the manticore into the secondary ranks of the enemy. A chariot smashed through the front rank and plowed into the lizards reeling from a manticore suddenly appearing in their midst. Gorebeast tore limbs off and trampled the bodies to a pulp. The Ironhorde knights were with him as they drove deeper into the lizard line. To his left the skullcrushers were keeping pace. Marauder javelins rained down.

Then the fog crashed on them like a wave upon rocks. His field of vision was suddenly reduced to a few paces. Sounds of fighting rang out all around him. He pulled his lance out of the smoking hole in a Seraphon’s chest and Gore Drinker cleaved in half a lizard who leapt at him. He did not see any Gorehorde warriors anywhere around him now. Dark shapes raced above him. He wheeled the manticore in a circle. Seraphon had him surrounded and were closing in. A volley of arrows came shooting out from the fog. Strange fin-fletched arrows seemed to suddenly bloom from his shoulder and the manticore’s side. Only one arrow seemed deep in the manticore and one arrow stuck from its cheek. The one in his shoulder was lodged in his armor. Not too bad.

Suddenly a mass of black that had been circling above darted toward him. What materialized from the fog was nothing he had expected. He and the manticore barley dodged the massive jaws and tearing teeth of a huge shark like beast. He took to the air himself. A yard of steel shot past his face as he turned on the shark beast. He saw several riders. Heavy beats of wing brought him higher than the shark beast. Then he dove at it.

He crashed into the shark beast and a terrible melee ensued. The manticore had the shark beast with both claws and was tearing at it with its teeth, spiked tail jabbed in vicious
uppercuts. The jaws of the shark could not reach the manticore but its tail beat at them furiously. A bluish aelf with a black topknot came at Madrax with a curved sword, but the blow was turned aside, and Gore Drinker drank the gore. A black topknotted head fell away into the fog. The beasts were unable to maintain flight and they all crashed to the ground. Madrax was thrown from the saddle. He picked himself up and slew another shark rider struggling to get up after being thrown from the battling beasts. He watched as his manticore disemboweled the shark beast. Victorious, it raised its bloody maw and roared.

On the flank
Vorak and Crag lay on the ground peering across the field from the same spot they had first observed the enemy. Now they watched the rear guard of Seraphon retreat from Madrax and the Horde’s cavalry. A fog had formed over the swamp during the brief fight. The delay of the rear guard had allowed the rest of the lizards to reform as expected but they did not advance to crush the smaller force. They just sat there; too far up the valley for an effective flank attack.

“That is unfortunate.” Vorak observed dryly.

Crag did not reply. He was not looking at the enemy line. He appeared to be watching something happening at the cavalry’s position. Vorak looked over in time to see that putrid Nurgle rotter flying toward the hill. He passed their hiding spot and headed back into the trees. Vorak and his companion slid back from the summit and proceeded to back through the trees. They found Bilerot in the same clearing as before. Now the Warshine dominated half the area and bloodreavers stood in ranks. The rest of the Gorechosen were standing around Bilerot.

“...and the rest of the Gorechosen,” Bilerot was saying. “will lead the bloodwarriors and the heavy infantry on the left.”

Roc Shatterhammer scoffed. “Kane again honors the Deathbringers.”

“And the priests.” Argot added. Arrgot Brak was the Bloodsecretor of the Gorehorde. He leaned against the staff of his icon.

“We all have our place in the Horde.” Snapped Exalted Deathbringer Heinryk Dreadspear. He leveled his giant spear at Arrgot. “You hold the highest honor among us.” He swung the point at Roc. “You have much to prove. Your trial may be complete, but if you want to do more than just make armor you will strive to bring glory to the Horde. Only in that will your accomplishments have meaning.” He turned to the rest of the Gorechosen. “You have heard
Lord Bilerot. His words are the words of your Mighty Lord. Follow them.” With that he turned away and walked out of the clearing.

Vorak and Crag exchanged a look and wordlessly grasped each other’s forearm roughly. Vorak turned to follow Heinryk. The three Horde’s Deathbringers hurried down the line gathering the bloodwarriors, wrathmongers and skullreapers.

