

# TOTAL WAR WARHAMMER



THE MAGE AND THE SORCERESS

- By Andy Hall and Chris Gambold -

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She approached from behind the throne. The knife in her hand shone with arcane dark-light. Two more silent steps and she struck. Her arm shot out from behind the throne and back around, through the body that sat within its cold, iron embrace. The attacker felt the knife bite deep, going through flesh until the tip of the cursed blade hit the silken cushion on the seat back. A choking sound followed. The being on the throne managed to pull out the dagger and then fell to the floor in the throes of agony, as if being violently shaken by an invisible god. The killer emerged from behind the throne to witness her work, and was immediately dissatisfied... and wary.



The murderer had been meticulous in their planning, coming into the throne room through a secret passage behind the dais. A risk, but one she had taken gladly to get close to her prey, knowing the quarry would be in the chamber, hopefully alone and resting upon her favourite seat.

The victim twitched their last, bloody foam gathered around the mouth and eyes. The attacker cursed in druhir — this was not her target! The corpse was male for one thing, an Asur by the looks of it, wearing a dark leather corset with a thick iron chain wrapped too tightly around his neck. It was a leisure-slave; a play-thing of its mistress. The mistress was the killer's intended target.

The whole chamber was in darkness, plucking candles lit up pools of light revealing tapestries of hate on the walls and rich silks strewn about the whole chamber. From out of the shadows before the throne came the mistress. She did not wear her gilded headdress, for who wore their best in their own quarters when not expecting guests? And yet, she looked regal and powerful, cold and beautiful, despite being countless millennia old. Morathi took in the scene before her. She looked untroubled by the corpse on the floor. Her cold eyes met those of the murderess, neither spoke or moved for an unknown amount of time. Silence.

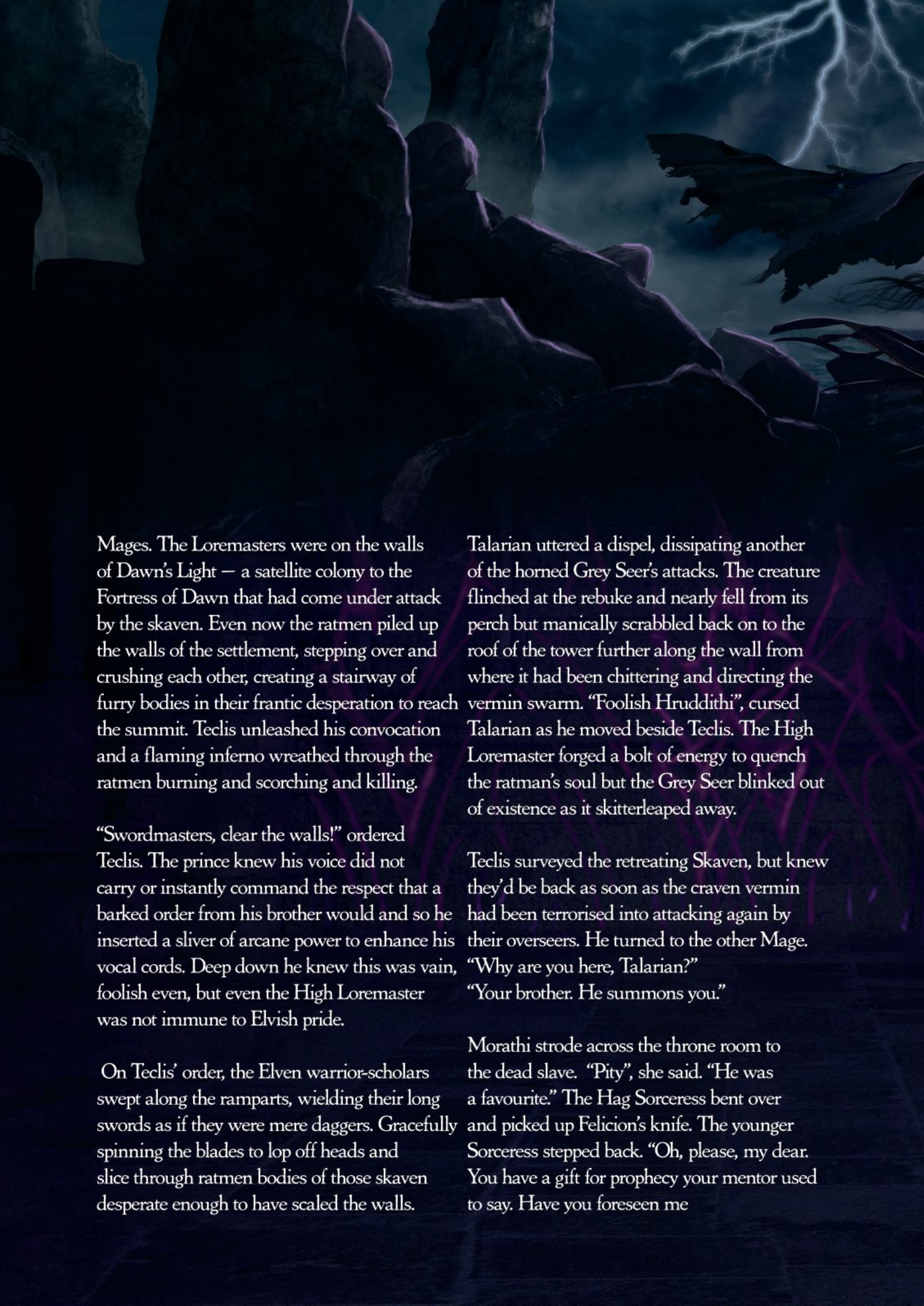
“The slave was sent to kill you”, lied the killer, she kept her voice level, trying to mask the fear of the being she now crossed. Morathi

