

# ***FLESHWORKS***

*A Necromunda novel*

*By Lucien Soulban*

*For the spies of the secretive House Delaque, survival is even more of a struggle. When Uriah Storm is told that his next target is his friend Soren, a spy working within rivals House Van Saar, he is surprised – Delaque spies are never supposed to know their targets personally. Realising that the real target is not Soren, but his biomechanical implants, Uriah begins to suspect the game is more complex than even he imagined and is forced into a race against time to find his friend before the Van Saar or his fellow assassins do.*



## **About the Author**

Lucien Soulban has authored and co-written over 90 roleplaying supplements for games including *Vampire: The Masquerade*, *Deadlands* and *Spycraft*. He also helped launch three roleplaying games including Guardians of Order's *Silver Age Sentinels* and White Wolf's awardwinning *Orpheus*. Lucien wrote the script for Relic Entertainment's *Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War* and *Winter Assault* video games, while February 2005 saw the release of his first novel, entitled: *Blood In, Blood Out*. He is now a scriptwriter for video-game giant Ubisoft Montreal.

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

Price: £6.99 (UK) / \$7.99 (US) / \$10.99 (CAN)

ISBN: 1 84416 329 6

Bookshops: Distributed in the UK by Hodder. Distributed in 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

Online: Buy direct care of Games Workshop's web store by going to [www.blacklibrary.com/store](http://www.blacklibrary.com/store) or [www.games-workshop.com](http://www.games-workshop.com).

The following is an excerpt from *Fleshworks* by Lucien Soulban.  
Published by the Black Library. Games Workshop, Willow Road,  
Nottingham, NG7 2WS, UK.

Copyright © Games Workshop Ltd, 2006. All rights reserved. Reproduction prohibited, in any form, including on the internet.

For more details email [publishing@games-workshop.co.uk](mailto:publishing@games-workshop.co.uk) or visit the Black Library website [www.blacklibrary.com](http://www.blacklibrary.com)

The ear-popping crack of gunshots and the hiss of lasfire was almost deafening; it echoed off the walls, amplified to storm's pitch by the thick, pockmarked plascrete.

Uriah Storm ignored the racket. He focused on his target, both hands wrapped around the bolt pistol's grip, and angled down to the floor. His blue eyes drifted, as though lost to some silent conundrum.

Suddenly, with an experienced snap, he brought the pistol up – one hand to aim, the other to steady – and squeezed off four shots, his finger barely tapping the hair trigger. The untamed weapon kicked in his hand with each shot; four of four rounds found their target. A fleeting smile escaped his lips and Uriah chuckled. He felt like a child with a new toy.

The firing range was crowded today, a line of twenty men and women unleashing a blistering array of punishment.

Uriah didn't look at them. Instead, he watched the steel-alloy targets scattered at various intervals along the range, hidden behind collapsed

walls and blasted archways. That the targets all bore some semblance to the thick-necked, low-browed members of House

Orlock was mere coincidence, or so the Delaque agents claimed with a smile. Still, too many of their shots were errant. Too many House members believed that filling the air with a steady hail of death was equal to being a crack shot.

Uriah clucked and smiled at his own sudden mischievous inspiration. He pivoted and fired another four shots into the other targets along the range, hitting the ones others had missed. A few people stopped firing and craned their heads to look in his direction. Most of the shooters scowled at him, though a couple returned his easy grin. Those of poor humour, Uriah decided, were likely to be equally poor shots.

Pleased with himself, Uriah ejected the pistol's clip and cleared the round in the chamber. He mouthed a quick 'thank you' to the Machine Spirit empowering the weapon. It was only when he turned the gun over to the weapons master standing next to him that he noticed the man had been talking.

'She is loud, isn't she?' Uriah said, removing the earplugs. 'You were saying?'

'What were you mumbling?' weapons master Coryin replied.

'Nothing,' Uriah said with a grin before waving dismissively.

'A mantra, I suppose, actually. *Hail to me*, or something to that effect.'

Coryin grunted. 'Your shots are drifting,' he said. 'Kept hitting other targets.'

'Yes, surprising that,' Uriah said, admiring the engraved handle, 'but she has spirit. I like the gun. She's untamed.'

'Too much for the likes of you, I suspect,' Coryin said.

'And too loud for your line of work.'

'Perhaps,' Uriah replied, taking a moment to unfurl the braid in his hair before tying it up into a simple ponytail. He noticed the bald Delaque man studying his crop of brown hair – a rarity among the Delaque, but necessary to someone in his position. 'There are times when the only proper response is a loud one,'

Uriah said. 'I want her.'

