

SKYFENZLIGHT

Issue 6

gazette



SKAVENBLIGHT

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g a z e t t e

Skavenblight Gazette

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Voices from the dark

Yet again the surface world feels our wrath!

Welcome to issue 6 of Skavenblight Gazette. Personally I'm impressed we have made it this far, and I'm looking forward to what the future holds.

Can you believe that this publication has been going 2 and a half years? It seems like only yesterday a handful of UnderEmpire members banded together and started working on it. But how it has grown. And continues to grow.

It is strange, but none of the editorial staff have really talked about their Skaven armies within these pages.

At the moment I am in the middle of redoing my entire Skaven army. I started working on my first one about 12 years ago, and I stopped adding to it about 6 years ago (save for the addition of a Warplightning Cannon).

In the interim a lot has happened. New editions, new army books, collecting a Bretonnian army, and life in general. But I decided it was time to go back and give the old Skaven a treatment worthy of the master race.

As my skills in the hobby have grown, and I have developed a taste for original storytelling, this has meant the armies I am interested in building always have a strong theme.

Last issues Warprail cover really struck a chord with me. I don't know why, but I like the idea of a massive, underground locomotive that barrels through the earth at ludicrous speeds. And could explode at any minute!

I have decided to theme my army around the Warprail. Theming an army can be hard, and I have found that it takes a little time refining the idea to make it fit comfortably into the Warhammer mythos.

Anyone can slap an idea together and jam it into Warhammer as their themed army, but it takes time and patience to create a themed that is original, creative, and fits seamlessly into the established Warhammer World background.

In the case of my army, I wanted to continue using my old clan (Clan Vestren) but now link it to the Warprail somehow. I took inspiration from the real life performance of the army, which has an average track record at best.

The current themed army idea goes something like this. Clan Vestren has been taken over by Clan Skryre as punishment and restitution for failure and misuse of equipment. Rather than dissolve the clan, Clan Skryre has made use of a fully functioning clan by putting them to work managing and protecting a Warprail Station, as well as extending the tunnel into Bretonnia.

This will mean converting a lot of troop choices into Skryre-esque equivalents. Plague Monks become Mechanics, Rat Ogres become Heavy Loaders, for instance.

This means that I get to spend some time converting miniatures to make them reflect more accurately their new role. Not only this, but it also means I have the opportunity to make the army completely from plastic kits. Plastic is by far the easiest material to do larger conversions with.

All I have to do now is pray to the Horned One that the new Skaven army book doesn't drastically change the army composition or troops choices, or I have a whole bunch of converted Skaven with no home!

Clanlord Trask
Editor, Skavenblight Gazette

Ask Seer Squeek

by Seer Squeek

Skavenblight Gazette's very own Agony Uncle answering your questions.

Dear Seer Squeek,

Well, when Skaven are born, who names the little rattlings, it can hardly be breeders as they aren't capable of speaking, so who is it? Surely not daddy skaven?

With regard,

Scarecr0w14

Dear Crybaby,

With a name like Scarecr0w14, I can understand that you really wish to know whom to exact vengeance upon for naming you that way. Now I can most certainly appreciate the odd bit of retaliation every now and then, but the problem to your question is that it is quite hard to specifically answer.

The reason for this is that, unlike most races from the world above our lairs, Skaven younglings are taken from the breeder den at an early age to work for the clan. However most die before they fully mature, which means that naming Skaven is something that does not occur at birth, making it quite difficult to determine whether it would be a Chieftain or an Overseer to blame for having such an awful name.

My advice would be to take on a nickname. I have learned of a Man-thing that was called 'the Crow' and scared the living daylights out of his opponent, by taking them down one by one. With most of the underlings that work for me giving new definitions to the term 'being paranoid' day by day, I think such a nickname would suit you well.

Wonders when he'll get the nickname 'Warp LIGHTNING',

Seer Squeek

Hello Almighty SeerSqueek-Squeek.

A Lizard-thing army is forming near Me.

I have Many-Many Clanrats to do the work instead of me wetting my blades.

Saurus are too powerful though, and few saurus kill many of Rat-rats.

What is my other option??

EshinAssassin

Dear Inept Infiltrator,

For someone who, if I am to believe your name, comes from that almighty clan back in Cathay with its spooooky agents, I suggest that a few additional courses in Infiltration 101 might be in order, not to mention improve your tactical skills. If your background is that of an Eshin agent, I have to say I'm a bit disappointed that you've then tried to engage them head-on. Although, not everyone lives to my age and gain that knowledge through trial and error methods. (Of course, trial and error by the clans that have hired me, not a pious servant of the Horned One like myself).

So, if the Saurus Warriors prove to be too much of a challenge to your Clanrat Warriors, the best course of actions is to avoid them. Either until a Skryre detachment has dwindled their numbers (always a sound tactic, as long as you don't have any flying creatures mess with them, in which case you really need that cover of darkness the Eshin are so famous for), or until you bring in a more powerful troop type. Plague Monks are a reasonable option here, for while their approach of tactics is similar to redecorating a porcelain collection with a sledgehammer, they are seasoned warriors with a good knowledge of how to fight the Lizard-things... Especially when they bring those deranged censer-wielding brethren of theirs.

Of course, if all else fails, trapping the Lizard-things in your lair, burning it to the ground and relocating yourself is always a good second option.

Keep a halfburned frog leg reserved for me,

Seer Squeek

Dear Seer Squeek,

I am a Clanrat from a most prosperous clan that has had much-much success in our raids of late. Recently we heard of another nearby clan that had fallen into some unknown disarray. Not-not being one to pass up on an opportunity our Warlord led us out to conquer our failing comrats, it wasn't until we arrived that we saw why they had fallen; they were now all undead dead-things!

We set to work killing them dead-dead, I-I was tasked with dispatching the Breeders. When I got there their bloated corpses were already half-rot, but they still lived. Indeed I could look-see that the Unborn within them were still moving and trying to chew their way out! But then something else happened, dead-thing or not me being a Clanrat I almost never with the Lottery for a chance at the Breeders, now I had a den of them all to myself!

There was no stopping it; I had to mount them, and though they half collapsed and tore apart under my fast-frenzied thrusting I still found it to be most satisfying. Actually I-I can't get the experience out of my head now!

So my question, O holy and sympathetic Seer is was the act that I had committed wrong? Could it be considered Blasphemous to the High and Holy Horned Rat? Yes-Yes, she was a dead-thing but she was Skaven as well! Was I wrong to take advantage of the situation?

Yours nervously waiting a response

- Stinknit Squeezebottom

Dear Nervous Squeezer,

One thing that puzzles me: If your clan is so very prosperous, yet you have never visited the breeder den, don't you find it strange to be sent (alone, I might ask) to a breeder den from an enemy clan that has been crippled by the assault of dead ones? Hasn't that at any moment struck you as odd?... Now what I think is that the Warlord and/ or Chieftains of your clans have come up with a convenient plot to get rid of you, without letting you wonder too much whether to trust the situation you find yourself in, or not. Reading your letter, I can only assume they've had success. So, unfortunately, I think that you might have a visit from the Horned One somewhere in the next couple of weeks.

Still, I'm never too troubled to help out a fellow Skaven.

Looking at your situation, I think the two options that are left open are known by Man-things as 'getting back, or getting even'. In that context, it's quite simple:

1.) Once you begin to notice any diseases you've caught are spreading through your system, start infecting any foodstuff (take an interest in swimming, try cooking for your fellow Skaven and use your paws a lot) and simply ensure that what killed you doesn't make them stronger.

2.) If you wish to get back at them, apply for a rank within clan Pestilens... Now I know they aren't the most appealing Skaven to work with and yes, aside from their lack of personal hygiene, the chattering squeaks they make when rushing towards the enemy is indeed in most cases the extent of their vocabulary. However they can withstand any disease thrown at them, so that might give you a somewhat extended life expectancy, but also enough time to interest the Plague Lords to investigate where the disease is from.

Trust me, no matter how prosperous your clan is, clan Pestilens always outnumbers you.

Sees a bri... pestilent future for you,

Seer Squeek

Dear most honourable Grey Seer.

