

THE TOME CELESTIAL

Driven by vengeful desire, the symbiotic entity known as Syll'Esske has fought their way into Slaanesh's favour. Now, mortals and daemons flock to their banner in search of delicious, sadistic revenge.



THE HOST OF SYLL'ESSKE

By Phil Kelly & Jervis Johnson

The entity known as Syll'Esske is a dual being, with one part hailing from mortal shores and the other from the Realm of Chaos. In Slaaneshi circles, Syll'Esske is considered a patron demigod of symbiosis, of mutual excess rather than individual indulgence. In reflection of their idols, the hosts that follow them include both daemons and mortals in roughly equal number, working together in the hope of gaining from their allegiance. The armies of the Vengeful Allegiance harbour all manner of strange outcasts, rising hopefuls, and Pleasurebound tribes that have flocked to their banner. A great many Hellstriders and mutants ride alongside them, for they too are fusions of mortal and chaotic creature that in essence have become one single entity of war. Yet their motives are not pure, nor laudable, but merely a means to an end. If there is one thing that the legend of Syll'Esske has come to embody, it is vengeance against the odds, taken in the name of spite, antipathy, and brutal tyranny.

The Vengeful Allegiance is a symbiosis of a once-mortal daemon prince and the Herald of Slaanesh who has fought with him – or rather stood atop his broad shoulders – for time immemorial. There is no part of this union that has dominion over the other, for the two are an equal partnership, and they ensure that the supernatural and flesh-and-blood followers that follow them enjoy a similar power dynamic. They have remained stubbornly unaffected by the petty rival struggles that afflict their daemoniac kind, though it has cost them dearly. In this they are extremely unusual, though it grants them great power. In the treacherous reaches of the Realm of Chaos and the Mortal Realms alike, to have followers that find strength in unity has proven to be a significant advantage, just as to have a permanent ally in Slaanesh's courts is a rare and wondrous thing indeed. But it was not always this way.

The story of Syll'Esske has been whispered with a mixture of awe, respect, and bitter envy across Slaanesh's realm for longer than any can remember. These mismatched daemons were once outcasts, spurned as misfits and fools by the legions of excess that patrol the hellscape and twisted paradises of Slaanesh's realm. Yet through a canny expertise in the Great Game that shaped them, they have become leaders amongst the Chaos hosts and even count several Keepers of Secrets – those greater daemons who epitomise their god's true self – amongst their entourage. They are sought out by those who wish to overcome the iniquities of Chaos worship through making a permanent pact with a daemoniac force, as well as by those daemons that wish to become muse, patron, or tormentor to a single mortal soul so that they may have a

constant anchor in reality from which to work their agendas. The volatile tyranny of Chaos is so prevalent that this means a near-constant influx of new recruits to Syll'Esske's long crusade. So numerous are these souls that at times the warhost that has trailed behind the Slaaneshi herald and her daemon prince paramour has been measured in the hundreds of miles.

In combat, the Vengeful Allegiance fights not as two disparate individuals, but as a single creature united by the same inviolable will. Oftentimes Syll's many-tailed whip loops around the weapon arms of the enemy, yanking them out wide just in time for Esske's long-hafted axe to carve in and decapitate the now-defenceless foe. At others, Esske will sweep his axe low, taking the legs from a half dozen enemies as Syll's whips catch around their throats and throttle the life from them whilst they are still reeling from the initial strike. Over the millennia these manoeuvres have been practiced so frequently they hit home with uncanny synchronicity. This is due to each part of the Vengeful Allegiance reading what the other will do, conveyed through minute shifts of body language. This they can feel through the complex apparatus that Esske can unfurl at will from his spine and shoulders, a strange lightweight framework shot through with nerve endings. When Syll shifts her weight for a strike, Esske reads the trajectory of her scourging whip. When Esske leans into a blow to put his muscular strength behind the Axe of Dominion, Syll balances like a dancer, lining up a follow-up assault. Together they fight with such fluid focus and skill that even the heralds of the other Chaos Gods find themselves swiftly outmatched.

Wherever the glorious dual being that is Syll'Esske walks, an obsession with joining the daemonic and the mortal together blossoms in the mind. So steeped in their own uniqueness are they that those who fight alongside them, even for a single hour, become infected with a burning need to tear the barrier between the everyday and the supernatural. The physical skills of these two daemonic scions are powerful indeed, but they are far from the only weapons in their arsenal, for their true strength is inspiration. The sheer aura of authority that emanates from Esske – a being twice the height of a man and possessed of a supernaturally overpowering presence – can leave weak-minded adversaries grovelling in the dirt. Such fools are swiftly dispatched. Conversely, those Hedonites who swear allegiance to the Vengeful Allegiance instead find their resolve hardened to the point it is all but unbreakable. How can they fail when they are led to war by not one but two of Slaanesh's foremost champions, they who have fought through millennia of strife and emerged triumphant?

THE DARK PRINCE OF CHAOS

Slaanesh is a strange god, for he is formed not of emotion or concept – as are his brothers in darkness – but of degree. He is the god of excess, and those who obsess over their vices or indulge their passions to the point of madness give great power to the Dark Prince. Androgynous and elegant, Slaanesh can take any form and gender, but the abyssal depths of evil in his eyes will always enrapture the souls of those who witness him no matter how he appears to them. His followers number in the billions, for mortals in every realm worship him, whether knowingly or not. Because the surreal environments and hazards that typify the furthest reaches of the realms foster extreme beliefs and behaviours, his faithful are found as often in the magic-haunted wilds as in the city, where cults of luxury and indolence thrive in secret. Slaanesh one day intends to claim all the Perimeters Inimical as part of his sovereign realm and from there close his stranglehold to consume reality entirely. Yet for long centuries Slaanesh has been absent, chained in the Hidden Cloaming by the magic of the aelven gods and able to act only through the scattered daemons and mortals who would one day see him restored to his rightful throne as the Dark Prince of Chaos.





Above: Syll'Esske leads an army of daemons and mortals dedicated to the Prince of Pleasure. With their heightened senses and lightning-fast reflexes fuelled by vengeance and unquenchable lust for power, there are few foes that can stand in their way.

There is much debate as to which of the two entities that make up Syll'Esske is the elder, or the most dominant, but in truth it matters not. There is no one soul that has authority, no one element that pays obeisance to the other. Instead they are a fusion of wills that has become far greater than the sum of its parts.