'Get the requisition forms signed and she's yours. Oh, and Uriah, no forgeries this time. I'm double-checking every signature with Percal.'

Understood?’

‘Coryin,’ Uriah said, slapping the other man’s shoulder, ‘I’d never use the same trick twice on you.’

Coryin scowled as Uriah walked away with a laugh.

The corridors were dark, the lights dimmed by half.

The Delaque preferred their illumination on the darker side of grey; less harsh on their normally sensitive eyes.

And they whispered while they spoke – even in passing conversation. The Delaque stronghold of Shadowstrohm was typical of the House’s other assets throughout Hive Primus, all plascrete walls and endurasteel floors, their sky low, dark and lined with pipes. The walls bled history in dulled stains, the collected moisture of centuries and the occasional spatter of blood from days when the Houses waged their wars more openly. It did not share the opulence of the main House compound several miles above their heads, but

Shadowstrohm was among the more active listening posts. It was closer to the streets, and thus nearer to the action and bustle. It was also considered part of the trenches, the first line of defence against the other Houses.

To Uriah it was home in an unfriendly household. Several Delaque gangs made their residence in Shadowstrohm, at the insistence of the House’s masters. It was a ploy against outsiders, making House Delaque seem larger and more organized than any of the other

Houses, but behind the walls, Uriah belonged to one of several factions, and surviving meant knowing how to navigate the other groups.

Fortunately, Uriah was good at his game. Despite the youthful mien that cast his age some years short of thirty, in his line of work, that meant he was a veteran of ‘the game’, the same game that killed Delaque spies with facile routine. Still, if the game’s mortality rate ever bothered Uriah, it didn’t show. He walked through the hallways, annoying the serious-minded Information Cullers with his smile and mystifying the Seductresses as to the motivation behind his grin. Uriah flashed teeth to disarm the unwary and to unhinge those who knew better. Why serve one purpose when an action can serve two?

Uriah navigated the labyrinthine corridors without a second thought, ignoring engraved markers that pointed him in wrong directions, official-looking hallways that suddenly dead-ended and doors that

opened to plascrete walls and gunports. The Delaque believed that a proper defence was a good deception, and that axiom reflected itself in the very architecture of their bases. That is what brought Uriah to the plain door hidden deep in the shadows of a thin, seemingly ignored corridor.

Uriah knocked five times in erratic fashion, mentally counting between each knock. On the final tap, something clicked on the other side. What that sound entailed, Uriah never knew, only that it was a bad idea walking through before hearing it. That said, Uriah entered carefully.

The room was small, but served the needs of the bald man sitting behind the desk, with some comfort to spare. It was surprisingly clean, with a metal desk, two chairs and a black pict screen to adorn the otherwise austere space.

Well actually, there was also that thin seam in the wall extending from floor to ceiling that Uriah suspected was a hidden door. He never asked about it or volunteered his suspicions that something was there. It was to his advantage to pretend he knew nothing.

The only personable touch to the otherwise basic room was a thick regicide board with bronze and silver tiles set upon a small stand in the corner. Upon the surface flickered low-rez holographic pieces caught in the middle of a match's static ballet. How the bald man managed to procure such a piece of archeotech was a mystery, but whenever Uriah visited, the pieces had been moved around. It was never the same game on the table.

Percal, the man sitting behind the desk, was bald and stout in all his proportions, thick of chest, arms, legs and neck. He might have been like any other venerable, but relatively indistinguishable agent in House Delaque, but a knife scar hooked his lip into a scowl and two slits rested where an Orlock knife had claimed his nose. He was proof that surviving the game had its costs, costs Uriah never intended to willingly pay.

Most men couldn't stare into Percal's beady black eyes, one partially clouded by white, but Uriah had no qualms maintaining eye contact with his superior, and he did so with a smile.

'Sit,' Percal instructed, reading a data-slate in his hands.

Uriah closed the door behind him, and heard the familiar whiz-click-whir. Apparently they weren't to be disturbed. He sat in one of the

unyielding metal chairs, instantly uncomfortable. The trick, was not looking bothered.

This is how the game between Percal and Uriah always began.

‘Comfortable?’ Percal asked, putting the data-slate down. He studied Uriah, his eyes that of a carrion eater seeking the prize morsels of meat on his subordinate.