I seek your advice. Last week I came under attack by a elven assassin, disguised as one of my own warriors, but I don't know which one. The only two people I know that aren't the assassin are my hired Eshin assassin, as he was in the room at the time, and myself. Can you give me any advice to seek out this sneak-coward?

Also, how much warpstone does it take to hire a Grey Seer such as yourself? I ask due to a confrontation with the forest elf-things in a large battle.

A Faithful servant of the Horned Rat

Warlord Kerqueak.

Dear Inept One,

In regards to the assault on your position, there are several steps to take.

First off, I would try to get rid of the clan Eshin assassin. They are supposed to excel at intrigue (after the Grey Seers obviously, as we have mastered the art of intrigue) and infiltration, so if an Elven assassin of all things manages to infiltrate your clan and get close enough to assault you, then either the hired assassin is rubbish, or bribed by another clan to ensure such an assault would succeed... In both cases, it is not wise to keep him under your employment.

Secondly, gather a larger bodyguard than just an assassin. I, as a Grey Seer, can appreciate the odd amount of bravado in my opponents (and you don't want to imagine how hard it is to target a single character with spells), but a general rule of thumb when trying to survive the harsh life of a Skaven is that the more bodies between you and your opponent, the longer you tend to live.

Third and last, though definitely not least, start handing out doses of warpstone snuff to various selections of your armed forces. The reason for this is that the Elven race tends to be more susceptible to mutations then us Skaven, so as you eventually ought to catch up with him/ her/ it in one of the selections of your forces, you should be able to have them betray themselves due to the rapid forming mutations, such as a third eyes, elongated nose, etcetera.

If all else fails, it might prove for some nice entertainment value.

As to the cost of merely interesting me to aid you in your up coming battles, I fear that this issue of the Skavenblight Gazette is not big enough to list the amount of digits involving that number... However, hire enough warfire throwers and with the amount of lumber the Forest Elves tend to bring along to battle, I'd be more then willing to drop by for the BBQ and grab a bite.

I'll bring the ketchup with me,

Seer Squeek

Clan Sleekit: A clan of boatmen

by *Clanlord Trask*



Deep below the earth, rickety vessels of wood and metal float. Atop them, hunched and filthy, red eyes piercing the blackness, ride the boatmen of Clan Sleekit.

Clan Sleekit is a large and wealthy clan. Unlike most clans however, rather than having any holdings and bases of power, the clan is spread throughout the entire UnderEmpire. They act mainly as transporters and merchants, ferrying cargo from one place to another for a profit.

The main reason for Clan Sleekit's hold on the logistics and trade industry within Skavendom is that they see the vast subterranean waterways and seas as a commodity. Most Skaven avoid these areas because of the horrors they contain, but Clan Sleekit has turned these waters into a profitable earner.

Centuries of travelling these rivers has led the clan to become known as exceptional boat builders, sailors and navigators. No clan rivals Clan Sleekit's knowledge of vessel construction or the dangers of the waterways. In fact it is said that the Skaven of Clan Sleekit have explored all the dim reaches of the world below, and harbour terrible secrets about the things that lurk in this sunless world.

As well as sailors, Skaven from Clan Sleekit are known as canny merchants and businessmen. Any clan worth its salt knows that, in order to secure resources quickly and reliably, they need merchants from Clan Sleekit. Most clan holds throughout the UnderEmpire contain a small army of such individuals who barter and make Deals with the clan and each other on a daily basis.

Merchants take orders for products and cargo that are then transported by the boatmen and accepted by merchants elsewhere. It is a complex and fragile system that is difficult to grasp, ensuring that Clan Sleekit remains the only ones who can successfully traverse this economic nightmare.

Organisation

Individuals in Clan Sleekit fall into one of two castes, Merchants or Boatmen. Merchants are the ones who make the deals and sell the goods, and the boatmen are the ones who transport it. Since the clan is so scattered, it operates in a series of groups called a Company. The bulk of a Company is made up of Clanrats and Slaves, who perform the menial tasks.

In the case of the Merchants, it is participating in the complex ritual of agreements stacked on top of each other that culminates in the creation of a Deal. Where as Clanrats from a Company of Boatmen are usually loaders and unloaders of cargo, builders of barges and operators of vessels.

Each Company contains a hierarchy, with Clanrats at the bottom. Above them are Chieftains whose role is to organise and motivate their subordinates. Merchant Chieftains are the ones who send Clanrats out to make deals, where as Boatmen Chieftains organise division of labour and act as Captains of the barges.



While each Company will include multiple Chieftains, it will contain only one Accountor, who the Chieftains are answerable to. The Accountor's role is to collect the profits of the Company and send them on to Clan Sleekit's Warlord. In order to do this the Accountor is a cunning and ruthless individual, often protected by large and ferocious bodyguards.

The Warlord of the clan collects the profits and issues orders to his subordinates. Of all of Clan Sleekit, this is the one you do not want to displease. The Warlord has the power to embargo any clan, effectively cutting them off from the rest of the UnderEmpire.

Speciality

Clan Sleekit's main claim to fame is its water-borne vessels, and its willingness to travel the waterways.

The clan maintains a series of barges and docks that it uses to transport, off load and on load various cargo. Barges are usually grouped together, known as a Flotilla, and move as a single entity. Each Flotilla is managed by a single Company, while separate Companies run the various docks and ports.

Anatomy of a Deal

For instance, Clan Mors requires a Warplightning Cannon. Rather than debasing themselves before Clan Skryre, they make a Deal with a Company to procure one for them. Clan Mors will make an agreement with a representative of Clan Sleekit, who will then make an agreement with another member of his Company to complete the Deal.

These inter-Company deals usually pass through several layers of Clanrat Deal Makers, mostly to distribute blame should something go wrong. A Clanrat from the Company will then contact a Clanrat from a Boatman Company, and more agreements will ensue, mostly to organise transportation of the item. The Boatman Company will then make an agreement with another Merchant Company in contact with the target clan, in this case Clan Skryre. More agreements will happen, with the intention of securing the product. This second Merchant Company will then make agreements with Clan Skryre to purchase a Warplightning Cannon.

What follows is another series of agreements between clans and Companies to transport the product back to the intended Deal holder. It is a complex and prolonged process, and one that keeps the masses of Clan Sleekit in work.

Skaven part of a Flotilla Company usually live their entire lives on the water. This means that Flotillas often represent tiny water-borne mini-clans. These include massive barges that act as breeding dens, as well as barracks for Clanrats and smiths to produce tools and materials essential in the repair of the Flotilla.

The docks and ports scattered around the UnderEmpire produce the new vessels for the Flotillas. Of all the clans, Clan Sleekit is the most talented at designing and building water craft. Even Clan Skryres attempts at nautical invention pale in comparison to Clan Sleekits simple, effective and cheap products. This is obviously a thorn in the side of Clan Skryre, and one they would greatly like to be rid of.

Roles within the clan

Warlord (Leader of the clan)

Boatman Company

Accountor
(runs the Flotilla)

Chieftain
(usually a barge Captain, though larger barges may have two or more in charge of particular activities e.g. Cargo, repairs)

Clanrat Deckhand
(Loads and unloads cargo)

Clanrat Carpenter
(Makes repairs to the barge)

Clanrat Rigger
(Operates the barge)

Slaves

Merchant Company

Accountor

Chieftain

Clanrat Dealmaker

Slaves

Such is Clan Sleekit's investment in their water based trade empire that they have been experimenting with a number of submersible vehicles and apparatus. Though nowhere near ready for mass production and use, the possibility of a form of transport unseen by those above the water is one too tempting for the Skaven to pass up.

Much of this research and development done by Clan Sleekit has been in conjunction with the Council of Thirteen. Obviously Clan Skryre is suspicious of this experiment in higher technology, but the benefits that the clan could reap are too rich to hinder the project. So far this partnership has yielded mixed results, the most promising being a massive underwater ship reverse engineered from a Dwarf Nautalis, as well as a personal submersion device.

