

The image is a highly decorative title page for a historical work. At the top center is a coat of arms featuring a crown above a shield with a central floral or leaf-like motif. This shield is flanked by two winged cherubs (putti) holding long, flowing ribbons that spiral downwards. Below the coat of arms is a small rectangular box containing the text "The History of".

The History of

Bernhard the Brave



and his part in

The Battle

Of Hisleu





The Drakwald family crest dates back many centuries and its origins are lost in the mists of time

The Drakwald Blade is one of twelve such Runefang swords forged by Alaric the Mad, as thanks to Sigmar and his allies

### The Storm Rises

The cruellest winds known for many a century howled through the Drakwald Forest in that fateful spring of 2302, bringing with them increasingly heavy swathes of snow. Boughs cracked and fell from pines as their strength gave out under the burden of snow. The beasts of the forest lay huddled in dens, loathe to set forth, despite the gnawing aches of hunger in their shrivelling stomachs. Huts, o'er banked with snow, signalled life within only by a desultory plume of smoke from ice-rimed chimney stacks. None dare face the elements so harshly disposed against them.

None, that is, except Count Bernhardt the Brave. Resolutely he travelled the distant reaches of his land, delivering bounties from his own store to loyal subjects. Their gaunt faces turned upwards gratefully as his unexpected knock at their door brought deliverance from death. The brave Count's noble features, bleached by the cold and framed with a beard of icicles, will long linger in the memory of many a poor mother whose children were thus saved by his courageous acts.

### A Rallying Cry

Such a man needed no prompting when news reached him of the onrushing forces of Chaos that threatened to overcome the State of Kislev. The soil upon which he might fall may be foreign, but the enemy was one common to all humanity. Seizing the Runefang sword, granted to his forefathers for their heroism, he bellowed a rallying cry across his land. Barely had the exhausted courier's feet touched the icebound ground before Count Bernhardt's were in the stirrup.

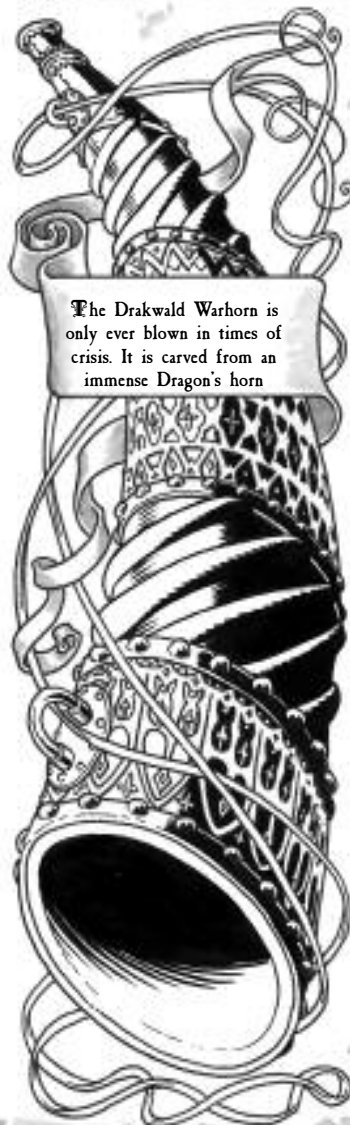
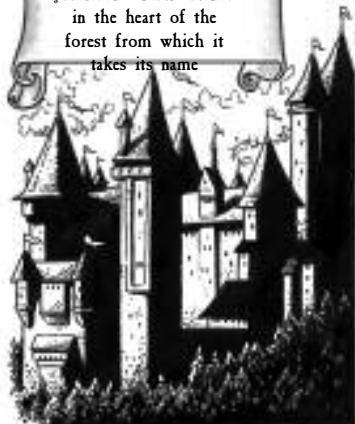
The famous Warhorn rang out, calling the militia to arms, as the fearless Count rode out at the head of the Knights of the Drakwald Forest. Banners streamed resplendent, dim spring sunshine glanced off lance tips, and hooves struck sparks, as the womenfolk waved the fearless warriors off to war.

