



The Rewards of Tolerance...

An Inquisitor Battle Report

By Ruaridh Dall, Jeremy Lowe and Derek Gillespie

Derek: So, here we go, back for the fourth and final time (in this series of battle reports, at least!). After the result of our third game, which tied up the events on Agripinaa in Saussure's favour, we felt that Goddard had at least picked up enough minor inconsistencies in Saussure's cover story to be left with a niggling doubt about the circumstances in which he'd found himself. As such, we thought that we'd play one final game, detailing Goddard and some of his accomplices tracking Saussure down and taking him to task. Just because the Lords Ryan have been deposed, things are not over between our two Inquisitors...



"Lord Benedict will be pleased, won't he, sir?"

The rating looked expectantly at Kuerten, who glanced up from the data-slate to meet the man's eyes over the high, starched collar of his dress jacket. Kuerten had seen this man break another man almost in two the last time he led a boarding party from the Angellic, but now he looked almost pathetically pleased at the thought that he'd have passed good news to his Inquisitorial master. For all that he crew rarely saw Saussure, he remained a figure of utmost respect for all long-serving crew members of the ship, which was no mean achievement.

"Yes, Mister Orar, he'll be pleased with this. Thank you for bringing it to my attention. Dismissed." The rating saluted smartly and turned on his heel, heading back to the lower circles of the bridge. There was no lie in that statement either, Kuerten knew. A cursory glance over the document on the data-slate told Richard that it was a series of manifests and ledgers accounting for recent production from Agripinaa and, as he now read more, it was evident that the last five months had seen a marked upturn in the fortunes of the stricken planet, even though it was still very much a war zone. General Torporov seemed to be doing an exceptional job at restoring the planet's industrial base to something like high-productivity, even if it was not yet capable of matching the outputs before the Black Crusade had been unleashed.

Saussure had been convinced that Torporov, with his attendant legion of Munitorum quartermasters and Administratum scribes, would be more than capable of holding the planetary government together in the aftermath of the removal of the Lords Ryan. This collection of documentation would help him allay any fears about what they had spent so many months achieving. He knew fine well that, for all his experience and personal faith, Benedict would still have periods of doubt after causing such social upheaval. All the more so, in this case, given that such a shining member of the Ordos had had to be manipulated so brazenly. In fact, if one counted Carter amongst the manipulated – and Kuerten knew that Benedict did – then there were two Inquisitors who had been played in order to bring Ryan down.

The operational debrief as they left Agripinaa had been more subdued than normal – only the impending investiture of Carter had raised the mood. However, Richard was well aware of the evidence against Cato Ryan and his twisted family. Of course, had they never had the good fortune to intercept the vessel carrying the high-grade astro-telepath all those months ago, they would never have been alerted to the treachery. Vasa Sark, not an individual to admit anything other than spite towards other men, had been visibly shaken by his near-death during the joint communion to which they subjected the captured astropath, but he had still managed to decipher the information contained within, without their presence being unmasked. The astropath had not proved so resilient but, given that the psychic transmission was a Magenta-level encrypt, it was unlikely he was intended to survive the onwards broadcast.

Perhaps some of the minor members of the House Ryan had never had knowledge of the corruption and treachery? Kuerten had little doubt that almost no-one outside of the closest of confidence circles around Ryan did, but their continued rulership could not be risked, nonetheless. They were guilty by association, and Agripinaa was clearly the better for their absence. It was no matter now. What was done, was done, and Lord Saussure had to answer to no man other than He on Terra.

Kuerten slipped the data-slate into an interior pocket of his jacket, and made for Benedict's study. He would enjoy breaking the good news to the old man.

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When the Past Comes Back to Haunt You...

Derek: Following the replacement of Lord Ryan and his corrupt administration upon the damaged planet of Agripinaa, Saussure and his associates left the planet to pick up on previous on-going investigations. The aged Inquisitor was content with his work, even though it had seemed in jeopardy at one point. By convincing Goddard of the legitimacy of his reasons for deposing Ryan, Saussure had got the backing of a staunchly-puritan, and well-respected, member of the local Ordos. Shortly after the Agripinaa incident, Nathaniel Carter was elevated to full Inquisitorial status at Saussure's recommendation, and left the travelling party accompanied by several members of Saussure's staff, with his blessing.

Thus, when we catch up with Saussure and friends once again, he and Interrogator Kuerten are following up a potentially significant lead in a long-standing investigation into the actions of one Inquisitor Joseph Stark. This lead has brought Saussure and Kuerten, accompanied by the ever-reliable (and now recovered) First Sergeant Ernst Asimov, to an unremarkable world in the Packard system by the name of Bruga. Here, in the wilderness between scattered settlements, there exist several disparate collectives that still follow primitive religious beliefs in contravention of the Imperial creed. Somehow, one of these groups has come into possession of a portable data-core, the contents of which may provide a clue as to Inquisitor Stark's whereabouts. As a religious man, Saussure cannot allow such backwards people to prosper upon an Imperial world, but has had to earn their trust such that they are willing to make a trade for the data-core. After the exchange has been made, Saussure will exterminate them and be on his way, hunting once again for the man who has eluded him ever since Tigris Bellerophon...



The Charlatan Must Die!

Ruaridh: After the beating my poor fellows took in the last battle report, it was perhaps an inevitability that Saussure's sneaky Recongregator plan to get a military council installed as the rulers of Agripinaa went through. As if this wasn't bad enough, Saussure played the whole thing so it would appear that Goddard had given it his blessing, as who would argue with a well-respected Ordo Malleus inquisitor based at no less a bastion of the good and just as Nemesis Tessera? Fortunately, Goddard has some diligent people on his staff, and the nagging doubt the inquisitor had about the veracity of the clerk captured from the recidivist's hideout in the cathedral has proved to be correct. Goddard's own telepaths have discovered that the information about Cato Ryan was planted, and only Saussure and his people could possibly have manipulated the heretic. Nobody likes being fooled, especially an inquisitor of the Ordo Malleus!