Motives

On the whole Clan Sleekit is mainly motivated by accumulating wealth. Any action they undertake will be with the express purpose of making a profit. The clan does not tend to resort to military might, instead relying on manipulation and bullying to secure their position.

Should battle be inevitable, they resort to contracting the services of other clans. They are not above utilising equipment intended for other clans as a part of a Deal. As long as they come out on top in the end, and with a profit, anything is allowed.

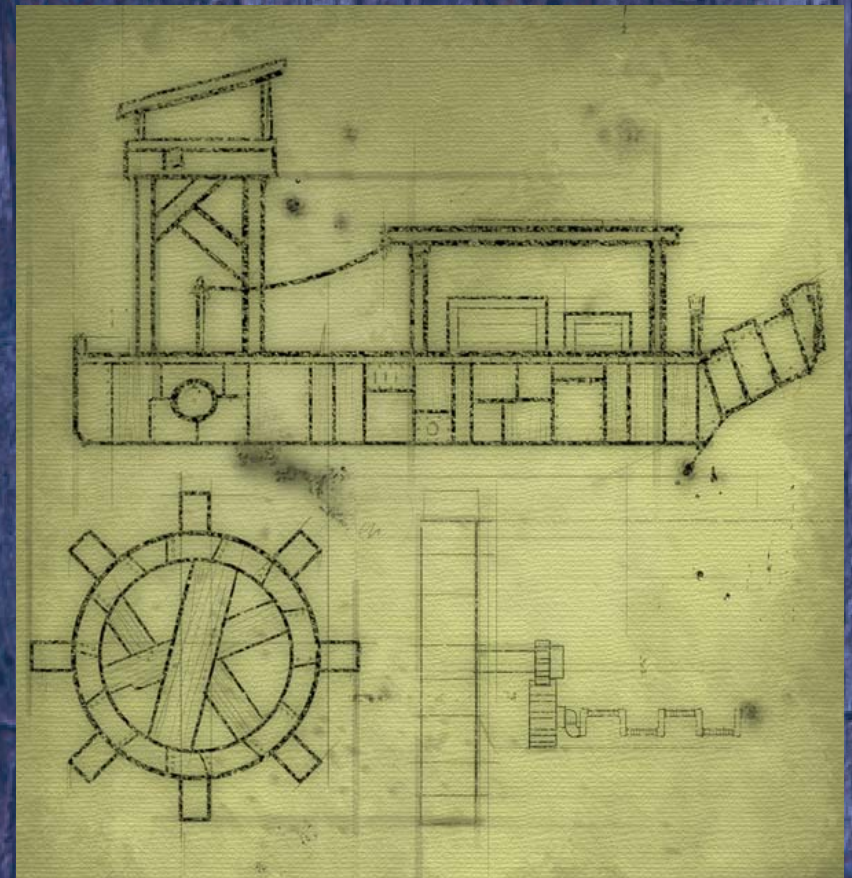
This has recently put Clan Sleekit at odds with Clan Skryre. The construction of the Warprail has meant that some of Clan Sleekit's normal income has started to vanish, as clans take advantage of this fast and relatively safe mode of transport.

In Service to the Council

Unlike most clans who serve the Council, Clan Sleekit is hardly ever sent to battle. The service that Clan Sleekit provides, a service that no other clan is willing to undertake, is too valuable to risk the destruction of the clan. The transport of troops and equipment across the UnderEmpire is a dangerous business, and Clan Sleekit has proved itself to be far too competent and efficient. To waste such a valuable resource would be madness. To compound matters, the clan is one of the most widely scattered, making gathering a cohesive force of Clan Sleekits troops difficult.

This has proved to be a boon for the Council, though. The nature of Clan Sleekit's work means that they often see and hear much more than any other clan does.

They ride on every barge. They toil at every dock. They stand alongside every Warlord. As a network of informants only Clan Eshin rivals them, and the animosity is often too telling.



Of Death And Shadows

by Andrew Mitchell

I lurked in the shadows observing my prey. The darkness, a natural extension of my being and the deadliest weapon at my disposal.

A cool breeze circulated the room bringing with it the putrid smell of rotting flesh and urine. In the centre of the room was my target, Warlord Steek, leader of the Clan Merkep. He stood before a large makeshift table piled high with scraps of hide that had been marked with crude sketches. Steek wasn't wearing his armour. This would be too easy.

Standing on the other side of the table two Clanrats, advisers maybe, hid their malformed snouts behind a veil of spoiled cloth. They used their mangled claws, oozing with disease, to gesture at the various markings. Silently I moved to a better vantage point. Steek's monstrous back was no more than a tails length away. His matted black fur stood up.

"When the assassin kills Kertz-z-z we will strike!" Steek slammed his huge claws into the table.

"Yessss." both advisers responded. "Weak-weak they are."

"I will crush-crush-", Steek's gargled the last few words before his carcass crashed into the table with a gigantic thud. Four of my poison tipped warpstone stars were buried deep into his spine at vital pressure points. A few droplets of dark blood seeped from the wounds.

"What!?" The advisers cried, jumping back from table. They stared at the corpse in shock. Their beady eyes noticed the warpstone stars. They glanced at each other in confusion. Giving me enough time to strike.

I leaped through the air, holding out my claws for increased balance. Moving fast and confidently, time seemed to slow around me. Landing, I couldn't help but stare deep into their eyes, waiting for a reaction.

Too slow.

I swung my claws around full arc and crossed them. The wickedly sharp blades of my punch daggers sliced through their scrawny necks with ease.

For a moment I thought I missed. They just stared at me in disbelief for what seemed like an eternity. But then, I was welcomed with a familiar sight. A stream of blood spurted from their necks, soaking me in a shower of red. A few moments later, they too crashed into the table, lifeless.

I jumped off the table and searched the carcasses for bounty. A few small pieces of warpstone and some string. I pocketed the lot. Not exactly my greatest windfall. Moving towards Steek's lifeless body I unsheathed my weeping blade. The overwhelming smell of poison hit me instantly. The blade was hungry.

I humoured it, taking my time removing Skreet's head. I felt the crunch of bone and the tearing of his thick muscle.

My ears shot up. Footsteps headed this way. They were short and slow paced, most likely a guard. I dashed to the entrance and scaled the slimy walls. Nimbly swinging myself around I hung down from the roof, my rear claws gripping the ceiling firmly. The guard entered the room below me. He was alone. It was a bad idea to take the head with me.

"Mas-s-s-ter" he stuttered.

A droplet of blood fell from Skreet's decapitated head and landed on the guard.

I noticed, Skreet died with a smirk on his face. How unusual.

The guard, understandably shaken by the sight of his dead masters, didn't notice the first droplet of blood. The second one he did.

Before he could look up the cold dark steel of the weeping blade entered his skull with little resistance, stopping only at the hilt. He started twitching relentlessly. I hate twitchers.

With ease I pulled the blade from his skull. It sounded like metal grinding against stone. The guards body fell to the ground and I made my escape.

✂ ✂ ✂ ✂

Kertz sat on a bed of straw. Huge, with black fur and wearing full armour. His face was scarred and torn, the marks of a veteran. I couldn't help but wonder how many marks were from failed assassination attempts.

This place smelt worse than the last and left a bitter taste in the back of my throat. I threw Skreet's head onto the floor.

"Good-good," Kertz said in delight.

"There was three-three-three of them." I snapped. "You owe me more-more."

With that Kertz threw a pouch of warpstone towards me. I caught and checked the contents. He paid well and compensated me fairly. Fool.

"It was too easy," I whispered.

Kertz let out a crude laugh. "Steek was a fool! Of course it was easy-easy."

"No." I readied my punch daggers. "It was too easy to get you alone-alone!"

"What?!" Kertz, infuriated, quickly stood. Holding a large crude blade he laughed. "You think you can take-take me?!"

Kertz charged towards me. I felt a brush of air on my back as I dodged his attack.

"Now for fun," I smirked.

Kertz let out a roar and swung towards my belly. I jumped, the blade missing by a whisker. He left himself open.

I took advantage, stepping in closely and jabbed three times into the gaps of his armour. Kertz looked at the wound and laughed. He charged once more, thrusting the blade. I stepped to the side. It passed me. I span as we passed getting two jabs into his back.

