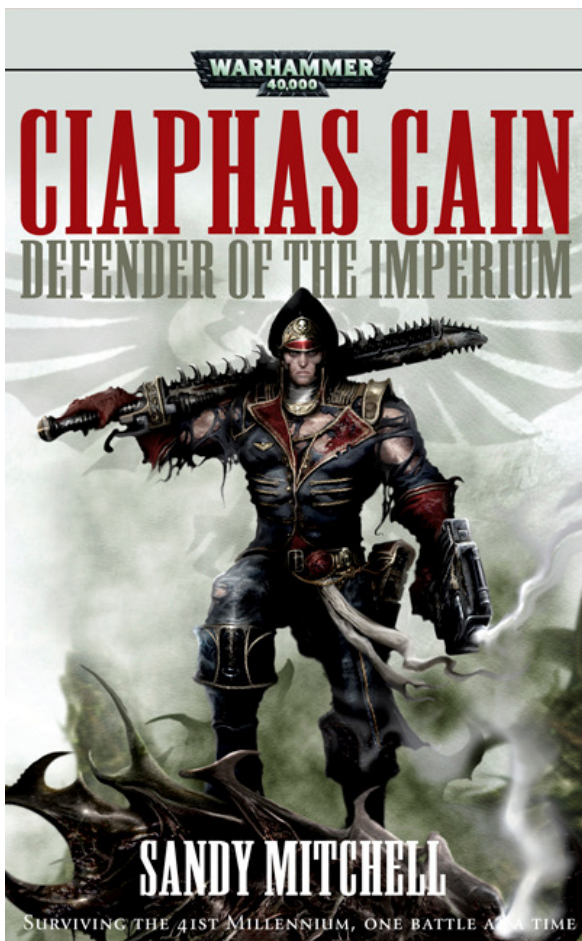




BLACK LIBRARY



# ***DEFENDER OF THE IMPERIUM***

## ***A Ciaphas Cain omnibus***

*By Sandy Mitchell*

The legendary Commissar Ciaphas Cain, lauded as one of the great heroes of the Imperium, finds himself thrust onto the battlefield again. Cain wants nothing more than to keep out of trouble and get to the other side of his commission in one piece, but the war-torn 41st millennium has other ideas. Confronted with the powers of Chaos and hordes of alien foes, our intrepid Commissar seeks to sidestep danger and talk his way out of trouble. Yet each time he survives his legend only grows, and his life is in ever-greater jeopardy... *Defender of the Imperium* contains the novels *Death or Glory*, *Duty Calls* and *Cain's Last Stand*, plus the short story 'Traitor's Gambit' and a new introduction from author Sandy Mitchell.

### **About the Author**

Sandy Mitchell is a pseudonym of Alex Stewart, who has been writing successfully under both names since the mid 1980s. As Sandy, he's best known for his work for the Black Library, particularly the Ciaphas Cain series. Currently, he's in the final stages of a two year MA in Screenwriting at the London College of Communication, which has left far less time than usual for having fun in the 41st Millennium, but is continuing to chronicle Cain's progress at every opportunity. His most recent project as Alex was the short film *Ruffled Feathers*, a comedy about a catastrophic hen night, which premiered in July 2010.



• **CIAPHAS CAIN** •

Sandy Mitchell

**HERO OF THE IMPERIUM**

(Contains books 1-3 in the series: *For the Emperor*,  
*Caves of Ice* and *The Traitor's Hand*)

**DEFENDER OF THE IMPERIUM**

(Contains books 4-6 in the series: *Death or Glory*, *Duty*  
*Calls* and *Cain's Last Stand*)

**Book 7 - THE EMPEROR'S FINEST**

• **DARK HERESY** •

Sandy Mitchell

**Book 1 - SCOURGE THE HERETIC**

**Book 2 - INNOCENCE PROVES NOTHING**

The following is an excerpt from *Defender of the Imperium* by Sandy Mitchell. Published by the Black Library. Games Workshop, Willow Road, Nottingham, NG7 2WS, UK.

Copyright © Games Workshop Ltd, 2010. All rights reserved. Reproduction prohibited, in any form, including on the internet.

For more details or to contact us visit the Black Library website:  
[www.blacklibrary.com](http://www.blacklibrary.com).

IN RETROSPECT, I imagine, the greenskin was as surprised to see me as I was to see it, otherwise it would no doubt have finished the matter before my numbed and battered mind had properly registered its presence. As it was, despite the weakness and stiffness in my scarcely better functioning body, instinct cut in and I evaded its rush reflexively, pivoting on one foot and kicking it in the back of the knee with the other as it hurtled past, bellowing like a bull grox catching wind of a rival. I had a moment of panic, wondering if the old trick would work against a slab of insensate muscle fully a head taller and twice as wide as any human opponent I'd ever faced, even the Catachans I'd occasionally sparred with, but it seemed greenskin joints were sufficiently similar to ours after all. It fell to one knee, yelling even more loudly, if that were possible, as the sizzling metal of the hull scorched through the coarse fabric of its trousers. It half rose, to come at me again, and disappeared through the open hatch with an almost comical yelp of astonishment after I kicked it in the face as hard as I could while it was still off-balance. A resounding crash followed, then the unmistakable crack of a lasgun, two single shots in quick succession.

