

The logo for Warhammer Age of Sigmar, featuring the word "WARHAMMER" in large, gold, serif letters with a blue background, and "AGE OF SIGMAR" in smaller, gold, serif letters below it. The logo is set within a gold, spiked banner.

**WARHAMMER**  
AGE OF SIGMAR

BROKEN REALMS

A dark, moody illustration in shades of purple and black, depicting a chaotic battle scene. In the center, a dragon-like creature with large wings is engaged in combat with a unicorn-like creature. Other figures and creatures are visible in the background, creating a sense of intense conflict.

**THE HATEFUL STASIS**

# THE HATEFUL STASIS

It was a revel unlike any other. It was a parade of sin that would scar a realm for generations, an outpouring of depravity to compete with those that raged through the Absent Prince’s own halls.

And Gestharyx was missing it.

The Lord of Pain did not recall pledging his allegiance to treacherous Tzeentch. Shifting blues and lurid heliotrope pink had never been his colours, nor did he particularly lust for command over the sorcerous arts – yet surely, Gestharyx mused, such a change of heart must have occurred for him to be blessed with such a tritely ironic fate. Had it not been he, Gestharyx the Realmstrider, who had besieged the black towers of the Khainite aelves? Was it not also he, most artfully agonising of Slaanesh’s beloved, who had sailed with the Herald Sinheart to Hagg Nar and bought time for ungrateful Morathi to complete her pretty ritual and bring the Prophecy of Parturition to pass?

And for this devoted service, Gestharyx had been relegated to leading the Sybarites that defended Ulgu’s Abyssal Hollow, allowing those in the shadow of their protean god-spawn to offer their ecstatic worship uninhibited.

‘It is outrageous,’ Gestharyx muttered, as he stared from atop the rocky outcrop into the murky depression below. ‘It is... an abominable insult.’

‘Abominable!’ Pasathan screeched at his side. That Gestharyx had not been addressing the Blissbarb Archer did not seem to register as Pasathan flung his arms wide, gilded chains rattling where they did not loop through flesh. ‘A truly odious—’

‘Shut up,’ Gestharyx snapped. ‘By the Six Delightful Hells, *shut up*. I never thought fawning could aggravate me so until I met you.’ The urge to stave in the Blissbarb’s skull flared up, not for the first time. Gestharyx was reaching for his sheathed mace when the Painmaster Rall stepped to his right.

‘Our scouts have returned. More are coming.’ Rall’s voice was unemotive almost to the point of parody. Gestharyx could tell little about the Myrmidesh beneath their gilded helm. His anger forgotten as quickly as it had arrived, the Lord of Pain sighed and clicked his tongue.

‘The Blood God’s whelps?’ he asked, rolling his eyes as Rall nodded. Even since the revel had begun, Khorne’s armies had been hurling themselves against the Abyssal Hollow. A maddening influence had taken hold of them that saw them barrel through the trickster mists of Ulgu to assault this sacred ground in near-constant waves. Some had come close to breaching the defences, leaving mounds of butchered Hedonites in their wake. This latest incursion was likely no more than a warband, but Gestharyx was not so blithe a tactician to discount it. Rall shrugged.

‘They name themselves “The Gore-Slake”.’

‘Naturally. It’s always gore-this, skulls-that with them,’ muttered the Lord of Pain. Another cacophony of delirious ecstasy rose from behind the Sybarite defences as the god-thing pulsated. From the way Rall exhaled and Pasathan shrieked, it seemed they felt the writhing in their souls too, yet all that left Gestharyx was a frustrated growl. ‘What about those ones at Neiroth’s Ridge – what were they called?’

‘The Flayed.’

‘*The Flayed!* Now, that was a name,’ Gestharyx beamed, sudden ebullience filling him. ‘Crude, but it showed a bit of imagination on their part.’ No sooner had he finished speaking than howled battle cries heralded the arrival of a mass of Bloodreavers, who emerged from the murk at a loping charge. The Lord of Pain straightened and clapped Rall’s shoulder with a furious grin. ‘Well then, perhaps this won’t be all bad.’