Now Goddard is leading up a heavily-armed kill-team to mete out his revenge. Since the first battle reports I had made a new version of Goddard, and expanded his retinue, so I thought it would be cool to try out the new models on the battlefield. Joining a more resplendent (and heavily armed!) Goddard would be the bounty hunter Lucius van der Voohen, the desperado Brett Thorpe and the gunslinger Hector Ganz. Van der Voohen and Thorpe have a bit of a history – Thorpe was a violent criminal that van der Voohen was once tasked with bringing in, but their respective skills brought them to Goddard's attention. The bounty hunter still thinks Thorpe is a bad apple, and this is represented by van der Voohen Distrusting Thorpe on the table top (see It's All in the Mind in Dark Magenta 1 for details). Additionally, the sight of Thorpe laying down a curtain of fire is enough to bring raw courage out of the meekest of allies - he is a Pillar of Fortitude from the same article. Let's just hope these three provide Goddard with the firepower he'll no doubt need...

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Left to Right: Lucius van der Voohen, Inquisitor Tomashek Goddard, Hector Ganz and Brett Thorpe.



A Final Trick Or Two

Jez: So, for one last time, I'm asked to come up with an opportunity for Goddard and Saussure to lock horns, and once again have a motley crew of ne'er-do-wells and villains to cause some amusing hindrances to both parties with! As we've moved forward in time a bit here, I've been led to believe that Goddard has somewhat got the drop on Saussure and tracked him to Bruga, a backwater planet upon which Saussure is planning on dealing out some rough justice to a group of mutated outcasts who just happen to have stumbled across an artefact slightly more valuable to the Inquisition than they would wish it to be.

Goddard will have the benefit of surprise her, if he chooses to use it. As Saussure doesn't know Goddard is here, he'll have to proceed as if all he's doing is carrying out this meet-up in a comparatively non-hostile fashion, so Goddard should have an opportunity to get the drop on Saussure and his men if he's cunning.

Just so that I have something to do, I've liberally sprinkled a few psychic powers throughout my mutant host, inspired largely thanks to the characterful modelling Ruaridh has done on the pieces. I'm hoping that they'll be viewed largely as bullet-magnets by Derek and Ruaridh, and that I'll be able to spring a surprise or two as a result!



Thix Reestor and his "associates"

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Goddard pushed on through the foliage, ducking under branches and dodging trunks as he eagerly sought out the ruins of the chapel of Saint Fortuna. Eighteen months of searching through shipping records, Inquisitorial communiqués and underworld scuttlebutt had finally borne fruit and now he could barely keep in check the desire to start bellowing Saussure's name in challenge. The venerable Inquisitor had deceived him on Agripinaa, getting Goddard to rubber-stamp the overthrow of the Lords Ryan on trumped-up charges of heresy and pacts with the Dark Gods. The Ryan dynasty had been incompetent in dealing with the aftermath of the Chaos invasion, but Goddard had undone thousands of years of good leadership thanks to Saussure's underhand methods. His actions spoke of Recongregation, covert and sly, but still a threat to the smooth-running of the Imperium. Goddard considered himself a moderate and fair-minded Amalathian, not one for a total pause on progress, nor one to sit by and watch the Imperium grow corrupt and unfit for purpose, but even so, what Saussure had put into progress was an attack on the sanctity of a multi-millennia old Imperial institution. Saussure had had no right to upset the running of a world of such importance and his actions could have brought about catastrophe. Goddard did not know what hurt more; that he had been used so blatantly, or that a respected member of no less than the Ordos Terran could so whimsically put into practice Radical thought. Goddard usually reserved his ire for the followers of the Dark Gods, but he had almost put all of his operations on hold to bring Saussure down, and now he was mere minutes away from enacting his revenge. No humiliation for Benedict though, just a date with the wide maw of Goddard's bolt pistol.



At the edge of the woodland, as the tree line gave way to withered shrubs and low bushes, Benedict Saussure pulled the rough woollen robe around himself, ensuring that there was little evidence of his wargear showing from underneath. The mighty relic-hammer, *Seraphim*, was slung over his shoulder, swathed under a water-proof tarpaulin. More prominently, his shotgun dangled over his other shoulder, slipped inside a leather holster and within easy reach. It would seem unlikely that a archaeo-pro prospector would arrive unarmed, especially in this forgotten backwater. Behind him, Richard leant against a decaying tree trunk, the casual nature of his pose at odds with his usual, instinctive, military posture. His chainsword was buckled prominently at his side, the usually pristine casing of the weapon deliberately muddied and obscured to increase the appearance of a rough lifestyle they had cultivated carefully. Behind Richard, slouched entirely passively and covered with a heavy robe, stood the penitent. Benedict had not been able to entirely convince himself something was not awry with this meet, despite the weeks of planning to get to this point. The 'ware-probes and vox-stalkers he had covering the information systems of Bruga kept catching snatches of something, sufficiently high-grade and sophisticated data-traffic to evade his observation. If there were something, or someone, with that form of capability, there were no reasons he was aware of that would bring them to Bruga unless it were somehow related to him. A few metres in front, Sergeant Asimov raised his left hand and slowly extended four

fingers, then moved his hand in a slow, horizontal line. The contacts were there, and they were waiting. Benedict beckoned Richard up to his side, and they advanced on Ernst's crouched form, just before the lip of the landscape that would lead them down into the depression within which sat Saint Fortuna's Retreat, the ruined chapel that the meet had been arranged within. Ernst rolled over onto his back and sat up, slipping the las-scope back underneath the fabric of his flak-vest. He ran his hand over his jet-black hair, and waited for Saussure to put them into operation.

"Slow and steady, everyone. Remember, these gentlemen are entirely unaware of what they've got, so stick to the story. Steel your disgust at their forms until we can be sure that we have what we came for. I am yet to be convinced that they have truly come alone, so eliminating this nest of degenerates may have to wait for another day if the situation dictates. Let's go."