ESSKE THE SCARRED

Esske used to be human, no more impressive in stature than the other tribally scarified warriors and athletes of his clan. He hails not from the Mortal Realms, nor even from the world-that-was, but from another time and place entirely – that darksome reality known in the Slaaneshi courts as the Land of the Forgotten.

Esske is one of the first mortals to make the journey into the Realm of Chaos voluntarily, millennia before Threx Skullbrand sought the brass citadel of Khorne or Lord Gardus of the Hallowed Knights ventured into the noxious domain of the Plaguefather. Having risen to kingship of his tribe, Esske walked the spiral of decadence that led from the Land of the Forgotten to the Realm of Chaos. Through sheer excellence and bloody-minded determination he fought his way to the outskirts of the six circles of seduction, intending to lay his axe before Slaanesh's divine throne. Though he fought and

bled each day, and though he reached the fleshy gardens that ring the outer circle of Slaanesh's palaces, he got no further.

In those dubious gardens, blood sports are a daily diversion for the daemons languishing between invasions of the mortal plane. Through illusions of a golden path, Esske was led to the outermost arenas, only to find himself fighting for his life in a giant oval of entwined bodies from which hundreds of daemons watched his progress. He found himself battling there for days, then months, then what seemed like an eternity, all the while sustained by the immortal energies of that place. Each new day he was matched against a procession of weird and terrifying creatures from a dozen dimensions, for the forces of Chaos have conquered many realities, and Slaanesh has retained keepsake souls and fascinating monsters from each and every one. There stayed Esske, unable to free himself from the seemingly endless arenas of Slaanesh's garden, unable to meet his ultimate goal of fighting before the Dark Prince himself. He wet his axe anew with each false dawn in his frustration, caught in a Moebius loop of endless bloodshed. Held back by his mortal nature, he could only get so far towards the prime arena sometimes frequented by Slaanesh himself. Then, one day, a new daemon ventured in to





watch him fight, and in doing so changed both of their fates forever.

SYLL LEWDTONGUE

The daemon known in Slaanesh's courts as Syll Lewdtongue was unusual amongst the favoured handmaidens of Slaanesh. She was not fickle and faithless, taking favoured souls as pets and discarding them again on a whim in the manner of her Daemonette peers. Instead she was devoted to that which enthralled her. This was a source of endless scorn from her peers, who painted her as a wilting naïf or a lovelorn debutante traipsing after those who she should rightfully be grinding beneath her heel for her own entertainment.

There was an element of truth to this, for though Syll had a sharp-enough tongue, quick-enough blade and vicious-enough imagination to compete with the best of Slaanesh's heralds, she had a habit of becoming obsessed with those mortals she visited in the physical realms. In her role as muse she would go to great lengths to foster the talent of those whose indulgences appealed to her, endlessly pushing them to scale greater heights or plunge into darker depths in their own all-consuming quests. Some she sought to fashion into perfect beings, for her ultimate desire was to parade her most beautiful creation before Slaanesh himself. So proficient

was Syll in the role of muse, so deep did her insight and wisdom run, she even inspired a Keeper of Secrets – the monstrous doyenne known as Aspho Mhel'Daraxes – to claim the Quintessent Crown. In doing so the greater daemon cemented their place as one of the six most favoured daemons in all of Slaanesh's court, and though Aspho has never formally acknowledged Syll's aid, they have swapped secrets ever since.

A CONFLUENCE OF FATE

On the day Syll entered the flesh-walled gladiatorial arenas of Slaanesh's gardens, all former projects and paramours were forgotten. She saw something wondrous in Esske's indomitable nature, despite his jaded soul and ever-growing fatigue, and approached him that night with every persuasive art she could summon.

By dawn, Esske had a new lease on life. He strode out onto the bone sands of the arena with a killing light in his eye, and he hacked his way into the next circle of gladiatorial excellence, and the next. With Syll's patronage, with her insights into the foes he would face and their secret weaknesses detailed before each bout by her ally Aspho, Esske proved unstoppable. His two-headed axe claimed the lives of champions, daemon lords, even gigantic bladebrutes and

'Two as one never lasts, dear, in the circles of seduction. One day your blades will find each other's backs, my prideful darlings. One fine day.'

– Last words of the Whispering Marquis



steel-skinned drakes as he fought his way ever closer to Slaanesh's godly palace. As his fortunes rose, so did those of Syll Lewdtongue, and the two enjoyed a brief period of pre-eminence. But as with all those embroiled in the Great Game, their very success courted disaster from those that would see them fall.

In the wake of a lengthy victory feast that Syll and her paramour enjoyed for far too long, the Daemonette was found in her gluttonous slumber by her fiercest rivals. Whilst Esske was at his red work in the arena, Syll was circled by the jealous heralds who sought to end her spate of success, and whilst the Daemonette was still in her gluttonous torpor, she was violently slain with her own blade.

Such an ignominy is not easily forgotten in Slaanesh's realm, for he despises those who show weakness. Syll Lewdtongue was banished from his realm for six hundred years and six days. It was a time so extensive that it damned Esske as well; fighting alone in the penultimate arena of the Dark Prince's bloodstained gardens without his consort's support and inspiration, he would eventually be outmatched and torn to pieces. This twist of fate was the cause of much tittering mirth within Slaanesh's court.

A PACT OF DAEMON STEEL

Syll was exiled to the nether hells of the Realm of Chaos, there to linger not as a daemon but as a shapeless essence with nothing but anguish to call her own. Yet obsession always finds a way. In her learning of secrets, Syll had uncovered the truths behind the Forge of Souls – a last bastion of opportunity for a disgraced daemon that supplied power, but at a terrible cost. She ventured there, formless and faint, to speak to the tyrannical masters of that strange sub-realm. There she used every nuance of her persuasive nature to broker a deal, and through the power of her voice, she struck a bargain. It saw her remade into a hissing, clanking monstrosity of pistons and arcane firepower. With a thousand souls slain for the forge, she could earn her freedom and become Syll once more.

With dark glee the Creature-that-was-Syll went forth into the Mortal Realms as a metallic Soul Grinder, scuttling out of a corrupted portal to wreak havoc across the worlds of mortal men. The carnage she inflicted was horrific. Driven by her desperate desire to reach Esske's side once more, her tally neared one thousand mortal souls in an impressively short time. Yet the masters of the Forge of Souls never intend their supplicants to make good their debts without experiencing crushing defeat or disgrace first, in doing so incurring a still greater debt and so being caught in a cycle of slavery for all eternity. Their agents

in the mortal world saw that as Syll neared her tally, she fought her way back to Slaanesh's gardens – not as a soul close to freedom, but as a mindless beast.

