

## Fallen Angel

by Michael J. Hollows

The victory fires smouldered in the cool evening air casting thick black smoke into the darkening sky. All around were the sounds of a vicious battle. Blackened carcasses of tanks and slowly decaying corpses littered the scorched ground. Amongst the debris, salvage teams were picking up unused ammunition and collecting bodies for the funeral pyres. The Munitorum had ordered that the remains of the greenskins should be burned to stop the spread of the spores which they use to spawn. That was how they had found him.

Atop a great mound of dark green corpses, many missing limbs and eviscerated. The thick, viscous blood ran from the collected bodies and seeped in to the ground, casting a grisly scene of death.

He was just lying there, obsidian power armour cracked and pitted with the signs of a great battle. The only adornment his armour bore were the purple-pearlescent gems crafted in the form of one solitary tear drop. Unlike the simple armour, great wings of golden feathers spread wide from his shoulders. The wings limply draped the mound of corpses, broken in places and torn. Like the rest of the fallen figure they were coated in blood and viscera. But despite the scene, the feathers glowed with a luminescence, becoming a beacon of light for the survivors amongst the darkness of death. The angel was clearly broken and life barely remained in him. Piles of greenskin corpses surrounding his horizontal form evidence that he had killed a great many before succumbing to his wounds.

The Munitorum serfs had found him there, bleeding, close to death. Not knowing which of the many Chapters involved in the battle he belonged to they had carefully taken his body to the nearest medicae facility. It took many serfs to lift the heavy warrior on to a pallet before they could move him. Once there, they had removed what little remained of his cracked armour and cleaned his wounds as best they could.

Over time the story of the heroic angel that had felled hundreds of Orks reached the ears of the Holy Inquisition. His armour discarded, the representatives of the Inquisition could no more return him to his own Chapter than could the Munitorum. Instead, they tried to pierce the secrets of his mind utilising their most powerful psykers. The psykers recoiled in pain, his mind too broken and disturbed by events to be penetrated successfully. The Inquisition left his body to heal, his secrets could wait.

Upon waking he would only speak when he was spoken to. He was still able to communicate effectively but could find no recollection of his former life. The warrior knew only that he lived to service to the Emperor of Mankind.

The Inquisition decreed that only option left in order to continue his service would be to send the warrior to a Watch Fortress. There he would join and begin his training with the Ordo Xenos' chamber militant; named the Deathwatch. Once joined with his new brethren the outcast would take up the Black Shield. Receiving new armour painted in the watch's black, though as he held no allegiance save the Imperium, he would bear no heraldry or chapter badge. The only adornment the silver 'I' that marked him out as a servant of the Inquisition. Unlike his previous life, there were no luminescent wings to separate him from his brothers, his duty was simple like his armour.

The other members of the Watch knew not where he came from, no marks of his history remaining. But rumours from the servants of the Inquisition that had borne him to the Watch Fortress spread. They told of a great winged figure, golden fury emanating from his every pore,

smiting the Greenskin threat while his brothers fell one by one. They claimed he had killed every last Greenskin and only then, his duty complete, did he succumb to his injuries. For this; they simply called him, *The Angel*.