### The Host Gathers

The retinue of knights galloped down the old forest road, encouraging all who passed to join their swelling ranks. At the court of Middenheim, Count Bernhardt embraced his comrades in the Order of the White Wolf. Immense goblets of wine were passed amongst the ranks. As each man took a sip, he pledged his loyalty and life to this mightiest of crusades. The yellow tunics of Drakwald and the blue of Middenland blended into a common brotherhood of arms.

The weary feet and hooves of the hurriedly assembled army only paused

Drakwald Castle stands in the heart of the forest from which it takes its name



The Drakwald Warhorn is only ever blown in times of crisis. It is carved from an immense Dragon's horn



Bernhardt's great helm was worn by his forefathers before him, and bears the marks of many mighty battles

for rest a further three hundred miles along their route at Talabheim, on the banks of the vast and still ice-bound River Talabec. In this frost-bitten city, terrible news was filtering in of the final destruction of the Tzar's army. His troops, previously bolstered by the Count of Ostland's own, had been beaten back to the frozen River Lynsk. The spring thaw was long overdue, and the daemonic forces of Chaos had swept across the ice to annihilate the stalwart remnants.

A melancholy gloom settled upon the gathered host much like the snow still descending to smother the city streets. Yet as the sun will unexpectedly break through the darkest of storm clouds, so their despair was forced to retreat once more to the deepest recess of their souls, for Magnus the Pious had arrived.

Magnus had already achieved incredible feats. Raising his banner in Nuln he had drawn a prodigious legion to his side. Marching north through Altdorf, to face the tide of Chaos, the numbers had swollen immeasurably, so that as his army flowed into Talabheim it looked likely to burst the city's very walls.

### Praag in Peril

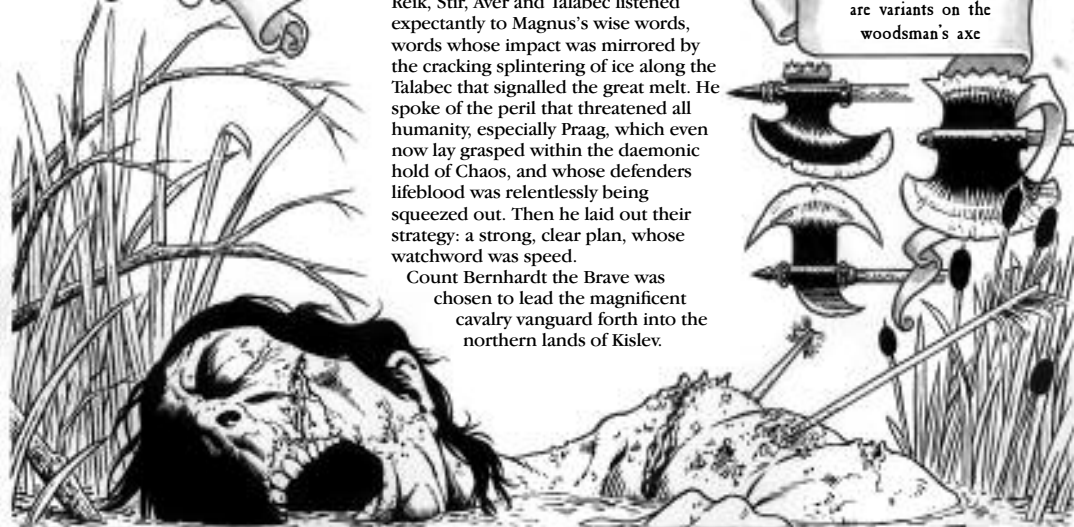
A great council was called. Leaders of forces from the Marches of the Rivers Reik, Stir, Aver and Talabec listened expectantly to Magnus's wise words, words whose impact was mirrored by the cracking splintering of ice along the Talabec that signalled the great melt. He spoke of the peril that threatened all humanity, especially Praag, which even now lay grasped within the daemonic hold of Chaos, and whose defenders lifeblood was relentlessly being squeezed out. Then he laid out their strategy: a strong, clear plan, whose watchword was speed.

Count Bernhardt the Brave was chosen to lead the magnificent cavalry vanguard forth into the northern lands of Kislev.