All three of them stood up purposefully, cresting the lip of the depression and bringing themselves deliberately into view of their contacts. Behind them, the penitent followed in a chem-suppressed haze. Within the ruins of the Retreat, sitting in a picturesque tumble-down of stone and moss on the valley floor, they could see the sub-human party take note of their arrival, and warily step out into the morning light.

Derek - A Tense Beginning

I had absolutely no idea what devious tricks Jez had up his sleeve for this one. For some reason, it appeared that Saussure had agreed to a rendezvous in an area worryingly devoid of significant cover, and I had a lot of open ground to cover before I got to my contacts. Given that I had no idea what mood they'd be in, and that I had Goddard and his party pointing their guns in the other way, I worried about this one...

The forest was beginning to thin out and shafts of golden sunlight stabbed down through the canopy, illuminating the thus far gloomy approach to the chapel. Goddard looked left and right to his heavily armed companions and gave a silent signal to ready themselves for combat. The trio with him brought firepower, muscle and, in Lucius van der Voohen, the finest tracker Subiaco Diablo had ever produced. He had been the one Goddard had charged with locating Saussure, and the bounty hunter had not failed him as the director of the search. Though Goddard wanted to be the one to put Saussure down, he would not begrudge Lucius the killing shot; it would be just reward for his efforts. Goddard watched as Lucius unslung his Polonian compact and chambered the first round and, after one last glance at Brett Thorpe, moved off to the right. Goddard knew exactly what that look had meant: *I'm watching you*. Goddard knew that deep down Lucius hated Thorpe, the only one of his quarry that ever got away back on Subiaco Diablo, and that he would never be able to believe that Thorpe could be trusted. It was rare for sworn enemies to end up on fighting on the same side, but here they were, both united in the service of the Inquisition, and expected to get on with it. Thorpe seemed to have forgotten everything that had gone before. But Lucius, the man of honour, could not let it go. Goddard had tried chastising him in the past, and kept the pair of them apart

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as much as possible, but Lucius' view of Thorpe would never change. He would always be the rogue gun-runner, thief and murderer that had plagued his hive in their former lives. No matter how many heretics Thorpe and his heavily customised, silenced Havvoy pattern autogun brought low, he would always be scum in Lucius' eyes. Goddard had chosen the pair of them for this mission because he had no one better in their respective fields, but it was at moments like these he wished that Choi and his hellgun were with him, or that Theobald was half the tracker Lucius was. Injury and other tasks had put paid to that ideal, so all that was left was praying that the two of them would get the job done. To Lucius' credit, he had never pulled a knife on Thorpe, but there was always a first time for everything.

The last of the trio, bedecked in a ludicrously patterned shirt, open to show off his multitude of scars, was one Hector Ganz; perhaps the toughest son of Subiaco Diablo Goddard had had the luxury to meet. No bulky armour for Hector – that would slow him and his pistols down, not to mention ruin his hard-man reputation. By all rights, Hector should have died at least four times before, but no one had managed that final killer blow, and Goddard was sure that no matter what happened when they confronted Saussure, Hector would be the last man standing. At Goddard's signal he had started moving off to the left almost casually, his gloved hands nowhere near the quartet of pistols that decorated his form, such was confidence in the speed of his draw. Part of that slickness was owed to the cigarillo laced with 'Slaught' that hung from the corner of his mouth. Goddard had no great affinity for combat drugs himself but he had no problem with Hector using, so long as his addiction didn't start getting the better of him. If his performance on the shooting range two days ago had been anything to go by though, the drugs were certainly not having a negative effect on his shooting ability. Hector was going to be deadly for a long time yet.

Goddard jinked past another trunk and found himself almost in the open. They had reached the edge of the clearing, and just as van der Voohen had described, the off-white stone of the ruined chapel dominated the sun-soaked clearing. Creepers and moss clung to its fractured pillars but despite the crumbling facade, the chapel still retained an air of holiness quite apart from the dark and overgrown forest that surrounded it.

'There's movement,' Thorpe grunted, his twin bionic eyes

rotating as they focussed on the chapel.

'Fire at will,' Goddard ordered with relish.

Thorpe raised his rifle to his shoulder and let loose a single round. There was a cry from within the ruins followed by the panicked barking of orders. Seconds later, a hulking brute – all sickly blue skin and muscle – came thundering from the chapel and across the ground between them, an oversized bionic claw dominating its right side. In a flash, Ganz had his matched Lak 7s drawn and aimed squarely at the monster's torso. The stub guns barked in unison and sent two heavy rounds thudding into the beast's flesh, but it didn't even break stride. Desperate to bring the mutant down before it could bring its horrific claw to bear, Goddard raised his bolt pistol to join Ganz's fusillade. He squeezed the trigger gently and blessed the name of the Ommissiah in an attempt to appease the weapon's ancient and baleful machine spirit, but the bolt failed to ignite. Again he tried, but the weapon was jammed. The brute had bypassed Ganz and was closing fast. Goddard stuffed the bolt pistol into his belt and drew his own Lak 7. As he brought it to eye level, a round from Thorpe's autogun struck the beast in the gut and it stumbled. Goddard's Lak roared, but the shot went high over the swaying monster. It bellowed and snapped the jaws of its claw open and shut as it covered the last few steps between them.

Ruaridh – Characterfulness Does Not Equal Performance

Part of Goddard's back story includes his unreliable bolt pistol that was gifted to him by his mentor. Its machine spirit was damaged during a raid some years before and despite the attentions of many a techpriests, the ancient weapon had never returned to total reliability. I ruled that it was a risky action to fire, and would jam if more 1s came up than 6s much like a belt fed bolter. I thought it was a nice quirk, which also meant that the raw power of the bolt pistol wouldn't dominate the games Goddard took part in. Of course, when I really needed it to work to save Goddard from a power claw armed mutant, the bloody thing jammed!

