

Deeper Underground

A campaign system with a twist

By Tom Newton

I first entered the world of Citadel Miniatures at the tender age of eleven, when I received Warhammer 40,000 second edition for a Christmas present. I immediately fell in love with the Eldar and built up quite a sizeable army.

By the grand old age of twelve I had developed what I thought was a cunning and unbeatable strategy with my Jetbikes, that is, until I met beardy Marine players whose army consisted mainly of Devastator squads. Thank the Emperor for third edition!

I was first introduced to the urban rat's nest more commonly known as Necromunda, in the 'Dead or Alive'

campaign during the summer of '98 in Salisbury store. I was immediately gripped by the simplicity of the game and loved the way that you could personalise and customise your gangs through buying and selling equipment and arms. Your gang could become as diverse as anything through the acquisition of skills and tailored to suit your style of play. Eventually you could gain a reputation and your name would be whispered in fear amongst your enemies.

At present, I have a cool, calculating Van Saar gang and those techno-deviants, the Pit Slaves, both of which have seen action in this campaign.

THOUSANDS OF MILES from the densely populated hives of Necromunda lies a decaying and forgotten hive amidst the great ash deserts. Its ruined spires stab aimlessly into the polluted skies. Millennia ago, the Hindsk hive was at its zenith, a city brimming with tech-noir fetishism, where the people's desires fuelled the city with artificial virtual reality dreams borne of a secret and ancient technology unheard of in the rest of the Imperium. Excommunicated countless centuries ago by the rest of Necromunda for reasons unknown, its memory has been left to fade with the passing of generations.

A breakdown in the archaic dream-machine's core program crashed the system, and a million innocent souls were consigned to the warp in the flickering of an instant. Today, crowds of amphetamine-crazed fanatics cruise the sprawl of the collapsed nexus searching for the machine, seeking the knowledge of their forebears. Savage alien bikers lead an unknown revolution against a mysterious and heartless master of the Undead, known as the Keeper, who holds the

post-apocalyptic hive within an iron grip. Underneath the neon-tipped spires, degenerates loyal to the despot direct their armies of mind-altered Pit Slaves towards the borders of rebellious mutants. Their struggle does not go completely unnoticed, however, for it is watched from the shadows by sinister, couled figures who also have a purpose here, for nothing escapes the immortal scrutiny of the Inquisition.

When several groups of well armed, powerful individuals emerge from an abandoned tubeway, they are carefully studied by the strange mix of Hindsk's inhabitants. Are they friend or foe? Each faction has the possibility of gaining new allies or deadly new enemies in a situation that could just about tip the balance of power. And what of the Inquisition? It is often safer to remain ignorant of the dealings of these feared agents of the Emperor. Prepare to enter one of Necromunda's darker sides, a story of betrayal, imprisonment, fear, and retribution. Your greatest adventure lies deeper underground...

Scenario 1: Depot Raid

This is the first scenario of the campaign and represents some of the rival gangs competing for a stash of illegal weapons, the knowledge of which will eventually cause them to become outlawed and drive them far from Hive Primus.

The Gang Leaders have become aware of the location of a disused weapons depot

under the remains of an old factory. A holo-mat scan later revealed that there are several entrances to the depot, but the worn blueprint data tapes have corroded over time, and crashed the holo-mat before complete plans could be download. Despite this lack of knowledge enough is known of its whereabouts to warrant a search. Each of the gangs involved have decided to take a small force of gangers to locate the entrance to the

depot and retrieve the weaponry that could be scavenged from the delapidated building.

This scenario should be fought between two gangs at a time (they are all considered to be searching simultaneously, but the depot sub-levels are huge), so the gangs taking part in the campaign should be drawn against each other in a random fashion.