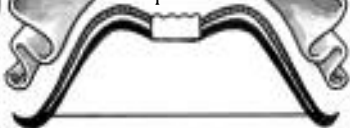
A typical uniform of a Drakwald soldier

Their favourite weapons are variants on the woodsman's axe

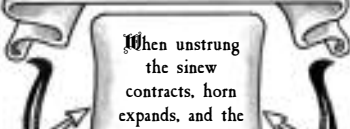


When the R.Lynsk thawed, so many bodies were washed downstream that rotting corpses were still being found months later

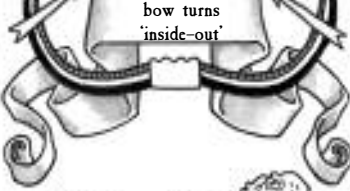
Bakshi Bazouk's horse archers were armed with curved composite bows



The bow has sinew on the outside, wood in the centre, and horn on the outside



When unstrung the sinew contracts, horn expands, and the bow turns 'inside-out'



Nurgle's Rot is a horrible wasting disease

Symptoms show first on a victim's hands

Banners of all the noblest Imperial Regiments fluttered in those ranks, the mightiest warriors in the land, and Praag's only possible salvation. For if they could reach Praag before it fell then the reinforced defenders should hold long enough for the main army to fall upon the rear of the besieging Chaos host.

Despite the punishing pace set, summer was nearly over when tired fetlocks arrived at the gates of Kislev, five hundred miles of country behind them. Crops lay rotting in the fields for lack of men to harvest them. The Tzar's subjects had all exchanged swords for ploughshares, and it was a motley, ill-equipped militia that gratefully cheered their arriving allies.

All had pressed in to Kislev in a last attempt to halt the destructive tide that swept the land. Count Bernhardt's clear eye caught sight of Nurgle's touch upon the city folk, and his nostrils were assaulted by the stench of overpowering decay. Tzar Vassily Zykov's pox-marked features and emaciated frame were mirrored in all of his subjects. The only relief from this oppressive sight was Aylmar Benjakson's band of Dwarfish Longbeards, from Karaz-A-Karak, who tirelessly strove to shore up Kislev's defences. Fresh earthworks seemed to spring up from the barren ground with each Dwarfish spade stroke.

Count Bernhardt required no imprecation from the grateful Tzar Vassily. Heedless of forthcoming danger the brave band set forth once more, guided now by local scouts. Departing through the city gates the column of knights was quickly encircled by the wildest swarm of horsemen they had ever seen – lithe figures, encased in all manner of furs and leather armour,

cavorted around them performing daring tricks of horsemanship. At some hidden signal the escapades ceased abruptly and instantly regiments formed into battle order. Mounted to their fore was a strong-chested figure, who grinned broadly from beneath an immense moustache. Greeting Bernhardt warmly he revealed that he was Bakshi Bazouk, war leader of many men, and they would fight with their southern allies to save the state of Kislev from destruction. Curious but grateful, the Empire Knights watched the famed northern cavalry join their ranks, each newcomer armed with a lethal curved bow.

### A Chill Wind Blows

Fallen leaves whirled in the maelstrom created by thousands of hooves thundering up the Praag road. As the remaining miles to Praag diminished rapidly in number an icy blast struck the riders. The freezing Northern gales were as early this year as the thaw had been

Kislev is built on the Hill of Heroes, and at its heart stands the famous Golden Dome



Murder hole

Kislev's defences were further strengthened by the addition of earthworks by Aylmar Benjakson's Longbeards

Examples of arrow slit design

Murder holes in Kislev's parapet enable defenders to drop rocks and oil on attackers