The sudden crackle of gunfire from across the bowl took all of them back, and Saussure waved them into the sparse cover that existed between themselves and the chapel. Guns were drawn in fluid motions, Benedict racking back



Van der Voohen and Thorpe put aside their differences and take up position

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the slide of his combat shotgun, watching the small lumen-bulbs wink green to indicate a payload ready to fire. Richard knelt beside him, his Stear-pattern stubber in hand and the chainsword now gripped in his fist. With a gentle psychic nudge, Saussure willed his living weapon to the ground behind them, unwilling to unleash the beast until he was sure of the need. Several metres away, over to the right and behind a tumbled mass of carved rock that had undoubtedly once been a part of the chapel complex, Ernst knelt, his lasgun in his arms as he expertly attached scopes and flash-suppressors, his eyes not even looking as his hands danced across the weapon.

"The shots aren't coming our way, Benedict", said Richard, touching the Inquisitor's arm. It took Saussure a moment to realise his Interrogator was correct. In the rush to take cover, he had not yet realised that there were no signs of shots in their direction. Nothing ricocheted off the cover behind which they sheltered, and there were no supersonic zips of slugs passing nearby. Whatever had fired, and drawn fire from the people he had meant to meet, was coming from the other side of the chapel, as if they had either blundered across the scene, or had been waiting all along.

He touched the comm-bead on the side of his neck, and told Ernst to get some eyes on what was happening across the clearing. The sergeant, his combat helm equipped with a highly-advanced array of sights and scanners, would be best placed to discern details of the fire fight. That done, he turned to Richard.

"We have been presented with an opportunity, my friend. Can you get yourself up there, behind the wall of the chapel that's still standing?" He pointed ahead of them, slightly to the left, where a crumbled window frame gave a route in to the chapel whilst still providing defence. Richard nodded.

"Good lad. See what you can see inside that building once you get there. You know what we've come for – if we can get it in the midst of whatever this commotion is, then the Emperor has smiled upon us. Keep a channel open."

Richard visibly relaxed his breathing, then launched himself out of cover and ran across the open ground. No-one challenged his approach. No-one fired a shot in anger. Absurdity and danger seemed to be mixed in equal measure.

What on earth was happening over there?



Ganz screamed, silently.

He was moving, guns raised, but he was a mere spectator. Was he finally losing his mind to the 'Slaughter? He'd seen old 'Slaughters drool their way across the floor of plenty of booze joints in the past but had always told himself he'd be long dead before that would happen to him. He could remember his name though; he could remember his parents; he could remember what he'd had for breakfast – nutri-soup. He hadn't lost his mind - he'd lost control of his body. How did that happen? Had he been possessed? He'd downed plenty of daemon worshippers in his time,

Hector Ganz finds himself losing control



and all the possessed had been mutated to some degree. He just about managed to glance downwards at first his arms and then his legs. They looked normal. He feverishly tried to piece together what had happened in the last minute that had left him like this. He'd left the tree line and shot at the big bastard. He glanced down at his Laks; the ammo counters read "6" on both of them. He'd only fired off one shot from each one. Why had he stopped? He remembered lining up the brute's head for the next volley, but that was it. Something had distracted him. There had been something on the big guy's shoulders. Something small, like a child. Had it done this to him? Whatever had taken control of him, it was leading him into the open, his limbs jerking against his control. From behind the same hill the big brute had appeared over, another mutant came limping forward. A single spike jutted from its right shoulder, and a crudely constructed shotgun rested in its hands. Ganz grimaced and tried to compel his hands to aim at it, but it was like trying to move two Lunar Class Cruisers with force of will alone. The mutant spotted him, smiled with a fang-laden mouth and raised its gun.

Ruaridh – A Nasty Surprise

Jez had completely caught me out with giving the "Little Sister" on the mutant's shoulder *Puppet Master*. Once again his dice-rolling ability came to the fore as he passed a fairly tough Wp test to get Ganz under his control. I expected a lot of trouble to come.

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"Lord Saussure?" Ernst's voice appeared in Benedict's ear, getting his attention at just the moment Richard had made cover, twenty metres away beneath the chapel window. Benedict turned to look at his First Sergeant, and saw what could almost have been surprise betraying itself behind Asimov's usual iron discipline. He gestured for a further report.

"There appears to be second party of hostiles engaging from the opposite tree-line, advancing in a haphazard skirmish order, sir. I count four contacts, individually armed. They seem surprised - I see little evidence they expected this opposition."

"Thank you, Sergeant. Anything further?"

"Indeed, sir. While I don't presume to have a right to know, sir, do you have any cause to believe other operatives of the Inquisition are active on Bruga, sir?"

"The Inquisition? No, confess I was entirely unaware, Ernst." Shocked as he was, Saussure cursed himself for not having suspected this earlier. The issues surrounding the fragment-traces of comm-chatter and electronic searches should have set off more caution in his head. He chastised himself for his carelessness. "What makes you think they're Ordo personnel, Sergeant?"

"I am certain, sir, that the individual leading the party is Tomashek Goddard. Either that, or he has a twin."

There was not a hint of humour in Asimov's voice. Saussure honestly wasn't sure whether or not to call him on his joke, but he suspected there hadn't been one. Tomashek. *Throne, damn it.* It would appear that Agripinaa hadn't been such a clean get-away after all, and now he had a youngster with wounded pride on his hands. Had Goddard *really* come here to track them down? It could not be coincidence that they cross paths again so soon. These degenerates were of no consequence to the Inquisition - Goddard *must* be here for him. He cursed again.

"Orders, my lord?" Ernst queried.

"Suppressive fire only on Goddard's party, Ernst, unless you are directly engaged. We don't have time for this. Richard, are you following?"

"Indeed, Benedict, I've heard."

"Good. Get in, get the data-core, and get out. Ernst and I will cover you and support as required."

Lucius took stock of the madness. The information he'd gleaned had spoken of a meet between Saussure and a local underworld leader in the depths of the forest, but nothing about a gang of mutant thugs. He was sure that a man of Saussure's philosophy would have no qualms about associating himself with such filthy creatures, but to be taken by surprise as they had been was quite plainly embarrassing. He raised his Polonian to loose off a quick shot at the brute, but a las-beam burnt across his forearm and the round flew wide. He glanced in the direction the shot had come from and saw a helmeted trooper ducking behind a fallen pillar. One of Saussure's cronies no doubt. He ducked down behind the cover of the chapel's ruined wall and switched his concentration back to the brute. Goddard was too close to it for Lucius to adjust his aim, so he started to advance on the melee, Polonian tight against his shoulder awaiting an opening to fire.



