

The logo for Warhammer Age of Sigmar, featuring the word "WARHAMMER" in a large, stylized, gold-colored font with a dark blue background and gold outlines. Below it, "AGE OF SIGMAR" is written in a smaller, gold-colored font. The entire logo is set within a gold, ornate frame with pointed ends.

WARHAMMER
AGE OF SIGMAR

BROKEN REALMS

A detailed illustration of a battle scene in a fantasy setting, rendered in a monochromatic teal and blue color scheme. The scene depicts various creatures and warriors in combat. On the left, a large, scaly dragon-like creature is engaged in battle. In the center, a winged figure, possibly a demon or a warrior, is shown in a dynamic pose. The background is filled with other smaller figures and structures, creating a sense of a large-scale conflict.

THE SCALES OF
VICTORY

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Slowly, painfully, Tatto'nek blinked his eyes open.

Stale shadow enveloped the skink. It was an atypical and far from comfortable sensation. Nowhere aboard the *Itza-Huitlan*, greatest of all temple-vessels, was ever truly dark. Glittering celestial energy was constantly being channelled through intricate arcane matrices built into the walls. The relics of the Old Ones glowed with inner brilliance at all times. Yet this corridor, deep in the vessel's bowels, was undeniably, suffocatingly gloom-dark.

With a discomforted hiss, Tatto'nek rose from the chill floor and attempted to piece memory back together. He had been tending to one of the countless damaged systems within the temple-vessel. The *Itza-Huitlan* had not emerged unscathed from its recent confrontation with one of the Eternal Enemy's silver-skinned fortresses. The floor had... had given way. Or had it opened up and swallowed him of its own accord? So many wondrous mechanisms were worked into the bones of the vessel that it was impossible to say.

Tatto'nek's considerations were interrupted as the darkness stirred. The skink turned at the sound of echoing footfalls, head-fin flared. The shadows took on form, complete with thick cords of muscle and deep azure scales. Even as the skink attempted to scuttle back, he knew it was pointless. There was little reasoning with two provoked Saurus Guard, no matter why he had been set to watch this passage.

'Stop.'

A few seconds passed after the unexpected word before Tatto'nek dared open his eyes. A hiss left the skink at the sight of an obstinate halberd held mere centimetres from cleaving into his neck. Muttering a thankful prayer, Tatto'nek looked up as a seat of carved stone floated out from behind the now-still saurus.

Another skink sat nestled in the throne's thrumming embrace. He was a stooped creature, leaning on a staff and drumming his claws idly against an orb in his lap. Scars criss-crossed his body, and a particularly grim laceration snaked up the side of his face, caving in an eye and disappearing beneath the feathered crown perched upon his brow. Instantly, Tatto'nek prostrated himself. Even if the skink's identity was unknown, his rank was apparent.

'Noble Starseer—'

'Rise,' the priest wheezed. Blinking, Tatto'nek skittered back to his feet, only for the Starseer's staff to poke his chest. The implement rose to jab the skink's face and limbs, as if in inspection, before the seated figure nodded.

'You fell. The *Itza-Huitlan* brought you here.' He said. Tatto'nek could only nod, drawing a thoughtful croak from the Starseer. 'We require more attendants. The Great Plan flows in unpredictable fashion. You will suffice.' With that the Starseer turned, floating back down the corridor, flanked by his saurus guardians. Tatto'nek lingered a moment, uncertainty fluttering in his breast. Only a pointed pause from the Starseer saw him trailing along fitfully.

'I am Rachi'kak,' the Starseer said as the other skink caught up. The elder's gaze never shifted from straight ahead. Tatto'nek, by contrast, could not stop glancing about. He had been wrong when he thought it completely dark; trapped starlight did glimmer from circuit-like carvings along the walls, albeit faintly, as if its strength was being diverted to feed some hidden purpose. The scant illumination shimmered at the edge of faded friezes and mosaics. 'There is discord in the lower realms. The constellar matrices speak of malformed divinity.'

'The... the End of Empires,' Tatto'nek chirruped. Rachi'kak nodded.

'Kragnos. The Living Earthquake. The vanquisher of Ur-Sabaal. The cosmic order buckles beneath each stomp of his hooves. We fought him once before. In the times before the awakening of the mortal gods. Our masters sealed him beneath Ghur.' Expectant silence followed the Starseer's proclamation. A thought flickered in Tatto'nek's mind. He tried to conceal it, but Rachi'kak noticed, eyes narrowing.

'Tepok's breath, bright-scale! Speak! Question! How can you serve if you do not understand?'

‘I do not deny the might of the Starmasters,’ Tatto’nek said, casting a glance to the looming saurus presence. ‘But... but rumours tell, blessed one, that Kragnos is warded against spells of even the strongest resonances.’

‘It is so,’ Rachi’kak nodded. ‘But the alignment of the fates saw fit to deliver us allies. The Draconith.’ As they moved onwards, Tatto’nek’s gaze shifted back to the darkened corridor’s walls. A fresco was wrought there of huge winged drakes, set atop an array of towering peaks. Above them coiled a colossal serpentine figure wrought from stellar gemstones. The skink bowed his head instinctively in deference to mighty Dracothion.

The images continued as the skinks walked further down the echoing hallway. In the next, the drakes stood alongside horned centaurs, ranged against hybrids of humanoid and dragon crowned by dark storms. Beyond that, rendered in a terrible likeness of life, was the oversized visage of some horned deity, mountains of amber skulls crunched between its fangs.