‘Indeed,’ Uriah said, acting half-distracted. ‘I requisitioned the very same chairs for my quarters.’

‘Did you now?’

‘Yes, I wanted my guests to experience the same comfort that you offer your visitors.’

Percal offered a thin smile. ‘I can’t abide company either.’

‘Then to what do I owe the pleasure of your invitation?’

Uriah asked.

‘Work.’

‘Same as always.’

‘Not quite this time,’ Percal said with a purr. ‘You know the target.’

Uriah was instantly aware that Percal was studying him, waiting to gauge his reaction to *something*. He said nothing. Even asking questions surrendered too much information, at least in theory.

Better Percal volunteer the information, Uriah thought, but a piece of him clamoured to know. It scabbled at his chest and dried his throat; he couldn’t swallow. He knew Percal was toying with him, but the old man only did so when it was an unpleasant piece of work.

All of Uriah’s previous assignments as Handler demanded distance, perspective. The Delaque preferred their Handlers to act for the strict benefit of the House; any personal stake in the matter was considered a threat to that interest. This was different, however, and Uriah had too many skeletons in his closet not to worry that he’d just been caught holding one of them.

To his credit Uriah said nothing, even though he prepared himself to hear a battery of potentially damning news. Instead he smiled with practiced ease and asked,

‘Who is it?’

Percal nodded to the pict screen. A grainy, black and white picture appeared, at eye level, showing a man moving down an oil stained and industrial-looking corridor, towards the camera. He wore a lab frock, fairly typical to the researchers of House Van Saar. His visible implants,

two eyes and an arm, were likewise of superior quality, while pinching his chin and mouth was a goatee that matched the colour of his hair. He nodded with a congenial smile before leaving the frame. The picture looped back, repeating the same four seconds over and over again.

Uriah recognized the shot. He'd filmed it over two years ago while deep undercover behind enemy lines.

'Soren?' Uriah asked Percal. 'What happened to him?'

'Our little mole has vanished.'

'Vanished.'

'He was carrying new Van Saar implants for us to examine. He never arrived at the rendezvous point.'

'Perhaps the Van Saar discovered his dealings with us. Maybe they captured him,' Uriah said, trying to maintain his professional facade. He was fighting a battering array of emotions that besieged him on all sides. On the one hand, he was relieved. This was not the secret he feared had come to light, the one that would ruin him. On the other, he was concerned.

Soren was an asset, certainly, but in the process of recruiting Soren into Delaque's service, Uriah had grown to like the man. He was quirky, sharing the darker elements of Uriah's humour. Uriah would even hazard calling him a friend, despite the fact he couldn't fraternize with members of other Houses except in the pursuit of his duties as Handler.

*Use anyone and everyone to further the glory of the house...*

That ranked among the most cherished of Delaque commandments, and currently, Uriah was betraying that oath through his friendship with Soren.

'Captured him? Perhaps,' Percal said, 'though I have my doubts. That's where we need your skills. Locate Soren and the implants he promised us. I need this done quietly. You mustn't alert the Van Saar about the operation. They cannot know we have a mole in their midst lest you endanger our other assets in their camp.'

'Why me?' Uriah asked. 'Doesn't this conflict with Delaque policy: no personal involvement in the assignment?'

'Soren was your mole. You befriended him. You brought him over to our side. If anyone knows how to find him, you do. If he trusts anyone, it's you.' Uriah nodded. 'Very well. I'll find him. Anything else I need know?'

Percal shook his head. With that, Uriah stood, prepared to leave; he

waited to hear the door unlock, but nothing happened. He turned and shot a questioning look at Percal.

‘Forgotten something?’ Percal asked, a sly grin on his face.

‘Have I?’ Uriah said, growing tired of this constant duelling.

‘Aren’t you going to ask me for something? A certain bolt pistol from the firing range? I thought you would take the opportunity to requisition the weapon from me?’

‘Weapons master Coryin told you.’ Uriah cursed himself for becoming so obviously distracted by the news. Perhaps he couldn’t anticipate everything that was thrown his way, but in his trade, it was a cardinal sin to act surprised.

‘He wounds me with his distrust,’ Uriah said, adopting a cavalier attitude. ‘Besides, I didn’t want to disturb you with such petty details as requisition forms.’

‘Requisition forms,’ Percal said slowly, picking up his personal data-slate, ‘of course. Nevertheless, I’ve granted your request for the bolt pistol. You might need it. Pick it up from the weapons master.’ With that, Percal went back to examining his recorder. The door unlocked.

