

Guts & Gears

Guts & Gears takes a look at the men, machines, and monsters of the Iron Kingdoms. Read about what it takes to be a warrior or warbeast with one of the many factions or look into the mechanical workings of hulking warjacks and what it takes to get these multi-ton constructs to dominate the battlefield.

DAWNGUARD

By Douglas Seacat
Art by Néstor Ossandón &
Andrea Uderzo

Addressing: *His Grace, Visgoth of the North, High Scrutator Enjorran Sollers, Tower Judgment*

Concerning: *Hostilities southeast of Leryn with soldiers of Ios*

Your grace, per your command I shall provide an account of recent hostilities against foreign powers threatening our theocracy. I share this information not to cast aspersions on the decisions of our hierarch, long may he reign, nor the leading officers, knights, and priests of the Northern Crusade. Rather, I relate this incident so the Synod has a complete understanding of threats abroad that could impact the holy capital or our sacred southern lands.

This incident transpired on a field southeast of Leryn. I can confirm this field to be clearly outside the borders of Ios. This area has been home to Llaelese farmers for many generations, and by all reports they never experienced hostilities or contact with the elves dwelling in the forest to the east. I had no reason to expect a sizable contingent of heavily armored Iosans might emerge from the forest and initiate an attack. There was no time to parley to determine their intent; rifle fire erupted from the Iosan soldiers almost as soon as they appeared. All of those we faced wore similarly heavy armor, enameled all in white, of a configuration and with decorations entirely unfamiliar. Their weapons were peculiar in appearance and nothing like the bores of Cygnaran or Khadoran rifles. The stocks of each of these peculiar firearms were fitted with long sharpened blades that were skillfully turned to melee when our Flameguard closed upon them.

I marshaled additional Flameguard to advance to meet the foe. Even while occupied at this task, I observed the smooth coordination of the enemy. Their movements were crisp and disciplined, rivaling our own, and clearly evidenced extensive drills or battle practice. The Iosans with the firearms stepped aside to make way for even more heavily armored soldiers to rush forward wielding oddly curved greatswords that carved effortlessly through the shields and armor of our forward ranks. In their coordination and battle concentration I was greatly reminded of Knights Exemplar and Exemplars Errant in battle. Completely silent they were, not shouting to rally or command, as if each soldier knew his part and needed no direction. Those whose eyes I could see were cold and possessed none of the inner fire given to humanity by the Creator.

Fighting alongside us were several Vigilants bestowed by the generosity of the grand exemplar. These warjacks obediently engaged the foe but were met in turn by smokeless counterparts among the Iosans. Iosan warjacks displayed

unholy mystical fields that shimmered in the air and turned away blows. The Iosan knights fought alongside their peculiar machines as smoothly and effortlessly as among their brothers in arms. I will admit to feeling horrified awe and a certainty of our doom. I hope this is not taken as a lapse in faith or conviction in our cause. Indeed, so sure was I of Menoth's will that I knew those who fell here had been recalled to Menoth to wage his battles in Urcaen. This calmed my spirit as the certainty of looming death solidified with the emergence of their cavalry, which quickly

