

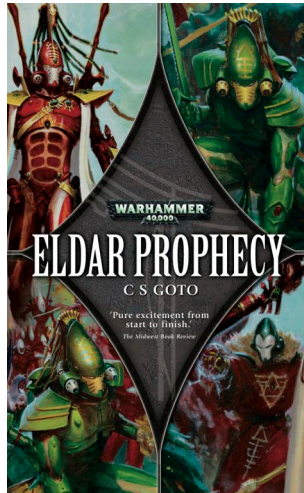
ELDAR PROPHECY

A Warhammer 40,000 novel

By CS Goto

The once mighty eldar craftworld of Kaelor floats through the darkest reaches of space. Home to a once glorious people, the eldar race is now in the twilight of its existence.

When the warrior Naois comes of age, he is unaware of a prophecy that has been placed on his shoulders. Armed with his deadly training from the ancient Aspect Warrior Temple of the Warp Spiders, Naois seeks to exact revenge on his enemies and bring them to their knees.



About the Author

C S Goto has published short fiction in *Inferno!* and elsewhere. His work for the Black Library includes the Warhammer 40,000 Dawn of War novels, the Deathwatch series and the Necromunda novel *Salvation*.

More CS Goto from the Black Library

• DAWN OF WAR •

Dawn of War • Dawn of War: Ascension • Dawn of War: Tempest

• OTHER WARHAMMER 40,000 •

Warrior Brood • Warrior Coven

The following is an excerpt from *Eldar Prophecy* by CS Goto. Published by the Black Library, Games Workshop, Willow Road, Nottingham, NG7 2WS, UK.

Copyright © Games Workshop Ltd, 2007. All rights reserved. Reproduction prohibited, in any form, including on the internet.

For more details email publishing@games-workshop.co.uk or visit the Black Library website www.blacklibrary.com

STANDING AT THE tall, elliptical window-bay in his tower, Ahearn Rivalin looked down into the plaza below. The great assembly for the passing of Lady Ione was impressive, as it should be. The plaza was packed, and each of the tributary streets was congested with bodies for as far as he could see. Kaelorians had come from all over the immense, spacefaring craftworld; there were no longer enough resident in Sentrium to account for such large numbers.

With some discomfort, the farseer saw the banners of Teirtu hoisted around the empty body of Ione, which lay across the silver anvil of his forebears. The double incongruity of a non-Rivalin on the anvil, and then of the vulgar Teirtu laying claim to the graceful Ione made him shiver.

As he gazed down, stooped over the railing but with his weight supported on his gnarled staff, he heard the main door to his personal chambers crack open behind him, but he had been anticipating his guest for some time and he made no effort to turn and greet him. Somewhere in the back of his mind he had been conscious of when the guards outside his room had halted the visitor and challenged his purpose.

The guards; Ahearn smiled to himself. Iden had told him that they were there for his own protection, but the farseer was under no illusions about his situation. He was not exactly a prisoner in his own palace, but his activities were being very carefully managed for him by the head of House Teirtu. Looking down at the Ceremony of Passing in the plaza below, Ahearn could not deny that he would have liked to be there, since the Lady Ione had been like a daughter

to him. She had certainly been like a sheet of silk amongst the rough, sackcloth of the Teirtu.

For a moment his thoughts turned to his actual daughter. He could see her down on the podium standing next to that Teirtu imbecile, Morfran, cradling his offspring in her priceless and perfect arms. His Oriana shone like a jewel amongst the crude and uncultivated eldar of that great house, and Ahearn furrowed his brow in displeasure at the way the Knavir of Kaelor had fallen so low that they must rely on these war mongering styhx-tann from beyond the Styhxlin Perimeter for their survival.

Times had changed on Kaelor. The House Wars had left scars through the very fabric of the vast edifice of the ancient spacecraft that the eldar called a craftworld. Looking out of his window, Ahearn could hardly recognise the place. He noticed that none of the Knavir courtiers had been permitted to join the ceremony, and he wondered whether they were also watching the proceedings from a balcony in his palace, somewhere below him.

‘Radiant farseer,’ muttered a voice from behind him. It was quiet and deferential, but it betrayed no hint of nervousness. There was assertion underlying the show of humility. It was the voice of an accomplished warrior, something that Ahearn was only just beginning to recognise.

‘Lhir of Teirtu,’ said Ahearn, smiling as he put a name to the voice without turning around. ‘How good of you to join me at this difficult time.’

‘I bring a message from the Zhogahn, my radiance.’ Lhir’s manner was clipped, professional and formal. He used the honorific title for Iden, which Ahearn had bestowed on the head of House Teirtu after its victory in the House Wars. Zhogahn: the vanquisher of sin.

Ahearn turned slowly, clicking his staff against the polished floor as he shuffled his weight around. He inspected the Guardian before him. Lhir was bowing deeply, with one knee and the opposite fist touching the ground. His long, silk cloak had been gathered and flung over one shoulder, an ancient ceremonial touch designed to expose his gun-belt and to show that his intentions were peaceful.