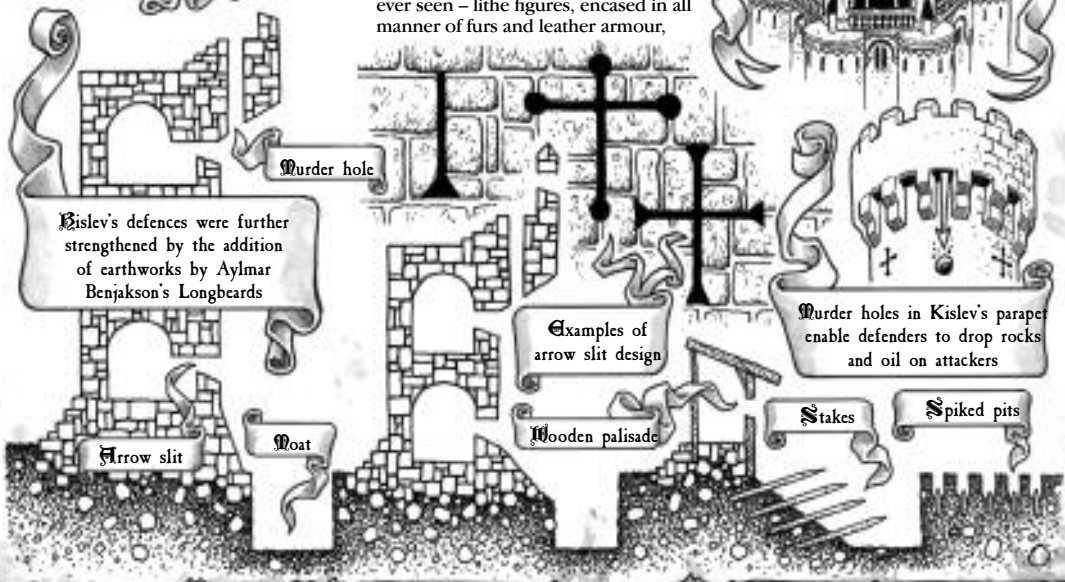
Arrow slit

Moat

Wooden palisade

Stakes

Spiked pits



late. Chilled fingers gripped icy reins, as cloaks were pulled tighter around frozen flanks. The first few flakes of winter began to flurry groundwards.

If this wind chilled the flesh of men, what followed would chill their very hearts. A low moaning rumble began to rise from the direction of Praag, now but a day's ride away, building as it neared to a discordant cacophony of tortured souls. The swelling sound roared across the land like a wave towards a beach, then crashed upon the warriors. Pennants tore jaggedly from lances. Cloaks ripped in shredded strips from broad backs. Teeth chattered loose from bleeding gums. The Chaos Wind raked the land with its cankerous claws. Praag had fallen.

Bakshi's returning scouts reported that the enemy was close by. All manner of beasts, unimaginable to the minds of man, ran, galloped, slithered, crawled and flew southwards from Praag across the blasted land in a relentless broiling flood of Chaos.

The Chaos Gods are identified by their misguided followers with specific runes

**Fzeentch:**  
the Great Sorcerer

**Slaanesh:**  
Prince of Chaos

**Nurgle:**  
Lord of Decay

**Ghorne:**  
the Lord of Skulls

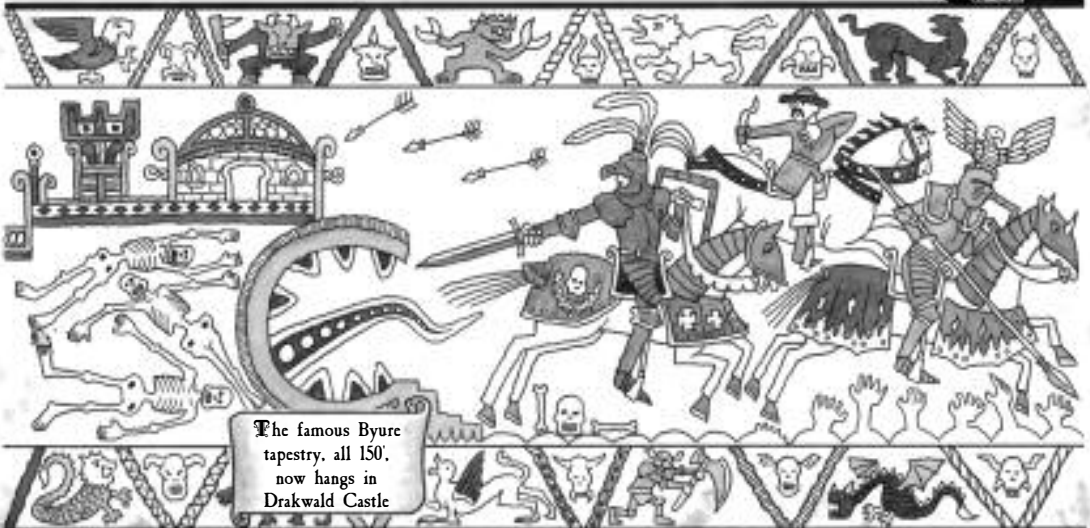
Count Bernhardt cursed that destiny which had thwarted their heroic exertions. At least by now Magnus should be helping defend Kislev's walls. There was little Bernhardt's horsemen could do to stop the foul horde before them. The ground was poor for battle, and the odds far too long. The sacrifice would be futile. Instead he employed the cunning for which he is well-renowned.