laughed. At first it was a harsh, ancient sound, but quickly changed into a fell melody; as if some enchantment was racing to keep up with the laugh and alter it before others heard. “Don't mock me, child”, said Morathi. “I know why you're here. Or why you think you're here. Welcome to Ghron, Felicion Heartkeeper.”

The horned ratman chittered, and spat a curse. Green lightning arced toward Prince Teclis. Suddenly the High Loremaster of Hoeth was covered in blue light. The lightning struck the arcane shield and dissipated. Teclis was momentarily surprised. He'd been in the midst of summoning a fiery convocation on the numberless rat swarms, and not concentrating on his immediate surroundings. A consistent weakness of his, he thought. Luckily, someone had thrown up a Sapherian shield. Teclis knew who — he had immediately recognised the rune alignment used. It was a risky combination he would never teach any student but the way the helix drew and solidified from the qhaysh-ine wind was impressive despite the risks.

“Loremaster Talarian, saving my life again”, he said to the Mage who emerged from a turret and strode along the ramparts with sword and staff in hand.

“Tyriorion would never forgive me if you were killed by mere vermin, High Loremaster”, said Talarian as he swung with his slim blade and decapitated two Clanrats that had been unfortunate enough to get between the two



Mages. The Loremasters were on the walls of Dawn's Light — a satellite colony to the Fortress of Dawn that had come under attack by the skaven. Even now the ratmen piled up the walls of the settlement, stepping over and crushing each other, creating a stairway of furry bodies in their frantic desperation to reach the summit. Teclis unleashed his convocation and a flaming inferno wreathed through the ratmen burning and scorching and killing.

"Swordmasters, clear the walls!" ordered Teclis. The prince knew his voice did not carry or instantly command the respect that a barked order from his brother would and so he inserted a sliver of arcane power to enhance his vocal cords. Deep down he knew this was vain, foolish even, but even the High Loremaster was not immune to Elvish pride.

On Teclis' order, the Elven warrior-scholars swept along the ramparts, wielding their long swords as if they were mere daggers. Gracefully spinning the blades to lop off heads and slice through ratmen bodies of those skaven desperate enough to have scaled the walls.

Talarian uttered a dispel, dissipating another of the horned Grey Seer's attacks. The creature flinched at the rebuke and nearly fell from its perch but manically scabbled back on to the roof of the tower further along the wall from where it had been chittering and directing the vermin swarm. "Foolish Hruddithi", cursed Talarian as he moved beside Teclis. The High Loremaster forged a bolt of energy to quench the ratman's soul but the Grey Seer blinked out of existence as it skitterleaped away.