"You bring a needle to a sword fight?" Kertz snickered.

I smiled. Kertz attacked. I dodged. He caught me off balance and lunged again, ripping the flesh from my shoulder. Kertz gloated at his strike. I readied myself for the next attack. The swing came low and hard. I ducked, but only just. I couldn't keep this up.

I jabbed three more times into his chest, with the third jab my blade got stuck on the armour. Kertz swatted me away like a flea. I flew across the room, smashing into the wall. He readied for another attack. I was still dazed.

The blade came down fast. I caught it at the last second, parrying with the blade of my punch dagger. I couldn't hold for long, he possessed the strength of five rats. I managed to push the blade to the side and jab six times at his feet. He kicked me hard sending my skidding across the floor. I was losing blood fast. I needed to end it.

Kertz got to his feet and leant on his sword. He laughed.

"I expected more from a great-great assassin as yourself." He paused for breath, gasping. "You are weaker than my slaves!"

"There is more than one way to skin a rat-rat," I replied breathlessly.

Kertz staggered towards me, his blade came down but went wide. I got to my feet jabbing him two more times along the way. He reeled in pain.

"I'm 'gunna feed you to my pets", Kertz snickered between breaths. His gasping was more frequent.

"Unlikely. You should be feeling-feeling the effects of my p-p-poison now" I replied confidently.

"What?" Kertz replied worryingly. His breaths fewer and more distant. He staggered slightly.

"First your sight." I charged at Kertz whilst he rubbed his eyes, pondering the dilemma. I jabbed five times into his side. He cried out in pain. "Then your breath-breath." I charged again, seven jabs to the belly. He fell to his knees.

"You will start to feel sleepy", three more jabs to his back. The blood had started to seep through his armour.

"How?" Kertz felt his stomach.

Blood rushed out like a wild river and covered his claw.

"But don't worry." I walked towards Kertz and kicked away his sword. He was more defiant than I had expected. "Your death won't be quick."

Kertz let out an agonising groan before falling to the side. A trickle of blooded spilled from his mouth.

"I left you with enough blood-blood to feel the full effect of the p-p-poisons." I ripped a piece of cloth from Kertz's chest and wrapped it around my wound.

He started convulsing violently. Foam gathered in his mouth.

"Your blood will feel like-like acid."

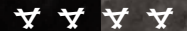
His feet kicked away helplessly. I caught my breath then grabbed him by the scruff of his neck. I looked into his dilated eyes.

"This was fun-fun. But I must go."

I unsheathed my weeping blade. I slashed at his tail cutting it in one swipe. It wriggled around like a dying worm. I laughed.

Then I removed his head.

Slowly.



I handed the sack containing Kertz's and Steek's head to Pragle. He looked inside and smiled. He lifted the heads out and inspected them.

"You did good-good work." He spoke respectfully.

"Where is my..."

Two clan rats entered the room carrying large sacks. They dropped them before me and scampered away.

"Like we prom-prom-promised. Yes?"

"Yes"

I looked inside the sacks to make sure.

"I have more work-work for you" He whispered and pointed upwards. "The man-things."

interview **ANTOINE VILLEPREUX** **CYANIDE STUDIO**

The Blood Bowl game, currently being developed by Cyanide and to be published by Focus Home Interactive, is an adaptation of Games Workshop's highly successful board game. It is in development for the Xbox 360, PSP, and Nintendo DS, as well as the PC. In the dead of night adepts from Skavenblight Gazette broke into a secure Cyanide Studios location and abducted one of the developers, Antoine Villepreux.

SBG: Can you tell us who you are and what your role is in the development of the Blood Bowl computer game?

Antoine Villepreux. Cyanide Development Manager, Blood Bowl Project Manager and PC Lead Developer.

SBG: What made Cyanide accept the opportunity to make Blood Bowl?

We already wanted to do it for a long time and Games Workshop accepted to give us the opportunity to do it.

SBG: Can you briefly tell us about the Blood Bowl video game?

Blood Bowl video is a very faithful adaptation of the original Blood Bowl tabletop game from Games Workshop.

SBG: What made you decide to include the Skaven as one of the teams in Bloodbowl?

They are cool. They are played. And we wanted a good balance in terms of gameplay and visual styles in our first set of 8 races.

SBG: Are the Skaven a playable team, or are they only an AI opponent?

Of course they are playable. The 8 races available for the launch of the game will be fully playable.

SBG: How does the Skaven team differ from the rest of the teams in the game? What makes it unique?

Same as in the board game: they are damn fast!

SBG: Was it hard to translate the visual style of the Skaven team into the game? Did you have to stick closely to Games Workshop's established look, or was there room for you to add your own touches and nuances?

For all the races we implemented in the game we have worked very hard and very closely with Games Workshop to reinvent a new Blood Bowl style, based on the old illustrations from the past, the actual miniatures and the current Warhammer visual style. The purpose was to give a fresh new look while keeping the funny, parodic, spirit of the style. Skaven (like chaos) were one of our favourite to produce since they have fur and mutations.

SBG: Was it hard to translate the play style of the Skaven team into the game? Most tabletop Bloodbowl players are used to Skaven teams behaving and playing a match in a certain way. Do you think you have met the expectations of the Bloodbowl fanbase?

We tried to meet their expectations for sure and so we spent a lot of time on the AI. If it's your team and you play turn based then it's behaving exactly the same as in the tabletop game, and if you play realtime then their play style has been kept also.

SBG: Are there Star Players and are we going to see one or more of the Skaven Star Players from the tabletop game make an appearance? Or did you get to create your own Star Player for inclusion in the game?

One star player per race for the launch. Skaven have Head-Splitter.

SBG: Will Skaven Coaches be able to mutate and alter their players? If so, how customisable will the appearance and the abilities be?

Mutations are of course included and have 3D visual representations.

Regarding customisation, it includes team name, team logo, team colour, players names, players body and skin variations. Combined with equipment and mutations it brings an awesome visual variety.

Abilities and skills levelling is also included.

SBG: Is there going to be a pitch specifically themed around Skaven? If so, what will it be like (its quirks and characteristics)? If not, why not?

No specific skaven pitch unfortunately. With 8 races in the game we did not have the time to produce racial stadiums. You'll have 2 generic stadiums and 3 big ones (themed orc, chaos and dwarf).

SBG: Is there stuff that you would have liked to have done with the Skaven that just wasn't feasible, given time restraints, budget, or any other factors?

We are quite happy with them. A skaven themed stadium would have been great though (we had some ideas for it). Maybe in the future.





SBG: Are there plans for expansions in the future? Will these just add new teams, or will existing teams gain some extra selections, like for example adding in the Skaven themed pitch?

If the game is successful enough, of course we do want to release many expansions.

Of course we are thinking of adding new races, but we also have many more possibilities. From releasing new stadiums, and especially for the races who do not already have theirs, to game extensions (cards, meteo,...), new starplayers, ...

The tabletop game is so rich that possibilities are endless.

SBG: The Skaven players community is a tight knit one. We like to know how well everyone is doing, mostly so we know who to stab in the back. Is there going to be some kind of online leaderboard so that players can compare themselves to other players? Or possibly an overall score of how well each team is doing in total? Skaven love to know when they are winning!

There will be an in game ranking page for each league, as well as the possibility to take a close look at your opponent's statistics.

The official web site might also have similar ranking pages.

SBG: How has working so closely with Skaven and warpstone effected the game designers ?

They exclusively eat cheese now and have a green glow effect around their ears.

SBG: Thanks again for helping us out.

Thanks for your support. Hope to see you and the BB community online in the game.



The Confessions of a Dwarf Slave

by Bruenor Odinson



Hurmph, so this is the sum of me days, me Bruenor of clan Odinson, forced to paint for these skittering scumbag ratmen.

Well I suppose if it's got to be done, it might as well be done properly, and by that I mean done by a dwarf.

Mutter... grumble... gripe...

This time we'll tackle a Globadier.



First task is to clean all the flash, threads and moldlines off, using needle files and a craft knife, this will give you a much nicer finished model.

