

[ALTARUS:]</i>> You must learn to control your spirit-form, Xerxes... for by mastering the art of traversing the mists you may effortlessly travel to many places, and many times. Countless secrets will be unlocked for you, and great enlightenment shall be yours.

[XERXES:]</i>> Yes, master... and yet, there is one realm which intrigues me above all others, one era which occupies my thoughts unceasingly... What of the clash between the Royal Army of Hyperborea and the Wraiths of the Chaos-Liege?

[ALTARUS:]</i>> Ah, yes... command the mists, Xerxes... gaze into their limitless depths... compel them to show you that martial vista which you so fervently seek.

[XERXES:]</i>> Yes... I see the massing forces, the battle is imminent! How splendid the Imperial Army looks as it fronts the foe... into the fray they ride!

[Chapter 1: The Bloodying of the King]
[(The Armies of the Hyperborean Empire steadfastly engage the Horde of Wraiths)]

[THE KING:]
Imperial Cavalry... advance! RIDE THEM DOWN!
In to the fray! Demonstrate unforgettably the art of Hyperborean warcraft!
Spearmen, form into Omega Phalanx.
Archers, notch arrows, prepare to loose.
Warriors, stand ready... Sound the clarion!

Hearken, sons of the glorious Empire...
Here we stand upon the Field of Blood...
Though this day we may die,
Our legend shall live forever.

[ALTARUS:]</i>> And the armies met upon the Field of Blood which stretched lifeless before the aeon-veiled citadel which men called the Shrine of A'zura-Kai, a mysterious and foreboding place steeped in ireful omens and legendary dread... Aye, the carnage of that first clash was phenomenal. The Hyperborean Cavalry tore gloriously into the foremost rank of the shadow-warriors, the enchantment of the Crystal of Mera rendering the squamous pseudo-flesh of the wraiths fully vulnerable to the steel of the royal legions. The king himself rode at the forefront of the onslaught, his ensorcelled ebon blade hewing ten to the left and cleaving ten to the right, his grim eyes gleaming beneath his shimmering horned and plumed helm. The momentum of that first charge threw the dark ones into shrieking disarray, and the vanguard of Chaos fell back before the thundering resolve of the Imperial attack. But the baleful, poisoned blades of the wraiths took their toll upon the Hyperborean horsemen. Raught by leprous swords and spears, men and mounts fell screaming to the dusty earth, where they were mercilessly rent and devoured by the slaving jaws of the Chaos-Liege's minions. Aye, glorious was the courage of the royal warriors, admirable was their mettle... for every Imperial Knight felled by the dark ones, five wraiths met their deaths beneath the slaughterfall of royal steel. And yet it was not enough. Like a slithering tide, the shadows engulfed the cavalry, and the bloodied king ordered the Hyperboreans to ride clear and regroup. Then, with volleys of shafts as their herald, and the Battle-Prayer of Hyperborea upon their lips, the Imperial Guard marched into the ravening embrace of the melee, and never in the grim and sanguineous history of battle was there a clash to rival the slaughterous magnitude of that awesome engagement...

[THE ARCH-WRAITH:]
Minions of Chaos, rend their flesh, crush their bones, devour their souls!

[Chapter 2: Havoc at the Shrine of A'zura-Kai]

[THE KING:]
Onwards with our spear-heads gleaming,
Meet them with cold steel a'cleaving,
Fall only when our hearts cease beating,
Men of Hyperborea.

[ALTARUS:]</i>> At the King's command, the clarion was sounded to move the battle-hardened veterans of the Seventh Fen-lander Army into a flanking position to unite with the remnants of the Royal Cavalry. Like a purifying storm the allied Imperial forces clove into the wraiths to deal righteous pattern-welded death unto their nighted foe. But at that moment, black terror descended screaming from the twilight sky... howling swarms of winged fiends, hurled forth from the malignant bosom of Lord Angsaar, soared razor-taloned into the fray. Beseiged man-to-fiend upon the field, and harried from above by the shrieking horrors of the Chaos-Liege, the Hyperborean Army began to falter, and to fall. And lo, beholding the carnage, the King raised high in his left hand the ancient Crystal of Mera, and in his right gauntlet he brandished the Bane of Angsaar, the dread Shadow-Sword once wielded by the Chaos-Liege's immortal nemesis... and he spoke aloud the terror-fraught and aeon-swathed words of invocation which he alone had been audience to deep within the shadow-haunted Mountains of the Dead...

[THE KING:]

By the darkling powers of the Shadow-Sword, I call forth the fury of the storm
to rend the massed legions of Chaos!

[ALTARUS:]</i>> And at the sound of his baleful Words of Power, the sky split wide in
fury, and searing tendrils of ruinous lightning lanced inexorably forth from
the heavens to rake and reave the massed hordes of Chaos...

[XERXES:]</i>> The fearful spells he had learned from the Mountain... did their
casting win the battle for the King's legions?

[ALTARUS:]</i>> The fiends were dealt a staggering blow by the sorcerous
incantations, the power of the spells inexplicably magnified by the
enchantments of the Crystal. The Wraiths were routed soundly by the elder
magics, fleeing the field howling their anathemas and maledictions against the
King, and the winged horrors fell seared and burning from the enraged sky. But
the twisted machinations of insidious Chaos had prepared for the King one
final blow in this dread confrontation... aye, the Chaos-Liege had reserved
his most heinous perpetration 'til the last...