Teclis surveyed the retreating Skaven, but knew they'd be back as soon as the craven vermin had been terrorised into attacking again by their overseers. He turned to the other Mage. "Why are you here, Talarian?" "Your brother. He summons you."

Morathi strode across the throne room to the dead slave. "Pity", she said. "He was a favourite." The Hag Sorceress bent over and picked up Felicion's knife. The younger Sorceress stepped back. "Oh, please, my dear. You have a gift for prophecy your mentor used to say. Have you foreseen me



killing you with your own blade?”

“It can’t be that much of a gift”, said Felicion.

“Why?” said Morathi amused. “Because you foresaw a knife embedded in me? I’d say your skills are competent enough.” Morathi plunged the knife into her shoulder. She gave a delirious laugh as pain coursed through her body.

“See, prophecy fulfilled.”

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**“I SAW YOU ISSUE  
A COUNTER-  
HEX ON THE  
BLADE, AS YOU  
PICKED IT UP.”  
SAID FELICION,  
UNIMPRESSED.  
“IT’S INERT.”**

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“Then you have learnt something.” Morathi removed the dagger in one swift pull, ignoring the black viscous blood that streamed out of the wound and down her flawless body.

“Context is everything with divination.”

Morathi strode behind the throne, in the direction Felicion had first entered the chamber, to the great window that overlooked border of Naggaroth and into the Realm of Chaos itself. She kept her back to Felicion; a display of strength.

“Tell me”, she said. “Why do you wish me dead?”

“All of the Dark Covenant want to control Ghroind. I am a seeress, this is the Tower of Prophecy. You are merely in the way.”

“Lies.” “Pure desire. Power.”

“Lies!” Morathi let her temper rise. “I don’t doubt your naked ambition, Felicion, you stink of it. But it’s more than that... You and your mentor left the Dark Covenant long ago. You believe hiding in Har Ganeth would shroud your actions? No. You’d like others to think

your hatred is nothing more impersonal than desire. But I know the real reason, Felicion. It's because of your br—"No!"

Morathi felt the Dark Magic coalesce and turned just in time to deflect an eldritch bolt of malice and doom.

Teclis looked beyond the walls. The vermin had run but were being swiftly turned about by their chittering masters. In the outfield, a bell tolled — a sound of spite that coursed deep in the prince's soul, telling him to run. He ignored it. "I am not at Tyrion's beck and call", stated Teclis. "I am needed here. See, the Skaven muster for another attack. They are cowards, but remain a threat in larger numbers." "I agree, my friend. I am just the messenger in this, but..." "But?" "He wants you back on Ulthuan." "He always wants me back on Ulthuan! He thinks to admonish me like some misbehaving child banished to the bed chamber." "It's more that he cares."

"Even worse! He thinks me frail; an ancient maid to be kept in dotage while he marshals the armies of the homeland."

"That may have been true before but this time I think he acts for Finubar", said Talarian.

"And it's no coincidence they sent you, one of my most trusted friends in the Order of Loremasters, an Archmage of Saphery that commands the respect of both twins?"

Talarian gave a barely visible shrug. If a man had been present they would have not seen it, but for the Asur it was an extravagant gesture. "I may come as an envoy of Tyrion and the Phoenix King, but I am here for a greater purpose. The Two-Tailed Dragon."

Morathi deflected another Dark Magic bolt as easily as a blacksmith striking an anvil.

"Witch!" Her anger mounting despite it costing the Hag Sorceress almost no effort to bat the attacks away. "You dare use my own art against me!" "Your time is over, queen-mother." Felicion spat. "Six thousand years is a good run. But now it's time for fresh blood."



She let loose a few more doombolts. Morathi approached, wafting the spells aside as easily as she had the others. Felicion backed away from her side of throne. Morathi quickened her pace closing the short distance between her and the younger Sorceress. "You disguise your true motives with all this talk of usurping.



**“ANOTHER POOR  
ATTEMPT TO  
DECEIVE. DON’T  
LIE TO THE  
MISTRESS OF  
LIARS, CHILD.”**



A pitiful effort to protect your brother’s identity. Oh, but I know!” Felicion suddenly stopped hurling spells.

Her defiance returned — any traces of panic gone. “The mistress of liars was looking at the wrong lie.” Felicion glanced down. Morathi’s eyes followed. She was stood in the middle of a circle, projected and inscribed with lines of glowing power. It was an arcane net, an artifice of Hekarti — intricate and masterfully executed. Morathi let out a scream of rage.

