

Graham McNeill looks at the journey of a man tortured by a Daemon as a child, who would grow to become Witch Hunter Tyrus, a man who's word alone can smite the daemonic.

WITCH HUNTER

THE TRIALS OF WITCH HUNTER TYRUS

The young Tyrus was to be orphaned at an early age. He was a mere six summers old when the daemons came to his home world of Loressa, an isolated agri-world in the Segmentum Obscurus. Acting insidiously through an adolescent girl, whose miraculous powers of healing had cured many people from Tyrus' village, the Daemon Prince Kholoth the Excoriator spread a plague of mutation across Loressa. This weakened the fabric of reality enough for him to force his way from the Immaterium into the girl's unprotected mind. In its new guise, the daemon destroyed Tyrus' village and began the slaughter of its inhabitants in an orgy of mutilation. Tyrus was dragged from his home into the village's main square, where the inhabitants' corpses lay

in a heaped pile. Over the next few hours, Kholoth tortured Tyrus, taking an eye and slicing off an ear, that he might still hear his own screams and witness the destruction of his flesh. As the leering young girl explained precisely what horrors she would next visit upon his body, Tyrus despaired and prepared for death. Only the timely intervention of Witch Hunter Covonis, who had tracked the daemon to Loressa via the Emperor's Tarot, saved Tyrus' life.

The Tarot has guided the servants of the Emperor for ten millennia and, though the significance of its readings are often obscure to the point of meaningless, its holy instruction is said to be imbued with the Emperor's own will. Such indeed seems to have been the case as Covonis, clad in a massive suit of elaborately tooled armour, intricately carved with decorative scrollwork and fluting, materialised with four, grey armoured angels of destruction in the village square.

The daemon girl paused in her gruesome handiwork, and turned to face the Witch Hunter, a hiss of recognition escaping her possessed lips. Through a red haze, Tyrus saw the mighty figure of Covonis and his armoured brethren do battle with the daemon girl. Three of the angels were cut down with bolts of blue fire, before Covonis swung his blessed sword in a glittering arc and beheaded the shrieking daemon. Whirlwinds of daemonic energy howled around

the combatants as the creature was banished back to the hell from whence it came, and Tyrus watched as one of the angels burned the corpse in the cleansing fire of its weapon.

Tyrus, almost blinded by pain and blood loss, staggered to the edge of the blaze, his skin blistering in the infernal heat, and spat his hatred into the flames. He cursed the daemon's name and, as an armoured gauntlet settled on his shoulder, he looked up into the stern features of Covonis and knew that there was only one path open to him now. Tyrus became Covonis' apprentice and journeyed back to the orbiting starship from which Covonis and the Grey Knights (as Tyrus would later know them) had teleported. He assimilated the wonders of technology and the ways of the Witch Hunter with a zeal only the truly dedicated can muster. He was gifted with cybernetic replacements for his missing eye and ear, and Covonis instructed him in the path of the Witch Hunter, the tools and methods at their disposal and, lastly, the heresy of the daemonic. Never before had Covonis known an acolyte to master the Rites of Detestation so quickly, or one whose pious devotion matched his own.

As the years of intense training passed, Tyrus grew to manhood with his hatred of daemons and those who would consort with such creatures growing stronger with each passing day. He mastered weapons, martial skills and the rites by which the daemon could be vanquished. Such was his strength of devotion to the Immortal God-Emperor that his word alone could stay the hand of a daemonic creature and cause it to reel in pain at his fiery zeal and devotion. Many base and repulsive creatures of the warp were destroyed by Tyrus and his master, until a fateful battle in the royal audience chamber of Epsilon Regalis. The Emperor's Tarot had led Covonis and Tyrus to the palaces of Regalis' great and mighty in search of deviancy. The monarchy of Epsilon Regalis protested their innocence, but Covonis was adamant; they would face Trial by Holy Seal.





Tyrus will never cease in his pursuit of the unholy, the unclean and the unworthy.

Into the palms of each member of the royal family, Covonis placed a featureless wax tablet and heated an Inquisitorial seal. When the seal glowed with heat, Covonis explained, he would press it into the wax upon each of their palms. Those whose flesh was burned would know the full wrath of the Inquisition, while those whose skin remained unblemished would have their innocence displayed for all to see. As Covonis pressed the seal into the first outstretched hand, the human features of the King's daughter split apart into the leering face of a daemon. Worse, it was a daemon Covonis knew; Kholoth the Excoriator. In an instant the daemon was free and dealt a mortal blow to the venerable Witch Hunter. As he fell, the last vestiges of humanity were cast from the faces of the captives and the daemons were free. Tyrus quickly swept up Covonis' power knife and set about himself with terrible fury and righteous anger, his heart burning with vengeance. The lesser thrall daemons in Kholoth's service were no match for Tyrus, and at last he and Kholoth stood face to face, the sole figures left standing in the gore-spattered audience chamber.

The two enemies fought a duel that had been five decades in the making, and almost killed the Witch Hunter's apprentice. Bellowing words of holy purity that the daemon is forbidden to withstand, Tyrus fought with the strength of the Emperor. The bitter foes traded blows, each grievous enough to

fell a lesser being. Sheer force of will kept Tyrus standing and, as he grappled with the daemon, sermons of piety and devotion spilling from his lips, he punched Covonis' weapon through the daemon's chest, dragging out its still-beating heart, and crushed it in his gauntleted fist. The daemon grinned as it died, spouting blasphemous oaths that promised the Witch Hunter that they would meet again and that it had already watched him die a thousand times. Suspecting the corruption of the royal family extended to the planet's population, Tyrus launched a bloody purge of the surrounding cities that saw tens of thousands burned at the stake to ensure the purity of Epsilon Regalis.

Tyrus took his master's suit of armour as his own and repaired the damage which the daemon had wrought on its holy fabric. Covonis' masters elevated Tyrus to the status of Witch Hunter and granted him the full remit of an Imperial Inquisitor. If his experiences with Covonis had taught him anything, it was that there was only room for one species in the galaxy and that was Humanity. His purges of aliens, heretics and warlocks have become legendary amongst even the most puritanical Inquisitors. A fierce Monodominant, Tyrus' quest to exterminate heresy, witchcraft and alien influence has carried him from one side of the galaxy to the other, his rousing orations fanning the flames of zeal and faith on every planet he purges. After the Gland War on Dantis III against the Tyranids,

Tyrus recruited Sergeant Stone, an Imperial Guard veteran who was one of only three survivors of a bionically altered company of the Lostok 23rd. Stone's aggressiveness and devotion to duty made him an ideal member of Tyrus' retinue.

During the Treachery of Hanuchek, Tyrus joined forces with Devotee Malicant, a disciple of the Redemptionist faith spawned on Necromunda, who led his fanatical army on a holy crusade. The battle to destroy Hanuchek all but annihilated Malicant's followers and, at its conclusion, the Redemptionist gladly accompanied Tyrus in his purges. In pursuit of the (in his eyes) heretic Inquisitor Lichtenstein, Tyrus journeyed to the world of Karis Cephalon, where he retrained the Security Enforcer Barbaretta. Her help in investigating the mutant uprisings, which Tyrus believed might have been sponsored by Emissary Fabian, was invaluable, and she has proven to be a worthy addition to the Witch Hunter's retinue.

Tyrus continues to pursue the unholy, purge the unclean and smite the unworthy. It is his holy task to bring the fire of the Emperor to those who need it most and destroy those who would see its light dimmed. Tyrus' reliance on methods first used thousands of years ago is reassuring to many people, who see the guilt or innocence of his subjects determined by the will of the Emperor Himself.