

The logo for Warhammer Age of Sigmar, featuring the word "WARHAMMER" in large, stylized, golden letters with a dark blue background, and "AGE OF SIGMAR" in smaller, golden letters below it. The logo is set within a golden, ornate frame with sharp, pointed edges.

WARHAMMER
AGE OF SIGMAR

BROKEN REALMS

The background of the cover is a dark, teal-colored illustration depicting a chaotic battle scene. In the foreground, a large, dark, horned creature (a dragon or dragon-like beast) is shown in profile, roaring. To its right, a winged creature (a dragon or dragon-like beast) is flying. In the background, a large, dark, horned creature (a dragon or dragon-like beast) is shown in profile, roaring. The overall scene is dark and atmospheric, with a sense of intense combat and destruction.

DARK OFFERINGS

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Four slinking figures approached the throne of shadow and bowed deeply. Even as they made a show of obeisance to the lord of this cursed chamber, their eyes flicked towards one another, narrowing with hatred and suspicion. Yellowed fangs were bared, and hackles rose.

These were Deathmasters of the Clans Eshin, masters all of murder, misdirection and mayhem. There was no being in the realms they trusted less than one of their own kind. But when the shadows spoke, their enmity was temporarily suppressed, replaced with fearful trepidation.

‘You are here because I have need for a swift and silent blade,’ said the being on the throne. ‘A killer that can breach any fortress, no matter the arcane wards or unsleeping sentinels that protect it.’

Its voice was the sound of swords scraping upon bone, a promise of death and torment that echoed terribly in the mind. So thick were the shadows obscuring the speaker that the skaven could see only the vague outline of its hulking, winged body. In the centre of that black mass were two terrible eyes – twin shards of ice, pitiless and ancient.

‘Present your offerings,’ it said, with a wave of a clawed hand that could tear off any of their skulls with a single wrenching motion. ‘Prove your skill. For the vermin that most impresses me, the rewards shall be more than you can imagine.’

Mikkerik of Clan Stabstrik came forward first, clutching a sack of white cloth stained red with blood. His hair had been all but burnt away long ago by a duardin flame-spitter, giving him the look of some oversized broodling. As he approached the throne, Mikkerik winced and scratched at his skinny ribs; being so near to the shadow-lord seemed to have entirely turned his stomach.

‘Great master, no trophy is better-greater than mine,’ the Stabstrik Deathmaster hissed, upending his sack. Out tumbled three severed heads. Each was noble and beautiful of aspect, each face serene despite the ragged, red stump of the neck beneath.

‘The Light-lords of Elune,’ said Mikkerik. ‘These pointy-ear brothers thought they were safe-hidden in their Palace of Prisms, but nowhere is safe from Clan Stabstrik. Mikkerik climbed their blinding walls, slipped swift-quick into their meditation chambers and cut their throats before they even opened their eyes.’

The creature to Mikkerik’s left snorted. This rat-beast was old and grizzled, and atop its snout were strapped a pair of oversized brass looking-goggles.

‘Dead aelf-things?’ he scoffed. ‘Boring! Deathmaster Curr has killed a thousand in his time. Any blind whelp could bring the shadow-lord such a gift. Mine-mine is greater by far.’

With a flourish, Curr revealed from his robes a glittering set of heavy keys: one bronze, one silver and the largest wrought of pure gold, its notches shaped to resemble the teeth of a fire Drake.

‘The forge keys of Dhrazmmar,’ snickered Deathmaster Curr. ‘Curr killed the priests and took them for himself. Without their foolish priests to tend it, the hearth of the great magmahold was soon snuffed out, and now the beardlings cower-shiver in their hole.’

Curr’s laughter turned to a hacking rasp and was soon cut off by the third skaven figure, who elbowed his rival aside.

‘Paltry gifts,’ he said, waving a dismissive claw. ‘Nothing compared to what Gnawspot has brought here, for he is the greatest Deathmaster of all.’

Gnawspot snapped his claws, and two ragged ratlings came scuttling from the darkness, carrying between them what appeared to be a tall, ornate mirror, its surface glowing with soft cerulean light. The room grew ice cold, and rimefrost crackled across the floor.