“I’ll take your soul”, said Felicion. “And parcel it back to your son in fragments!” Morathi raged and prowled within the circle like a trapped Ind Tigerman. Felicion walked up to the circle, coming eye to eye with the Hag Sorceress. “You’re mine now. Not even Malekith could break through this barrier.” Morathi gave the merest hint of a smile, hatred flashed in her eyes. Her hand shot out beyond the circle and grabbed Felicion by the throat. “I am not my son”, hissed the Hag Sorceress. Felicion struggled as Morathi’s hand tightened. “Don’t get me wrong, the spell is impressive. Your mentor should be impressed, it’s fine craftwork. I have not seen runes of soul-severing in a long time. But your mistake is assuming we all venerate Hekarti... that I’m bound by the rules of the Mistress of Magic.” Morathi brought Felicion’s face close to hers, and gave her a deep, prolonged kiss. She then nuzzled next to Felicion’s ear and whispered. “I worship another god. I always have.”

With a strength that belied her slender figure, Morathi spun, stepping out of the circle and flinging Felicion in it. The younger Sorceress landed hard on the rune-etched floor but then got up. She stared back at Morathi.



“You better kill me”, she said. “I could kill you, Heartkeeper”, agreed Morathi. “But that would be far too quick. Besides, my son has taken an interest in your prophetic talents. No, I’ll take your soul, and give it to the Witch King as a gift. After all, I need an excuse to be at his side. For the Dragon with Two-Tails blazes across the sky... Presenting us with an opportunity.” She thought for a moment. Then said, “Don’t get too comfortable, I’ll be back shortly.” The Hag Sorceress of Ghronnd spun on her heels and strode from the throne, leaving Felicion trapped in Hekarti’s circle. “All this for a sibling! They are more trouble than their worth. That’s why I only had one”, she called back.

Talarian and Teclis watched as the Skaven charged towards the walls once more. “Siblings are strong. Especially your relationship. Brothers. Twins. One the mightiest warrior, one the greatest Mage of this age. You complete each other”, said Talarian. “Enough with the lecturing, Loremaster, the vermin come!”


“Go and see him. We have a full war host here. I will deal with these pests.”

“No, there is more to this than a mere Skaven attack. This is not isolated; the vermin agitate on all continents and now the Dragon with Two Tails is in the sky decades before it is expected. Something is awry.”


“Even more reason to discuss this with Tyrion. Ulthuan needs its defenders in concert.”

The Skaven reached the walls. Some scampered up the ramparts and into the blades and mystic strikes of the two powerful Mages. “Very well”, said Teclis as he unleashed a fireball into the vermin. “I return to Ulthuan,

but I will not be waylaid there, no matter what Tyrion demands. Too much is going on across this world. There is a part we are not seeing. Your foresight is needed Talarian.” The Mage struck down a ratman, before turning to Teclis.



**“I WILLINGLY  
SERVE, HIGH  
LOREMASTER.”**  
**“I NEED A FRIEND,  
NOT A SERVANT  
AT THIS TIME. I  
FEEL ALLIES ARE  
GOING TO BE  
HARD TO COME  
BY. WHEN YOU  
ARE DONE HERE.  
MAKE YOUR WAY  
TO HOETH. BEGIN  
PREPARATION  
RITES, WE MAY  
NEED TO LOOK  
INTO THE POOL  
OF ISHA.”**





“Agreed, but that will require fragments of waystones. Not something I am comfortable in dealing with — a shattered waystone is one less Asur soul in the world.”

“It is a hard request but a necessary one. We are missing something — there is a game being played but not all the dice have been cast. We must make sure our pieces are put on the table before it is too late”, said Teclis. Talarian nodded assent, but then the ratmen flooded the ramparts, forcing the Mages apart. Swordmasters quickly surrounded Talarian and the warriors of Saphery reaped a deadly toll. Teclis was lost in the tumult but Talarian was not concerned. It would take more than a swarm of clanrats to bring down Prince Teclis. Who even now was probably already on his way back to Ulthuan to meet with Tyrion. As it should be, thought Talarian.

The End