The sound of fighting echoed down the valley. Vorak climbed the hill and looked up the valley. Madrax and his command were driving deep into the enemy line. The fog raced across the field. It unnaturally turned against the wind and swept around to engulf the entire enemy host along with the Horde’s cavalry. It was time. He raised his arm and a horn sounded deep and mournful from behind him. That horn was answered by one, then two and three others. Soon a dozen horns sounded. Their long low wails echoed off the trees and reverberated across the valley. Bloodwarriors moved up to him and they all set off down the long slope as one. Vorak looked to his right and saw the Warshine top the hill. Arrgot was next to it, keeping pace. He lost sight of the imposing altar as he and the other Deathbringers swung their command up the valley. A few moments later a flurry erupted in the distance, above the fog. A manticore seemed to be fighting a shark. As suddenly as they appeared the shapes fell back into the fog.

They were moving fast, and they covered the tree spotted ground quickly. Vorak led the way quietly into the fog. Zac Brak, Arrgot’s brother was the other Aspiring Deathbringer in the Gorehorde and he was right next to Vorak when they found the enemy flank in the fog. The aelvish bowmen were too surprised to put up much of a fight. Not that they could have against the superior prowess of his bloodwarriors. They were slaughtered.

A mass of dark shapes was moving across their front from left to right. Zac nodded at Vorak and he nodded back. With a roaring shout, they charged the mass. His hammer rose and fell smashing aside foes and his axe sent heads flying. He had no idea how big the force he faced was. He just kept killing. He felt the wrathmongers near. His fury intensified as if injected with the pure essence of the Blood God. Red rage filled him, and he became a whirlwind of death. An endless roar ripped at his throat. A spear tore the flesh of his arm and he laughed at the pain.

Suddenly the fog around them seemed to shudder and it took on a ruddy red hue. A bolt of blood red lightening shot across the sky, then another and another. Thunder cracked and rolled. The fog seared off the battlefield like water in a hot pan. Arrgot had opened the Portal of Skulls.
Madrax had just finished pulling the shallow arrows from the manticore when the attack came. He was still dismounted when more than a dozen Seraphon warriors rushed at him and the manticore. He fought with Gore Drinker and killed two of them quickly. Three others pressed him hard and he was forced back. Turning aside a blow aimed at his head, he took another in the breastplate to gain an advantage and planted a boot in the stomach of the third while his sword was still raised. A parry and slash gutted one of the lizards and his fist shattered the snout of another. The one gasping for air from the kick was rid of his head and the one with the broken face staggered off while two more had a go. They fared little better; one landed a cutting strike on Madrax’s thigh before Gore Drinker split him from shoulder to hip. The other gave an arm to the cause before running off. He pivoted ready for more but the manticore had dealt with the rest. The arrow that pierced the side of its face was gone, but teeth shown through a ragged hole. He snapped the shaft of the deep-set arrow close to the beast’s hide and leapt into the saddle. It pranced to the right and tossed its head, shaking is great mane. The fighting and the pain from the arrows obviously had it riled up and it took flight with little urging. Madrax needed to see the disposition of the battlefield.

Fog covered the enemy entirely. He did not see the cavalry but rank after rank of bloodreavers were pouring over the long hill and into the fog. In their midst was the Warshine lumbering down the hill. He saw Arrgot Brak, striding near the Warshine, they stopped just short of the fog. The Warshine priest had just finished a ritual sacrifice and was holding a head high in the air. Far above Madrax saw Arrgot plant his Icon to Khorne. The Portal of Skulls opened with a tremendous lightning storm. He had not seen that happen before. The fog burned off in an arc racing out from the Portal. It revealed pure madness.

Near the hill, the cavalry push had stalled then stopped. A mass of juggernaut riding skullcrushers had formed a rough circle and were defending the marauders on all sides, many of whom now fought dismounted from behind the carcasses of their horses. Some skullcrushers fought on foot near them while rider-less juggernauts rampaged through the enemy, throwing lizards aside and trampling others. The Ironhorde knights and a single remaining chariot were forming for a breakout charge. Some bloodreavers were about 50 paces from the cavalry and now that they knew the peril the cavalry was in, they were pressing hard to reach that position. Could that be Roc Shatterhammer leading them? Madrax saw a great anvil smash a hole in the lizards ranks and knew that it was.