Even as rains of barbed arrows fell down upon them, the Bloodreavers’ charge never faltered, murder flashing in their eyes. As they crashed against Rall’s Painbringers, the melee became a maelstrom of joyous, howling screams. Rall wielded their blade with customary flair, severing the heads of two barbarians in a single precise swing, even as another of the Myrmidesh was hacked apart under a flurry of axe-blows.

‘Pain-lord.’ As Gestharyx lifted his barbed mace from the spasming wreckage of a Bloodreaver, a guttural voice attracted his attention. The hulking, horned figure shouldered his kin aside with irrepressible fury, muscles flexing beneath ruddy flesh. The brute soon drew up before Gestharyx and hefted an oversized axe, skull-rune of Khorne blazing where it was carved into his chest. ‘I am Rornos Born-of-Daemons, Deathbringer of—’

‘Normally, I would hear your oafish posturing out in full,’ Gestharyx cut in, sighing as the Deathbringer flinched in surprise. ‘But I am in foul humours today. Can we hurry this along, wretch?’

With a roar, Rornos flung himself forwards with a speed that caught the Lord of Pain quite off guard. Gestharyx staggered as the axe sunk into his bare chest. It was not a deep cut – or at least not a lethal one – and the champion felt his spirits soar once more as blessed agony coursed through him. Hurling himself backwards, blood sheeting from the wound, Gestharyx laughed and parried a follow-up strike with the shaft of his bludgeon. For a time, the two simply traded blows, Rornos’s bloody rage seeing him shrug off torturous impacts as Gestharyx darted aside from the Deathbringer’s axe.

Gestharyx was preparing to deliver some new acerbic remark when a rush of mania filled his soul; the frenzied straining of something desperate to be born writhed against reality’s shackles with such force that it set the aether quaking. All the Hedonites felt it, a fire in the mind that spurred them on to greater murder-making. Setting upon a staggered Rornos with renewed fury, Gestharyx was barely in control of himself and only loosely aware as the head of his mace crashed against the foe’s skull over and over and over—

‘Gestharyx.’

The honey-sweet intoning of his name snapped the Lord of Pain from his frenzy. Staggering, he glanced down to the ruin of brutalised flesh that had been Rornos Born-of-Daemons as the last few Bloodreavers fell around him. Gestharyx’s attention, however, was irrepressibly drawn to the luminous figure before him. Glavia Sinheart’s smile was beatific as they stood atop a carpet of writhing, moaning Blissbarbs. Even for one of the Dark Prince’s handmaidens, the daemon had always possessed an otherworldly quality. Since arriving at the Abyssal Hollow, they had become practically radiant, their opalescent eyes filled with divine purpose. Even as he scowled, Gestharyx fought not to be smothered by those hypnotic orbs.

‘You promised me glory, Divine One. You said that I was to stand at the side of the Prince.’ Gestharyx all but spat the words, levelling his mace at the daemon. ‘Yet I am condemned to this—’

‘Gestharyx,’ Sinheart cooed. One of the daemon’s slender arms extended, a hand brushing the champion gently beneath the chin. Anger ebbed from the Lord of Pain as he felt his soul twitch. ‘Our loyal Realmstrider. So many prove themselves false, but not you. You have always been a true servant. The time of genesis will come. When we are blessed with hearing the divine voice and witnessing the glittering talons that will shear reality in twain, who will it be known fought with such vigour?’

Glavia was flattering him, Gestharyx knew. Yet was flattery not a sacrament to the Dark Prince? And if it was indeed his pride that trapped him in this task, then was that in itself not a form of worship?

‘But when?’ the Lord of Pain asked, gazing at the daemon as fury was replaced with rapturous need. ‘When will it be time?’ Glavia’s cherubic smile only widened as they looked up, gazing to a horizon no other could see.

‘When the mirror of men’s minds lies open to us, and the stolen banquet is offered once more. Then, my sweetling... then, all we desire will become ours.’

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