As this is going to be a display miniature (mini), I have chosen a precast resin base. This needed cleaning up as well, and also washing with some washing up liquid just to remove any mold release spray that may be left. The mold release residue stops the paint sticking, so needs to be washed off.



Then everything gets an undercoat with Halfords grey spray car primer, I know there's a lot of arguments over which is best, black or white undercoat. We will go middle of the road and use grey, which give you the best of both worlds. You can still have the shading benefit and the bright colours. But to each to his own, I suppose.

You'll notice that the mini has not been assembled at this stage, as this makes for easier painting.



I used Khemri Brown for the basecoat on the robe and Hawk Turquoise for the collar. The Foundation paints are excellent for coverage, but very thick so you'll need to thin them slightly.

Personally I thin all my paints before applying them to the mini for smoother results.



The part of the robe painted Khemri Brown, was generously washed with Devlan Mud wash.

These washes take a little while to dry, so go have a cuppa or something while it dries. Me, I had to sit and wait. Bloody ratmen don't make tea. Or coffee. Or even a bloody good ale... grumble... mutter...

(Silly Dwarf-thing get on with itsssss...)



The robe was highlighted with Khemri Brown, and then again with Dheneb Stone added to the Khemri, adding more Denheb until happy.

Then it was given a thinned glaze of 70/30 water and Devlan Mud, to taken off the sharpness of the highlights.



I then washed the collar with Azureman Blue, and added a Calthan Brown basecoat to the fur and a Tallarn Flesh basecoat to the flesh areas.

The fur was the washed with Devlan Mud, and the skin with Ogryn Flesh.



The collar was highlighted with Hawk Turquoise and then again with Bleached Bone added to the Hawk Turquoise. Usually 3-4 highlights is enough. I then went back with some Asurmen Blue to reline any areas I'd gone too heavy on.

The fur was highlighted with Cathan Brown, and again with Bleached Bone added, and then pure Bleached Bone.

This was then washed with a 50/50 water/Gryphon Sepia mix. The skin was highlighted with Tallarn Flesh. I added tiny amounts of Skull White to this for each highlight.

The deep areas on the skin, like around the cuffs and bottom of robe, were 'lined' in with Devlan Mud to deepen the shadows.



The leather part of the mask, and pouches were basecoated in Bestial Brown, and washed with Devlan Mud.

The globes were basecoated with Dark Angels Green and highlighted in a half blended half stippled way, adding a little Snot Green, Goblin Green, Scorpion Green and (an old one!) Bilious Green, to the basecoat in that order.

They were added in a dabbing fashion, and then smoothed with a wet clean brush to create a nice soft transition of dark to light.

A line of Badab Black wash was added between the hand and the globe for the final shadow.

A very thinned sheen of Skull White was added to one side to try and recreate a glass like shine.



The ropes were basecoated in Iyandan Darksun, washed with Devlan Mud, and highlighted with Iyandan Darksun and Bleached Bone.

The 'leather' was highlighted with Bestial Brown, Snakebite Leather, and a tiny bit of Bleached Bone.

This was then washed with thinned Chaos Black. The reason for thinning it is to let the grey undercoat show through slightly, giving you your first highlight.

The pipes were basecoated in thinned Chaos Black. The reason for thinning it is to let the grey undercoat show through slightly, giving you your first highlight.

Then Adeptus Battlegrey was lightly drybrushed over the pipes, and a final wash of Badab Black was added to dull down the highlights a little.



The metal on the mask was basecoated in Chainmail and washed with Badab Black. The sword blade was also done in the same way, but the Badab Black was drawn back to the base of the blade. This was then highlighted with a little Chainmail.

The mask lenses were first painted Chaos Black, then Liche Purple in a half moon shape was added, leaving a small circle of black in the top right side.

A little Bleached Bone was added to the purple, and gradually tapered outwards until a final thin line of Bone was added to the very edge of the lens.

A Skull White dot was added into the black area to create a glasslike reflection.



The back pack was basecoated with Brazen Brass on the boiler, and chainmail on the lower metal parts.



The boiler was washed with Ogryn Flesh and, once dry, Devlan Mud. The lower part was washed with Badab Black.

The wood on the base was basecoated in Spearstaff Brown (a very old out of production paint now, but any yellowy brown will do). I did the sword handle at the same time. (I also added a cut down rat to look like it's swimming in the sewer water).



The boiler was highlighted with Brazen Brass, then Dwarf Bronze. Dwarf Bronze with a little Mithril Silver added was used for the very edges, where it would get worn and tarnished.

The lower part and the symbol were highlighted with Chainmail.

The bag and ropes on the back pack were done the same as on the main body.

The wood on the base and the sword handle were washed with Devlan Mud, then Ogryn Flesh, and finally Badab Black. I was quite generous with each one, BUT letting each fully dry before adding the next (that's my easy wood method).

The rat was done the same as the fur and skin, only not so many highlights, and the bucket the same as the other metals.

At this stage you could finish the base off and call it done, and it would look great. But I decided that it all needed weathering.



The verdigris on the brass was achieved by thinning some Scaly Green down to a 'milky' look and carefully washing it into all the recessed areas. This required 2-3 coats to get it to stand out, and then I add one coat of Jade Green thinned to the same consistency.

The rust and dirt are one and the same depending on where you stop the highlights.

The base is thinned Dark Flesh washed into the recesses and stippled onto the sword blade. The next colour is Vermin Brown, done the same to all the metal areas.

I then added on final stage of stippled Blazing Orange to the sword blade for that extra rusted look.

This was highlighted over in stripes and across the outer edges where the rust would flake off with Mithril Silver.

The claws on the feet were basecoated in Graveyard Earth, and highlighted with Bleached Bone and Skull White. A thin line of Devlan Mud was washed across the joint of the claw to the toe to create a nice shadow.

The water areas of the base were painted Camo Green and then liberally washed with Devlan Mud, Thrakka Green and Azureman Blue in varying levels until it looked murky and vile. Like sewer water should.

Once this was dry I added the water effects, and had to leave it for 24 hours to cure. Now some water effects tend to shrink as they dry and need a second coat. This did, so I added a second coat once the first had totally cured.



I then assembled the whole thing and added some Gloss Varnish to the masks lenses and the globes.



I hope you've enjoyed this dwarf's ramblings. I know that the bright colours might not suit everyone, and the longer process really won't suit your rank an file troops, but there's no reason that you couldn't apply these techniques to your character minis.

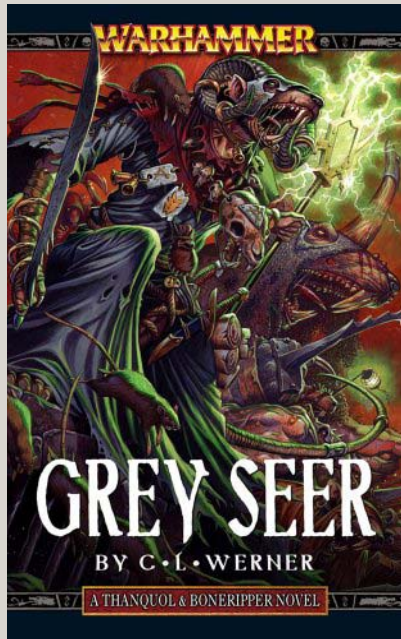
Hopefully I'll be back to show you some more in the future. That is, if ripping the tail off this bloody ratman that keeps poking me with his spear and ramming it down his throat doesn't get me eaten.

May yer stone never turn to pebbles. Bruenor Odinson.

Grey Seer

By C. L. Werner

A Thanquol and Boneripper novel



Nefarious Grey Seer Thanquol, skaven sorcerer and arch-enemy of Gotrek & Felix, embarks on his own adventure to recover the deadly artefact known only as Wormstone. With this dread substance, he plots to poison the city of Altdorf and rise to power in the eyes of his masters amongst the Council of the Thirteen.

'Fast-quick, flea-maggots!'

The scratchy voice was thin as a whisper, like the rasp of snakeskin against cobblestone, but it carried through the dank, crumbling tunnels like a thunderclap. Scrawny rats with jaundiced eyes and matted fur skittered away, hugging the earthen walls as the fury of the voice moved them to flight.