Tatto’nek was not sure whether it was his imagination, or whether the illumination grew stronger then. It cast the next mosaics into stark relief – images of the centaurs, led by their terrible god, laying waste to the eyries of the drakes. In places the light pulsed faintly. Scenes of mountain peaks crashing to earth and draconic skulls piled high as the beasts were slaughtered flickered like dancing shadows, sending the skink clicking in unease.

They were nearing the end of the passage now. Rachi’kak had gone silent. The cruel tableau mercifully ceased, followed by a scene of two drakes – one noble of aspect, another whose features were cast in shadow – arrayed in conference with the holy Starmasters. A final frieze awaited. Atop a mountain of horn, the twin drakes tore into the horned god, as the slann surrounded them and Dracothion coiled above. The light pulsed, revealing the maw of the mountain opening to swallow the Earthquake God.

Tatto’nek let the tale wash over them. One thought stood out.

‘But the Draconith are gone, blessed master. The End of Empires broke them.’ The skink said. He blinked as something approaching a smile flickered at the corner of Rachi’kak’s mouth.

‘Come. There is something you should see.’

The Starseer’s throne accelerated, saurus loping along at its side. At last, the party halted before an immense sealed portal. Here the circuitry glowed brighter still; Tatto’nek saw that it was arrayed into the glyphs of Itzl, divine master of beasts. Rachi’kak extended a wizened arm, palm resting flat on the portal’s face. The priest’s eye lit up at the transfer of some subtle power. For around ten minutes, all save Tatto’nek were still. The twitching skink was just about to speak up before the portal rumbled, stone slowly disappearing into the wall above.

It opened into a wide hexagonal chamber. Saurus Guard stood sentinel at precise alignments, while skinks flitted back and forth. Most tended to the intricate lens-array that dominated the ceiling, and that concentrated a soft, focused beam of amber magic onto a central plinth. Upon that platform stood a rough-cut oval of stone. It was pitted and marked, scarred but not broken, seemingly lit from within as the energies washed over it.

‘No,’ Rachi’kak said, as Tatto’nek opened his mouth. The Starseer’s voice was hushed as he floated closer. ‘We are just in time. Watch and perceive.’

The stone twitched. It twitched again. A pregnant quiet fell over the chamber as it rocked, the arcane beam growing in intensity. The stone’s inner glow magnified as cracks suddenly splintered and ran along its face.

No. Not a stone at all.

With another crack, the oval’s flank ruptured. From the cavity emerged a reptilian wing, caked in embryonic fluid. Claws followed, feeble and scrabbling, pulling the attached creature out into the light. The tiny drake staggered and toppled over atop the plinth, mewling as it scrambled unsteadily back to its feet. The assembled skinks let out a chirruping chorus of welcome. The saurus rumbled, slamming the butts of their polearms against the floor in unison as the infant drake spread its dripping wings and let out a reedy hiss of becoming.

‘Their eggs...’ Tatto’nek breathed, staring in wonderment at the newborn creature. ‘The surviving Draconith knew they had no strength left, so they granted us their eggs to keep safe.’ The skink dared take a step forth as the drake turned and snapped warily. ‘We... we have hatched a Draconith.’

‘A Draconith?’ Rachi’kak said, voice tinged with amusement. The Starseer let out a croaking chirrup. Skinks darted about, depressing touch-stones upon banks of arcane machinery in rhythmic order. Segments of what Tatto’nek had believed were walls rose, revealing spaces dark as the lightless void. As Tatto’nek watched, the blackness rippled, like a midnight river into which a stone was dropped. Realmgate activation.

Diffuse terracotta light spilled into the incubator-chamber, aetheric ward-barriers shimmering into being before any errant magic could wash over them. Tatto’nek expected the infant Draconith to shy away. Instead the young reptile turned towards the light, wings flared. Looking out from the portals, Tatto’nek realised that their chamber now appeared to hover over a vast expanse. The lands below resembled a small fragment of Ghur, untouched by Chaos; some secret dimensional fold painstakingly recreated by the slann, no doubt. Tatto’nek had heard of such things, but never thought to see one.

Beyond the portals, Tatto’nek beheld mist-clad peaks and an amber savannah. Shapes whirled amidst the clouds around them, winged reptiles each the size of a Bastiladon – and all of which bore resemblance to the young creature on the plinth. On the flanks of the mountains Tatto’nek picked out idols and stonework, crude but with clear, nascent artistry worked into their being.

‘In their wisdom, the Starmasters decreed that the Draconith race be restored’ Rachi’kak said, as he floated to a stop beside the gaping Tatto’nek. ‘It has been a difficult process. Across the long centuries, we have hatched but a fraction. They desire to learn of their true culture. These things we cannot teach. Long have we attempted to discern their place in the Great Plan. But now the asterisms align clearly. The End of Empires must be checked before the Astromatrix’s paths are forever misaligned. With the Draconith’s presence, we can begin.’

‘Begin?’ Tatto’nek asked as he found his voice. ‘So they will fight alongside the warhosts?’

‘They will not.’ Rachi’kak said. ‘The Draconith have honed their instincts in these concealed places. They have listened to us speak of the wider war. All they require is leadership, and suitable allies. The Great Plan conspires to now divide the paths of our fates. A new alignment is instead imposed upon the celestial paths.’

The Starseer raised his hands. Starlight danced around his fingertips. Tatto’nek watched as, over his master’s head, an astrological sigil formed – that of Mallus, the core of the broken world. Around it, a second layer of starfire blazed like a great ring. Such a thing existed, the skink knew. Mortals named it the Sigmarabulum. Rachi’kak’s fingers twitched again, and the symbols of confluence blazed into existence around the Sigmarabulum, even as it was draped in the shadow of spreading wings.

‘A new era begins.’ Rachi’kak nodded. ‘An era of scale, and of storm.’

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