Thorpe barged past Goddard to get his armoured frame between the inquisitor and the mutie. Goddard was a stuck up spire-boy, but the Inquisitorial gig paid well, and although he'd never admit it, his number had been up back in the downhive. Van der Voohen had had him good, and if Goddard hadn't stepped in with his offer of employment, Thorpe knew his skeleton would be hanging over the gaol in Clutter Rest. He owed Goddard his life, and if it weren't for the inquisitor looking out for his assets, he knew Lucius would have stuck him when everyone else's back was turned. Until the bounty hunter was dead, Goddard was the best protection Thorpe could ask for. Plus this job did involve shooting up just about whatever he liked, and that was the sort of work Brett excelled at. Right now, this big metal armed freak was next on his kill list, and after seeing it shrug off his last shot, he knew he'd have to up the ante. He flicked the shot selector to full and braced the rifle against his shoulder. The little bastard on the big guy's back was going to buy it first. It was even staring right down his sights. *Oh the silly little...*

Thorpe's rifle sagged in his arms, and he found his legs like leaden weights. *This ain't right...*

Richard slipped down into the collapsed shell of the chapel, stubber shouldered and ready to fire if necessary. The rock-face opposite puffed and fizzed as stray bullets and las hit off it. At his appearance, three figures whirled, guns pointed and fear in their eyes. They were jittery. Richard pulled back his hood, letting them see his face that they recognised from their last meet. Slowly, he tossed the small sack of Thrones at their feet. One of them stooped after a second's pause, greedily grabbing the bag and passing it to the central figure within their midst.

"Bad business, Reestor," Richard began. "Mr. Ure's not going to be a happy man that you've let the party get crashed by your friends out there."

Wrapped in a filthy, full-length cloak of rough hemp, Thix Reestor pushed passed his foul minions, one of whom was bound to the other by a crude metal leash. At Reestor's side, as ever, was the foul, skeletal marionette, dancing and chittering amongst the confusion.

"Nothing to do with me, pretty boy. I reckon your Ure's the

Derek – The Mind Boggles

I was finding the flow of this game increasingly perplexing, though seemingly not all that threatening to my characters the moment. Whilst I had reckoned that a degree of caution in my approach was worthwhile, Ruaridh had marched his warband from the tree-line like the Emperor's wrath personified, all fire and bluster. Somewhat ridiculously, they seemed to have encountered the toughest degenerate this side of the Eye of Terror, and his tiny psychic friend. I could only watch, increasingly sympathetic, as Jez unleashed his normal panoply of unfeasible dice rolls...

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Thorpe is pinned in place by another's malicious will



one with some explaining to do if he wants me to hand over this 'ere trinket" Reestor revealed the data-core, clutched in a wart-covered hand.

"Reestor, Mr. Ure's only a minute away, with enough firepower to keep you and your boys safe from whoever's doing the shooting out there. He's even willing to still pay you, if you can convince him that you aren't to blame for ruining all the work he's done to meet you here in private. Your call, Thix. You can stay here and probably die, or you can follow me and get rich." Richard pointed back the way he had come, and strode confidently in that direction. Upon reaching the window, he looked back and, as he'd known he'd find, their guns were lowered. Greed got the better of them, and they followed him out.



The mutie's shotgun blast took Ganz in the gut and sent him careening backwards into the scrub. The wind was driven out of him and to his surprise, he let out a groan.

'Smak me!' he grunted, half in pain and half just to test that he had control of his voice box back. He lifted his arms up to see the pistols in his hands, and wiggled his toes to check that his body was back with him too. He looked down at his belly and, confident that he couldn't see his intestines in the bloody mess, got to his feet.

'Game on,' he said and sent a pair of rounds from each Lak through the mutant's torso in a flash of crimson. 'Shoulda shot me twice!' he shouted as the mutant slumped over backwards. He turned around to see where the big mutie had gone, and saw it bearing down on Goddard. He took a big draw on his 'Slaught-smoke and stuffed his Laks into their holsters. As the combat drug

started powering through his system he balled up his fists and roared bestially. He looked down at the silver spikes of his knuckle dusters and grinned. He was going to make sure the big boy and the little girly knew exactly who they'd tried to smak with.

Ruaridh – You Get One Back, You Lose Another

Fortunately, Ganz hadn't suffered too much under the "Little Sister's" control and I'd got him back on my team after only two turns. But then Jez had targeted Thorpe, and grabbed himself another plaything. Fantastic.



'Damn it Thorpe, get moving!' Lucius yelled in Thorpe's ear as he barrelled past him. He was just standing there dumbstruck while the mutant juggernaut tried to catch Goddard in its claw. The inquisitor was barely staying out of its grasp, his sword arm not strong enough to turn aside the oversized bionic that was laying about him. Thorpe should have emptied his magazine into it, but the duplicitous criminal had lowered his autogun. He'd pay for his treachery later, but right now Lucius had to dig Goddard out of this mess. He slung his Polonian compact and reached over his shoulder to draw his combat knife. Goddard and the mutie were dancing around too much to risk shooting the beast so he'd have to do this up close. While Goddard had its attention he could land a decisive blow when its back was turned. He rocked back on his heels, waiting to pounce on an opening. The mutant ducked its shoulder and attempted a wide backswing to catch Goddard under the chin, but the inquisitor side-stepped it easily. As the beast followed through, it turned its back on Lucius and gave him the clear sight he needed. He made to move, but found himself hurtling chinwards to the ground, pain cutting through the back of the skull. Above him, Thorpe's stolen body lowered the butt of his rifle and stepped forward to deliver the coup-de-grace to his helpless long-term foe.



