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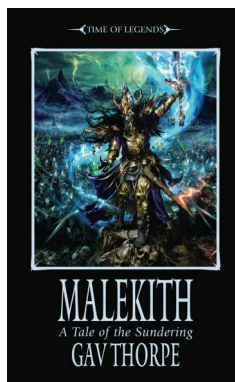
MALEKITH

A Warhammer 'Time of Legends' novel

By Gav Thorpe

Far to the west of the World, across the great ocean, lies the fabled land of Ulthuan, island home of the elves. Thousands of years ago, when men were but fur-clad savages, elf civilisation flourished; with their learning, magic and armies, they were truly masters of the world. But even at the peak of its glory, a seed of corruption gnawed at the roots of elf society, for Chaos had cast its shadow over Ulthuan. The elves would be plunged into a bitter and bloody civil war that would tear their nation apart, and ruin the very land they trod on: a time known as the Sundering.

This story recounts the beginning of the downfall of the elves. When Malekith son of Aenarion is passed over to succeed as king, he is wracked by jealousy and bitterness. Goaded by his mother Morathi, he plots his revenge, triggering a tragic sequence of events that will doom the elves forever.



About the Author

Gav Thorpe works for Games Workshop in his capacity as Lead Background designer, overseeing and contributing to the Warhammer and Warhammer 40,000 worlds. He has written the Last Chancers series, and numerous other novels and short stories set in the fictional worlds of Games Workshop.

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By Mike Lee

The following is an excerpt from *TIME OF LEGENDS: MALEKITH* by Gav Thorpe.

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WITH DETERMINATION AND resourcefulness, Malekith bent his mind to the rebuilding of Nagarythe, as the other princes looked to their realms. In this time, Ulthuan raised itself from the ashes of war, and the cities grew and prospered. Farmlands pushed back the wilderness of Ulthuan as the elves shaped their isle to their liking.

In the mountains, hunters found strange beasts twisted by dark magic: many-headed hydras, bizarre chimerae, screeching griffons and other creatures of Chaos. Many of these they slew, others they captured and broke to their will to use as mounts. Here also change had been wrought upon the birds, and the

elves became friends with the great eagles who soared upon the mountain thermals and were gifted with the power of speech.

Ships were built and fleets despatched to explore the lands beyond the seas, and the power of the elves grew. Tiranoc, the kingdom of Bel Shanaar, profited greatly from this expansion of the elven realms, as did other kingdoms whose people took ship to found new colonies on distant shores.

Seeing that the future of his lands lay not just upon Ulthuan but across the globe, Malekith decided to lead the Naggarothi forth on an expedition of conquest and exploration. Though he had laboured long in the reconstruction of Nagarythe, ever he had chafed at domesticity and would seek the adventure of the mountain hunts or train with the legions of Anlec.

Not for him the life of security and comfort enjoyed by the princes of Ulthuan, for his spirit burned brighter than theirs, and ever the words of his mother and father sprang to mind. He felt destined for greater things than the building of walls and the collection of taxes, and he appointed many chancellors and treasurers to oversee these duties for him.

In the two hundred and fifty-fifth year of Bel Shanaar's reign, Malekith quit Nagarythe as part of a mighty fleet bound for the east, to the unconquered wilderness of Elthin Arvan. To Morathi he gave the stewardship of Nagarythe. Though the relationship between mother and son had been strained at times, for Morathi could not accept her son's fate as placidly as did he, the two remained close.

Beneath a spring sky the two parted on the wharfs of Galthyr, Morathi wrapped against the chill with a shawl of black bear fur, Malekith in his golden armour. Behind the prince his flagship rose and fell at anchor, her white sails cracking in the breeze, the high tiers of her gilded hull shining in the morning sun. Further out to sea waited a dozen warships of Nagarythe, their black and gold hulls rising and falling upon the white surf, five hundred warriors and knights aboard each vessel; a bodyguard befitting the son of Aenarion.

'You will earn glory on your travels,' Morathi said with genuine affection. 'I have seen it in my dreams, and I know it in

my heart. You will be a hero and a conqueror, and you will return to Ulthuan to be showered with praise.'

'I have nothing to prove,' Malekith answered.

'You do not,' Morathi agreed. 'Not to yourself, nor I, not to your loyal subjects. You will make a fine Phoenix King when you return and the other princes see your true worth.'

'Even if they do not, Bel Shanaar is not immortal,' Malekith said. 'I shall outlive him, and there will come a time when the princes must again choose a successor. Then the crown of Ulthuan will return to its rightful line and I shall do honour to the memory of my father.'

'It is good that you leave, for I could not bear to see you wither away in our halls like a rose hidden from the sun,' Morathi said. 'One day your name will be upon the lips of every elf, and you will usher in a new age for our people. This is written in the stars and thus in your destiny. Morai-heg has granted me the wisdom to see it thus, and so shall it be.'