Uriah left the office, a soft curse under his breath. He was already beginning the game at a disadvantage, and he didn’t like feeling uncertain.

Percal waited for Uriah to finally leave the room before setting down the data-slate. He turned to the wall and waited for the hidden panel to slide aside on well-oiled tumblers. Standing at the secret door was a young man, no older than Uriah, perhaps in his mid-twenties. He was well dressed, his black trench coat clean and pressed; his face and scalp were Delaque smooth, while his features were sharp and angular. He wore rectangular glare-shades with wire rims.

The man stepped out of the small and surprisingly empty room and glanced at the panel sliding back into place.

‘Did you miss anything, Kaden?’ Percal asked.

‘Caught every word,’ Kaden said.

‘Good, because I’d hate to think I made a mistake using you.’

‘No,’ said Kaden. ‘And again, thanks for the opportunity.’

‘I’ve been—’

‘Thank me by succeeding,’ Percal said, interrupting the young man.

Kaden said nothing and merely nodded.



The door unlocked again, and Kaden left Percal alone in his chamber.

The armoury chief was well acquainted with battle, his scars, marble eye and bolted skin plates a testament to his years in the trenches of the Underhive. They were also the cost of working in back-alley chop-shop medicine, where so-called doctors disposed of severed limbs in garbage pails and used them for unsavoury experiments – or worse. Uriah didn't care to know what exactly.

Uriah wondered whether he would one day face some disfiguring treatment; skull pump tubing, exposed steel plate for bone, pseudo-articulated gears for joints; the horrifying list of disfigurements was endless. The thought chilled Uriah, both the prospect of such pain and the physical cost.

After dutifully studying Uriah's requisition list for equipment, the armoury chief limped into the rear storerooms with their low ceilings and tightly packed shelving units, leaving Uriah to his thoughts. He was worried about Soren, but thinking about his own injuries was a sobering, and frankly welcome, distraction.

He'd come close to enduring such mutilation at the hands of street surgeons, but had eventually managed to find someone with enough skill to avoid permanent disfigurement. That would have spelt the end of his career as a Handler. Uriah relied on his ability to blend into crowds and to move about unnoticed. Undercover work was crucial to his livelihood, as was the ability to alter his appearance. Any permanent fixtures upon his body would ruin one of the principle tools of his trade. He would become useless to his gang, the Handlers, and to their leader, his leader, Percal. But then, it was skirting the edge of that danger that provided the job with its thrills.

Uriah thrived on the notion of peril and he had a nose for it. In fact, Soren's disappearance promised more than was stated. Uriah had worked with Percal long enough to know there was always something more to his superior's assignments.

The armoury chief returned moments later with the standard assignment pack, the equipment satchel still flecked with dried blood from someone else's unfortunate outing. Uriah picked up the satchel and smiled at the armoury chief.

'Amateur?' Uriah asked.

'We're all amateurs when it comes to getting shot,' the Chief said.

‘Not me,’ Uriah said. ‘I plan on bleeding like a professional Handler. All my forms signed and approved by my Overseer before one drop of blood strikes the ground.’

The Chief smirked and returned to his paperwork.

Uriah checked the tools sheathed inside the heavy leather fabric, the satchel a tool belt of sorts for his crafts. More than just thieving supplies, lock picks, acid ampoules and protean metal keys, the satchel also carried small telescopes, eavesdropping equipment and other accoutrements for carrying out his role as spy.

Uriah nodded in satisfaction, at which the armoury chief deposited extra ammunition clips on the table.

‘Tough assignment?’ the armoury chief asked, more polite than interested.

‘Subtle assignment,’ Uriah answered, taking the supplies, ‘but then it’s the subtle ones that will cost you.’

Something in the statement attracted the armoury chief’s attention. His expression changing from civil to concerned.

‘Percal’s boy, right?’ the armoury chief asked.

‘Well, not *boy*, but Percal is my Overseer, yes,’ Uriah said, uncertain of the Chief’s shifting interest.

‘Careful with that one,’ the Chief said with a casual whisper. He pointed to his marble eye with the clawed finger on his rusting metal hand. ‘He cost me dearly.

My first assignment too.’

‘You’re a Handler?’ Uriah asked, shoving the ammo clips into the satchel. ‘I didn’t know.’

‘Was a Handler,’ the armoury chief said, a little pained at his own admission before he relaxed again.