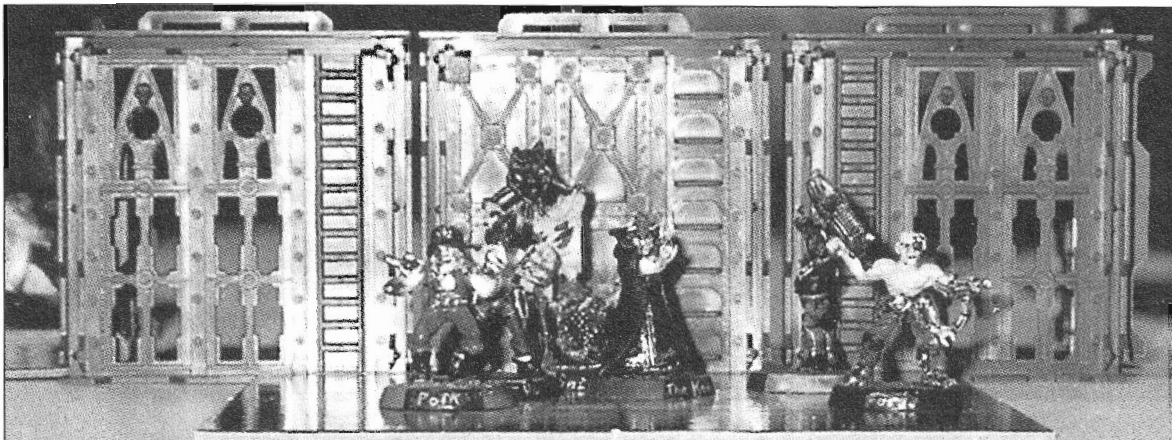
GRIG HELD HIS lasgun tightly, as he clenched his teeth in a mixture of frustration and dread, he felt uncomfortable as sweat trickled down his back. He was hiding in the somewhat dubious safety of an abandoned uranium extraction plant, hoping that the insane Cawdors wouldn't follow him in. He noticed the Juve next to him was tense with fright, fumbling as he was with the safety catch of his laspistol. Grig tapped him with the butt of his lasgun and gestured for him to move behind a group of empty barrels. Somewhere in here, Grig thought, was the entrance to an abandoned, illegal weapons depot and wealth beyond their comprehension. He had retrieved this information from a bounty hunter, whom he 'retired' shortly afterwards. He would find the entrance soon, but for now he had to deal with the advancing Cawdor gang. They knew little of stealth, Grig thought.

He silently shoulder-rolled across the floor and dropped to one knee, in one precise movement. He brought up his lasgun in a firing position, so that the infra-red filters on the sighting tube adjusted perfectly. He lined up his sights with the lead ganger's temple, and switched on his red-dot laser-sight. It was extremely satisfying to see the stunned expression and then sudden realisation spread across the ganger's face, as he noticed the red dot line-up on his forehead, too late. He fired, a pure bolt of brilliant blue laser, that threw actinic light around the gloomy recesses of the old plant. He dropped back behind an old blast furnace, and glanced around the corner to see the Cawdor stumble

to the ground with a smoking hole in his forehead.



The Juve behind the drums of chemicals began fired the laspistol wildly, repeatedly missing, but drawing attention to himself. The three remaining Cawdors immediately returned fire at the Juve. He was cut down by a hail of bolter shells and autogun fire, which gave Grig and his gangers a chance to retaliate. Grig leaned out from behind the furnace and fired three consecutive shots which struck all three of the gangers. However, a stockily-built Heavy brandishing a Stubber rose quietly from behind a pile of crates and launched a hail of lead at Grig, with a twisted smile of evil on his masked face barely concealing a toothless grin. Grig was thrown back by the force of the heavy weapon, but his carapace armour held. Luckily, as he was pushed into the blast furnace's huge sides by the impact, one of its old worn panels crumbled under his weight to reveal a doorway, leading down to a set of worn spiral stairs. The underground entrance! He beckoned to his gang members quickly. He left a melta bomb near the entrance to take care of anyone inquisitive enough to follow. Grig and his cronies jumped down the long shaft in search of the stash in weapons that awaited and prepared to take on what ever lurked in the gloom underground.



The Keeper puts in a shadowy appearance with his loyal Pit Slaves

TERRAIN

You will need to have access to the card floorplans from Space Hulk or Warhammer Quest (it doesn't really matter which you use, but the Space Hulk floorplans look better for this scenario).