For others, retreat was an option long ago taken from them. Emaciated creatures nearly as thin as the starveling cave rats, their scarred bodies covered in stringy brown fur, cowered and grovelled but heavy chains of corroded iron forced them to stand their ground. Each of the creatures was a horror of blisters and scabs, their bodies gouged by the violence of whip and fang. Only the most sardonic of observers would liken them to men, though there was a loathsome mockery of man in the shapes they wore. The things that dangled limply from their wasted arms were as much paws as they were hands.

Naked tails, scaly and pallid, lashed the floor between their clawed feet. Above the iron collars that circled their necks was a narrow head, pinched and pulled

into the rodent-like visage of an enormous rat. Yet even here could be found a gruesome echo of humanity, for it was more than the blind fear of vermin that shone in their beady red eyes, more than the unthinking pain of a simple beast that gave their gaze its stamp of dejected misery.

'Fast-quick!' the voice snarled again.

This time the words were punctuated by a loud crack as a scaly whip, like the severed tail of one of the creatures, flashed through the green-shadowed gloom of the tunnel.

Something cried out in a wordless shriek that spoke equally of pain and terror. The echoes of the cry had not even started to shudder through the tunnels when the slaves were moving once more, attacking the walls with their clawed hands, slashing and scratching at the earth and rock with frantic desperation.

Kratch coiled the macabre whip around his arm, exulting in the panic of the slaves. Not the slightest twinge of sympathy for the miserable throng moved him; pity was a concept utterly alien to the skaven mind. The slaves

existed only to further Kratch's own position and power; beyond that simple fact, Kratch had no concern for them or their suffering. It was the most basic foundation of skaven society: the weak existed to exalt the strong.

Kratch rubbed his white-furred hands together, a pleased gleam in his eyes, as he considered the wisdom of such an arrangement. Perhaps he would have been less pleased had the Horned Rat not smiled so kindly upon Kratch and made him one of the strong. But the skaven god had favoured him, shaping him in the belly of his brood-mother and placing his mark upon Kratch.

The ratman lifted a paw to his forehead, stroking the bony nubs protruding through his fur. Horned skaven were the chosen of their god, the voices and instruments of his will. More than the frayed grey robes and warpstone charms he wore, it was his horns that marked Kratch as one of the exalted, one of the grim brotherhood of sorcerer-priests known as the grey seers.



As he stroked his tiny horns, some of the pleasure ceased to sparkle in Kratch's eyes. He had been marked, but he was still far from the magnificence he wanted. Kratch was young, barely eight winters from the whelp-nests, his horns still developing and his magical knowledge small. He was only an adept, an initiate into the secrets of the grey seers, not a grey seer himself. One day he would wield such power, but until then he would be an apprentice, serving those who Kratch knew were his inferiors for all their horns and magic.

Kratch looked away from the frantic slaves, casting an appraising glance over his shoulder at his current 'master'. Grey Seer Skabritt was several times again as old as Kratch, his horns grown into a double-curved knot of bone that encased the sides of the priest's head like a helmet. Skabritt fancied himself a cunning strategist and plotter, weaving a nest of intrigue and deception to cloak his activities from his many rivals and enemies, but Kratch knew he could do so much more with Skabritt's resources and power.

The adept lashed his tail in annoyance. Looking at Skabritt caused Kratch's blood to boil with resentment.

The grey seer stood well away from where the slaves were working, surrounded on all sides by his armoured stormvermin. The big black-furred skaven kept an easy grip on their halberds when they weren't scratching fleas from their fur. So very like Skabritt to spare himself any chance of danger. Distance would protect

him from any cave-in that might result from the attentions of the work gang on the crumbling walls. The stormvermin would guard him against the unlikely, but possible event of a slave revolt. The armoured ratmen would cut down any berserk slaves long before they could lay a paw on Skabritt.

However, such hazards were perfectly acceptable for Kratch to be exposed to. The skaven gnashed his fangs as he reflected on that fact. Skabritt had insisted it would be a good learning experience for his apprentice, something to bolster his abilities to command and lead the unwashed masses of the Under-Empire. More pragmatically, Skabritt could always get another apprentice if something went wrong.

'Fast-quick!' Kratch growled, spinning back around and striking out with his whip.

He wasn't sure if the brown-furred wretch he struck had really been slacking off and didn't really care. Lurking about in this forsaken network of burrows – burrows that had been sealed off since the skaven civil war – was far from Kratch's idea of safety and comfort. The number of stormvermin Grey Seer Skabritt brought along, and the amount of warpstone tokens he had spent in the markets of Under-Altdorf arming them, told Kratch that his mentor expected trouble. That Skabritt had not shared from what quarter he expected that trouble didn't do much to reassure Kratch.

Still, the adept reflected, Skabritt would hardly put himself at risk for some miniscule gain. Whatever he hoped to find in the abandoned

burrows the slaves were excavating, it would be something of importance.

Perhaps some lost cache of warpstone or a lost trove of Clan Skryre technology. Kratch began to salivate as he considered the magnitude of such a find. Skabritt would earn the favour of the seerlords and the Council of Thirteen itself presenting them with such a treasure. Or perhaps he would instead choose to deal with a single clan, tempting them with the power his discovery would offer them. Under-Altdorf was a nest of intrigue already, each of its dominant clans striving against the others for control of the city, the largest in the entire Under-Empire with the exception of Skavenblight itself. Clan Skryre would pay well for anything that would tip the balance in their favour, just as the other clans would pay to keep such power from slipping into their paws.

Whatever Skabritt chose to do, Kratch would be there, clinging to his tail every step of the way. Even if only the smallest portion of the wealth and glory Skabritt was after trickled down to his apprentice, Kratch would take it. Unless of course he saw some way to cut his mentor out of the equation. Accidents did sometimes happen, like the time a swamp troll had broken free in the mines beneath Rat Rock and nearly devoured the grey seer. In the right paws, a sharp file and a rusty chain were as deadly as any assassin's poisoned dagger.

A sharp squeal of alarm stirred Kratch from his murderous visions. The adept cracked his whip against one of the slaves,

slashing through its mangy hide, then wrinkled his snout in disgust. The workers were venting the musk of fear from their glands. Kratch fought back the instinctive response to do the same, his contempt for the wretches overcoming the tyranny of biology.

The slaves were skulking away from the wall of the tunnel. Kratch could see a dark opening where the bloodied paws of the skaven had broken through into a sealed chamber. A murky, stagnant odour wafted from the opening, overcoming even the pungent musk of the frightened slaves. Kratch felt a tremor of anxiety as his senses drank in the cold, evil smell. He quickly calmed himself. Anything with such an intimidating stench would also be obscenely powerful. His thoughts turned to visions of some lost trove of warpstone quietly festering away in the dark for six centuries and again his jaws became moist with anticipation. There was certainly a suggestion of warpstone about the clammy stench issuing from the darkness.

Kratch started to scramble down from his perch atop a pile of loose earth. Sounds behind him had the adept spinning about in alarm, one paw slipping to the dagger concealed in the sleeve of his robe. A gruff snarl froze Kratch's hand. The adept winced, screwing his eyes shut and lifting his head, exposing his throat in deference and humility to the creature he called master.

Grey Seer Skabritt had been drawn from his cautious observation point well away from the excavation by the clammy smell issuing from the opening.

There was a feverish light shining in the priest's eyes as he shuffled forward, his stormvermin flanking him.

'Yes-yes,' Skabritt chortled, clapping his paws together.

'Mine it is! Power-strength! The Wormstone belongs to Skabritt!'

The grey seer's eyes narrowed with suspicion, casting a hostile glance at slaves, stormvermin and apprentice alike. In his injudicious enthusiasm he had let too much slip off his tongue. The priest seemed to almost swell with malignity as he drew energy into himself, his eyes glassing over with a greenish film of light. After a moment, he allowed the energy to dissipate, satisfied that none of those around him knew of what he spoke. The ignorance of his minions filled Skabritt with contempt.