‘Gnawspot has travelled to the Mirrored City,’ he said, his trembling voice nonetheless filled with smug bravado. ‘He has returned with fur intact. He brings you this, mighty one, as proof-certain that he is best!’

The being on the throne leant forward. Looking closer, one could see that the mirror did not reflect the darkness of this chamber but instead showed a ghostly city of impossible dimensions, a metropolis of splintered glass and looming, crooked spires. There were figures within, ghostly beings with anguished faces that pressed their fleshless hands against the glass.

‘Impressive,’ the being muttered. ‘The Necromancer’s cursed prison is not easily breached and less easily escaped.’

Gnawspot half grinned, half winced. Staring down at his scarred paw, he saw a purplish discolouration spreading painfully along his forelimb.

‘And what of you, Crixxit of Clan Nictus?’ said the shadow-lord. ‘What trophy do you bring me?’

All eyes fell upon the last of the Deathmasters, who crouched some distance from his kin, using his tail-knife to sharpen his foreclaws.

‘Crixxit brings no gift,’ Crixxit said.

‘Hah!’ barked Mikkerik, with an accompanying acidic belch.

‘Pathetic fool,’ sneered Gnawspot, clawing furiously at his itching arm.

Deathmaster Curr bared his teeth contemptuously and hacked up a slimy wad of fur.

Seated on its throne, the hidden master’s glowing eyes narrowed to angry slits. The shadows writhed and shifted, like animals taking flight in expectation of imminent violence. Each of the Deathmasters took a discreet step backwards, eagerly anticipating their peer’s gruesome death.

‘It is not wise to waste my time,’ the shadow-lord growled.

Deathmaster Crixxit spread his arms wide and bowed deeply.

‘Mighty-powerful one, Crixxit needs no trophy to prove his skill. It will be obvious any moment now, when he slays these scab-furred fools.’

There was a chorus of hissing and cursing from the other Deathmasters, who were suddenly brandishing a bewildering array of shurikens, daggers, punch-blades and assorted murderous implements. Crixxit gazed at them, his expression more curious than afraid.

‘Any moment,’ he repeated.

‘Let us peel the fur from this Nictus wretch,’ snarled Curr.

The throned master waved a hand to signal its accord, and the three assassins burst into motion, leaping at their prey in a blur of blades and snapping fangs.

Curr’s toxin-dripping dagger was no more than the width of a boifly’s wing from Crixxit’s beady eyeball when his motion ceased entirely, his muscles locking rigid. The stricken skaven’s eyes flicked across to Mikkerik, who was frozen in the act of hurling a clawful of shuriken, his hairless body trembling, blood streaming from his snout and his fearful eyes. Gnawspot was somehow staggering on despite obviously suffering the same gruesome affliction, still clutching his twin shortswords yet convulsing so fiercely that Curr heard the familiar sound of bones splintering. Curr himself began to shake uncontrollably, racked by waves of indescribable agony that twisted his skeleton and turned his muscles inside out. His spine bent backwards, and he felt the horrifying sensation of his ribs forcing their way out through his narrow chest.

‘Now,’ said Crixxit with a satisfied nod.

The three Deathmasters exploded in a shower of gore and shattered bone. Crixxit was right in the midst of the deluge of viscera, and he emerged squinting through a splatter of skaven flesh that covered him from snout to hindclaw. He wiped the back of a paw across his eyes and bent to retrieve a pair of brass goggles with smashed lenses – all that remained of the unfortunate Deathmaster Curr.

‘Yskian livid spore,’ said Crixxit, by way of explanation. ‘All it takes is a single sniff-sniff, and it brews inside your belly until it bursts. Crixxit poisoned them days ago, but timing can be... imprecise. Here is proof that Crixxit is the deadliest master-murderer of all.’

He held out the bloody pair of looking-glasses.

The figure on the throne was silent for a long moment. Then, Crixxit saw the glint of oversized fangs bared in a cruel smile.

‘You will do, vermin,’ the hidden being said. ‘You will do very well.’

‘What is the kill-contract, oh master?’ said Crixxit.

‘To destroy the impossible,’ said the winged monstrosity, rising from its shadowy throne. ‘And in doing so, to bring about the end of the eternal.’

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