The rules for movement, and room changing are the same as in Warhammer Quest, with one model holding a flashlight (he serves the same purpose as the lantern that the barbarian carries). Nominate the model who will be holding the flashlight. This model always has to lead the

group into new rooms, so that he can warn the group if there is any danger or a dead end ahead. If this model gets killed, then the nearest friendly model uses up its next move to pick up the dropped flashlight.

I suggest only allowing four models from each of the two gangs taking part into the depot, ensuring that one of them is the leader, and that one is a Juve. Due to the lack of space in the small corridors, Heavies or Scalies are not allowed into the depot. The objective of this scenario is to find the ammo dump located somewhere in the complex, and then to escape with crates of the weapons.

MOVING & NEW ROOMS

If you haven't played Warhammer Quest before, or you have forgotten how the movement and venturing into new rooms system works (shame on you!) then consult these rules before play.

Divide the table up into four quarters. Each gang has to deploy in opposite quarters

and each gang starts off in a straight corridor, with two exits/entrances on each end. Each model is allowed to move four squares during the movement phase, regardless of any equipment the model has. When each model has finished its turn, roll a D6, and consult the Random Events table:

When the model with the flashlight has passed through the exit of the room/corridor that it was previously in, roll a D6 to uncover the next room location and consult the table:

RANDOM EVENTS TABLE

D6	Result
1-2	Nothing happens
3	Rat Attack! The gang is attacked by D3 Giant Rats.
4	Spider Attack! The gang is attacked by D3 Wolf Spiders.
5-6	Alarms Tripped! The archaic alarm system has been tripped somehow and all exits are closed for a turn until the gangers override them.



The situation may arise that two corridors are about to cross over each other's path and mess up the game board layout. This just adds to the fun if it happens, especially if it's the rival gang's. Treat the corridors as a crossroads and let the gunfights commence. Use your imagination!

Special Rooms

A Special room is, physically identical to the crossroads, (you could use the *Room of Power* from Warhammer Quest to identify a special room). This may be the chief arms depot where absolute hordes of crates of weapons are stashed (fill up the room with Loot Counters, ensuring that there are more than enough for both sides!) or it may be just one of the subsidiary offices filled with Archeotech. However, many items in these rooms are fakes equipped with booby traps that will cause all of the doors to shut

and seal the intruders in.

Roll on the table below to determine the room's contents:

SPECIAL ROOM TABLE

D6	Result
1-2	The alarm system has been accidentally tripped and all doors will close for the next turn only.
3-4	The gangers have found some Archeotech which can be traded for 3D6 creds.
5-6	This is the Arms Depot, grab what you can and get out fast!

Unlike the Loot Counters from the Scavengers scenario (page 154 of the Rulebook), these are huge crates and only one may be carried at a time by each of the gangers. Whilst they are carrying a crate, the ganger moves only three squares a turn and may not shoot or engage in close combat. If he is charged by an enemy he must immediately drop the crate and fight in close combat.

Each Gang Leader is assumed to have downloaded the security override codes from the blueprints. Providing that

the Leader is still in the room, he can re-open the door (but this takes one turn to do so). If the leader is dead, players can always try to blast the door to pieces and get through. The doors have an armour value of 10, and they will instantly open if a Scrambler device is used on them.

SHOOTING

Shooting is handled in the same way as it is in normal games of Necromunda. However, because of the walls blocking the way, the shooting model must have a direct line of sight to the target. Template weapons are even more deadly underground, as bits of shrapnel and burning liquid ricochet and rebound off of the walls back to the target! This means that all weapons using templates have an extra +1 added to their strength, and an extra -1 to their modifiers. Grenades, however, can't be thrown in the depot, primarily because there is not enough room to get a good arm behind a grenade in the corridor. Grenade launchers, can still be used as normal. Models behind corners attempting to shoot suffer a -2 modifier to hit, because they are taking potshots at the enemy, whilst trying to conceal their person behind the corner.