The seeress looked away for a moment, her gaze turning towards the north. Malekith opened his mouth to speak but Morathi raised a finger to silence him. When she looked at her son, he felt her gaze fall upon him like a lamb stood before a lion, such was the intensity of her stare.

'Great deeds await you, my son, and renown equal to that of your father,' Morathi said, quietly at first, her voice rising in volume as she spoke. 'Let Bel Shanaar sit upon his throne and grow rich and spoilt upon the labours of his people! As you say, his time will pass and his line will be found weak. Care not for the judgement of others, but go forth and do as you see fit, as prince of Nagarythe and leader of the greatest people in the world!'

They embraced for a long while, sharing in silence what could not be said. There were no tears shed at this parting, for the elves of Nagarythe were ever hardened to adversity and loss. For both, this was simply a new chapter in the story of Nagarythe, to be boldly written upon the pages of history with feats of valour and tales of conquest.

SWIFT AND SURE ARE the ships of the elves, and the fleet of Malekith sailed north and east for forty days, crossing the Great Ocean without trouble. The elves were masters of the seas, the inheritors of the civilisation of the Old Ones that had now fallen, and the world was theirs to claim. Anticipation and excitement filled the sailors and warriors of Nagarythe as they gazed to the east and wondered what spectacles awaited them.

Malekith was filled with energy, and would pace upon the deck of his ship constantly, when not cloistered in his cabin poring over the charts and maps sent back by elven shipmasters who had begun to explore the wide seas and foreign coasts.

He travelled also from ship to ship when he could, to spend time with the other princes and knights who accompanied his expedition. They feasted on fish caught from the seas, and drank toasts to their prince from caskets of wine brought out of Ulthuan. The mood was of a great celebration, as if setting out was in itself a victory. Malekith could not fault them for their optimism, for as they woke each day heading towards the dawn he felt the lure of adventure too. Other ships they saw passing westwards, laden with timber and ores from the new lands. Ever they exchanged news with the captains of these vessels, and each meeting brought fresh excitement at the wealth and opportunities to be had.

The lands of the east were untamed wilderness for the most part. Savage creatures were there, amidst the majestic mountains and dark forests, but also vast untapped resources that could be taken for those with the wit and daring to do so.

Malekith vowed to his followers that they would build a new realm here, and carve for themselves an empire that would dwarf Ulthuan in size and majesty, worthy of the memory of Aenarion. This cheered them even more, for each prince could see himself as a king, and each knight could picture life as a prince. Under Malekith's reign, it seemed as if anything would be possible, and each would have a castle filled with delights set in breathtaking glades and valleys.

Malekith allowed them to forge their fantasies, for who was he to quell their dreams? He had spoken in truth and looked to

the wilds of Elthin Arvan as a new beginning; a place where the ghost of his father would not haunt him and the expectations of his mother would not choke him.

As dawn broke on the forty-first day, a commotion ran through Malekith's fleet. Land had been sighted: jutting headlands of white and dark mud flats that stretched for miles. It was not for this that there was much agitation, for the masters of the ships had known they would make landfall that day, but for a great pall of smoke that hung over the northern horizon. A large fire or fires burned somewhere, and Malekith was filled with foreboding. He ordered his captains to turn northwards at once, and up the coast sped the fleet with all sail set, dancing effortlessly across the waves.

Not long after noon they came upon the port of Athel Toralien, one of the first colonies to be founded in these new lands. Her white towers rose up majestically from the sea of trees that grew right up to the coastline, and a great harbour wall curved out into the ocean, surf crashing upon it. As Malekith feared, the city was alight with many fires, and her walls were blackened with soot.

As the Naggarothi fleet tacked into the bay upon which Athel Toralien stood, they found the quays empty of ships. Malekith guessed that their captains had fled whatever disaster had befallen the city, and that Athel Toralien now lay deserted. He was to be proven wrong in part though, for as the ships approached the harbour, a loud cry went up from the lookouts. There was fighting upon the walls of the city!

As the ship of Malekith came alongside a slender pier, he leapt over the side onto the whitewashed planks. In his wake came his soldiers, jumping from the ship in their haste, not waiting for the boarding bridges to be lowered. Calling his warriors to arms, Malekith raced down the pier towards the high warehouses around the edge of the harbour. As he neared the buildings, clusters of elves came out and hurried towards the Naggarothi. Most were women, unkempt and afraid. With them they brought clusters of children with eyes wide in fear, who hung upon their mother's dresses as if they were gripping upon

life itself.

‘Bless Asuryan!’ the womenfolk cried, and hugged Malekith and his warriors with tears streaming down their cheeks.