Confident that Jurgen had been able to deal with the problem, I shielded my eyes against the sun and glanced around rapidly, trying to discern where the thing had come from, and, more importantly, whether or not it had been alone.

No such luck, of course. Harsh guttural voices echoed around the dunes, and from my elevated position atop the hull I was able to see two more flashes of green, moving astonishingly fast, closing in on our position. The quick hand-to-hand scuffle with their fellow had been over so fast I hadn't really had time to take in the full ghastriness of the creature I'd faced, but these were sufficiently far away for me to be able to make them out in all their grotesquerie.

I'd be lying if I said I didn't quail inwardly at the sight. Despite my confident assertion to Divas that they didn't sound so tough, and the relative ease with which my first attacker had been dispatched, I was bright enough even then to know a serious threat when I saw one. I'd been lucky in that first encounter, I realised that, only instinct and reflexes honed by years of training enabling me to take advantage of my adversary's impetuosity, and Jurgen's intervention hadn't exactly hurt either (well, it had hurt the ork, and a good thing too if you ask me).

For one thing, the creatures running towards me were big, and bulging with muscle in a fashion I'd only previously seen on ogryns. Even a Catachan would have looked distinctly puny next to one of these monstrosities. Tiny red eyes glared from beneath an exaggerated brow ridge, but unlike the holos I'd seen, they were alive with malevolence, and what, if not exactly intelligence, was the kind of instinctive cunning which quite often made up for its lack. I've got to know a great deal more about

these creatures over the last century or so, since that first disconcerting encounter, and one thing I've seen time and again is that dismissing them as simple, unreasoning brutes is a fast route to the graveyard (or more likely their stomachs). Despite their bulk they moved swiftly, and with a kind of grace completely at odds with their appearance, every movement economical and precise.

That, above all else, was the thing which most struck fear into my heart. Vast as the power of those hulking muscles undoubtedly was, it was contained and directed, focussed on a single objective, and that was my demise.

'Commissar!' Jurgen appeared at the hatch, a lasgun from the weapons locker cradled in his arms, and Emperor bless him forever, the chainsword I'd left in the main compartment after completing my practice session what could only have been a couple of hours before, thrust through the motley collection of pouches and webbing he was habitually festooned with. I took it gratefully, thumbed the activator, and drew my laspistol from the holster at my belt, feeling instantly more comfortable for the sensation of weapons in my hands again. My aide turned his head to look at our attackers, his mouth set in a faintly self-satisfied grin. It only occurred to me later that, having dispatched the ork which had stumbled into our pod, his mood was bound to be as cheerful as any Valhallan's would have been under the circumstances. 'Ugly frakkers, aren't they sir?'

'Indeed they are,' I said diplomatically, aware that, as always, the irony of his words would be lost on him. By now, our assailants were close enough to open fire with the crude bolt pistols they carried, but fortunately they proved to be no more accurate with firearms than most of their kind, the explosive projectiles detonating a couple of metres from where we stood. Even so, the

noise seemed to excite them, and their pace increased, scrambling up the dunes so fast that for a moment I began to fear that they'd be on us before we could react. Sunlight glittered from the close combat weapons they wielded in their other hands, large stubby axes with short handles, which looked incongruously like something which would have looked more at home in a kitchen than on a battlefield. 'Whenever you're ready.'

I opened fire with my pistol, Jurgan following suit. With relief I saw our las bolts impacting on the torsos of those monstrous assailants, blowing cauterised craters through the dull brown clothing they wore (which blended quite disconcertingly with the desert sands, so that their outlines were blurred, the festering green of their limbs and faces seeming to flicker against the landscape like disembodied parts) and the dense flesh beneath. To my horror, the wounds, which would have dropped a human, barely slowed them, and they charged on blindly: if anything we seemed to have succeeded only in enraging them.

'Waaaaagh!' they yelled, provoked by pain and rage into bellowing the warcry, which no one who has faced these monstrosities can ever forget. I'd never heard it before except through the speakers of a hololith, and although, as I was subsequently to discover, it was nothing compared to the sound produced by hundreds, or even thousands, of ork throats, it was disconcerting enough, let me tell you. It was to save our lives, though. Abruptly I heard it echoed from behind, just in time to turn and face another pair, which had flanked us unnoticed while our attention was fixed on their comrades.