ROOM TABLE

D6	Result
1	Corridor
2	Left Turn
3	Right Turn
4	Cross Roads
5-6	Special Room

RANDOM EVENTS PROFILES

Beastie	M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld
Giant Rat	6	4	3	2	3	1	3	1	4
Wolf Spider	7	3	0	4	3	1	1	1	5

Special Rules

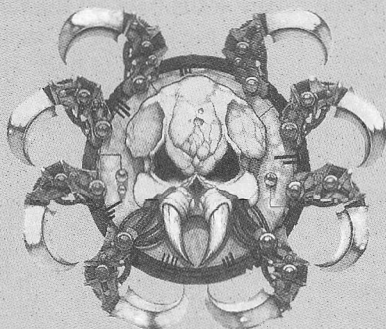
Giant Rat: *Dodge* 4+ unmodified

Wolf Spider: *Armour* 6+, *Movement* – the spider may move up and down any sloping surface without restriction.

ESCAPING AND WINNING

The gang to escape, back down the tunnel that they entered via, with at least one crate of weapons (a Loot Counter) has won and the game will end immediately, unless one of the gangs has *Bottled Out*.

THE KEEPER SAT upon the cold flagstones of the ruined chapel in a meditating position as he placed the bowl of blood before him. His followers – those blind fools – all stood around him in the ritual circle. He could feel the psychic aura reverberating around them, as he concentrated upon the bleak focal point in his mind. Unlike most rogue psykers, he only had to connect his body and mind in the chain of power, others had to link up fully, mind, body, and soul. But his soul was lost, when he offered up the first hundred souls to his master in return for one hundred years of life. 'Another soul, another year'. The Keeper lived by those words. Because he was an immortal, he had no soul, and could not therefore die. He had also speculated throughout his long life that without a soul he was not alive either. But he felt alive, that was the main thing. When he closed his eyes, he saw the dim lights of hundreds of souls burning brightly in the Warp, and he also felt a darkness, a rift within the Warp.



The vast and ancient machine that towered in front of them, its huge form throwing shadows around the gothic crenelations of the old shrine had caused a tear in the Warp, all those centuries ago. The thing was an immense cacophony of whirring cogs, wheels and drive belts, spinning frantically motivated by the darkness of the Warp that it implemented. Centuries ago, this machine had been constructed by loyal followers from the Cult of the Machine God from ancient manuscripts of a long dead alien civilisation, who built it as a tribute to their deity. When the Keeper had descended upon this ruined chapel, five hundred years ago, he had discovered the machine and sensed a great, burning anguish as he walked the chapel's labyrinthine corridors. The Cultists had been

destroyed in the process of the machine's initiation, reduced to mindless wretches, nothing remaining but empty husks. He ascertained that their aims were to harness the Warp in a similar way that the great spaceships of the Imperium did to travel vast distances across the tracts of space. For what purpose they would harness such power though was unclear.

The Cultists of the Machine God had paid for their curiosity not just with their lives but also with their eternal souls. As any experienced psyker knew, the Warp would instantly devour a living soul as soon as it was exposed to the immaterial Warp unless its owner had undergone years of mental training. Which was why the Keeper was immune to the ravaging energies of the 'Soul Machine' as the hive's survivors had come to call it. The hundred that encircled him were also immune to the machine, at least for the time being, for they had pledged their souls to him, and his purpose in exchange for power. Mutants, social outcasts, and other shadows of society all stood in silence.

The Keeper drew his hand out of the bowl, and raised it in the air, his eyes still closed, his mind still blank. The trick was to conceal yourself from the Warp. This was made easier for the Keeper, since he was soulless. Half of the time, he didn't even know that he was raising his fist, because of the meditation routine that he had practiced for so long. Suddenly, he allowed the pooled blood to trickle from his hand. This symbolised the release of one hundred souls into the Warp. The bowl contained his own blood, which he had slowly collected over the years, and he had strung together the sacrifice of souls and channelled their energies into a fistful of blood. As the blood slowly dripped, the machine vented a huge gout of black fire which ripped right through the circle. Warpwind beat at the Keeper's face, as he hung motionless in Limbo. He felt one hundred lives become at one with the warp, as they were pulled into an uncontrollable maelstrom of power. A millisecond later, he felt his master's will fill him with the powerful essence of one hundred souls. The Keeper stood, and smiled.