The long years of despair and endless battle had dulled Syll's mind, just as the masters of the Forge of Souls had expected. Under tides of bloodshed her sharp wit and fierce sense of independence had been eroded, and in many ways she had become the roaring, senseless beast within as well as without. When the Creature-that-was-Syll passed through that same portal that had unleashed her and stormed back into the domain of Slaanesh, she was insensate, a pale echo of the famous muse that had once climbed the spires of glory.

Slaanesh's domain was at that time embroiled in an intense war against Khorne, the Dark Prince's old rival, for the two gods take every opportunity they can to fan the flames of their aeons-old enmity. This time, the daemons of Khorne had penetrated further than ever before. Yet though hordes of red-skinned Bloodletters were hacking their way through the outer gardens, the fighting in the most prestigious arenas still raged unabated. The agents of the Forge of Souls cared little, focusing only on Syll and the debt she was soon to forfeit. They ensured that she found her way to the heart of Slaanesh's realm, storming headlong through a mob of Khorne daemons to emerge onto the sands of the penultimate arena.

THE DUEL

There – just as the Forge of Souls and their allies in the Slaaneshi courts had planned – was Esske, standing alone and drenched in gore. He was half-blind with fatigue, exhausted in body and soul, and covered with a dozen grievous wounds. In stormed Syll, roaring with bloodlust. Her giant piston-driven claw snapped in anticipation of claiming the thousandth mortal soul she would need to break free of her curse – though in truth, she remembered not why she wanted it so badly. The two fought with everything they had, the last remnants of their defiance wasted upon one another as the bejewelled harpies of Slaanesh's realm laughed from the contorted thrones ranged all around. Should Syll slay the last mortal she needed to escape her purgatory, she would have killed her own true protégé. Should she be slain in turn, she would be bound as a Soul Grinder for all eternity.

Lashing out came Syll's giant claw, smashing Esske across the arena. The gladiator rolled with the landing, teeth bared as he ran, made as if to leap, then dropped to slide under the giant scything blade Syll sent to intercept. He leapt up, spinning his axe around in a decapitating arc. At that moment something of Syll's essence, some

tiny trace of her scent, caught in Esske's nostrils with a burst of bittersweet familiarity, like the perfume of a lost lover. In that moment, the vile trick played upon them both became clear.

Esske stayed his blade at the last moment. He landed deftly and stepped back. He would not play puppet to those gloating courtiers in the arena, and if ascending to the final level meant destroying the one soul he had felt a connection with, he would rather abandon his long-cherished dream entirely. Raising his arms, he let his executioner's axe tip from his hands and closed his eyes in the closest thing to peace he had felt for untold centuries.

A second later, Syll's razored claw came slamming in, the twin blades ripping Esske's eyes from his head and simultaneously tearing out his throat. His blood fountained out in great spurting arcs from his once-handsome face as he was flung back into the gore-stained sand, spasming and convulsing. And there he died.

SACRIFICE

With the last mortal soul she needed slain in the name of the Forge of Souls, Syll was released from the spell that bound her. Her metal-bound form diminished, shrinking in on itself to become a Daemonette herald once more, fragile in comparison to the bladed monstrosity she had been for long years of slaughter. Though she was weakened beyond measure by her transformation and the soul-wracking despair that sought to consume her, she rushed to Esske's fallen form. A cry of anguish ripped from her throat as she cradled him, the scent of his dying breath still lingering in the air as his soul drifted away into the aether towards the Forge of Souls.

Syll breathed that departing soul in, wholly and completely, before it could escape – for the daemons of Slaanesh are no stranger to feasting on souls. Instead of drawing power from it, however, she leaned down to cradle Esske's lolling head and, closing her teeth over his bloodied mouth in a fanged kiss, she breathed it back into his corpse. Unclasping her bladed girdle, she closed the garment around Esske's neck, moulding it with her hands into a high collar that covered the gladiator's mortal injury. Last of all she slit her own wrist with her razored claw and let the hot daemon ichor spill into Esske's throat.

All around her the crowd hooted and roared, taking perverse glee in her desperate measures, shouting accusations of unfair play, and thrilling at the sight of the blessed excess on display before them. Fate itself forked, twisted, and unfurled anew.

And then, perhaps by the grace of Slaanesh himself, Esske spasmed once more and gasped.

Had he still eyes, he would have opened them to see his muse in her true form smiling down at him, but he was all but blind, and she was shaken and exhausted. Instead he drank in her proximity, her heady scent, and found bliss. Esske rose to his feet, unsteady but alive – and with vengeance foremost in his mind.

NEMESIS AT THE GATES

All eyes had been fixed on the plight and strange rebirth of the two paramours, for in the inner circle of Slaanesh's realm, extreme emotions are all the more spellbinding. Yet in watching so closely, the daemons of Slaanesh had allowed their enemies, the forces of Khorne, to hack a path deep into their master's territory. The edges of the arena came alive as a tide of horned Bloodletters broke across the fleshy bulwarks of the gladiators' inner circle, baying savagely as onyx hellblade clashed against chitinous claw.

Blinded and with a great deal of his lifeblood staining the sand, Esske would soon have been cut down by the Khornate daemons charging towards him had he fought on his own – just as would Syll, still exhausted and spent from giving so much of her strength to resurrect her consort. In a flash of inspiration, Syll saw a way out. The

'Vengeance comes for you.'

– Motto of the Syll'Esskan Hordes





Daemonette whispered into Esske's ear that she would be his eyes; she would guide his blade if he would be her strength. The big warrior simply nodded, reclaimed his greataxe, and knelt before her. She took a discarded sixtail whip from the arena floor, climbed gingerly atop his shoulders, and they stood as one.

The two proved greater than the sum of their parts. Inspired by a desire for revenge upon those who had so nearly laid them low, they fought with every iota of their skill to survive. An uncanny symbiotic relationship was born from their mingled souls; given the circumstances, they had no other choice. Those who evaded Syll's whip were met by Esske's axe; those who darted in to wound Esske as he swung his blade found themselves pulled aside at the last by Syll's lash.

In the surreal tableaux of daemon war that followed, the two were formidable indeed, empowered by their fierce joy at having escaped the brink of death. They fought all the way to Slaanesh's throne room, intercepting a trio of Bloodthirsters that had the temerity to barge through the flesh-sculptures of the palace walls and yanking their leader from its feet with an artful lash of Syll's whip before Esske's axe bit deep into its neck. There, before the indulgent gaze of Slaanesh himself and with their fellow gladiators pouring in to fight alongside them, they fought the greater daemons to a gory standstill until the Bloodthirsters were eventually overwhelmed by the trilling Fiends that had been basking in Slaanesh's radiance.