‘Now I’m with the Requisitioners, but then that’s the nature of our craft. Nobody will ever know how good you are and they’ll certainly never remember you once you’re gone.’

Uriah smiled. ‘In truth, that sounds glorious. I would welcome a chance to step away from it all.’

‘It is glorious if you leave on your own terms,’ the armoury chief said, shuffling back into the storerooms.

‘But in our business, retirement is never expected or pleasant, and it often comes far too early for anyone to prepare for it.’

There was one last step to the process before Uriah launched into his

investigation, something that fell well beyond Delaque operational protocol. The district was strictly low-ceiling and crammed with warehouses and containers. The buildings and storage cabins were mostly forgotten in the Underhive, their contents abandoned by their former owners. Still, enough were booby trapped that scavengers didn't bother pillaging the lots.

Too many died in their attempts to loot, the containers electrified or coughing out some noxious gas that melted skin.

No official streets ran through here, only lot numbers belonging to the seemingly endless grid of corrugated and rusted storage units. Uriah drifted through the alleys, the rumble from his dark green bike echoing off the thin metal container walls.

Uriah turned several times, ignoring the lot numbers that were frequently switched around to lure unsuspecting travelers into ambushes. Instead, his circuit was memorized to the point of casual familiarity, and he never deviated from the path. Finally, Uriah arrived at the right section. He stopped in front of a storage container emblazoned with colourful profanities, but remained on his bike. He was centimetres from the wall. He left the engine running; he wasn't leaving its side.

There was a vox grille next to the heavy door, but no buttons, not that Uriah needed to press anything.

'State your business!' a woman's voice demanded through the scratchy vox feed.

'It's Jester,' Uriah said, using his operating handle.

'Stop revving your damn engine!' the woman shouted. 'Who is it?'

'Jester!' Uriah said, letting the engine idle. 'Or are your cameras broken again, Voice?'

'You know the drill,' the woman said.

Uriah disembarked from the cycle and turned around slowly, allowing whatever cameras that were hidden throughout the area to register his face and profile. He faced the intercom again and straddled the bike

'Happy?' he asked.

'Can you meet my price?'

'No, I came for the pleasant company, Voice.'

'Not in the mood for games, Jester.'

'Yes I can meet your price,' he said with a sigh.

‘Then I’m very happy,’ Voice replied, the tone more casual now.  
‘What can I do for you, Jester?’

‘I’m on assignment and something about the mission bothers me.’

‘You? Bothered? Care to share?’

‘Since when do I share?’ he asked, spreading his hands in feigned innocence.

‘Fair enough. Same as before, then? You run your operation and I dispense my sage advice?’

‘I’d appreciate that. Your understanding of the Machine Spirit is—’

‘Oh, please! Not this crap again. There is no Machine Spirit. Just machine. Wires, tubes, chips and the occasional attitude. But no Machine Spirit!’

‘Fine, fine,’ Uriah said. ‘Forget I mentioned it, Voice.’

‘I’ll be in contact.’

Uriah tore through the streets, eager to reach his next objective, but his mind was still on Voice. He rarely relied on help; the nature of his business demanded self-sufficiency and it was also rife with the possibility of betrayal. Still, Voice came highly recommended from some acquaintances and she’d proven extremely useful in the past, almost trustworthy were Uriah comfortable with that sentiment. Still, it bothered him that he’d never met her face-to-face, but that was the condition of her services.

Regardless, the thought that Voice was now helping him did much to settle Uriah’s mind. She was good at what she did, and she could keep up with Uriah’s cavalier attitudes and humour.

Uriah reached a small tunnel barely high enough to let him through on his bike. He rode through several tunnels, taking different turns along the way, before finally reaching a locked grate against the wall. He opened the grate with a key and steered the bike deep inside the dark side tunnel, around a bend and against the dead end. Upon exiting, he locked the gate and looked back inside. He couldn’t see his bike. Not the safest storage, but it served its purpose well when Uriah needed to tear through the Underhive.

Uriah made his way through the tunnels on foot and headed for a long-forgotten elevator shaft. It was going to be a long day.

*More storming action from the Necromunda Universe*

SALVATION

*C S Goto*

SURVIVAL INSTINCT

*Andy Chambers*

BLOOD ROYAL

*Will McDermott & Gordon Rennie*

JUNKTION

*Matthew Farrer*

*Coming soon*

CARDINAL CRIMSON

*Will McDermott*

BACK FROM THE DEAD

*Nick Kyme*