'Another hundred, another century,' he said.

EXPERIENCE

Experience is earned as stated below:

- +D6 Survives.** If a gang fighter survives the battle then D6 points are earned. Even fighters who are wounded and taken out of action receive experience for taking part.
- +5 Per Wounding Hit.** A fighter earns 5 points for each wounding hit he inflicts during the battle (this will include damage done to the random encounter creatures).
- +5 Per Loot Counter.** If a gang fighter is carrying a loot counter at the end of the game he receives 5 points.
- +10 Winning Gang Leader.** The Gang Leader of the winning side earns an extra 10 points.

FLOGGING THE LOOT...

After the game, when they have returned to their base camp, each gang can get their techno to crack open the crates and see what they've got! Roll 1D6 for each crate, and check out the following table.

On the score of a 5+ the gang has acquired enough ammo to easily last for the next three gang fights. This means that for the next three games no member of the gang has to take any ammo tests at all!

In addition to the *One-in-a-Million* weapon on a roll of a '6', the weapon comes equipped with an *Infra-red Sight*.

Players may trade everything in the crates if they want to, or



Sandy's dice rolling gets 'jammier' by the minute

sell each crate for 5D6 credits without opening them.

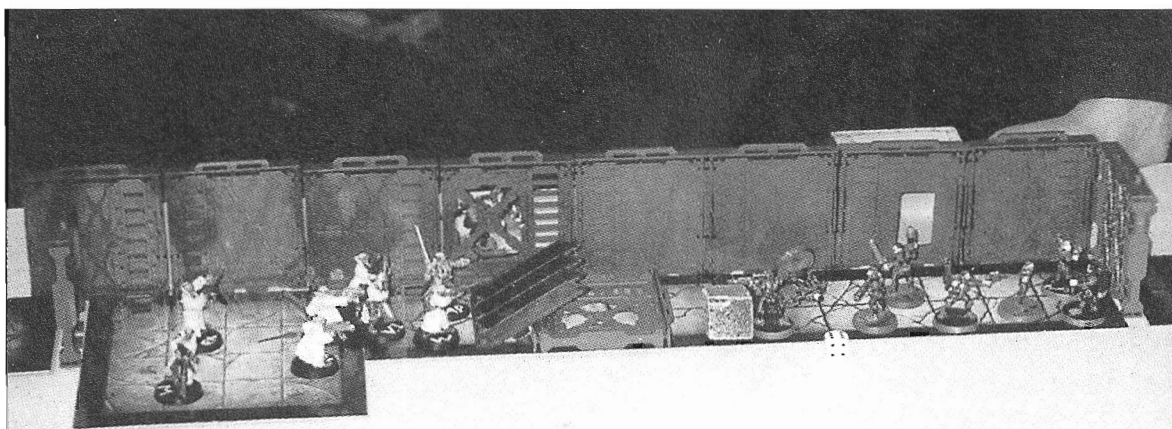
It may be a good idea, if a player gets any armour, to

trade some jackets and keep the others (for example, Tom sold two of his Flak jackets, and kept the other four). This is a useful ploy if the player is in desperate need for stash and already has armour for most of his gang members.

This scenario proved to be an interesting challenge, and is good for beginner gangs, as it gives them opportunity to gain loads of experience before they enter the Hindsbive! It's also great for veteran gangs who've got a tight budget and need some extra creds in their stash! I hope that everyone who plays this enjoys it. Oh, and remember: take your flashlight. You never know what's lurking underground.

CRATES TABLE

D6	Result
1	D6 Flak Jackets.
2	D3 sets of Mesh Armour.
3	Archeotech worth 6D6 creds.
4	D2 Needle weapons (roll again: 1-3+pistols, 1-4+rifles).
5	General ammo worth 2D6 creds.
2	A <i>One-in-a-Million</i> weapon.