The golden glint of a shuriken pistol was visible in the deep shadow at Lhir's waist. The young officer had quickly learnt the value and the limits of ceremonial gestures.

The farseer nodded, impressed by the perfection of the young warrior. Some of these styhx-tann have promise, he thought as his eyes glinted with new possibilities.

'Would you care for a drink, my immaculate young Lhir?' asked Ahearn, wondering how the Guardian would respond. 'I have some excellent Edreacian. Have you ever tasted it?'

As he spoke, Ahearn shuffled over towards a plain-looking cabinet against the wall, with his staff clicking and scraping over the floor as he went. The cabinet opened with a dismissive gesture from the farseer, revealing a luxurious array of beverages and delicacies. A large carafe of simmering, blue liquid had pride of place. It was already half empty.

The Guardian did not move from his position, kneeling just inside the door. His head remained bowed towards the floor, but Ahearn could feel his hidden eyes tracking his movement across the room.

'I must inform his radiance that a detachment of Warp Spiders from the Temple of the domain of Ansgar are moving against the Court. Zhogahn Teirtu has dispatched a force of Teirtu House Guardians to repel the threat. They are making their stand outside the Gates of Rivalin, under the command of Ysult Teirtu-ann. They fight in your name, my radiance.'

'I see,' said Ahearn, pouring a small measure of the steaming blue liquid into a crystal glass. 'Are you sure that I cannot tempt you with a little drink, Lhir?'

'I take my leave, radiant farseer,' replied Lhir crisply, bowing his forehead until it touched the ground. As he rose to his feet, his cloak fell into cascades around him. He nodded once more to Ahearn, and then turned in an abrupt whirl of deep green fabric and strode out of the door.

The farseer watched him go, admiring the disciplined theatricality of the young officer. He could see why Iden had posted this particular Guardian to duty in the palace. There was very little

to which even the Knavir courtiers could take offence in the cultivated manner of Lhir.

Rotating the shot of Edreacian thoughtfully, Ahearn wondered whether Lhir could be truly integrated into courtly life. In the myriad paths of the future, one always contains hope, thought Ahearn as he drained his glass.

Returning to the window, Ahearn looked down in time to see the funeral procession pushing through the crowd towards the Shrine of Fluir-haern on the far side of the plaza. Lady Ione's body had been draped with the green and gold serpent of House Teirtu, and lines of house Guardians flanked the route to the sacred gates.

While he stared, the scene faded into the background of his mind as his thoughts turned towards Lhir's message. The Warp Spiders again, he mused. It had not been so long ago that his own son, Kerwyn, had fallen into league with those Aspect Warriors during the period of escalation of the House Wars. Kerwyn had insisted that the warriors of that deceitful and secretive temple had been loyal to the farseer, but they had turned his mind against Iden and the Great House of Teirtu, and the consequences had nearly torn Kaelor apart. The Rivalin dynasty had become divided for the first time in its long, distinguished history. As a result, after he had routed the Ansgar and their treacherous allies, Iden had banished Kerwyn from the sanctity and sophistication of the Sentrism, sparing his life only out of respect for the farseer. Ahearn had never seen his treacherous and misguided son again.

What could the Warp Spiders want on this day of all days?

Down in the plaza, Ahearn saw the procession reach the gates of the shrine. There was a pause while the shrine-keepers performed the necessary purifications before they could permit the mourners into the sacred space within. In that moment, Ahearn saw the distance-diminished figure of Oriana turn her face away from the group and look directly up towards his window. Even though he knew that she was too far away to see him clearly, Ahearn saw something beseeching in her delicate manner that made him ache. In different ways, Iden had taken both of his children from him. It had been a high price to pay in exchange for the reimposition of stability

and central power on Kaelor. Politics was a dirty and unpleasant business.

THERE WAS A FAINT hiss, like air escaping through a pressure-crack in glass. Then there was a scream, accelerating towards Yseult at an impossible speed. She dropped instinctively and rolled, coming back to her feet just in time to see the Warp Spider burst back into material reality and lash into a spin with her powerblades, slicing through the space that had been occupied by her own neck just moments before.

Without hesitation, Yseult unsheathed her sword and flourished it into a striking pose, held vertically above her head even as she sunk low into a combat stance.

Fiannah snapped to a halt, levelling her eyes and then her blades at the Guardian before her. She crossed her arms in front of her face and then lashed them down to her sides, as though shaking the blood of her kill from the blades that ran along her gauntlets.

For an instant, the two warriors stood motionless in the impromptu arena between their two forces. They were lit dramatically by the flow of light that washed out of the legendary Rivalin Gates – the site of so many of the greatest battles of Kaelorian history – and it eased over the lines of house Guardians that stood ready to defend them. Darkness hung over the ground all around them. It was as though the light-phase of Kaelor was striving to frame them a heroic stage.