'Frak off!' I parried a downward stroke from one of those large and intimidating axes with my gently

humming chainsword, firing four or five las bolts from the pistol in my other hand directly into the creature's exposed belly. To my relief, it staggered back, momentarily blocking the rush of its fellow, which reacted in what I was soon to realise was the typical manner of all its kind. Without hesitation it smashed its own blade down into the skull of its comrade, releasing a gush of foul smelling ichor, and shouldered the falling body aside in its eagerness to get to me. A charnel stench worse than anything I'd ever experienced (and considering I'd just spent three weeks cooped up in a tiny lifepod with Jurgen that was saying something) rolled over me as it opened its jaws astonishingly wide, and bellowed its bone-shaking warcry. For a moment, my entire field of vision was filled with sharp teeth, tusks, and a gullet, which looked quite capable of swallowing me whole#.1

Almost without thinking, I raised the pistol in my left hand and fired again, a number of shots in rapid succession, straight into that huge and stinking maw. The back of the creature's head exploded, taking whatever brains it had with it. It staggered, staring at me in vapid astonishment for a moment before toppling from the hull to impact against the vitrified sand beneath, with a crack vaguely reminiscent of someone breaking the largest plate in the galaxy.

I whirled round to face our original attackers, to find that Jurgen had switched his lasgun to full auto, and was hosing them down with the same vindictive enthusiasm Valhallans generally displayed while slaughtering their hereditary enemies. Caught in the blizzard of las bolts, the two greenskins staggered at last, dropping to the sand and rolling down the side of the dunes to leak out the last of their lives in what I expected to be no more than a



moment or two of feeble twitching. To my astonishment, however, they began crawling back towards us, the lust for bloodshed still burning in their eyes, until a couple of more carefully placed shots from my imperturbable aide blew their heads apart like overripe melons.

‘Well done, Jurgen...’ I began, when my aide’s head snapped around, and he began trying to bring his weapon up to bear in my direction.

‘Look out, commissar!’ he yelled, still trying to find a target, and forewarned by his cry, I was just able to bring my chainsword up in time. With a roar, which left my already abused ears ringing, the ork whose comrade had so casually struck it down charged at me, swinging its cleaver again. Unbelievably, the head wound, which would have proved fatal to a man had, it seemed, barely stunned it, and the belly wounds I’d inflicted hardly slowed it down at all. Ignoring the atavistic voice in the back of my head which gibbered in panic at the creature’s seeming invulnerability, I moved instinctively to counter its rush. It wasn’t unkillable, we had four pieces of evidence to prove it lying all around us; I just needed to find its weak point. In the meantime, a slash across the torso from my trusty chainblade ought to slow it down a bit... I swung the weapon, ducking under a massive forearm, and was rewarded with another roar of anger as my blade connected.

Ichor continued to pump from the gash in its skull as I danced away, trying to open the distance between us enough to give Jurgen a clear shot at the thing, but it was hellish fast, and closed with me again before I could do so. It blinked, trying to clear its vision, and I took advantage of its momentary distraction to get in under its guard again, striking at its leg. The humming blade struck deep, whining against bone for a moment, and the

greenskin staggered, bellowing another challenge. For the first time, it seemed less sure of itself, its movements a little less controlled, and I evaded another desperate swing of its axe with almost contemptuous ease. The blow had been a wild one, and I countered it easily, taking the creature's arm off just above the elbow with a gush of foul smelling fluid that sprayed the surrounding sand and hull, missing me by millimetres.

That ought to have been enough to subdue any opponent, but once again I underestimated the ork capacity for beserker rage and lack of instinct for self-preservation. Instead of collapsing, it surged to its feet, roaring just as loudly as before, staggering slightly as it favoured its wounded leg. That was enough: I sidestepped, striking at its back, and severed the thing's spinal column. It fell at last, rolling down to join its comrades, and twitched for a moment before finally becoming still.

'Nice work, sir,' Jurgen said, lowering his weapon.

I looked around us, breathing hard, not quite daring to believe it was all over at last. 'Is that the last of them?' I asked.

My aide nodded. 'Must be,' he said, with an assurance I quite envied; but then his people had generations of experience fighting these creatures, so I suppose he had good reason for his confidence. 'If there were any more around they'd be all over us by now.'

'Well that's a comfort,' I said, with less sarcasm than I'd intended, then the obvious question struck me. 'But what I want to know is how they found us so fast.'

***DEFENDER OF THE IMPERIUM*** can be purchased direct from this website and GW mail order, Games Workshop and other hobby stores, and better bookstores.

In the UK: Price £10.99

ISBN: 978-1-84416-882-8

In the US: Price \$15.00 (\$17.50 Canada)

ISBN: 978-1-84416-883-5

- Online: Buy direct care of Games Workshop's webstore by going to [www.blacklibrary.com](http://www.blacklibrary.com) or [www.games-workshop.com](http://www.games-workshop.com).
- Bookshops: Distributed in the UK and the US by Simon & Schuster Books.
- Games & hobby stores: Distributed in UK and US by Games Workshop.
- UK mail order: 0115-91 40 000
- US mail order: 1-800-394-GAME