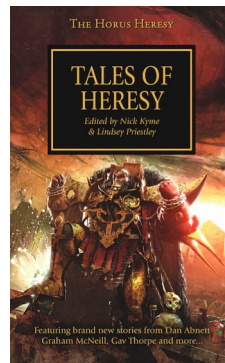


TALES OF HERESY

A Horus Heresy Anthology

Edited by Nick Kyme and Lindsey Priestley

When Horus the Warmaster rebelled against the Emperor, the ensuing civil war nearly destroyed the Imperium. War raged across galaxy, pitting Astartes against their battle-brothers in a struggle where death was the only victor. This collection features stories of heroism and tragedy set during this turbulent time, by star Horus Heresy authors Dan Abnett, Graham McNeill, James Swallow and more.



About the Author

Lindsey Priestley is one of Games Workshop's longest serving employees. A lifelong science fiction and fantasy fan, she currently works as the senior editor on the Black Library fiction line.

Nick Kyme hails from Grimsby, a small town on the east coast of England. Nick moved to Nottingham in 2003 to work on White Dwarf magazine as a Layout Designer. Since then, he has made the switch to the Black Library's hallowed halls as an editor and has been involved in a multitude of diverse projects. His writing credits

include several published short stories, background books and novels.

You can catch up with Nick and read about all of his other published works at his website: www.nickkyme.com

• **THE HORUS HERESY** •

HORUS RISING

Dan Abnett

FALSE GODS

Graham McNeill

GALAXY IN FLAMES

Ben Counter

FLIGHT OF THE EISENSTEIN

James Swallow

FULGRIM

Graham McNeill

DESCENT OF ANGELS

Mitchel Scanlon

LEGION

Dan Abnett

BATTLE FOR THE ABYSS

Ben Counter

MECHANICUM

Graham McNeill

The following is an excerpt from *Blood Games* by Dan Abnett, taken from *Tales of Heresy* edited by Nick Kyme and Lindsey Priestley. Published by the Black Library. Games Workshop, Willow Road, Nottingham, NG7 2WS, UK.

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He had been circling for ten months. Ten months, and eighteen identities, most of them so authentic they had fooled Unified Biometric Verification. He'd faked out three blind trails to throw them off his scent, one into the Slovakian fiefs, one to Kaspia and the Nord Reaches, and the other a meandering route down through the Tirol to the Dolomite Shrines overlooking the Pit of Venezia. He'd overwintered in Boocuresti Hive, and crossed the Black Sea Basin by cargo spinner during the first week of ice-ebb. At Bilhorod, he had turned back on himself to lose an unwanted tail. He had spent three weeks hiding in a disused manufactory in Mesopotamia, preparing his next move.

Ten months; a little long for a blood game, but then he was playing it out carefully, synchronising his movements with global patterns, following trade routes, inter-provincial traffic and seasonal labour migrations. He was one hundred per cent certain they didn't have an orbital grid fix for him, and he was fairly confident they didn't even have an approximate. There'd been no one on his heels since Bilhorod.

He trekked up-country through Baluchistan, mostly on foot, sometimes stealing a lift on transports, and crossed

the border into the Imperial Territory three hundred and three days after he had set out.

The top of the world had changed in ten months. An entire peak had disappeared from the blinding skyline, a gap at odds with his memories, nagging like a missing tooth. The high-altitude air smelled of pitch, molten alloys and shaved stone. Primarch Dorn's warrior-engineers were crafting their poliorcetics, armouring the highest and most robust steeples of the Earth. The smell of pitch, alloy and stone was the smell of approaching war. Its fragmented notes hung on the bright air of the old Himalazia.

The scenery was so white it scorched his eyes, and he was glad of his glare-goggles. A few degrees below zero, the air was like glass, and the sun like a fusion torch in the blue sky. Perfect snows coated the peaks and the ascents, painfully white, achingly empty. He had considered the south his best option, Kath Mandau and the towering central Precinct, but as he approached he realised how much things had changed. Security, which had never been less than rigorous, had cinched up as tight as a penitent's cilice. The coming war had trebled the guards on the gates, quadrupled the gun-nests and automated weapon blisters, and multiplied the biometric sensors a hundredfold. Vast workcrews of migrant labourers, serving the orders of the Masonic Guilds, had gathered around the Palace: their camps, their workings, their very bodies staining

the high snows green and black and red like algae growth.

Security is tighter, but there are millions more faces to watch.