### Chaotic Crypt

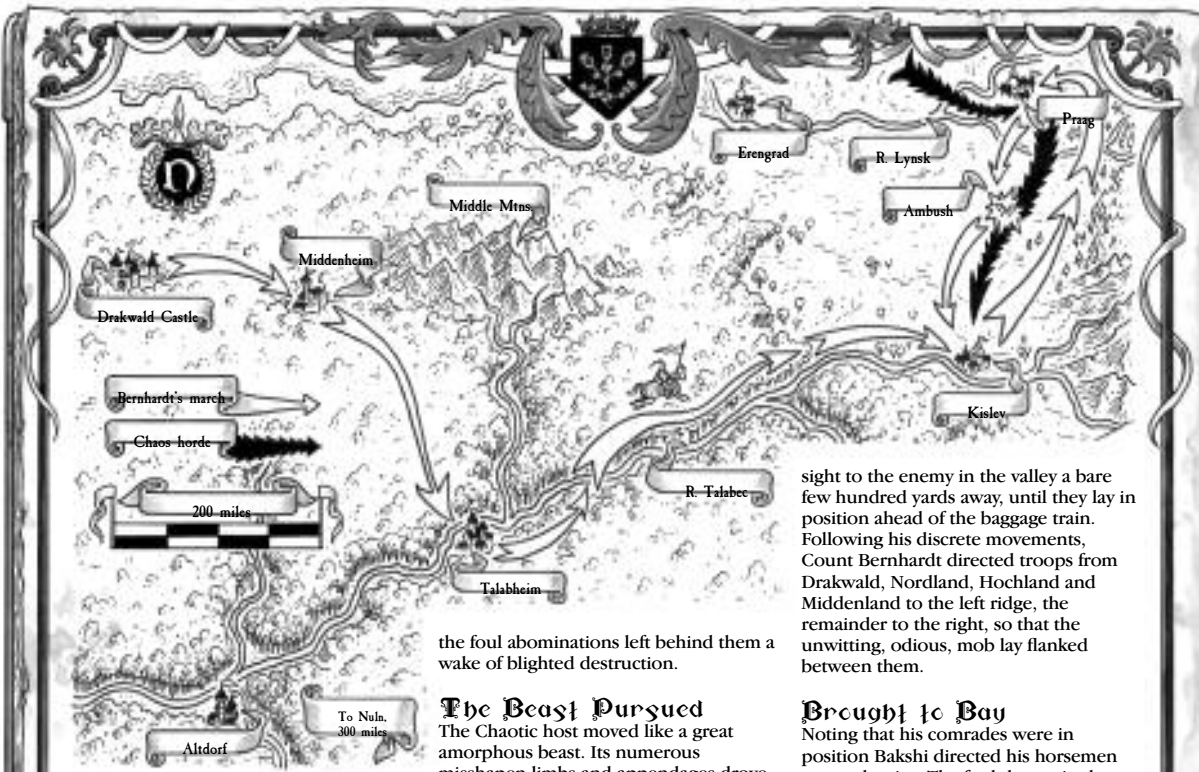
Guided by his fur-wrapped allies he skirted around the flank of his foe, circling behind the enemy horde. Topping the crest of a rise, the fearless vanguard beheld Praag's fate. Where once a fine city had stood, full of tall towers, fine houses and glassy domes, now all was unrecognisable. As Chaos had swept through the city it wreaked havoc in a myriad of inconceivable ways. It were as if the city had been but a waxen creation, now blasted by the very fires of hell. The forces of destruction had wrought their worst, and like a spoiled brat as quickly abandoned this now broken toy. Ever hungry for fresh blood, the Chaos host, still unsated, had moved on.