The rest of the bloodreavers were swarming over the ranks of aelves and lizards and were hacking a great swath through the enemy. Crag Gorespittle stood on a bronze and iron alter.
Madrax had never seen such a thing. Where had it come from? Crag raised his hands and lifted his face to the sky. A giant axe erupted from the ground and plunged into the enemy. Blood flew in a spray from the carnage it caused as it tore a great rent in the enemy ranks, through which the bloodreavers poured. Lizard and aelf alike ran screaming from a huge bleeding bronze icon that plowed its way across the battlefield. Near the swamp a horrible melee was in progress. The entire flank had deteriorated into chaos. There were no lines, no ranks, no charges or counter charges. Just a huge brawl. He banked the manticore that direction.

There were other things flying near him. Winged lizards with riders were heading toward the Crag and the alter. Huge boulders held in their talons. Madrax veered from his original path and intercepted the flight. He let the manticore do the heavy lifting. It used its claws and barbed tail to eviscerate the flying lizards. The riders plunged screaming to the ground. With the alter and Crag now safe, he turned his attention to the barroom brawl at the edge of the swamp.

As he got closer he saw that the brawl was a one-sided affair with the Gorehorde holding the upper hand. He also saw that the aelves held a strong position on a rocky outcrop that formed a headland into the swamp. Their lines were still intact there and the broken Seraphon were using that avenue to escape the murderous advance of the bloodreavers. If the aelves in the rocks could be dislodged, then the retreat could cut off. He landed in the middle of the brawl.

“GOREHORDE! RALLY TO ME!” He bellowed. “TO ME! TO ME!”

The Gorehorde fighting force near the swamp converged on his position. Once disengaged what was left of the aelves ran full tilt for the rocks. He quickly organized the remaining bloodwarriors, skullreapers and wrathmongers for a charge. He needed daemons for this attack, but they had not come even with all this bloodshed. He did not wait for the lines to be fully formed before he started for the spear bristling fortress of boulders.

Charge after charge crashed upon that terrible bastion. Not once was Madrax and the Gorehorde able to gain the rocky heights. Even when the bloodreavers and remaining cavalry overwhelmed the lizards and joined the attack the aelves held rocks. Half of the Seraphon were able to escape. By nightfall the aelves had reinforced their position and had anchored both flanks against the swamp forming an impenetrable semicircle of rock and steel.
Madrax stood on the long, low hill directly across from the rock fortress. Flights of burning arrows from there rained down on anything that moved in the valley below. The Gorechosen and Bilerot stood a few paces away. Madrax gave orders for all probe attacks to stop and to dig in for the night. They dispersed to their separate commands leaving Bilerot standing alone. He had lost around one third of his fighting force, but he would not allow the enemy to control the field. Arms crossed he waited for dawn.

But in the morning, there was no one to fight. Under the cover of darkness and burning arrows, the aelves had vanished from whence they came. Madrax could only assume that the bushwhacking bloodless heathens had no stomach for a real fight. Which was fine. He had better places to be.
The Kriegsrat, by P.L. Baker

Dramatis Personae

Oberon Brightblade, Lord-Celestant
Titania Thundersworn, Lord-Arcanum
Faustus Dawncaller, Lord-Relictor
Wolfgang Skysplitter, Lord-Ordinator
Sabine Wolfsoul, Knight-Zephyros
Klaus Starstrike, Knight-Venator
Alveblade Runeshaper, Knight-Incantor
Günter Stormcaller, Knight-Heraldor

Laying low in a valley of Shyish can be found the bustling metropolis of Anvilheim, and at the city’s heart stands Himmelsplitter, a stormkeep of the Anvils of the Heldenhammer. Deep within its mighty walls is a room, barren of all décor save markings of the cardinal and ordinal points in the chamber’s center. Here stand eight mighty warriors, clad in armor of black and gold, and all helmsless with one exception. At the cardinal points stand the Lords of this stormkeep, and at the ordinal points, the Knights.

Faustus Dawncaller raised his reliquary and tapped the pommel against the flagstones, calling the conclave to order. “Now that we are gathered, the Kriegsrat may begin.” The Lord-Relictor gestured toward Oberon Brightblade, who acknowledged with a nod.

“My thanks, Faustus.” Oberon said, stepping forward. “First, I would ask a moment of silence for our fallen brother, Lord-Veritant Amauth Ravenmane.” He held a mailed fist up to his chest, and those around him did the same. “Let us pray his reforging soon returns him to our number.” All present bowed their head in respect, comforted in the knowing their comrade would stand among them once more.