A FITTING REWARD

Together the Vengeful Allegiance were fulfilling a twisted, bloodied echo of their dreams. Syll the Muse was parading her 'perfect warrior' before her divine master, though by this point he was a blind and ragged wreck bleeding from a dozen deep wounds. Esske was finally fighting under his patron's gaze, but being long past the edge of exhaustion, his signature grace was sorely lacking. The gory dance turned into a stumbling, blood-drunk parody of the finesse for which the two had once been known. And yet they defeated the Khornate trespassers one and all, for when fighting together the two had inner steel to spare. In doing so, they saved Slaanesh himself from having to intervene – though he could have annihilated the intruders with a flick of his claw, it would have meant admitting the Blood God had forced him to direct action. Better than that, now the Dark Prince could boast that Khorne's spearhead thrust had been defeated by a blind mortal and a broken lesser daemon, something that he would enjoy reminding the Blood God about for centuries to come. The clash of battle faded away until at last the audience chamber fell

quiet – silent aside from the slow, languid clap of Slaanesh's beringed hands.

When the two emerged from his throne room, they did so in splendour. Syll was returned to the peak of her powers, clad in queenly raiment and positively radiant with Slaanesh's favour. Esske had been given the ultimate reward, not only healed by the Dark Prince's own hand, but reshaped and given immortality as a daemon prince – twelve foot tall and with all the hauteur and poise Syll had once intended for him. In his hands he clutched the Axe of Dominion, an enchanted greataxe that could cut through even stone with ease.

Out they went into the war-torn gardens, where the last of the preening gossips of Slaanesh's court were fought ragged by the Khornate invasion they had so narrowly overcome. Yet though the Blood God's servants were no more than a stink of hot gore upon the air, the slaughter was not yet over. This time, Esske's gigantic axe cut not the crimson hide and lumpen spines of Khorne's avatars, but the soft and silken flesh of those Slaaneshi daemons who had sought to engineer the downfall of the Vengeful Allegiance. The swiftness of the courtiers' demise was merciful, but the long millennia of their resultant exile was not.

THE HOSTS GATHER

Since that day, the legend of the Vengeful Allegiance has spread through whisper and song to all eight of the Mortal Realms. They have become dark saints of the Slaaneshi religion, revered by all as champions of those who would seek power from the fusion of daemon and mortal to cast down those who once stood in their path. Syll made good on her debt by swearing an oath that her warhosts would include Soul Grinders for the rest of time, and she ensured that for every six souls they claimed, one would not count against their tally, but go directly to the Forge of Souls. Esske's legend has attracted gladiators and athletes from every realm. A great many warriors who hear the story of Syll/Esske become obsessed by it and devote their lives to seeking out the Vengeful Allegiance, just as so many Slaaneshi daemons seek the Dark Prince in their turn. Those who find their muse risk never coming back. Once they join the adoring masses who trail in Syll/Esske's wake, pleading with the dual entity for a chance to garner personal power or get their revenge on those who wronged them, they will likely never leave, dying in the Vengeful Allegiance's service before their own tale can reach its end. For a pact with the Vengeful Allegiance is a pact with the daemonic, and very few across the span of history have lived to tell of such desperate measures.

'Watch the axe, and the whip'll take your eyes. Dodge the whip, and the axe'll split you in twain. And that's if you can keep from debasing yourself as soon as they get near. The hand of the Dark Prince himself is behind those two, and he won't let them fall easy.'

— Rhardros the Bear of the Skullfiend Tribe.

Opposite: The Host of Syll/Esske includes both mortals and daemons – followers of Slaanesh who obsess over revenge and the acquisition of power they believe is rightfully theirs. They take a perverse joy in inflicting pain on those foolish enough to stand in their way.

OUT FROM THE REALM OF CHAOS

The legend of Syll'Esske is older than that of any Slaaneshi daemon save that of Shalaxi Helbane, the great hunter. So long ago did the story of the Vengeful Allegiance enter mortal consciousness that depictions of two conquerors, one standing upon the other's shoulders, can be found daubed on the walls of Ghur's deepest Primal Caves, within the Hyali Mosaics, and even in other worlds and realities entirely. Some of their exploits are particularly well known, for since Slaanesh blessed them in recompense for their service, they have carved a bloody swathe across the Mortal Realms and beyond.

THE AGE OF MYTH

TO SEEK A GOD

Esske the Scarred, undefeated champion of the Land of the Forgotten, passes through the spiral of decadence to reach the Realm of Chaos. There he seeks out Slaanesh himself, though it is many millennia before he reaches his goal, and he does so not in splendour but in desperation.

THE CROSSING OF THE PATHS

In the gladiatorial arenas of Slaanesh's gardens, the herald Syll sees Esske fighting for the edification of a crowd of her fellow daemons. She seeks him out that night, and an immortal bond is formed.

THE LOST YEARS

Syll is sent into ethereal exile by her jealous detractors, forced to take the form of a Soul Grinder in order to have any corporeal presence at all. Meanwhile, Esske fights for his life every night in the arena, sustained by daemonic energy only so long as he provides a good spectacle for the baying crowds.

THE AGE OF CHAOS

THE STEEL RAMPAGE

Syll cuts a bloody swathe across Hysh during the dark era in which Slaanesh infiltrates the Ten Paradises and lays them low before returning to the Six Circles of Seduction. There she is matched against Esske for the amusement of the crowd, but after a fierce duel they rise above the desire for violence and in doing so save one another at the last.

A GODLY BLESSING

Syll and Esske fight their way to Slaanesh's throne room, stymieing the Khornate invasion that threatens to disturb their master. In doing so they earn his blessing and are reborn as Syll'Esske, the Vengeful Allegiance.

REVENGE IN THE BRASS CITADEL

The first duty given to the Vengeful Allegiance is a retaliatory strike against the same Khornate legion that had the gall to invade Slaanesh's realm. Together they fight their way across the wastes of the Realm of Chaos, gathering a great following of long-limbed mutants, lithe dancers, and warrior acrobats as they pass out from those areas devoted to Tzeentch. Fighting through the hot-soiled wastelands around Khorne's citadel, they find their path barred by a giant fortress wall studded with brazen gargoyles that vomit molten metal. With their followers forming a human pyramid, Syll'Esske scale a ladder of limbs to crest the wall and butcher the garrison of Bloodletters sent against them. Only when they have mounted the heads of six Khornate heralds upon the highest spikes of that fortress do they retreat for the realm of Slaanesh once more, for a thousands-strong pack of Flesh Hounds has been dispatched to avenge the slaughter. Though their followers are chased down by the hundred, the two cross back into the Six Circles of Seduction as the hunt closes in on them. Just as the Flesh Hounds' snapping jaws are close enough to bite, they are hurled back by Slaanesh's wards, forced to slink back to their master in disgrace.