Buildings which had once stood proud now oozed and dribbled through the streets. Stone, wood and glass bubbled and coalesced into a mockery of their previous form. Fearless warriors exchanged troubled glances as they rode silently into the destruction. Naught was fully identifiable as what it had been. Horses whinnied pitifully as they pulled their hooves free from the cooling putrescence shaking off globules, iridescent with innumerable crazy colourings, as they did so.

Praag's deformed city walls were initially mistaken for grotesque carvings



The famous Byure tapestry, all 150', now hangs in Drakwald Castle



Yet this was the least of the horror, for it was not only the materials of buildings that had been caught in this molten brew of damnation. Deformed limbs stretched forth to grasp the unwary, distorted twisted faces cried out unspeakable oaths. The stalwart defenders of Praag had been subsumed and warped by Chaos into another adjunct of its multi-faceted terror. A terrible fate was sealed and there was no aiding them in their torment.

Grim pledges were made between warriors whose homes lay over a thousand miles apart, but who were now bound into an unlikely alliance. An alliance whose resolve had been strengthened, and turned to thoughts of vengeance by the horrors all now witnessed. Praying for the souls of the doomed defenders of Praag, the vanguard turned its back on this strangely-wrought tomb. It was an easy task to follow the horde of Chaos, for

the foul abominations left behind them a wake of blighted destruction.

**The Beast Pursued**

The Chaotic host moved like a great amorphous beast. Its numerous misshapen limbs and appendages drove it remorselessly onwards, all senses focused on its next prey: the city of Kislev. The bloated carcass tapered for many miles into a narrow tail, a rearguard that contained the lumbering, but necessary, baggage of war.

The courageous Count Bernhardt seized his chance. Such a leaderless mob would be slow to react, especially now that its powerful pincers were reaching out to squeeze Kislev until it screamed in agony. The slow moving tail snaked its way through the narrow, steep sided Vashienka Valley. This terrain presented the Count with a perfect opportunity.

Bakshi Bazouk led his troops along the lee of the ridge line, remaining out of

sight to the enemy in the valley a bare few hundred yards away, until they lay in position ahead of the baggage train. Following his discrete movements, Count Bernhardt directed troops from Drakwald, Nordland, Hochland and Middenland to the left ridge, the remainder to the right, so that the unwitting, odious, mob lay flanked between them.

**Brought to Bay**

Noting that his comrades were in position Bakshi directed his horsemen to top the rise. The foul throng in the vale below reacted instantly, the baggage guards swarming towards the cavalry silhouetted against the horizon. Howling taunts down the slope, the northern clansmen cantered forward to within easy bow range, then wheeling in the face of their foe withdrew as they released a hail of arrows. Enraged, the loathsome pack pursued them up the

Bakshi's men wrapped their horses' hooves in special boots to protect them from the cold



Sholokov's famous sculpture of Tzar Vassily Zykov



Empire knights used plate armour to defend their warhorses



Bazouk's horsemen  
lure the guards away

Dashienka Valley  
proved an ideal  
location for an  
ambush

steep slope, triggering the trap with their enthusiastic ignorance.

A single war horn rang out shrilly, and thousands of levelled lances thundered down both steep hillsides. Inhuman cries of surprise and dismay were uttered from beastly throats amongst the baggage train. The creatures of Chaos had been ambushed. Whilst their strongest warriors chased futilely after Bakshi's elusive horse archers, the rest lay surrounded and open to destruction. Shrieking fearfully they huddled together in desperation. There were no champions or sorcerers to protect or discipline these doomed despoilers.

Lances skewered strange bodily organs. Swords slashed tentacles, arms, claws. Hammers split brain boxes asunder. The slaughter was swift. Many hues of blood stained the trampled snow. Count Bernhardt raised the vengeful Drakwald Blade on high, gore dripped from the keen edge, and all

swore they would not rest until every last one of their foes were vanquished.

The vanguard's spirits were lifted for the first time as they stood amongst the mangled massacred. With such a leader would they not be invincible? The enemy may be at the gates of Kislev, but with Magnus's army inside the forces of Chaos would learn defeat.