“And now, unto the business at hand.” Oberon looked at each of the others in turn. “We have received an entreaty from one Seneschal-General Monique von Helminger.” Faustus spoke up first. “Von Helminger? Any relation to the House of Stars general that lost his men and his own life at the Hammerhides?” Oberon nodded, “The very same.”

Producing the letter, Oberon read aloud. “With the authority vested in me by the Grand Conclave of Hammerhal, I bid you join the Sigmarsmacht Delegation in the grand undertaking
that is the reconquest of Amasya, the hallowed necropolis.” The Lord-Celestant returned the letter to his belt as murmured conversation broke out among his compatriots. Oberon thought he’d caught a look of recognition from Titania Thundersworn as he read, but the Lord-Arcanum was now speaking in hushed tones with the Runeshaper. “We have a decision to make, brothers and sisters.” Oberon intoned, calling the council to order.

“In which Realm would we be waging war, Lord-Celestant? Where does this hallowed necropolis stand?” inquired Klaus. “Ghyran, brother.” Oberon answered, looking toward Faustus as the Lord-Relictor began to speak. “I do not denigrate the import of this undertaking, but what would make it significant enough to pull us away from the wars high Sigmaron has already tasked us with?”

A grim countenance swept over Oberon’s face. “The Basalt Lord.” The torchlight itself seemed to flicker and dim as a sour mood settled over the room. All knew of Lord-Veritant Ravenmane’s defeat by the hand of the Varanguard named Qarang Sarn; some present had even fought alongside him the day he was struck down by the Basalt Lord. The battle had been bitter, but the Anvils’ defeat was sealed by his death- and Oberon declared vengeance soon after.

This time, Faustus took note of the Lord-Arcanum’s demeanour. “Lady Titania, do you have something to say?” She glanced at the Lord-Relictor, unable to read his expression behind the skull mask. “Speak, sister. You are among friends. What do you know?”

Titania stepped forward, and told the Kriegsrat of purging a soulblight coven and discovering texts of hide and blood which also made mention of the hallowed necropolis. She spoke to memories of her mortal life, of a holy city and the great diversity it held. She recalled a young leader, the son of a high priest, who betrayed Sigmar in his hour of glory. “I know not of whom these visions behold,” Titania explained, “yet I feel compelled to seek this sacred city.” Bowing her head in deference, she stepped back to her cardinal point. After a long moment, Oberon spoke. “Lady Titania, you shall indeed go Amasya, with the full strength of your Tempest Chamber.” Looking to Faustus, he continued. “Lord Dawncaller, you will accompany her with a detachment Warrior Chamber. Lady Wolfsoul,” he turned to the Knight-Zephyros, “You will take your fiercest hunter retinues and keep track of Sarn.” Sabine crashed her gauntlet to her chestplate in salute.

“As for the rest,” Oberon raised his tone almost to a battlecry, “you will accompany me and cast down all who oppose the Seneschal-General!” His words were met with a unanimous, crashing salute.
“Steel yourselves! The Soul Wardens march to war!”

“Zebrech sie auf dem Amboss!” the Kriegsrat answered as one.

Wolf Trap, by P.L. Baker

Dramatis Personae

Sabine Wolfsoul Knight-Zephyros
Helga Shadowblade Hunter-Prime
Yuric the Swift Pallador-Prime
Gavrik “Eagle-Eye” Darreg Raptor-Prime
Galain Stormbreaker Lord-Castellant
Imrik Gryph-Hound Pack Alpha

Isik Kulesi

A storm was coming, Sabine could smell it. Her and her chosen warriors were stalking the ruined tower halls in search of their target. The tower might have been great once but years of neglect had brought the mighty tower down. Imrik and his pack loped and warbled around the hunters; Eagle-Eye and his Raptors were stationed overlooking the entrance the hunters had taken and Yuric and his Palladors were on standby.

So far, the plan had worked; await the two Chaos factions to begin their conflict and amidst the confusion, she would kill Sarn. Imrik let out a short squawk and the party clung to the shadows. Several emaciated humans, if they could still pass as such, shambled by, so unaware that they didn’t see the Gryph-Hounds, even as the beasts ripped into them. Once the scene was properly cleaned the group continued.