As Kuerten and Reestor emerged from Saint Fortuna's Retreat, Benedict got up and walked towards the party, quickly taking stock of the situation unfolding around him. His intention had always been to return after the deal had

Van der Voohen lies helpless as the possessed Thorpe looms over his body



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been done and eliminate this nest of deviance, petty anarchists who were lashing out at Imperial society on Bruga. However, with the initiative wrestled from him by Goddard's arrival, he couldn't afford to have Thix Reestor and his ring-leaders survive to pass any information, however slight, onto the young Inquisitor. This time, Saussure would make sure there were no leads for Goddard to latch on to. He could be spending all his time looking over his shoulder, and yet wouldn't condone violence against Goddard. Reestor and his men would have to die – the only issue was now getting the data-core from them in one piece.

"Well, Thix, how do you explain this? I thought you wanted the Thrones for your little band and their struggle against the straight-skins?" Straight-skins – a mutant's term of derision for the populace of Bruga that oppressed them.

"You must have done this, Ure. You've tricked me into coming here and brought others with you. You'll suffer for tricking us, off-worlder." The mutant's words slurred more than usual, adrenaline doubtless fuelling his bravado.

"Nonsense, Thix. I've got the currency," Saussure said, hefting the bag in his free hand and dropping it to the floor, "all you have to do is give me the scrap-tech, and I'll make sure that your men and mine get out of here intact. Whoever that lot are, they won't prove a problem if they get passed your men fighting now."

"Yes, yes, my men fighting, while your men wait, Ure. I think we should be rid of you know, and keep this little box if it's so important someone else wants it too." Reestor, turned to go, his foul familiar now twitching uncontrollably on the spot. It fixed Saussure with its uneven eyes, which suddenly glowed with a sickly lambent light.

"I think not, filth. There is judgement awaiting you before you leave." From beneath the folds of his over-cloak, Benedict produced his shotgun and pressed it against the head of the startled familiar. In a fluid motion, he depressed the trigger, and the upper body of the dancing creature disintegrated in a cone of flesh and bone. The augmented systems of his bionic arm absorbed the recoil without problem. Reestor screamed, stumbling to one knee and dropping the core, which bounced a few metres from his grasp. Richard, moving swiftly, ran past Saussure and swept the precious data-core into his arms.

As the other mutants howled in rage, Benedict turned to the silent figure behind him.

"Sanguis. Omicron order."



Goddard's sword clattered off the claret-red paintwork that clad the mutant's bionic. There were hydraulic pipes adorning the joints, and Goddard hoped that by severing one he could paralyse the brute's arm, but the monster's arms hadn't stopped swinging since it had charged him and the small targets were always out of reach. Unlike him, the beast showed no signs of tiring either, and

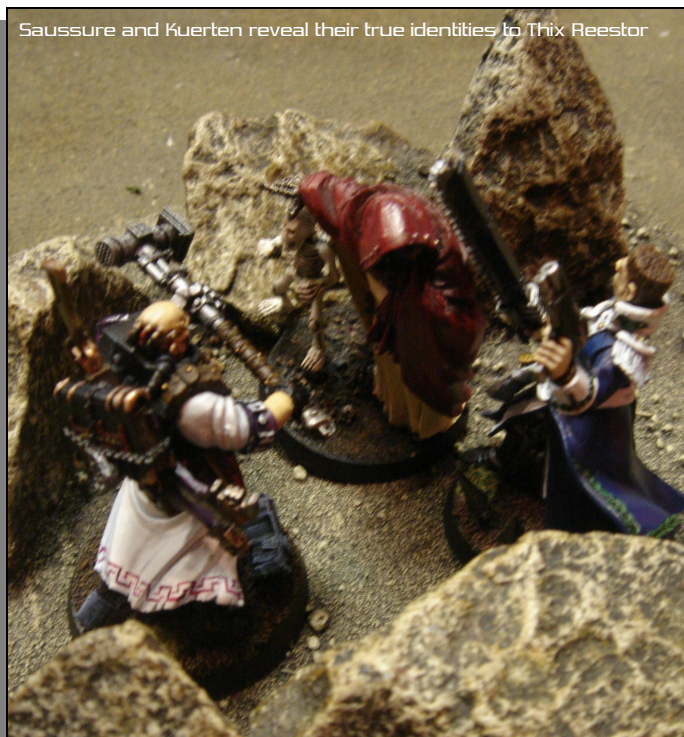
Goddard knew that he would soon be struggling to lift his sword, let alone parry a blow. He was no master swordsman or acrobat, and he could not see a way out of the combat. The frustration inside him boiled. Anger at his own inability to dispatch the mutant and abject fury that while he struggled against this beast, Saussure was probably making for the hills, escaping the judgement he oh-so deserved. Goddard knew that this was realistically his only chance to stop him – Saussure would not be so careless as to leave a paper trail again – and time to do so was evaporating fast. The beast's claw came down at him again, thundering into the earth beside him with ground

shaking force. Goddard swung his sword at the temporarily stationary arm and was rewarded with a spurt of oil from the pipe he attacked. The mutant's un-augmented arm came round and knocked him from his feet in retaliation. The bionic arm rose skywards again and the helpless inquisitor could do little but watch it reach its zenith.



In a previous life, the creature now called Deus XVII had been a rapist of pleasure-girls in the Agorran Lattitudes on Denthemar. Arrested by the Arbites and found guilty without trial, the Ecclesiarchy had taken him and turned him from the scum of humanity into a weapon of the Emperor's vengeance. And now he launched himself towards the terrified, mutated brethren of Reestor, his pacifier helm withdrawn and stimulants coursing through his body. He struck the two degenerates like a freight train, eviscerating one of them in seconds as the two over-sized shears of the Decapitators tore through bone and muscle. His compatriot lifted his crude hand cannons and fired, hitting the arco-flagellant square in the chest and inflicting wounds that would have floored a normal man. Deus XVII simply bellowed with pure rage, unable to feel the pain or suffer from the shock. His response was to crudely slice the head from his attacker, arterial blood fountaining over the scene like a hellish geyser.