[Chapter 3: The Awakening of Chaos]

[LORD ANGSAAR:]

Fly, my winged sentinel of the night,
Deliver unto me the Ninth Crystal of Power,
That I may at last be free once more...

Come then, mortal! Test that cursed blade of black steel against me if you
dare! O' great King, your pitiful army shall be swept away before my wrath!
'Ere the dawn, ten thousand shall die!

[THE KING:]

For the eternal glory of Hyperborea!

[ALTARUS:]</i>> Striking from the swift darkening sky, Angsaar's Arch-Wraith, which
had been watching the battle with gleaming inhuman eyes, leaped to the attack
and smote the King, engulfing him in its ebon wings and driving its
steel-rending talons into his golden armour. And yet it was not the life of
the Royal Scion of Hyperborea which the fiend sought to take on that fateful
eve, but rather that which the King held tight in his gauntleted fist... the
Crystal of Mera. Wrenching the glimmering antediluvian jewel from its keeper,
the Arch-Wraith unfurled its leathern wings and soared into the deepening
gloom with a cacophonous cackle of victory, leaving the King to roar his ire
after the fleeing wraith.

[XERXES:]</i>> But what did Angsaar want of the Crystal? I know he battled his
immortal nemesis over possession of the mystic gems many aeons ago... but what
use would just one of the jewels be to him?

[ALTARUS:]</i>> After rising from his Chamber of Slumber, the Chaos-Liege's power was
direly depleted... and he was unable to venture beyond the obsidian walls of
his Citadel of Shadows, being compelled to control his wraiths and fiends to
undertake his diseased schemes on his behalf. When he ascertained that the
wizards of the Royal Court of Hyperborea held in their possession the Ninth
Jewel of the Galactic Confederation of Mera, the most powerful of all the
crystalline keys to the Psionic Epsilon Matrix, he began to formulate an
elaborate scheme which would gain him the gem and facilitate his liberation,
sundering his fetters and allowing him free reign to spread his vile influence
across the land once more. Utilizing to its fullest extent the dark art of
sorcerous mind-control, Angsaar succeeded in placing spies and traitors within
the King's Court, and thus set into motion a dark chain of events
treacherously crafted to bring the Armies of Hyperborea to battle at one
carefully predetermined place... the Shrine of A'zura-Kai... an ancient
citadel built over the site where, many thousands of years ago, one of the
Galactic Confederation's galaxy-spanning star-chariots was cast forcibly to
earth by the tempestuous skies of a powerful cosmic witch-storm... a place
where resultantly, the star-born energies of the Prime Crystal would be
magnified tenfold, if wielded in unison with the correct arcane incantations
which Angstaar alone knew...

[XERXES:]</i>> Then the battle, the defeat of the wraiths, all that had been merely a
ruse... a scheme implemented by the Chaos-Liege merely to realize his ultimate
ambition of the sundering of the mystic shackles?

[ALTARUS:]</i>> Aye... the Shrine would act as a portal, a gateway opened by the
power of the Crystal, a yawning aperture in the dimensional barrier through
which Angsaar could escape the incarceration of his Citadel at last. And as
the Arch-Wraith soared the night-winds on its return journey to its malign
master, the Prime Crystal clutched in its bloodied claws, the King knew as he
watched the Shrine of A'zura-Kai begin to glow with a great and ominous
sidereal luminescence, that he had on that battle-fraught eve defeated one
dreadful menace on the Field of Blood only to unleash an infinitely more
terrifying foe... But the Chaos-Liege had reckoned without the power of the

one thing he feared the most... the one thing which had the merest glimmering hope of thwarting his dread scheme and restoring order to glorious Hyperborea...

[XERXES:]</i> Yes, the only chance... the last hope for victory...

[ALTARUS:]</i> The Shadow-Sword. Evident once more was the fearsome extra-dimensional intelligence linking the sword and the gem, the same crystalline sentience which had guided the King to the mountainous resting place of the ebon blade, and had shielded the presence of the sorcerous immortal weapon from the dark one until it had been brought into play upon the field of battle, that magical link placed within the Ninth Gem by the Immortal if ever again the power of the Shadow-Sword should be needed to bring to bear against Chaos! And with the Arch-Wraith disappearing into the massing dark, that yard of fearsome black steel spoke once more to the King in the same long dead tongue it had burned upon his mind deep within the Mountains of the Dead, the essence of the Immortal mystically encased within the blade instructing the Scion of Hyperborea to commit himself to one final, cataclysmic deed... a deed which would end the aspirations of the Chaos-Liege forever, or plunge Hyperborea and the kingdoms of the world into an endless abyss of eternal suffering and a ravening maelstrom of limitless carnage and galactic terror...

[XERXES:]</i> What was that deed? What could stop the Chaos-Liege? I must know the outcome of this confrontation!

[ALTARUS:]</i> The vista begins to darken... the mists once again weave their spell to withhold their timelost secrets. Practice your art, Xerxes... hone your skills, and the final outcome of this epic tale shall soon be made known to you...