The rain had begun to fall, and the sounds of battle grew into a cacophony. The group stopped at the sound of voices, one louder and more confident than the others. Sabine knew Sarn’s voice, he so loved to hear himself talk. The enemy likely outnumbered them; she always knew this was a suicide mission; but Lord Oberon’s will would be carried out. No matter the cost. With a few clicks of her tongue she sent Imrik and his pack to the front to incite chaos. Once the Gryph-Hounds had startled their prey Helga and her Hunters took to the field laying low Khornites and Maggotkin alike. Sabine joined her brethren in this conflict, her twin axes singing a deadly lamentation.
Sabine caught site of Sarn, the Basalt Lord was watching the battle with indifference. With a bounding leap she brought herself within striking distance but before she could bring her axes to bear Sarn grabbed her by the throat and arm. The Basalt Lord held Sabine high choking the life from her, she could see the sneer on his face. With a simple gesture he broke her arm, and within the same movement broke the other one, her axes clanged to the floor.

Sarn leaned in close to her, “Tell your Lord I expect a real challenge next time.” With a laugh he threw her to the ground walking towards a shattered corridor. Sabine’s vision swam as a trio of Blood Warriors and a Slaughterpriest bore down upon her. Sabine screamed her frustration and kicked out at the khornites.

A great bolt of lightning crashed down blasting apart the Blood Warriors. The Slaughterpriest took a step forward axe raised, swinging the axe with brute force only to be stopped by a halberd coming out of the mote of lightning. Sabine watched as Lord-Castellant Stormbreaker strode forward challenging the Khornate priest, the priest yelled some great verse of the blood god and charged. What seemed like an eon to Sabine was but mere moments as Galain split the skull of his adversary. More lightning struck the field, Paladins and Liberators appeared and closed ranks around them. Others came to the aid of the Hunters while Galain’s own gryph-hound Obsidian rallied its still living brethren.

Galain turned to Sabine Warding Lantern open, bathing her in the warm glow of Azyr. As Sabine’s arms began to mend he spoke, “Gather your blades Wolfsoul,” she could see his gentle smile behind his death mask, “Your quarry yet lives.”

That is Not Dead..., by P.L. Baker

Dramatis Personae

Titania Thundersworn  Lord-Arcanum
Alveblade Runeshaper  Knight-Incantor
Cedric Aetherborn  Sequitor-Prime
Sydril Heavenlight  Evocator-Prime
Faustus Dawncaller  Lord-Relictor

The seal was placed. Titania stared at the door for what seemed an eternity, her heart hurt. She and Alveblade had just trapped Lord-Relictor Dawncaller and his Warrior Chamber, alongside a sizable portion of her Sacrosanct, on the other side with legions of the
undead. “He commanded it sister.” Alveblade looked drained as he placed a hand on her shoulder. Still she felt remorse for leaving them behind. The Barrow Lord and his skeletal legions had menaced the Anvils after they had made it deep into Nagaskahip. After many sorties the Stormcast had been forced to retreat but their only way out had been blocked. Eventually the beleaguered warriors came upon an old maintenance network, Faustus had given the orders to escape and that he would hold back the enemy force. Now Titania and her Sacrosanct were in unknown territory, and an ominous presence seemed to call to them.

Rahipmezar

Titania noticed the tombs were much more decorative here. They must have crossed underneath the Ur-River into the priests tombs. Alveblade led the group, light emanating from his staff, Sequitor-Prime Cedric brought up the rear while Evocator-Prime Sydril and Titania took center. The darkness radiating from the tomb was crushing, the presence they all felt was close. They came to a corridor, Alveblade put his fist up, they could hear chanting and metal clanging against stone. He glanced around the corner, “Arcanites.” He reported, “not many but they’re led by an Ogroid it seems.” He laid out what he saw, a handful of tzaangors, some chosen and the Thaumaturge. “They seem to be trying to force their way through a sealed portal.” Alveblade said as he scratched at his beard. Titania shivered, the presence was stronger from there, “We must stop them,” she looked to the group, “Sigmar knows what is in there.” The others nodded solemnly.