Beside the carnage, and without remorse, Saussure unsheathed Seraphim and swung the blessed weapon in a wide arc, bringing it down on the head of Thix Reestor even as he fumbled for his weapon. The degenerate died



Saussure and Kuerten reveal their true identities to Thix Reestor

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instantly. Pausing only to regain control of Deus XVII with a series of psychic imperatives and command words that enforced the control of the pacifier helm once more. A final mutant rose from cover, wielding a potent looking musket, but he fell back a split second later, drilled clean between the eyes by Asimov's super-charged las.

"We're leaving. Extraction with immediate effect."

Saussure's men fell back, covering themselves as they went.

Derek – With Extreme Sanction

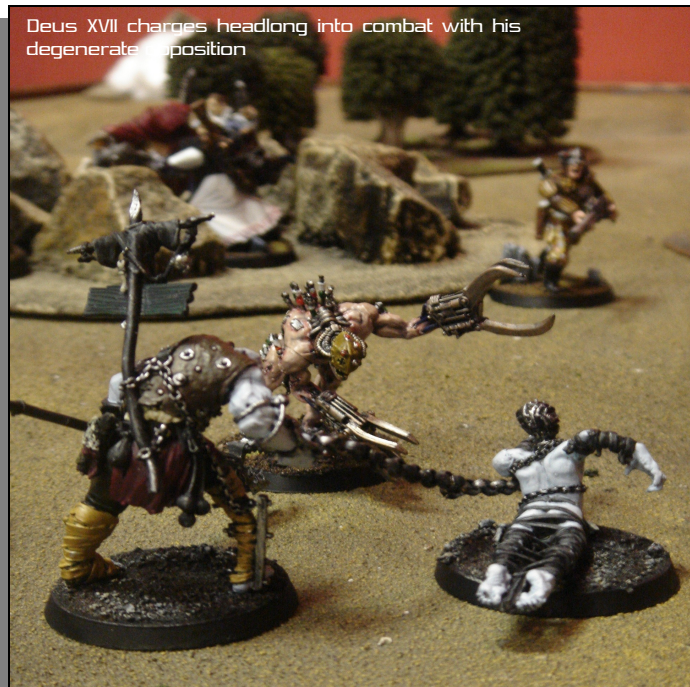
Given that Ruaridh's men were now in all sorts of bother, and that Goddard had failed his System Shock test after being given an almighty whack around the head, it had been time to get off the board with the data-core in hand. If you think the text gives the impression we may have rushed the telling of this part of the story, you'd be wrong. Whilst Ruaridh had been hamstrung all game with his bad luck, and Jez's uncanny fortune, I promptly got the opposite – Fate appeared to give me a big pat on the back and rolled my dice for me, as Saussure's men tore through the four mutants in front of them with zero fuss. A few unfeasible damage rolls later and there were four corpses on the ground, and I could fall back in good order. I think Ruaridh may have quietly cursed...



Ganz's limbs burned with lactic acid as his drug-enhanced mind pushed them well beyond their limits. He sped across the open ground towards the mutant far faster than any man should have been able to, his legs a near blur of perpetual motion. He dipped his shoulder for the final steps and hammered into the beast's flank, knocking it sideways. He felt something break in the impact but didn't give it more than a moment's thought before he launched into a flurry of blows. His spiked knuckles bit deep into the creature's flesh, shedding chunks of meat in a shower of crimson. Where the blood splashed on his skin it burned, leaving red raw marks as the mutant's altered physiology reacted badly with his own. He ducked a swing of the brute's bionic and leapt up on its back, sending the child-like creature he'd seen before spinning to the ground. He punched the brute twice about the head before it lurched wildly and dislodged him. He hit the ground hard, but the 'Slaught pumping through him kept him alert enough to roll backwards and up onto his feet before the great claw could come down on him. In the midst of Ganz's attack, Goddard had got to his feet, and Hector watched as the inquisitor attempted to drive his blade into the mutant's abdomen. It was quick to his ruse though, and with a backhand slap sent Goddard tumbling to the ground. It rounded on Ganz, roaring, before the zipping sound of silenced automatic fire cut through the air and the beast jerkily keeled over backwards. Ganz turned to see Thorpe with his rifle tucked tightly into his shoulder advancing on the beast. Van der Voohen lay prostrate on the ground behind him.

'Don't know why I did that,' Thorpe said as he saw Ganz eyeing the downed bounty hunter. 'I just found myself battering the back of his head.'

Deus XVII charges headlong into combat with his degenerate position



'A lot of that... going around,' Ganz replied hesitantly, coming down as the 'Slaught began to leave his system. 'You'll just have to convince him you didn't mean it.'

'He didn't see who it was,' Thorpe replied, grinning.

Ganz moved over to where Goddard lay. He was breathing, but had a cut across his crown. Hector shook him by the shoulder, but Goddard wasn't coming round anytime soon. As the haze of the 'Slaught wore off completely he became aware of shouting and lasfire from the other side of the chapel. He'd half forgotten that they were here to take out Saussure, but by the sounds of things the other inquisitor was knee deep in trouble himself.

'What's going on over there, Brett?' Hector asked. Thorpe cast his augmented gaze in the direction of the noise and took in a desperate hand-to-hand melee between more of the mutants and a bearded figure, most likely Saussure and a couple of others.

Ganz hands out some rough justice to his tormentor



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'The muties are fighting with Saussure too,' he said, slinging the autogun over his shoulder. 'I reckon I can take the whole lot down with a frag.'

'Go for it.'

Thorpe slunk off towards the cover of the ruins, unclipping a grenade from his belt as he went. To the right, van der Voohen was back up, clutching the back of his head.

'Smakin' muties started throwing rocks!' Ganz called over to him. 'Clocked you one badly.' Lucius raised a hand to indicate he was alright. 'They're all rumbling at the far side of the ruins,' Ganz pointed. Lucius nodded and headed for the right hand side of the chapel, taking cover behind a crumbling wall. He sent a volley of shots into the chaos ahead, and was rewarded with a scream. Thorpe threw his grenade in a long arc, landing it on the fringes of the combat. The blast threw up a cloud of dust and rock fragments, obscuring their view of the melee. When it cleared, only the bodies of a couple of mutants were visible.