Showdown in the Arms Depot, between Delaque and Van Saar gangers

PLAYTEST NOTES

During the playtests we did at the Salisbury Games Workshop store, we (Sandy, a fellow gang leader of the Delaque clan, and the store members) thought that there were some aspects that needed changing from my initial draught. The outcome of the first Scenario was quite well balanced, as Sandy and I both have veteran gangs, so it was a close fight. Even though Sandy managed to down my Juve AND my leader (GIT!) – who survived receiving some *Impressive Scars* in the process. In return, Sandy failed to escape after turn four, and I managed to get back to my starting room with two crates full of cool stuff (I got Flak and Mesh armour – excellent!). Sandy, renowned at Salisbury store for being a ‘jammy’ dice-roller managed to get the ammo crate and the needler weapons (DOUBLE-GIT!). The final outcome, however, was me walking away with loads of experience and armour, and Sandy with hardly any experience at all, but much better gear.

Scenario 2: Ambush in the Hindsk hive

This is the second part of the Deeper Underground campaign, and picks up roughly where the first part left off. The Adeptus Arbites have become concerned with the frequent raids occurring in a certain prohibited underground storage depot, and have tracked the cause of these raids by the means of snitches, and third-hand information gathered from bounty hunters. It’s not long before they hold the gangs responsible for the raids on this property.

A lucky tip-off provided the culprits with just sufficient time to grab their things and get on the run. After a brief fire-fight between some squads of Arbitrators and those gangs involved in the depot raids, the gangs managed to escape down an ancient, disused subway tube (you could even write up a scenario to simulate this if you want). The tubecars arrived quite sometime later at an abandoned subterranean

station seemingly miles away from anywhere (in fact, the supersonic car had taken them thousands of miles!). Similar in many respects to the Underhive from which they had just fled, a quick search revealed that this was once home to one of the major producers of iron ore on Necromunda, the Hindsk hive. After leaving the station and exploring, it soon became apparent that this hive hadn’t been inhabited for a very long time and soon it also became apparent to each of the gangs that they were sitting on a potential gold mine. Leaving behind them only the very annoyed Arbitrators this presented itself with a golden opportunity to start again.

Unknown to the gangers they had just walked into a war zone and although they were at least safe from the Arbitrators, the fun was only just about to start.

Whilst exploring the vast tunnels and corridors of this new Underhive, the fugitives have come to an intersection on one of Hindsk’s air-highway routes, the roads which join separate domes

together spanning several miles, and many thousands of feet above the concrete surface. Whilst travelling along this road, some of the gangs noticed a tall cloaked figure standing at the intersection's end. When approached, he faded from view. Probably just a rogue Wyrd, on the run from the Arbitartors. Almost immediately after this shadowy form disappeared, the seemingly solid concrete floor of the Underhive began to crack open and the rancid figures of Plague Zombies began to heave their misshapen forms out of the ground in front of the stunned faces of the gangers. As the Juves turned to run, they halted in their tracks to notice more Zombies approaching from behind as well! Since there was no way out, they had to fight their way through the hordes of the undead in a bid to find a suitable escape route.

This scenario is meant for two players, and one gang only (although you could make it a multi-player scenario if you're completely mad!).

SPECIAL CAMPAIGN RULES

Now that the gangs are in the Hindsk hive, the following special rules will apply:

- **Outlawed:** All the gangs are now Outlawed, although being that there aren't any Guilders or Bounty Hunters in the Hindsk hive this makes little difference.
- **Territory:** Each gang will lose all of its previously held territories and must roll up a single new one on the Outlaw Territory Chart.

- **Trading:** As the gangs become acquainted with the strange new denizens of Hindsk hive they may trade with them for arms and equipment. Use the Outlaw trading Post to simulate this.
- **Recruiting:** There is no longer access to a plentiful supply of eager young hopefuls willing to join the gangs in return for a share in the spoils of their endeavours. Later each gang will have the opportunity of recruiting/allying with the sinister inhabitants of the decaying hive, and I hope to cover this eventuality in the follow-up part to this article.

TERRAIN

A table area 36" by 24" should be O.K. Set up the terrain as indicated on the map (below).