Titania led the charge with the Evocators close behind where Alveblade led the Sequitors. The Thaumaturge grunted in its own language and the Tzaangors charged while the Chosen rallied around it. Titania dispatched a tzaangor with her stave while arcing lightning from her fingertips into another. A third Tzaangor rose its greatblade to strike and found the tip of a sword through its chest, Alveblade pulled his blade from the creature and pointed, “The Thaumaturge continues its ritual!” Titania charges up the ramp into the Chosen, Sydril and her Evocators behind. The Chosen Champion swung wide with his great axe, taking advantage of the narrow space. Sydril and the others empowered their blades and met the Chosen head on. Titania turned briefly noting that Alveblade was not far behind and that Cedric’s Sequitors were almost done with the Tzaangors. Bringing herself back to the moment she cleared the battle between the Evocators and the Chosen and launched herself at the Thaumaturge. The beast never stopped its rite and swung his stave at her, a fell energy expelled from it.

She dodged low and brought her own stave down with another lightning blast. The Ogroid unbound the spell and stood bringing its full height to bear. Sweeping low with its
staff it caught her leg and pulled her down. She tried to roll to the side but it brought its
cloven-hoofed foot down on her chest and began to crush her. Alveblade struck it from
behind with his sword and also cast spirit storm, throwing its balance off enough for Titania
to recover with another lightning blast.

The Ogroid reached down and grabbed Titania and threw her against the sealed door,
summoning its fell energies for another attack. Alveblade brought his sword down upon the
beast’s arm causing it to drop the stave, with that motion the Thaumaturge turned and
grasped Alveblade by his throat beginning to crush it. Titania watched as the Knight-Incantor
graped a spirit flask and smashed it in the face of his attacker. Titania watched as the flask
exploded, Alveblade flew back down the ramp while the Thaumaturge crashed into the door
beside her. “Alveblade!” She tried to get up. “I…yet live…sister.” He lay there, armour
smoking from the explosion. She sighed in relief and looked to the Ogroid its face a smoking
mess. Titania struggled to her feet, just then the door gave off an eerie light and hundreds of
ghastly hands pulled her through the door as if it wasn’t there. Alveblade watched in abstract
horror, “Titania!” He ran to the door and began beating on it. He had to find a way to get in.

Which Can Eternal Lie..., by P.L. Baker

Dramatis Personae

Titania Thundersworn   Lord-Arcanum

Deep within Rahipmezar

Titania lay on the cold paving stone, aware but not awake. She knew that someone was
nearby but could not see them. Strength began to fill her body once more.

It has been a lifetime, my dear Gwenthyltine.

Titania started, she heard is as much as felt it. She rose slowly, hand resting on her head. It
was now she realized her death mask had laid beside her, she noted her weapons as well. “I
know not of whom you speak.” She shouted at the darkness, “I am Titania Thundersworn
Lord-Arcanum of the Anvils of the Heldenhammer!” She cast quick glances around the area as
she recovered her gear. Still nothing.

Ah it seems as though the false god has filled your mind with deceit allow me to illuminate.

At that moment Titania felt a cold grasp upon her head, visions similar to the ones she had
before overtook her. She saw herself as part of a council, in heated debates with the ruler
Mithridates Besh, alongside other generals as they fought the Chaos invasion, being struck down by a Chaos Lord. These memories and more flooded her, when she came back to reality she found herself on her knees in a silent scream.

*You see my dear. You’ve been brought home.*

Titania stood up, head still reeling, “Show yourself.” A spectre floated into view; its cloak long and ragged, skull a rictus grin, a broken crown adorned it, and an ornate blade at its side. “Who are you spirit!” She demanded as she pointed her blade towards it.

*My dear,* it paused, *I thought that would’ve been obvious by now.*

“Besh?”, Titania gasped, “so you sold your soul to the Undying King?” The gheist cackled, **Sold? No! I did so willingly.** Besh threw his arms out wide, **I knew that one day my son would be of need. And I have provided.** With that the wall sconces flared to life with an eerie green flame, in the flames glow was the skeletal remains of a massive dragon. “Chondronor, Champion of Amasya!” She gazed over the beast, “You would dare to desecrate the greatest defender of this fair city?” Besh cackled again, *My son will require a great steed, and what better than the great dragon Chondronor?*

Titania leveled her sword at Besh, “As one who defended this city with her life,” bringing the sword into a defensive stance, “I am more than ready to do so again.” She struck out at Besh who deftly countered with his blade. His crown transformed into a skull-faced helm. Their blades rang in chorus, she threw out some of her deadliest spells. Sacrificing her stave to hold her blade two-handed she swung down with all the strength that Sigmar had bestowed upon her. Once more sigmarite rang against the pitted steel, Titania feinted left yet Besh did not take the ruse and struck right. The blade bit into her shoulder, she pulled back and swung upwards catching the wraith’s arm. Besh answered with three well placed strikes, unable to parry them all Titania took a slice into her abdomen. Titania again feinted a strike to the left, Besh connected a strike to her right running through her side. She took the blade in full and connected a powerful blow to Besh’s head. The gheist slammed hard into the ground, Titania lifted her blade and struck his head many times.