Yseult shattered the tension. She lunged forwards suddenly, bringing her dresword down in a direct and simple strike towards the head of her opponent. The attack looked clumsy and obvious, but that was its purpose. As Fiannah easily sidestepped the blow, pushing out one gauntlet to parry the blade to a safe distance, Yseult let her strength fall out of the strike and used the force of the Warp Spider's parry to push her into a turn. Dropping almost to the ground, she swept out her leg and spun through a low sweep, catching the arachnir just before her weight had settled.

The Warp Spider's legs lifted under the force of the sweep, sending her crashing backwards onto the ground. Before she could

regain her feet, Yseult was upon her. Her foot crunched down against the chest of the Aspect Warrior, pinning her, and she raised her blade into both hands for a vertical thrust down into her opponent's neck.

For a split second, the two warriors held each other's gaze, and then Yseult plunged down with her sword, forcing it down with all her strength and twisting her power into a scream of focus.

At the last moment, Fiannah vanished again, blinking out of the material realm just before the tip of the diresword touched her neck, leaving a fizzling crack of energy that vanished almost instantly. Yseult's scream was arrested as her blade was driven down into the rough metallic ground, burying nearly a quarter of its length. Her balance was thrown for a moment, as she teetered forwards on the hilt of her sword.

From her position just behind the front line of the Warp Spiders, Exarch Aingeal watched her arachnir reappear behind the unbalanced Guardian. She sliced rapidly across Yseult's back with one set of powerblades and then kicked out into her spine with a powerful thrust of her hips. The impacts made Yseult shriek in sudden pain and then flip over the hilt of her grounded sword and skid across the floor under the force of the kick, leaving her blade still vibrating in the ground.

The Teirtu Guardian sprang back to her feet, turning to face Fiannah with fury written across her features. With one hand, she reached round behind her to feel the deep slice that had been cut diagonally across her back, and with the other she tugged a short, black biting blade from her belt. A rapid flicker of her eyes betrayed her longing for the lost diresword.

Satisfied with the performance of her arachnir, Aingeal made a quick check of the other Aspect Warriors in the line, and then she turned and strode back away from the battle. She had more important duties on that day than battling the honourable Yseult. The Lady Ione had done the Warp Spiders a great service on the day that she had pleaded for the life of the young Ansgar heir, Naois. She had given a voice to the great prophecy. She had placed hope in the byways of the future, and Aingeal would not be deprived of the

opportunity to pay her last respects to the beloved Lady of Hidden Joy.

Checking back over her shoulder towards the battle once again, the exarch activated her warp-pack and vanished from the scene. There had been no way that an entire detachment of Warp Spiders could have infiltrated the courtly sector of the Sentrinum without detection – the sha’iel signatures around the Shrine of Fluir-haern were so closely monitored by the servants of the Rivalin Court – but a single warrior might yet pass unnoticed.

Meanwhile, Yseult stalked into an arc, patrolling around Fiannah with her black blade almost hidden in the near-darkness. She tossed it easily from one hand to the other, as though testing its weight and balance.

The Warp Spider turned on the spot, keeping her foe constantly in full view. She held her powerblades diagonally across her chest, and peered out from between them at the predations of the Guardian. Then, with a faint nod, an aura of energy pulsed around her and she vanished, leaving behind a purpling haze for a fraction of a moment.

This time Yseult was ready. The Warp Spider had appeared in the same orientation after both of her last jumps, and only an ork would have fallen into the same trap three times.

She waited for the crackle of white noise and the faint hiss of sha’iel escaping into material space through an abrupt breach. Then she darted through a tight circle, moving around behind herself. There was a sudden red haze and then Fiannah clicked into existence immediately in front of her, facing towards the point that Yseult had occupied only an instant before. Without a moment of hesitation, Yseult dashed forwards and thrust her dark blade into the Warp Spider’s abdomen, forcing it under the warp-pack and into the arachnir’s lower back.

Fiannah threw her head back and shrieked in shock and pain, but Yseult cut off the cry by ripping the blade out of her foe’s flesh, springing onto her back and then dragging the biting blade across her throat.

While the Warp Spider fell like a dead weight, crashing onto her face on the ground, Yseult kicked free of the collapsing corpse,

springing away towards her diresword and tugging it out of the ground. By the time the front line of Warp Spiders realised that their arachnir had been killed, Yseult was already brandishing her ancient blade and calling her Guardians into battle.

There was a brief moment of calm, and then the Guardians charged forwards towards the Aspect Warriors, with the light of the farseer bursting radiantly behind them. Before they had crossed even five metres of ground, the Warp Spiders blinked into their midst, deathspinners and powerblades flashing.

The Rites of Commencement were over.

Eldar Prophecy 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) / \$9.99 (CAN)

ISBN 13: 978 1 84416 451 6

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