THE AGE OF SIGMAR

THE SANDS STAINED RED

The Idoneth of Fuethán take a great soul-haul from the outlying settlements of Vanx Littoral. Just as they are returning to their whirlway portals, a pair of strange figures rise from the surf of the beach, one atop another. The two give rise to an ululating and discordant call, and from the blood-laced waves come hundreds of daemons, leaping forth to slash and cut. The Fuethán rear back in horror and return to the coast, only to find a vast host of Slaanesh-worshipping mortals running across the dunes behind them. Caught between the two halves of Syll'Esske's horde, they are cut down – and the souls they had harvested consumed by Syll and her fellow Daemonettes.

THE LAST DEBAUCH OF BLEINHAIM

The infamous harvest festival in Bleinhaim, a wealthy city known for its lavish feasts and elaborate costumes, is treated to some unexpected guests when the Vengeful Allegiance is summoned through a forgotten portal by a sect of Slaaneshi cultists. Walking regally through the carnival, Syll'Esske soon have the populace rapt in awe, and street by street they draw every reveller in their wake. The Bleinhaim Freeguild muster to bar their path at the city limits, but they are torn to pieces by Syll'Esske and their newly devoted hosts. When Syll'Esske finally leave the city, their host is greatly bolstered, and Bleinhaim is empty save for the rats and other vermin that suddenly find themselves the sole inheritors of its former riches.

A PURITAN'S REWARD

The Dawnbringers, a warrior chamber of the Knights Excelsior, uncover a cult of degenerates that has thoroughly infested the Sigyorn region in Chamon. They purge the cultists and burn their holdings to the ground, reducing to ash every blasphemous tome and tattooed, flayed skin upon which the depictions of Syll'Esske and their fellow daemons of Slaanesh are drawn. Yet they are too late, for the Sigyorn region has come to the notice of Syll, and she takes offence to her burgeoning power-base being laid low. Under the

light of the next new moon, the Dawnbringers are assailed by a Slaaneshi host of daemons and mortals that outnumbers them three times over. The Stormcast Eternals fight with every ounce of determination and skill they can muster, and the ground is painted red with cultist blood and daemon ichor by the time the sun rises. Yet it shines not upon the white sigmarite plate of the Knights Excelsior, for they have been slain one and all. Only Syll'Esske stands proud, glinting in the new sunlight and covered head to toe in spilt gore.



THE HOST OF SYLL'ESSKE BATTLE TRAITS

A Syll'Esskan Host is a new Host of Slaanesh which can be used by any player that is using a Slaanesh army chosen from *Battletome Hedonites of Slaanesh*. If you decide to do so, after you have chosen the Slaanesh allegiance for your army, you can choose for your army to be a **SYLL'ESSKAN HOST** instead of an **INVADERS HOST**, a **PRETENDERS HOST** or a **GODSEEKERS HOST**. All units in your army gain the **SYLL'ESSKAN** keyword and benefit from the following Battle Traits as well as the allegiance abilities they have for being a Slaanesh army.

VENGEANCE UNLEASHED

SYLL'ESSKAN HOST units only

COMMON PURPOSE

In reflection of their leader, the hosts that follow Syll'Esske count both daemons and mortals in roughly equal number, working together in perfect symmetry.

At the start of the battle, if the number of **MORTAL** units in a Syll'Esskan Host army is exactly equal to the number of **DAEMON** units, you receive D3 extra command points. If the total number of units in the army is more than 12, and the number of **MORTAL** units in a Syll'Esskan Host army is exactly equal to the number of **DAEMON** units, you receive D6 extra command points instead of D3 extra points. Syll'Esske counts as 2 units, 1 **MORTAL** and 1 **DAEMON**, for the purposes of this rule.

DEADLY SYMBIOSIS

The followers of Syll'Esske are united in their desire to wreak vengeance, and they take shivering pleasure in their comrades committing acts of violence and excess in the name of the Vengeful Allegiance.

When you receive depravity points because a friendly **SLAANESH HERO** has inflicted a wound or mortal wound,

or has suffered a wound or mortal wound, you receive 2 depravity points instead of 1 if that **SLAANESH HERO** is within 12" of **SYLL'ESSKE**.

SYLL'ESSKAN HOST

A Syll'Esskan host contains far more mortal warriors than any other host of Slaanesh.

A Syll'Esskan Host can include only the following warscroll battalions: The Vengeful Alliance, Epicurean Revellers, Seeker Cavalcade, Devout Supplicants, Vengeful Throng and Daemonsteel Contingent. The Vengeful Alliance, Devout Supplicants, Vengeful Throng and Daemonsteel Contingent warscroll battalions can only be used in an army that is a Syll'Esskan Host.

HOST OF SYLL'ESSKE WARSCROLL	POINTS
The Vengeful Alliance	100 pts
Devout Supplicants	160 pts
Vengeful Throng	140 pts
Daemonsteel Contingent	110 pts

WARSCROLLS

WARSCROLL BATTALION

THE VENGEFUL ALLIANCE

The armies of the Vengeful Alliance harbour all manner of strange outcasts, rising hopefuls and Pleasurebound tribes that have flocked to their banner. A great many Hellstriders and mutants ride alongside them, for they too are fusions of mortal and chaotic creature that in essence have become one single entity of war.

ORGANISATION

- 1 Syll'Esske, The Vengeful Allegiance
- 0-5 **CHAOS SLAANESH HEROES**
- 1-2 Devout Supplicants and Vengeful Throng warscroll battalions in any combination
- 1-2 Seeker Cavalcade warscroll battalions
- 0-2 Epicurean Revellers warscroll battalions
- 0-2 Daemonsteel Contingents warscroll battalions

ABILITIES

Brutal Tyranny: *If there is one thing that the legend of Syll'Esske has come to embody, it is vengeance against the odds, taken in the name of spite, antipathy and brutal tyranny.*

All **MORTAL** units in this battalion count as having a Bravery characteristic of 10 as long as **SYLL'ESSKE** is part of your army and on the battlefield. In addition, at the start of your hero phase you receive 1 command point if **SYLL'ESSKE** is part of your army and on the battlefield.