STARTING THE GAME

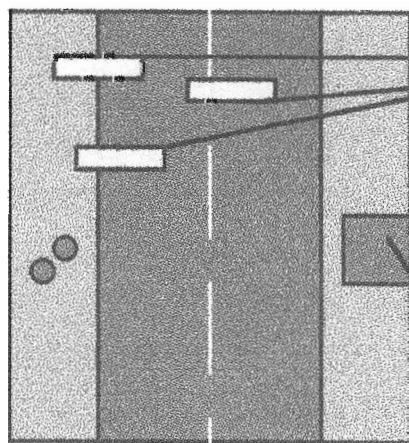
The ganger player should deploy opposite the barricades. This represents the gang entering the street,

exploring the hidden depths of this new hive. Each gang member must be within 2" of another when they are deployed to represent their surprise. During the first turn, no Zombies are deployed. As soon as the ganger player's first turn is over, the Zombie player rolls a D6 and that many Zombies must be placed behind the barricades. Each turn after the first the Zombie player may roll 2D6, and place that many Zombies on the table with approximately half of these being positioned behind the gang. Zombies may not be placed any closer than 8" to a ganger.

ENDING THE GAME

As soon as the gang successfully leaves the table by the furthest edge, they are assumed to outdistance and escape the Zombie hordes.

The gang is surrounded and although their trousers may show it, they cannot *Bottle Out* under any circumstances!! It is purely a fight for survival.



Scenario 2 map – Ambush in the Hindsk hive

EXPERIENCE

Experience is earned as stated below:

+D6 Leaving the Street. If a gang fighter leaves the street by the opposite side, he survives the battle and earns D6 points. Fighters who are downed must be carried off by their comrades or they will be joining the Zombies for dinner (if you know what I mean!).

2D6 Killing a Zombie. A /D6 fighter earns 2D6 points for the first Zombie he kills, representing what a fearsome encounter it is. After the first he earns D6 per Zombie.

NOTES

Even though one gang can only take part during a battle, each player can bring their gangs along, and the player who takes control of the Zombies can swap roles with his opponent. You don't have to set up the terrain exactly as shown on the map, but you should have at least three barricades at the end of the street, and a few bits of scattered terrain around the sides of the road.

Substituting Zombies

You can use other denizens of the Underhive if you wish in instead of Zombies. For example, if another player has a Pit Slave gang, you could set up the Pit Slaves for an ambush, (the mystery man also commands hordes of rebellious techno-deviants). You could even assault the nosy gangers with a some Scalies, those nasty reptilians despise anyone who trespasses on their property!

Even though you can substitute Zombies for another type of outcast, this scenario shouldn't degenerate into a straight gang-fight. The scenario should be a bit of a taster for what's to come (and it is really set to get quite nasty!). This scenario should represent gangers exploring the ancient hive being wholly unexpectedly assaulted by a horde of creatures and mutants that are shunned by Underhive society. Anyway, I have recently taking a liking to Zombies (anyone who has seen the Pink Eye episode of South Park will know what I mean!), and I am going to make them an addition to my Outcast gang (which compromises of Pit Slaves, thieves, mutants, and hordes of the living dead, so far!).

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

Obviously, so far, I have only given a hint at the background to the campaign and a bit of a taster of things to come. Many of you will be able to take this outline and continue the campaign in your own way, which is fine by me. Hopefully, school work permitting, I will be able to write up the next part of the campaign and send in a few more scenarios which will witness the plot begin to unfold. In the meantime, here's a summary of some of the ideas I hope to include:

The rest of the campaign is going to be based around the bitter gun-fights between the brain-washed followers of the Keeper: the hordes of Pit Slaves and Zombies and the Brotherhood of Odo, a bizarre group of renegade Squat engineers and bikers with their trusty Scalies and Scavvy

allies. Oh, and of course, somewhere in the middle will be the bemused players with their displaced gangs, eager for power and wealth, silly as they are!

Little does any side know (or, especially, the author!), that those mysterious, cowed agents of the Inquisition are here to fulfil their mission for the Emperor and attempt to save the whole of Necromunda from a potential global catastrophe that is about to happen. Phew... everything but the kitchen sink!