‘Be quiet!’ snapped Malekith to quell their effusive thanks and sobbing. ‘What evil passes here?’

‘Orcs!’ they shrieked in reply. ‘The city is besieged!’

‘Who commands the city?’ he demanded.

‘No one, my lord,’ he was told. ‘Prince Aneron left eight days ago, with the fleet and many of the soldiers. There was not enough room aboard the ships for all to flee. Captain Lorhir defends the walls as best he can, but the orcs have war engines that hurl flaming rocks, and have pounded the city for many days.’

The army was assembling on the dockside, and Malekith ordered that the horses be brought from the ships. As the knights readied themselves, he ordered two companies of spears and his best archers to follow him to the walls. As they marched through the city they saw that the destruction was not as widespread as they first thought. The war machines of the orcs were wildly inaccurate and the damaged buildings were scattered across the city. Even as Malekith reached a stairway leading up to the rampart, a ball of flaming rock and tar flew overhead and crashed into a tower, showering dribbles of flame and debris into the street below.

Leaping up the stone steps three at a time, Malekith swiftly reached the top of the wall, which rose some thirty feet above the ground. The curtain wall of Athel Toralien curved around in a semi-circle for more than a mile, enclosing the city against the bay that lay to the south. Beyond lay an immense forest that stretched as far as the eye could see, cut by the straight lines of roads radiating out from the city’s three gates.

There were piles of bodies everywhere; of slain elves, and gruesome green-skinned creatures with fanged mouths and slab-like muscles, clad in crude armour. The current attack appeared to be at a gate tower some two hundred yards further along the wall. A motley assortment of elves, some wearing armour, others in robes, beat back with spears and knives against a

swarm of the wildly shouting orcs.

More orcs were pouring up from four ramshackle ladders leaning against the wall.

‘Form up for advance!’ bellowed Malekith, unsheathing his sword, Avanuir.

The spear companies fell into disciplined ranks six abreast, their shields overlapping, a wall of iron points jutting forwards. Malekith waved them to advance and they set off at a steady pace, their booted feet tramping in unison upon the hard stone.

‘Clear those ladders,’ the prince told his archers before running to the front of the advancing column.

The archers moved to the wall’s edge, some standing upon the battlements, and loosed their bows at the savages climbing up the ladders. Their aim was deadly accurate and dozens of the greenskins tumbled to the ground below, black-fletched arrows piercing eyes, necks and chests.

The orcs had gained a foothold upon the wall and more of their number clambered over the rampart, howling and waving brutal cleavers and axes. The Naggarothi advanced relentlessly, as groups of orcs broke from the main body and ran towards them.

When the first orc reached the black-armoured company Malekith despatched it with a simple overhead cut that left its body cleft from shoulder to groin. The next he slew with a straight thrust through the chest, and another with a backhanded flourish that spilled its entrails onto the stones of the wall.

Malekith continued marching forwards, hewing down an orc with every step, his spearmen tight behind him slaying any orc that evaded the prince’s deadly attentions. The Naggarothi stepped over the bodies of the fallen savages as they advanced, never once wavering or changing direction as they headed for the knot of greenskins crowding about the ladders. The elves of Athel Toralien took heart with the arrival of their saviours and fought with greater vigour, stopping the orcs from gaining further ground as the Naggarothi closed in.

Wielded by Malekith, Avanuir sheared through shield, armour, flesh and bone with every strike of the prince, and a line

of orc bodies trailed him along the wall until he reached the ladders. No clumsy blow from his foes found its mark as he fainted and swayed through the melee.

Signalling his spears to deal with the other ladders, Malekith leapt up to the battlement by the closest, kicking an orc face as it appeared over the wall. The orc reeled from the blow but did not fall. Avauir swept down and lopped the orc's head from its body, the lifeless corpse tumbling down the ladder, dislodging more orcs so that they fell flailing to the ground.

As he hewed through another attacker, Malekith held up his left hand and a nimbus of power coalesced around his closed fist. With a snarled word of power, Malekith thrust his hand towards the orcs and unleashed his spell. Forks of blue and purple lightning leapt from his outstretched fingertips, earthing through the skulls of the orcs, causing flesh to catch fire and armour to melt. Down the ladder writhed the bolt, jumping from orc to orc, hurling each to the ground trailing smoke. With a thunderous blast, the ladder itself exploded into a hail of splinters that scythed into the orcs waiting at the foot of the wall, cutting them down by the score.

The spearmen had toppled two more ladders, and as Malekith turned from the wall, the fourth and final ladder collapsed, sending the orcs upon it plunging to a bone-cracking death on the hard earth below. The archers turned their shots now onto the orcs who had gathered around the fallen ladders, shooting any that tried to raise up the siege ladders, until the orcs lost heart and began to retreat.