WARSCROLL BATTALION DEVOUT SUPPLICANTS

ORGANISATION

A Devout Suppliants battalion consists of the following units:

- 1 MORTAL SLAANESH HERO
- 2-6 Chaos Chosen, Chaos Warriors or Chaos Marauders units in any combination
- 0-2 Chaos Spawn units
- 1-2 Chaos Warshrine units

All units in this battalion must have the SLAANESH keyword.

ABILITIES

Favoured of Slaanesh: The warriors of the Syll'Esskan hosts are held in special favour by Slaanesh, and he will often answer their prayers.

When you use the Favour of the Ruinous Powers ability for a WARSHRINE from this battalion, the prayer is answered on a 2+ instead of a 3+.



WARSCROLL BATTALION VENGEFUL THROING

ORGANISATION

A Vengeful Throng battalion consists of the following units:

- 1 MORTAL SLAANESH HERO with a mount or that can fly
- 2-6 Chaos Knights or Chaos Marauder Horsemen units in any combination
- 0-4 Chaos Chariots or Chaos Gorebeast Chariots units in any combination

All units in this battalion must have the SLAANESH keyword.

ABILITIES

Headlong Charge: The thunderous pound of iron-shod hooves shakes the ground as this warband charges headlong towards the foe, all restraint lost to the thrill of imminent vengeance.

Once per battle, at the start of your charge phase, you can say that this battalion will make a headlong charge. If you do so, in that charge phase you can attempt to charge with a unit from this battalion if it is within 18" of the enemy instead of 12", and you can roll 3D6 instead of 2D6 when making charge rolls for units from this battalion. In addition, after each unit from this battalion makes a headlong charge move, pick one enemy unit within 1" of that charging unit and roll a dice. On a 5+ that enemy unit suffers D3 mortal wounds at the end of the charge phase.

WARSCROLL BATTALION DAEMONSTEEL CONTINGENT

ORGANISATION

A Daemonsteel Contingent battalion consists of the following units:

- 1-3 Soul Grinder units

All units in this battalion must have the SLAANESH keyword.

ABILITIES

The Debt: When Syll was bound to the masters of the Forge of Souls, the toll of souls that was owed to earn Syll's freedom was not fully repaid. Rather than earn the enmity of the masters of the Forge of Souls, Syll'Esske brokered a new deal, agreeing that the Vengeful Allegiance would forevermore include an elite contingent of the mightiest constructs created in the Forge of Souls, thus ensuring that the masters would receive a proportion of the souls taken by the Syll'Esskan host forevermore.

Add 1 to hit rolls for attacks made by SOUL GRINDERS in this battalion, and add 1 to save rolls for attacks that target SOUL GRINDERS in this battalion.

PAINTING SYLL'ESKE

Welcome, little mortal, to the two most glorious pages in the magazine – the place where we show you how to paint the most magnificent of Slaanesh's servants: Syll'Esske, the Vengeful Allegiance. Make sure you've got plenty of purple paint on standby.

This rendition of Syll'Esske was painted by Andrew Palies, who observant readers will notice is one of the entrants in our Golden Demon Winners Challenge later in the magazine. Here's what Andrew had to say about painting the Vengeful Allegiance.

'I kept the model in three sub-assemblies to make it easier to paint,' says Andrew. 'There's Esske, the metal frame on his back, and Syll. I sprayed Syll and Esske

Chaos Black and the frame Leadbelcher, then started painting the largest areas of the models first, namely the skin, then the cloth, then the metal. There's a lot of purple on this model, and you'll notice that some areas use exactly the same colours but come out looking different (such as the purple robes and Syll's claw). That's because I used some colours as full layers, while others I used as edge highlights. You can create a whole range of tones and textures by experimenting with colours in this way.'

PALLID SKIN



SHINING ARMOUR



PURPLE ROBES



Wash: Nuln Oil



Layer: White Scar

LOINCLOTH



Wash: Nuln Oil



Layer: White Scar

BLACK LEATHER



Layer: Blue Horror

LUSTROUS GOLD



Basecoat: Retributor Armour



Wash: Reikland Fleshshade



Layer: Liberator Gold



Layer: Stormhost Silver

AXE OF DOMINION



Basecoat: Leadbelcher



Wash: Drakenhof Nightshade



Layer: Ironbreaker



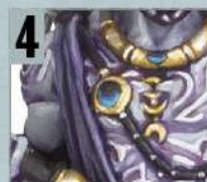
Layer: Stormhost Silver

DAEMONETTE CLAW



GEMSTONES

Andrew painted Syll'Eske's gemstones to make them look like they are reflecting the light. He started with a basecoat of Kantor Blue on each gem (1). Next, he shaded the top of each gem with a crescent of Abaddon Black (2) and highlighted the lower edge of each gem with a crescent of Sotek Green (3). He then applied edge highlights of Temple Guard Blue (4) and Baharroth Blue (5) around the bottom edge of the gemstone. To finish off, Andrew painted a tiny dot of White Scar into the top right corner to represent a light reflection point (6).



THE DUALITY OF VENGEANCE

Dark are the desires of Slaanesh's followers, their lust for power and revenge beyond compare. The Vengeful Allegiance can offer them everything they ever dreamed of and more in this short story by Jordan Green.

'V'engeance comes for you.'

Those are the whispered words in Yarkasai's head that spur him onwards.

Sand and shale the hue of a burnt-out funeral pyre crunch underfoot as he flees. Each step sees the sharpened rocks slice into his soles. There's pain, but Yarkasai doesn't care. If he slows, his pursuers will gain on him. Should they catch him, there'll be more pain – perhaps more than he can handle.

'Faster, my love. Vengeance comes for you.'

'I know, Luxsion,' Yarkasai says to the daemon-muse trilling in his mind. His voice is a hoarse and ragged gasp born from exertion. 'I know.'

Yarkasai's skin is pale, like many inhabitants of Shyish. His muscles are lean, but there's strength there. He's a warrior, as are all those tribesmen who dwell in the underworld of Athanasia. He honours the gods, and he rejoices in waging war against the charnel hosts of the Undying King and the Storm God's get. But it isn't they who hunt him. It's his own tribe, seeking his blood for a sin they cannot forgive.

He cannot run forever. Luxsion's urging keeps him going. His daemon-muse offers a solitary hope. As the lightless surf of the Ocean of Mergheists crashes against the night-black beach, he pulls his khiropfiend-hide cloak tighter and stumbles onward.