There was no danger such wretches could pose to him.

Kratch was careful to maintain his subservient poise, to keep any suggestion of his thoughts away from Skabritt's keen nose and penetrating gaze. The grey seer's scrutiny of his apprentice lasted only a moment, then he was turning his attention back on the tunnel.

Skabritt was growing forgetful with his years. He had forgotten the apprentice who had scoured the records of Under-Altldorf for him, sniffing out any mention of the war with the plague priests of Clan Pestilens and the doom of Clan Mawrl. He had forgotten the many weeks Kratch had spent poring over the rat-hide scrolls and their cramped lines of hieroglyphs. Skabritt had forgotten that everything he knew about the Wormstone, his apprentice had learned first.

Stormvermin kicked and bullied their way through the huddled throng of cowering slaves as Skabritt ordered them forward. Warpstone lanterns were pulled down from the crumbling walls, casting the tunnel into blackness. Kratch scurried after the light, not trusting the darkness to guard him against the attentions of a vengeful slave. He crept after the rearmost of the stormvermin as Skabritt entered the exposed chamber.

The light from the lanterns warred against the centuried darkness that filled the burrow, casting green shadows against the dripping walls. The burrow was not large, its other entrances as choked with rubble as the one

Skabritt's slaves had broken through. The other clans of Under-Altldorf had been most thorough in their plot to bury Clan Mawrl alive. Evidence of how successful they had been was littered all across the floor. The bones of hundreds, perhaps even thousands of skaven were scattered everywhere. Even a cursory glance told Kratch that something had fed off the dead, the marks of fangs clearly visible

on the bones, though whether the damage had been done by common vermin or fellow skaven was impossible to determine.

Kratch quickly dismissed the question, his focus shifting to the object standing almost in the exact centre of the burrow. Here the skeletons were at their thickest, piled about the object as though seeking succour from it in the long hours of their slow deaths. Kratch's fur crawled as he looked at it, as its evil smell hammered at his senses.

Yet even in the midst of his fear, he could not deny the fierce desire and awful hunger the thing provoked in him.

A sickly yellow haze surrounded the Wormstone. The artefact was the size of a skaven, the colour of swamp slime laced with veins of pitch-black. Two hundred pounds if it was an ounce, the smell that came off it told Kratch what formed the bulk of its composition.

Warpstone, the sorcerous rock that was the very foundation of skaven civilisation. It was food, power, wealth and more to the ratkin, used to power their technology, feed their brood-mothers and fuel their industry. A piece of warpstone the size of the find he now gazed upon was more wealth than any but the strongest clan-leaders and sorcerers could ever expect to possess.

There was something more in the scent of the Wormstone, something that reminded Kratch of what he had read. The warning checked the adept's greed, and he backed away from the glowing rock.

The stormvermin, however, were ignorant of the Wormstone's history. Two of them rushed forwards, snapping and spitting at each other as they rushed for the massive shard of glowing rock. One of the ratmen slashed his paw across the other's face, staggering his rival as black blood spurted down his forehead. For an instant, it seemed that Grey Seer Skabritt might intervene, but then the priest's face pulled back in a gruesome sneer. Skabritt was a big believer in object lessons: the more ghastly the better.

The foremost stormvermin covered the last few yards between him and the Wormstone with a fierce pounce, his teeth bared in challenge to any who would contest his new possession. Skabritt's tail twitched with amusement as the defiant warrior stretched his arm around the massive rock. Instantly he cried out with a pained squeak, leaping away in terror. Kratch could see the same ghoulish light that surrounded the Wormstone now glowing around the stormvermin's arm. Was it a trick of shadow, or were there really gigantic maggots burrowing into the warrior's fur?

The stormvermin was scratching and tearing at himself now, his body twitching in a fit of agony. The ratman whose eyes he had nearly scratched out snickered and drew his sword. No thought of seizing the tainted Wormstone now, but the stormvermin could still glut his need for revenge against his treacherous rival.

As the avenger approached the twitching wretch, the stricken stormvermin reared up, lunging at his rival with paws spread wide.

Kratch realised with revulsion that the sick skaven wasn't attacking, he was appealing for succour. The swordsrat backed away in revulsion, horrified by the squirming ripples beneath the sick skaven's fur. He wasn't fast enough; the paw of the maddened wretch struck his foot, leaving a touch of the glowing taint on his clawed toes.

The swordsrat shrieked and brought his blade smashing down. The sick skaven's head burst open like an overripe melon, exploding into greasy quarters. From the grisly mush, fat green worms plopped and slithered.

The watching skaven vented their glands at the sickening sight. Several stormvermin braced their halberds, pointing the blades at the now infected swordsrat, trying to keep both him and the glowing worms in view. Kratch began trolling through his mind for a spell that would guard him against the ghastly magic he had witnessed, prayers to the Horned Rat rasping through his fangs.

Skabritt was unmoved, however. A fiendish, exultant light was in his eyes now.

'This,' the sorcerer hissed, 'this is the weapon that makes Skabritt seerlord!'

His master's words had barely registered with Kratch before the adept's attention was riveted once more upon the Wormstone. The bones piled behind the relic were moving, heaving and undulating like a boiling pool of pitch. A new scent imposed itself upon his snout, a thick beastly reek like an orc abattoir after a hot summer

day mixed with the stink of wet rat ogre.

The stormvermin were too preoccupied with fending off their infected comrade, jabbing at him with the points of their halberds, trying to keep him back without puncturing his hide and spilling more glowing worms onto the floor of the burrow. They did not see the pile of bones rise up, did not see the old gnawed skeletons crash back to the floor as something immense and monstrous shook them from its peeling hide.

What it was, Kratch did not know. He suspected such a thing had no name. It was immense, bigger even than the blind burrowers that Clan Moulder used to expand the caverns of the Under-Empire. There was certainly the suggestion of rat in its overall shape, a loathsome bulk that conspired at once to appear both bloated and emaciated. Patches of piebald fur clung to random bits of its anatomy; the rest was leprous and dripping. Its paws were oversized, like those of a snow bear, and tipped with more talons than it had toes. The head was withered to the point of being almost skeletal and the eyes that stared from either side of its peeling snout were swollen and pale. It lashed its tail against the floor and scrabbled forwards, darting to the carcass of the slain ratman.



Now the stormvermin could not fail to notice the monster. They froze, eyes wide with fright as they stared at the imposing beast. The rat-thing ignored the warriors, instead snuffling at the floor, licking green maggots into its maw with its thin slimy tongue. The stormvermin backed away from the feeding monster, nearly trampling Kratch in their slow retreat.

Along with the healthy warriors, the infected swordsrat also withdrew from the monster, visibly shivering as he watched it feed. The sick skaven blundered into one of his former comrades. Instantly the stormvermin cried out, slashing the swordsrat from throat to belly with his halberd. Glowing worms oozed from the wound, slapping against the floor like greasy raindrops.

The sound caused the enormous rat-beast to lift its skeletal head. The monster sniffed at the air, then its jaws opened in a sharp hiss. Before any of the skaven could turn to run, the beast leapt across the burrow and was in their midst. Giant claws ripped and tore the tight knot of warriors, shredding armour like paper. Squeals of terror and agony became deafening as the smell of blood enraged the beast still further, provoking it into a frenzied state.

Kratch didn't wait to see anything else. The adept dived from the burrow, scurrying on all fours in his haste to flee. In the tunnel, the panicked slaves were struggling to rip the iron spikes that anchored their chains to the crumbling walls from their earthen fastenings. When they saw Kratch, some of

them abandoned their efforts, turning instead toward the savage taskmaster. Several leapt at him, tearing the empty air with their bloodied paws as they reached the limit of their chains.

Kratch backed away from the maddened slaves, but found his retreat blocked by something warm and furry.

Grey Seer Skabritt's scent held an unfamiliar taint of fear, but Kratch still recognised the smell. He lifted his gaze to the sorcerer-priest. Like the stormvermin, Skabritt's eyes were wide with fear. Unlike the warriors, however, fear was not the only thing Kratch saw in his mentor's stare. He saw anger, the smouldering fury of a mad genius who at the moment of triumph sees his prize stolen from him.