### The Beast Turns

It is not surprising, then, that Bernhardt shed a tear of frustration when he beheld the reality. The infantrymen of the Empire Army had failed to reach Kislev before the enemy host. The latter seethed around the city walls in frenzied action. Deep within this boiling mass could be seen the standards of the Reiksguard, White Wolf swordsmen, Drakwald Forest Legion and many other Empire regiments. It appeared that Magnus, upon arriving, had ordered an attack. The indomitable might of his

armies had cut through the enemy, causing destruction and confusion, but had in turn been halted by the rallying forces of Chaos.

The Empire troops stood trapped upon a low hill overlooking the threatened city. The soldiers had formed shield walls, and standing shoulder to shoulder sought to repulse yet another assault. Screaming hordes of hideous mutation swarmed up the corpse littered slopes all around them. Mobs of Beastmen, packs of Flesh Hounds, a mass of Spawn – even Haszteech, Chaos champion, charged in at the head of his dark knights. The deafening clash of arms rang out over the embattled countryside. Count Bernhardt could see amongst the defending ranks the yellow tunics of the Drakwald militia, who resolutely defended their ground. Rivulets of blood flowed down the hillside, turning to rivers as the carnage ensued.

A Dragon's skull found after the battle was three times as long as a human is tall



Empire regimental  
banners

Dwarf weaponry, such as that  
wielded by the Longbeards, is justly  
famous for its intricate adornment



Count Bernhardt led the  
Empire cavalry charge



Suddenly the gates of Kislev were flung open. Crying out a bloodcurdling battle cry, Aylmar Benjakson led his Longbeards into the fray. Desperately they attempted to carve an avenue through the enemy, such that Magnus might reach the city himself, but it proved a forlorn hope. Dragons that circled lazily in the sky swooped down upon the irrepressible axe-wielding warriors. Mighty talons snatched bearded heroes from the field, only to toss them back like scattered pebbles. Bloodied but unbowed, the decimated Dwarfs were forced back behind the ramparts.

The Count knew that he must act decisively. The Empire Army was contained, and could offer no assistance to those within Kislev. The outer earthworks had long since been overrun, and it was clear that the last sweeping assault against Kislev was beginning. The piles of dead against the walls were such that no ladders would be needed to clamber over their heights.

### Runefang Speaks

Count Bernhardt the Brave held the Runefang sword up for all his comrades to see, then pointed to the heart of the army before them. All could clearly see Nurgle's Daemon slaves as they cajoled and guided the servants of Chaos. Destroy them and their forces would crumble. Mailed hands lowered visors.

Never had the World witnessed a charge such as on that day. The finest flowering of manhood swept in serried ranks upon their foe. The Chaos multitude, caught upon their rear, splintered. Like a sharp axe cleaving the mightiest oak, thus the cavalry wedge split their foe asunder. Runefang whistled in blurred arcs, a whirling scythe of death. Wherever Bernhardt led, the knights followed, carving a swathe of destruction.

Bloodshot, yellowed, demonic eyes swivelled feverishly to the source of their doom. A horned, bulbous head leapt from bulky shoulders in a spray of blood as the Drakwald Blade sliced through a

tendonous tree trunk of a neck. Lords of Chaos were forced to cower before Bernhardt's might. Howls of despair echoed across the field, as the Chaos masters fell to the blows of the Imperial cavalry. Disarray spread like Nurgle's rot over the battlefield. Emboldened militiamen swarmed from the City. Magnus signalled a counter-charge. The foe were routed; Kislev was saved.

Counting the slain fiends was impossible the numbers were so great. Over a hundred bonfires were built to burn their putrescent corpses, each standing taller than the highest tower of Kislev. The fires burned for a full cycle of the moon before the last bone was reduced to ash.

The tide of Chaos had swept south, only to break against the indomitable barrier of Imperial arms. Let us all praise men such as Magnus, and Count Bernhardt the Brave, for as sure as the Chaos Moon wanes it will wax again, then our mettle may also be tested. ✽



The stalwart Drakwald  
Militia lost over half their  
number in the great battle