He observed the labour hosts for six days, eschewing his plans for the south and turning north instead, following the high pastures and walking trails over onto the plateau, keeping the toiling hosts in view. Constant streams flowed down the snowy valleys and passes from Kunlun: columns of fresh workers, and convoys of cargo and building materials from the Xizang mines. The columns looked like rivers of slow, dark meltwater, or racing black glaciers. Where the influx streams met the worker armies, temporary cities sprouted in the shadows of the immense walls, habitent towns and canvas metropoli, accommodating the migrants, corralling their pack animals and servitors, seeing to their needs of food and water and medicine. The unloaded materials: timber, pig alloy, mule steel, ores and ballast, stacked up around the camp cities like slag heaps. Hoist cranes and magnificent derricks lifted pallets of materials up over the walls. Horns snorted and echoed around the high valleys.

Sometimes, he just sat and looked at the Palace as if it was the most wonderful thing in creation. It probably wasn't. There were undoubtedly feats of ancient, inhuman architecture on forgotten, scattered worlds that dwarfed it, or eclipsed it in stupendous scale or awe-inspiring scope. The architecture was not the point. It was the idea of the Palace that made it the most

wonderful thing. It was the inner notion, the concept that it made flesh.

The Palace was vast, beautiful, the greatest mountain range on Terra refashioned into a residence and a capital, and now, belatedly, a fortress.

The missing Himalazian peak had been levelled for building materials. The recognition of that feat made him smile. These days, the schemes of man were never modest.

Adopting rags and dirty leg armour, he spent three days labouring with the genestock ogres from Nei Monggol. Nicknamed the migou, they slogged up and down the passes, carrying sheets of zurlite and huge panniers of nephrite and Egyptian pebble. They dug embankments and earthworks with massive shovels made from the blade-bones of giant grox, and formed hammer gangs to rhythmically sink the iron stakes that would support the concertinaed spools of flay-wire.

At night, in the work camps, the massive genestock stoked their over-muscled bodies with qash, a resin derived from the venom of a Gobi Waste nematode. The substance made their veins bulge, and their eyes roll white. It made them speak in tongues.

He watched the effects, and made estimates of dosage and systemic duration.

The genestock were prepared to work with him, but they treated him with general suspicion. He tried to be just another Caucasian broadback, keen to earn a stipend and a bonus from the Masonic Guilds. His papers were in

order. When he tried to purchase a little qash, however, they turned sour, fearing him to be a genewhip sent into the camps to keep the workforce clean.

They tried to kill him.

Under the pretence of a quiet sale, three genestock migou drew him apart from the main camp, and led him to a rock pasture where fire stone and cacholong spoil had been heaped up by porter gangs. They unwrapped a cloth roll with slices of brown resin in it to show him.

Then one drew a punch-dagger and tried to insert it into his liver.

He sighed – a complication.

He took hold of the migou's wrist, folded the arm around and broke it against itself with his elbow. The joint went the wrong way, and the arm went so slack, he simply peeled the punch-dagger out of the dead fingers. The genestock uttered no expression of pain. He simply blinked in surprise.

All three of them were titanic creatures, corded and slabby with unnatural, hard-cut muscle definition. It had not occurred to any of them that the Caucasian, though extremely large and well made, would offer them a moment's problem.

One threw a punch, a blow driven with huge force but desultory effort, as if he was aggrieved that they should be put to such trouble. The punch was designed to finish matters, to put the Caucasian down, his jaw pulped, his head slack on the column of his spine.

The blow did not connect with any part of the Caucasian. Instead, it encountered the punch-dagger, which had suddenly been angled to face it. The impact shaved flesh

and muscle away from bone. This produced a pain response. The genestock howled, and tried to gather in his shredded hand and forearm. The Caucasian shut him up by jabbing the punch-dagger into his heavy forehead. It cracked in through the bone like the tip of a rock-breaker's pick.

The genestock toppled backwards, wearing the grip of the punch-dagger above his eyes like some curious tiara. The third migou grabbed him from behind in an ursine hug. The genestock with the broken arm tried to claw at his face. It was all tiresome now. He broke free of the embrace with a shrug of his shoulders, turned and drove his right hand into the genestock's chest. The sternum split. When the Caucasian wrenched his hand out again, it looked as if it was wearing a red glove. Most of the migou's heart was clenched in his steaming fist.

The genestock with the broken arm, now the only one of the trio left alive, murmured in fear and started to run away across the rock pasture.

He bore the wounded genestock no especial malice, but he couldn't let him go. With bloody fingers, he bent down, selected a small piece of fire stone, weighed it in his hand and launched it with a snap of his wrist.

It made a pokk! noise as it penetrated the back of the fleeing ogre's head like a bullet. He fell heavily, and his hefty corpse slithered down the litter of a spoil heap on its face.

He disposed of the three bodies in a fathomless gorge, washed his hands with snow and took the roll of qash resin.

TALES OF HERESY can be purchased in all better bookstores, Games Workshop and other hobby stores, or direct from this website and GW mail order.

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