Then Skabritt's eyes were changing, glossing over with a greenish luminance as he drew upon the arcane power of the Horned Rat and the warpstone talisman he clutched in his fist. Kratch could feel tendrils of energy oozing into his brain, trying to smother his thoughts. It took all of his own willpower and sorcerous knowledge to drive them back, to free his mind of their numbing touch. The adept slumped to the floor, physically drained by the effort of resisting Skabritt's spell.

The slaves were not so fortunate. From the ground, Kratch could see them grow still. Fear withered from their eyes, dispelled by a green glow that was an eerie echo of Skabritt's own charged gaze. When the grey seer gestured, the mob stirred, pulling once again at their chains and the iron staples anchoring them to the walls.

This time, however, they did not attack the task as a disordered rabble but rather as a unified body guided by a single will: that of Skabritt. One after another, the combined strength of the slaves tore the staples from the walls.

The last staple came free just in time for Skabritt. The sounds of carnage and slaughter had faded from the burrow. In the exposed mouth of the chamber, its mangy pelt smeared in the black blood and yellow fat of the stormvermin, the rat-beast snarled and spat. Skabritt spun about, glaring at the loathsome creature and pointed a clawed finger at the monster.

At his command, the ensorcelled slaves surged forward, a chattering mass of claws and fangs. Like a furry tide, they crashed upon the rat-beast, crushing it beneath their sheer weight of numbers, bowling it over and slamming it into the crumbling wall of the tunnel. Earth and rock showered down from the ceiling, throwing dust into the musty air.

The rat-beast fought back, disembowelling slaves with every turn of its massive paws, snapping spines with its iron jaws. For all their numbers, for all the grey seer's magic, the stink of fear began to rise from the tangled knot of skaven sweeping over the monster. Skabritt gave voice to an inarticulate howl in which was both terror and outraged fury. The sorcerer-priest scurried forwards, desperate to reinforce his hypnotic control of the craven slaves.

Kratch watched the grey seer rush closer to the battle and his mouth pulled back in a predatory smile. He pulled a small piece of blackish-green rock from beneath

his robes, a tiny sliver of refined warpstone. The adept's teeth gnawed at the rock, letting little bits of stony grit burn their way down his throat and through his body.

Now it was Kratch's eyes that began to glow with an unholy light, the apprentice's brain that roared with the mighty power of the Horned Rat. Kratch could feel his body pulse with strength, swell with godlike vitality. He felt the essence of the warpstone flow through his entire being, hearing its seductive whisper crawl through his flesh.

It was almost worse than Skabritt's spell, fighting down the euphoric mania of the warpstone, but Kratch knew if he lost control now, his opportunity would be lost. That cold, ugly fact helped him maintain a grip on his reason.

He forced his eyes to focus on the rat-beast and the slaves, on Skabritt now standing so very close to the fray.

On the crumbling walls and weak ceiling of the tunnel.

It seemed so easy. A few words, a few gestures, and the primordial power that raced through his body was reaching out. Like a great hammer, it smashed against the walls, it battered against the ceiling. A deafening roar thundered through the tunnel. In that last instant, Skabritt turned, locking eyes with his apprentice.

Kratch grinned back, baring his fangs in challenge to his hated mentor. Then thousands of tons of earth and rock came crashing down, obliterating Skabritt's expression of disbelief.

Grey Seer, slaves and rat-beast, all were buried in the collapse.

Kratch coughed, spitting dirt from his mouth, choking on the dust that filled the tunnel and stifled the warpstone lanterns. He wiped at his almost blind eyes, even as he was pressing a rag to his snout to act as a filter for his nose. Briefly, Kratch considered waiting to see if the entrance to the burrow had remained intact. Skabritt was not the only skaven who could put the Wormstone to good purpose.

It was the memory of the stormvermin who had been infected by the Wormstone's power rather than the dust and dirt that made Kratch decide to flee. He would not brave such a fate as he had seen. He would let others take those risks.

Yes, Kratch decided as he scurried through the raw, desolate tunnels, he would need helpers if he wanted to recover the Wormstone and reap the rewards of such a find. Kratch's muzzle dripped as he salivated in anticipation of those rewards. He knew where to find his allies. He knew where his report about Skabritt's discovery would benefit him the most.

GREY SEER can be purchased in all better bookstores, Games Workshop and other hobby stores, or direct from Black Library and GW mail order.

Do you mind?

by Kizzlesticks



Panic, fear and even terror. These aren't just rules that apply to your army, they can apply to you as well. It might be that sinking feeling you get when your opponent is placing down a horde of 400 troops, where the thought goes through your mind "there is no way that I can kill all of that!".

Or maybe you've experienced it when your enemy deploys a third of their army by placing down a single unit of knights. How

about that hydra that looks

set to mow down your flanks? Or that gun-line that

has turtled in the corner? To be

honest the list can go on without any end in sight.

The thoughts going through your head, that twisting feeling in your guts. They are both caused by the same thing. You'd better start making more room in your skull, because your foe has just crept in your head.

Once the enemy is inside your head you are immediately on the back-foot from turn 1, where players should at least be on even footing (deployment permitting). To have a disadvantage so early in the game will most likely cost you, and a skilled general could simply play you the whole match. Not good!

So how can one deal with this problem? The same way our models do, become Immune To Psychology. What do I mean by this? Let me explain.

There are two different parts to these problems. I shall call these *facts* and *reacts*. Whether they are material or not, facts are solid. That unit he has just placed on the board is a fact. The hero armed to the teeth within that unit is a fact. No matter how you respond to these facts they are not going to change. Simply worrying about his hydra won't make it go away.

This leads to the second part, reacts. These are changeable, so it is possible to work with them. Take this hydra on the flank for example. You see it being deployed on the right flank (fact). It causes terror, has a breath weapon and a number of attacks (also fact).

Whether you laugh or cry for your mother (react) will not change any of the facts. So ask yourself, what is more beneficial? Panicking, stressing and worrying about all the problems it will cause? Or simply acknowledge its existence, smiling and moving on? No matter which you choose the facts remain the same; so you might as well choose the most beneficial reaction.

So we've dealt with the pre-game fears and are starting off the battle on a more even footing. This is where the next wave of psychology tests can come into play. Those little doubts that rose in the back of your head at the beginning, such as "how am I going to kill ALL of that" or "that big unit looks *REALLY BIG*" start popping up again.

Chances are what you are thinking is true. You aren't going to be able to kill every single enemy model, and you might not be able to completely obliterate that scary unit off the board. Accept that and move on. Start looking at what you can do.

Try and isolate that hydra, or tie it up, or even shoot at it a hell of a lot. But whatever you do, don't lose your head. Think it through before reacting. It is easy enough to panic and in the heat of the moment unleash almighty hell at one target, completely ignoring a much closer and greater threat.

Once again, facts are facts. You aren't going to change them, so change what you can. Your reaction. Try and react in the most beneficial and enjoyable way. If you can keep your head you are more likely going to be able to turn things around.

Having said that, sometimes all hope is in fact lost. Sometimes defeat is inevitable. So what to do now? You might believe that no amount of positive thinking will turn the battle around for you. You are right. You have lost. That has become a fact. Once you have accepted that, you can set yourself some new goals.

Maybe take out as many enemies as you can, or aim to take out their general or a specific unit. Basically, set yourself a new objective and play a little mini-game. It is even possible to have a little bit of fun with a couple of units, trying to keep them alive for as long as possible.. You can take to this with renewed vigour and try to obtain a small victory within the overall defeat.

No matter what the outcome of the battle when it is over, you can take something away from it. This is the final psychology test. You could get annoyed or upset at yourself or your opponent, or you could smile, talk and start thinking about what you could have done differently. The outcome of the battle is now a fact, so change what you can. Your reaction.

If you think as you've always thought, you will act as you've always acted. And if you act as you've always acted, you will get the same result as you have always gotten.

(Note that this article focuses solely on big scary things. However at the other end of the scale there is underestimation. This is essentially the same concept, but you are wetting your pants laughing instead of in fear.)





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