An elf in bloodstained mail emerged from the knot of weary defenders, his helm scored with many blows, and walked slowly towards the Naggarothi company. He pulled off his tall helmet with a grimace, to reveal blood-matted blond hair, and dropped the helm wearily to the stones.

As he approached, Malekith stooped and tore a rag from one of the orcish dead to clean the gore from the blade of Avauir. The prince raised an inquiring eye to the approaching elf.

'Captain Lorhir?' asked Malekith, sheathing his blade.

The other nodded and extended a hand in greeting. Malekith ignored the gesture and the elf withdrew his hand. Uncertainty played across Lorhir's face for a moment before he recovered his composure.

'Thank you, highness,' Lorhir panted. 'Praise to Asuryan for guiding you to our walls this day, for I feared this morning we had seen our last sunrise.'

'You may have yet,' replied Malekith. 'I have space upon my ships only for my own troops; there is no room for evacuation. I do not think there is escape by land.'

Malekith pointed out over the wall, to where a sea of orcs seethed along the road and beneath the boughs of the trees. Half a dozen huge catapults stood in clearings slashed raggedly from the forest, mighty pyres burning next to them. Scores of trees swayed and crashed down in every direction as the orcs cut timber to build new ladders and more war engines.

'With your aid we can hold the city until the prince returns,' said Lorhir.

'I do not think the prince will be returning soon,' Malekith said. As he spoke, others of the Toralien defenders gathered about to hear his words. 'Why should I and my soldiers shed our blood for this city?'

'With all the favour of the gods, we few could not hold against this horde for another day,' Lorhir said. 'You must protect us!'

'Must?' said Malekith, his voice an angry hiss. 'In Nagarythe, a captain does not tell a prince what he must do.'

'Forgive me, highness,' pleaded Lorhir. 'We are desperate, and there is no one else. We sent messengers to Tor Alessi and Athel Maraya and other cities, but they have not returned. They have been waylaid, or else our calls for aid have fallen upon uncaring ears. I cannot hold the city alone!'

'I cannot throw away the lives of my warriors defending the lands of a prince who would not defend them himself,' Malekith said sharply.

'Are we not all elves here?' asked one of the other citizens, an ageing elf who held a sword with an edge chipped and dented

by much use and little care. ‘You would leave us to the tortures and brutalities of these orcs?’

‘If this city were mine, I would defend it to my last breath,’ Malekith said, appearing to relent. Then his face hardened. ‘But Athel Toralien is not my city. We came to the new world to build a new kingdom, not to spill our blood to protect one of a prince who flees for safety at the first hint of menace. Swear loyalty to me, place yourself under the protection of Nagarythe, and I will defend this city.’

‘What of our oaths to Prince Aneron?’ replied Lorhir. ‘I would not be known as a traitor.’

‘It is Aneron of Eataine who has broken his word,’ Malekith told them. ‘Yes, I know him. He stands upon the labours of his father and abandons his people. He is worthy of no oath of fealty. Stand by me, join the Naggarothi, and I will save your city and from here we will conquer this wild and plentiful land.’

The elves huddled together in forlorn conference, occasionally looking out over the walls at the green-skinned army beyond, and at Malekith’s stern demeanour.

‘Take us with you on your ships, and we will swear our loyalty to Anlec,’ Lorhir said finally. ‘What can we few hundred do against that tide of hated beasts?’

‘Your eyes must be weary,’ said Malekith, waving a hand towards the docks. ‘Look again.’

The elves gaped in awe as they watched the Naggarothi host disembarking from the warships. In long columns of black and silver they snaked down the piers, banners fluttering above them. At their head came the knights, already mounted upon their black-flanked destriers. Rank upon rank of spears formed up on the dockyard, moving with poise and precision born of a lifetime of training and fighting.

‘A thousand knights, four thousand spears and a thousand bows stand at my command,’ Malekith declared.

‘The enemy is too great for us to hold the city, even with such numbers,’ argued Lorhir. ‘Prince Aneron had ten thousand spears and he could not hold the walls.’

‘His warriors are not Naggarothi,’ Malekith said. ‘Each

soldier in my host is worth five of Eataine. They are led by me. I am the son of Aenarion, and where my blade falls, death follows. Simply swear oaths of fealty to me and I will save your city. I am the prince of Nagarythe, and where I march, the undying will of my kingdom follows. If I so command it, this city will not fall!’

Such was the bearing and greatness of Malekith at that moment that Lorhir and the others fell to their knees, uttering words of loyalty and dedication.

‘So be it,’ said Malekith. ‘The orcs will be dead by nightfall.’

TIME OF LEGENDS: MALEKITH 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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