I will be submitting rules for the grand fighting-pit tournament in the Keeper's Colosseum. The entrants for this will include: each of the player's gang leaders; the Keeper's champion, Styx (not named after a 70's group, honest!); a secret character (working for some undercover Imperium organisation – perhaps the Inquisition); Warlord Kruffoot's champion, Drong Grimley; and a 'boss' character (all fighting games have them, don't they?) which will add a bit of flavour to the whole proceedings.

MAD MODELLING...

The Brotherhood of Odo will consist of the old Citadel Squat heavy weapons trikes. Conversions will hopefully include a cross between an Ork Trakk and the Imperial Steam Tank from Warhammer for Warlord Kruffoot's Battle transport, and Squats on foot in Exo-Armour. Because Squats are a dying race, there are only seven Squats (well nine, if you count that there are two riders on the heavy weapons trikes).

ONCE GRIG KNEW that there was some kind of alien presence in the hive, he decided that it was imperative that his gang found a safe resting place for the night. This part of the old hive was rotting, and intuition told him that despite the fetid state of the Underhive something was not right here. In the tube station, he had briefly read a torn part of the 'Hindsk chronicle', probably a local settlement paper, advertising the vast mineral wealth that lay underneath the Hindsk region, huge deposits of bauxite, and oil were supposedly lying in wait to be extracted from the ash-covered soils. The big-domes' armouglas shells were cracked in several places, and the trees and shrubbery, something of a rare sight, lay in twisted husks of raw decaying humus. He wondered what had caused this once influential spire with evidence of apparent fabulous wealth, to become abandoned and fall into such a state of decay. Grig hadn't even heard the name Hindsk before in his time in the Underhive. His uncle had taught him of trading, and revenues and other tricks of the ore business, and he had known of many settlements, whose traders hadn't even heard about the Imperial Guard Spider Conspiracy.

He began to doubt his bearings. They had travelled very far on that disused tubeway. It was a miracle they had even got it working again. He just felt very far away. This part of the hive had been forgotten. Lost. Maybe some great accident had befallen it. Maybe, he thought, this wasn't even Hive Primus after all. A hive as wealthy as this one would not be simply abandoned. The Guilders, and maybe even the Orlock Iron House smithmasters would snap up a deal in this place instantly. Something had gone wrong, he could feel it. Call it 'sixth sense', or whatever, but he knew that this place was probably more dangerous than the deepest recesses of Nokolyov, his home town. Finding a safe place to sleep would be essential in a place like this. He stared up at the almost infinite ceiling and shivered.

The Keeper sat again and meditated. This time however, he relaxed in the dais, from where he observed the games that took place in the amphitheater below him. Gangers, outsiders probably hired by those meddling Odos, or maybe some looters on the run from

the authorities. They had stopped him in his practices, just because of their presence. No-one must know of his experiments, no-one must see them be carried out, for they were of utmost importance to him as was their secrecy. The arrival of these newcomers could have any number of outcomes, all of which would greatly affect him in some way or another. They could join the Brotherhood of Odo, and lead an uprising against him, which would be a great hindrance to his studies. He did not want to exhaust his powers on quashing these petty revolutionaries. They could be drafted into the games, where they would all die before him, when he summoned his champion from Limbo. They would all probably die before he had a chance to augment their souls anyway. They would fall foul to one of the many perils that awaited them in Hindsk's sprawling and very dangerous underhive.

A shocking premonition suddenly broke his calm meditation. They could be on the run from the Arbitrators, he didn't want them snooping around here, not after all these years of happy isolation. Maybe they were in league with the Inquisition and that thought troubled him – all his studies and practices would be worth nothing if the Inquisition found him. He grasped the amulet in his hands, and looked into its obsidian surface, and frowned, as he feverishly rubbed its shiny surface, as if it were dirty. He could not see his reflection in it. It was of little consequence. He would find out how to regenerate himself later. For now, he had to deal with the problem at hand. These infidels had to be eliminated, one way or another. Right now he didn't care if he used all his power in devouring these fools. It was better to lose a small part of his energies to low-life gang scum, than to lose everything he had taken centuries to build to the Inquisition, his thoughts pained him. Why were predictions never clear, he mused?