“It’s sad really,” Titania said blade poised down, “you truly were a great leader and friend.” Strength fading she drove her blade into his skull, the gheist known as Mithridates Besh began to fade.

*Fate shall see that we shall meet again my dear Gwenthyltine.*

The door began to glow and Titania felt herself being pulled again as she lost consciousness.
Under the Blood Red Skies, by P.L. Baker

Dramatis Personae

Oberon Brightblade   Lord-Celestant
Klaus Starstrike   Knight-Venator
Wolfgang Skysplitter   Lord-Ordinator

Azyrhol

The field of battle was absolute chaos. The Delegation's forces had committed and the Basalt Lord had proven to be a stalwart foe. Lord-Celestant Brightblade saddled on the mighty Stardrake Tiberon, bluish grey scales reflected little of the sunlight. Oberon pondered the recent news he had received; Sabine and her vanguard were defeated and only still here because of the timely intervention of Lord-Castellant Stormbreaker, The combined forces of Faustus and Titania had breached the catacombs but had suffered heavy losses from the undead and arcanites. Worse still that Titania lay in a coma of unknown means, Faustus and Alveblade were marching to rejoin the main force.

Wherever he flew the forces of the Freeguild would cheer and fight harder, not one to be outdone he spurred Tiberon towards the ground. The Stardrake's talons raked across the ground slaying scores of Chaos Warriors, it finished off with a breath of lightning on a group of Skullcrushers. Oberon reached low in the saddle and took off the skullhunter's head with a flick of the blade. Tiberon spiraled upwards unfurling his wings to full splendor. The men and women of the Freeguild cheered once more and charged with great fervor into the enemy. Sarn had committed most of his forces to this battle and was slowly overtaking his foes. The combined artillery might of the Stormcast and the Ironweld Arsenal, under the guidance of Lord-Ordinator Skysplitter, rained devastation upon the Horde. Klaus and his Prosecutors flittered through the sky sending lines of hammers, javelins, and arrows into a large group of Maggotkin.

Tiberon landed as Oberon stood on his mount, “By day's end we will hold this sacred ground!” Around him mustered not only his Stormhost but many other Stormcast of varying Stormhosts, Freeguild, Duardin and Aelf alike. “We will take our fight in His name, and while we yet draw breath there will be no ground given!” He thrust his sword into the direction of the Chaos Hordes, “Now warriors of the Delegation! Let this be the charge that crush their
lines! We will break them upon the Anvil!” Oberon overlooked the crowd as Tiberon lifted off, “For Sigmar!” The chant was taken up by the crowd as they charged fearlessly into the coming slaughter. Tiberon rakes his claws into the ground again as Blood Warriors fell, the Stardrake landed and lashed out his tail into a group of Blood Reavers. Oberon patted the beasts shoulder as he dismounted, taking to the battlefield alongside his Paladins.

Tiberon took flight again and rained his lightning upon the Bloodbound. Oberon and his warriors crashed into the front lines of the Horde, a mighty Khorne Lord rushed to greet him with axe in hand. The two squared off, testing each other’s mettle. The Khorne Lord was quick, each strike precise, but Oberon deftly parried the blows and sent out two himself scoring a strike to the Lord’s midriff. The Lord struck back with a bullish charge that took Oberon of guard. The two landed heavily with a crash of steel and sigmarite, the Lord brought his blade down at Oberon’s head. Oberon brought his sword in a reverse hold and blocked the axe, he pulled his sword in its arc and shoved it into the Khorne Lord’s side. The Lord stumbled back grasping at the blade; Oberon got to his feet and grabbed the axe from the Lord and brought it down, splitting his skull.

The Khorne Lord fell to the ground as Oberon recovered his sword. The sky grew a dark, ugly red while the Khorne Lord laughed as he died. An ominous feeling came over the Lord-Celestant. Deep in his heart he knew the true battle for Amasya was only beginning.
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“AUDACITY!”