Saussure had escaped them once again.



Simply Unbelievable.

Derek: Never, in all honesty, have I felt so sorry for another player, or been more perplexed by what was happening to the little toy soldiers in front of me. To be brutally honest, all I did in this game was walk from a board edge to the middle of the table, have a quick altercation, and then go back in precisely opposite direction. I never got into combat with, or even had real sight of, Ruaridh's warband, and the only offensive action I took against them was a single shot from First Sergeant Asimov to make them keep their heads down. I ran up against four NPCs, who I think Jez expected to cause me as much trouble as Ruaridh was having but, in the event, keeled over and died when faced with a lasgun, a Power Hammer to the head (!) and an arco-flagellant on the rampage. Jez looked crest-fallen, Ruaridh's fingers probably dug furrows in the table, and I still shook my head in near-confusion.

Ruaridh really had a nightmare here – it's a good thing he's as laid-back about fortune has he appears to be, because there was punishing bad luck coming from his side of things. Every dice roll seemed to fail if he made it. On the other hand, as soon as Jez took control of his characters, they seemed worryingly effective. Perhaps the little girl should simply have taken control of Goddard's mind and sent him after Saussure with Jez rolling the dice?

So, it would appear that Saussure has got away with the whole thing far more easily than he has right to, quite frankly. Ruaridh and I have finished our series of battle reports for the moment, though I'm sure you'll see more from Mr. Dall in these pages very soon. You never know, Saussure and Goddard might cross paths once again, sometime in the future.

Once Ruaridh's got some new dice...



Curses, Foiled Again!

Ruaridh: Not so much a daring assassination attempt on a Radical inquisitor as much a frantic fight for survival against one big mutant and one tiny one. Anyone who's played against me on the *Inquisitor* table will know that occasionally the dice will desert me (usually with fairly apocalyptic results), but this game was just plain ridiculous! I have no idea how many to hit rolls were botched trying to bring the "big boss mutant" down. Every gunshot or sword-swipe I seemed to roll for went wide. Eventually Jez just had to step in and fudge it so that the big freak went down. The mission was unfortunately well and truly beyond my guys by that point, but at least no one had died! Congratulations to Derek though for competently doing what he needed to do to complete his objectives and make his escape. Although Saussure has escaped Goddard's clutches, I'd like to think the two of them will cross paths at some point in the future. I'm also hoping that some other plucky fellows will be inspired enough by our escapades and get together to play and write up a new set of battle reports for *Dark Magenta*. It's not as difficult as you might think – just make sure someone has a pen and paper to jot down what happens as the action unfolds, take some photos and then hit the keyboard!



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The Angellic ghosted through the void, distant stars streaking passed the huge windows that made up a wall of Saussure's cabin quarters. The blast shutters were rolled back, and the old man stared into the middle distance of the endless night. On the desk before him, the desktop cogitator extracted files from the recovered data-core, the lambent glow casting a sickly light across his face. His mind was not on the data they had fought to obtain. Whatever the core contained seemed temporarily insignificant.

This was not how it was meant to be. Saussure was getting too old to attract another young aggressor. Goddard should never have got mixed up in the Agripinaa operations, much less have apparently discovered that he had become a pawn in the wider plan. He was not sure from where the laxity in the plan's execution had originated, but someone had become sloppy. Had it been himself? He could not pin-point the moment if it had but, regardless, Goddard had been sufficiently convinced of duplicity that he had tracked Saussure across the Segmentum to a planetary backwater, and had announced his hunt with immediate gunfire. He was convinced that those around him were more than capable of defending themselves against Goddard's associates and, regardless of what the younger Inquisitor doubtless imagined, he was no radical outcast divorced from Inquisitorial resources, and nor would he be in the future. Anyone challenging Benedict Saussure would find themselves opposing the full authority and influence of a senior Inquisitor, and that was surely beyond even one as promising as Tomashek Goddard?

No, the problem was that there was now apparently an enemy where, except for the machinations of fate, there should have been a valuable ally. No, that was not entirely true. It was not merely a twist of fate. It was either carelessness, or treachery. Which one, he had to discover, even though the Agripinaa operatives were now dispersed far and wide on other business. Indeed, some of them no longer answered directly to him, since Nathaniel Carter had gone his own way, taking some of the staff with Saussure's own blessing. Carter would ideologically side with Goddard, he knew, though he was sure that Carter currently knew none of this, and Goddard had – as far as he had been able to ascertain – no knowledge of Carter's location, and had not attempted to find him. The thought, however, that he had dispatched Carter with not only a rosette, but also a traitor in his midst, gnawed him unceasingly...

His reverie was interrupted by the soft chime of the cogitator completing the data extraction. The sacred hourglass had stopped turning on the screen, and numerous files awaited his attention. He pressed a button on the panel beside him, silently summoning Kuerten from wherever he was on board. Between them, they would turn their attention to the tasks of the future, and the old man would re-focus himself on what needed to be done to continue the search for Joseph Stark.

He only hoped that those hunting him would abandon their pursuit before more serious measures had to be taken...



About the Authors

Derek Gillespie is the Editor-in-Chief of Dark Magenta, and has been keeping his fingers in many Inquisitor-related pies ever since the game came out. He's currently trying to get back to having some regular gaming and painting time after finishing off his thesis, and is finally having some small measure of success!

Ruaridh Dall is a newly qualified dentist working in Elgin in the north of Scotland. While not filling teeth he can be found working on far too many modelling projects at once and thinking about grown up stuff like buying a house. He goes by the online moniker Van Helser..

Jeremy Lowe is a a veteran of Games Workshop games, from Man O'War to Aeronautica (although he has a strange aversion to Gorka Morka). Whilst he doesn't get to play Inquisitor as much as he would like to, it doesn't stop him talking about it whenever he has the opportunity and reminiscing about aerial sneak attacks with Eviscerators. These days he can be found thinking about tanks, painting High Elves and dreaming of Dark Elves...



For Inquisitorial Eyes