'We must keep going. We must find the Vengeful Allegiance.'

With a grunt, Yarkasai pulled his axe from the daemon-beast's chest. The tainted raptor let out a rattling wheeze, tongue lolling from its beak. Yarkasai lifted the blood-slick blade in respect for the fallen prey. Around him, his warband finished slaughtering the remainder of the flock. The squawking cries of more Raptoryx echoed through the rocky hills, a last effort to escape the death coming for them.

Yarkasai frowned. The cabalistic shamans who ruled the tribe of the Unending Coil claimed that to sup the blood of

daemons was to inherit a portion of their divinity. In the past, the Coil had brought down daemon behemoths and infernal predators beyond count – but ever since the gheist-gales had begun to rock Shyish, the creatures had grown scarcer. Yet Yarkasai was the son of a Maraktor, one of the marauding chieftains of the Unending Coil. There were expectations.

He crouched to sup from the tainted vitae, absorbing its faint daemonic power. Then Yarkasai stood, hoisting the carcass across his shoulders and setting off towards the tribe's camp, a collection of tents nestled amidst cyclopean menhirs. Other warriors were returning from the hunt as Yarkasai arrived. Many were bloated in body and covered in dripping pustules. They were marks of devotion to the Gift-Giver, one of the dark powers worshipped throughout Athanasia.

His father was waiting. Yarkasai held the elder Maraktor's gaze as he approached, an uneasy void opening in his stomach. The Raptoryx corpse suddenly felt insubstantial compared to the tales of his father slaying infernal champions and temptress-daemons in his own youth. Yarkasai stopped a few paces before his father, flinging the carcass down. A drawn-out silence lingered until the elder spoke.

'Is that all?'

'Pickings were slim,' Yarkasai answered.

The old man did not blink. Yarkasai's lips pursed as he fought the urge to reach for his axe and defend his honour.

'A kill is a kill, father, it—'

The sound of drums interrupted him. Frowning, Yarkasai turned towards its source. More warriors were returning. Carried on their backs were the bodies of tainted grave-beasts hunted amidst the most perilous reaches of the mountain passes. At the head of the triumphant returning party marched a younger warrior, chin crimson with gore, eyes alight with a lust for glory.

Arsamax. His younger brother.

'You will never become Maraktor, boy,' Yarkasai's father said. As Arsamax was lifted onto the shoulders of his blood-wards, the elder pushed forward, shouldering Yarkasai aside.

'Never.'

The Vengeful Allegiance. The Dualarch. The Two-that-is-One. Whispers say that these daemon-saints can bestow divine symbiosis, that through them can mortal and daemon become one. The same gossip suggests their caravan now crosses Athanasia.

That's his salvation. He is favoured by a dark muse, and through such a union he could return to take vengeance on his tribe. But first he must survive.

Even through the fugue of pain, Yarkasai can hear his pursuers. With them come mercenaries from distant Tzlid, flayed men who have long fought alongside the Coil.

'Left,' Luxsion orders. Yarkasai complies, darting into a cluster of protruding rocks. It won't buy him much time, but every second could count. But in the end he must catch his breath, else his heart will explode. The sudden halting sends Yarkasai's vision swimming with black stars. He can hear the pursuers still.

'It's no use,' he gasps. 'We cannot outrun them.'

'Hush!' Luxsion's tone is stern but encouraging. 'Do not give into wretched despair. I taste the Dualarch's scent upon the wind.'

'They will catch us before we reach them.'

'They will not!' Yarkasai winces as his muse shrieks into his mind. Yet as ever, Luxsion offers succour; the tribesman's aches recede as his patron's insubstantial essence ghosts across his mind.

'They will not catch us. I will not let them.'

'He had no right to speak to you that way.'

The thoughts mirrored Yarkasai's, yet they were not his own. The voice that crept into his mind was a sibilant whisper, a taunting hiss that nevertheless reached the core of his being.

The tribesman rose from his fur-pile bed, axe in hand. Within his yurt the shadows loomed large. A brazier flickered in the corner, wafting scented smoke. Here and there the smoke took on the impression of a waif-form, slender of limb with coy, almond-shaped eyes.

'Show yourself,' Yarkasai said, scanning the darkness. Tittering laughter was his reply.

'Alas, my prince. Once I was a queen amongst the joyous courts. But now I am banished – a lost echo, an exile. This form is all I can muster.'

Yarkasai paused; the Unending Coil hunted and praised the

children of the gods in equal measure. Sensing his hesitation, the smoke-form drifted closer. Yarkasai felt the impression of a claw-limb running across his chest, sending bliss fluttering through him.

'This is a trick,' he said. 'A temptation. You are an agent of the Changer, twisting threads for your own amusement.'

'A temptation, yes. But I am no progeny of the Lunatic God,' the daemon-form crooned. 'My absent lord is of far nobler stock. And he adores those with ... potential. Like you.' As he shook his head in bitter self-hatred, Yarkasai almost thought that the smoke-thing seemed disappointed.

'Yes, like you,' the daemon said. 'After all, you are son of the Maraktor. You were amongst the finest warriors of this tribe. You could rise high in my master's esteem.'

Within Yarkasai's breast, ambition kindled. The daemon was not wrong. Had he not been heir-apparent until Arsamax stole their father's gaze?

'And you?' he said warily. 'What do you gain through this?'

'A second chance,' the daemon chuckled. Smoke-claws rested upon his cheeks, stroking gently. 'My name, in your tongue, is Luxsion. Tell me ... have you heard of the Vengeful Allegiance?'

Yarkasai has reckoned without the cunning of the Unmade. The pain addicts are no fools; a pack of them have outflanked him and now close with wicked cleavers and flesh-hooks ready.

Yarkasai does not think. He merely moves his blade to follow Luxsion's urgings. Deflect a thrust. Step back from a blow. Sidestep, then an elbow into a flayed face. Downward cut to decapitate. Soon, not all the blood on the sand is his own.

But they outnumber him, and they don't fear agony. One is caught square in the chest by Yarkasai's axe, only to lash out and trace a thin line of crimson over the tribesman's chest. Another leaps from behind, plunging a barbed dagger into the meat of his shoulder before being thrown off. Luxsion cannot predict every motion. Gradually, Yarkasai's strength flees, along with his lifeblood. Luxsion's voice grows faint.

Was his betrayal worth this end?

'He will not see it coming.'

Yarkasai had Luxsion alone to guide him. That and the burning need to claim what ought to be his.

Arsamax saw him across the night-shrouded campsite. His

brother smiled. It almost gave Yarkasai pause, but his muse drove him onward. Raising a hand, Arsamax stepped forward, his smile disarming and handsome.

'A fine hunt, brother,' he said, as Yarkasai closed the distance. 'Do not let father trouble you. He—'

He never finished. Yarkasai's hand slipped to his belt, producing his bone-hilted dagger and ramming it deep into his sibling's chest. With Luxsion's guidance, it wasn't much different to gutting a swine.

Arsamax fumbled for his own blade, but to no avail. With a rattling gasp, he collapsed. Rich crimson blood – a warrior's blood – sprayed over the rocky ground.

For a time Yarkasai could only stare at his sibling's corpse, dagger dripping with gore. It wasn't long before Arsamax's blood-ward jarls spotted the body. Kin-slayer, assassin – these were not titles of honour amongst the Unending Coil. Javelins and axes flew through the darkness. In Yarkasai's mind, Luxsion's cackles turned into over-exaggerated cries of outrage.

That was when he fled.

He hears his saviours approach before seeing. Yarkasai doesn't know where they came from, but the discordant war-shouts and blaring of demented horns alert him to their presence.

Hellstriders. Mounted devotees of the Pleasure God. They charge lightning-fast, falling upon the Unmade. Whips lash out. Cruel spears punch through leathery hides. Amidst the carnage, Yarkasai catches glances of his saviours. They are neither fully mortal nor fully daemonic. They are unholy fusions of both. Limbs and bodies, nerve endings and weapons, they all mix in a symbiosis as beatific as it is terrible.

They're riding back towards him. The foe lie dead or scattered, but still they're coming. Yarkasai is too weak to run. They reach out for him, lifting the tribesman, and as they ride off, Yarkasai lets blackness overtake him.

He's not dead.

As his vision clears, that's the first surprise. The second comes as Yarkasai looks around, still carried by the conjoined man-daemons. He's not sure he's in Athanasia anymore; he's not sure he's anywhere anymore, except maybe an addict's fantastical nightmare.

He has found the caravan. More accurately, it has found him. It stretches for miles, an endless pageant of wonder and sin. There are more mortals

than he expected. The ground is a writhing carpet of man and daemon. Armoured warriors with the porcelain features of succubi observe him with void-black eyes. Chariots pulled by hooting Fiends and crewed by twisted hunchbacks charge pell-mell between screeching cartilage-wagons. Mortal supplicants plead at the feet of daemon-maidens, infernal harpists playing for rapturous crowds of flesh-pierced marauders.

'Soon, my light.' Luxsion's voice drips with anticipation. Yarkasai can feel his heart pounding in a frenzied tattoo. *'The Allegiance calls. Soon, vengeance.'*

The Hellstriders deposit him by the grand pavilion at the caravan's heart, retreating into the whirling clouds of madness. The silken portal billows open, a sweet-scented breeze wafting from within. With Luxsion's urgings ringing in his ears, Yarkasai rises and staggers inside.

It feels like he's walking for seconds, and hours, and both at once. Eventually he trips. Yarkasai braces for pain, but the sensation of impact is blissful, the ground beneath his hands surprisingly supple.

'Stand.'

Yarkasai complies. He can't help it. Shaking off a lingering sense of disorientation, the tribesman gets to his feet. What confronts him is a shade, an outline of something terrible and wondrous. Slowly, it steps into the ring of light at the pavilion's centre.

It's tall. The lower half of its body is thickly muscled, the top lithe. There are multiple limbs, multiple pairs of eyes watching him. Is it one being? Is it two?

It's both, he realises. It's the Two-that-is-One. Not separate entities, but an indivisible whole.

'You've come far, little one.' It's the hulking man-thing forming the Allegiance's lower half that speaks, though there's something curiously androgynous about the cast of its features. There's a smile upon its broad face and an oddly paternal quirk in its voice. Upon the curved apparatus rising from its shoulders the lithe daemon sneers, eyes radiating a cold disdain.

'You know what it wants, my love. You know what they all want.' The daemon's scowl deepens. *'Power. That's what they come for, what they all bleat for. Nothing grander. No vision beyond petty revenge.'*

'Vengeance can be vision,' the masculine half replies. Yarkasai doesn't think it's addressing him anymore. There's a thoughtful edge about it, as if it continues a conversation held many times before. *'We made it our vision, did we not?'*

'We earned it.' The feminine daemon's voice is sharp, but she smiles now, crouching and caressing the man-form's cheek. The Vengeful Allegiance stares at Yarkasai, one face wearing a cruel expression, the other contemplative. 'What has this wastrel earned?'

'Union!' Yarkasai can't help himself but speak. He forgets himself as he staggers forward a step, dropping to his knees once more and raising his hands in supplication. The Allegiance watches, caught between amusement and disdain.

'I have come so far.' Tears flow freely as he speaks, the words coming without conscious effort. He must make them – it? – understand. 'I have been passed over when glory should be mine. My muse has led me here. Teach me your secrets, I beg you, let me and my Luxsion become one and seize what is ours!'

They're still watching. One half is spiteful, the other almost pitying. He can never tell which is which, for the expressions flow into one another with each passing moment. At last, the Allegiance steps forward. The man-half's huge hand extends, lifting Yarkasai's chin. Black eyes, shark's eyes, stare into the tribesman's own.

'Oh, little mortal ... did you think I was speaking to you?'

Yarkasai doesn't understand. The Allegiance is the glory-bringer, the granter of revenge. All the pain, all the terror of the pursuit, it was all for this. A chuckle in his mind freezes him. Luxsion, normally so soothing, now speaks with a bladed edge.

'Did you never wonder how I was banished, my love? Did you never consider why your tribe above all attracted my gaze?'

The daemon-hunts. The rites of the Unending Coil. They flash through Yarkasai's mind. They assumed that those they slew would never seek vengeance of their own.

Yarkasai screams, but Luxsion is already in his mind. His muse pounces with a frenzied hell-shriek. Slicing shards of soul-pain fill him. Everything that Yarkasai was is supplanted as Luxsion, empowered by the presence of its kin, takes his flesh as its own. He feels himself ripple, his body distend.

In his mind's eye, Yarkasai sees his brother staring at him.

Syll'Esske continues to watch. As Yarkasai collapses, howling as he is violently remade, he hears the Allegiance speak in twinned voices.

'You wished for union, in pursuit of power and glory. Now you have it. Vengeance comes for you.'