



THE SIEGE OF CASTELLAX

C L WERNER



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The Chaos Space Marines of the Iron Warriors Legion have long been renowned as the masters of siege warfare, able to inflict devastating firepower and unimaginable cruelty upon their foes. On the world of Castellax, twisted Warsmith Andraaz builds his own empire even as a system-crushing ork Waaagh! approaches, and drives his own slaves ever harder to meet their production quotas and supply materiel for the Legion's many warbands. Their walls are strong and their weapons ready, but how long can the planet hold out against the deadly greenskin invasion when whisperings of rebellion begin to pass between the Iron Warriors' downtrodden vassals?

The Siege of Castellax Details

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From Reader Review The Siege of Castellax for online ebook

Stuart says

"Come on through to the other side..." - The Doors

Imagine this. A planet (Castellax) where the human populace are enslaved to harvest the precious minerals. Did I say human? No they are just flesh to their overseers, those dastardly Iron Warriors. Dastardly is such a bad word, try sadistic bastards and you're not far off. Things are going swimmingly well until a massive (tens of millions) incursion of Orks threaten the planet. Hence the title *Siege of Castellax*. I'm being a little flippant (as if you can't tell). This type of story is so tried and tested in the Space Marine Battle Novels series that it's just becoming a little over used.

The story is told from the Chaos Marines POV, a refreshing change. Bad guy against bad guy! The Iron Warriors are Traitors! They fought some ten thousand years ago for Horus and now find themselves fighting "The Long War" which is the war against the Imperium of Mankind. There not a friendly bunch. Take Aolol The Skintaker, he flays his human victims alive and wears that skin as a cloak - sometimes even taking their face and plastering it on to his helmet. A lovely chap, I'm sure your agree. The meat of the story focuses on Captain Roodaan and his Raptors (assault marines with demi-organic jump packs), Fabricator Oriax and Over-Captain Vallax. When the Orks land onto Castellax, Roodaan finds himself shot down by a stray missile - conspiracies start to take root, where the Captain discovers a plot from within. The author is apt where he keep the story from being a meatfeast, he uses clever little sub-stories to elaborate on the background of the Iron Warriors Third Company and a coven of Imperial Mechancium whom have survived serving under the Traitor Marines aegis.

Here is my real problem with the story. There's a lot of greenskins (aka Orks) and not a lot of those Chaos Marines, sixty four in fact. Of course there are millions of slave-soldiers and other human-stock the Iron Warriors puts to use. The planet is designed to withstand a siege, the Iron Warriors being masters of such warfare. If you've read *Armageddon* your know there were thousands of Space Marines, millions of Imperial soldiers there to defend the planet. Here there are sixty four as I've mentioned - they never seem to die. In comparison to the Orks slaughtered thousands of Astrates - consuming entire Chapters. Continuality is really important within 40K, for me anyway. I just found this to be a little lazy in regards to research.

What I enjoyed was how Captain Roodaan becomes a sort of anti-hero, he becomes 'almost' likeable. The Iron Warriors superior complex is well written, the rivalries within most enjoyable. Another good point was Brother Mereiam for me, a Obliator. What is that? Think of the T-1000 from Terminator 2 and your almost there, just in the form of a superhuman.

There is a human element to the story, several slave-soldiers find themselves facing a choice between deserting or continuing to fight a war they cannot win. Once their chose is made, they make some nasty discoveries about their superhuman overlords - that they are feeding the humans (or as the Iron Warriors refer to them 'The Flesh') their dead. Tasty, do you do take out?

Siege Of Castellax is enjoyable though a little hamstrung by the overused story. I enjoyed the Iron Warriors being the POV and found some of the rivalries really kept me glued to the novel. I can't say it blew me away, let's think of it as a Russian space rocket... gonna make it... almost there... but not quite **BOOM**

Greatredwarrior says

A fun enough entry from the Black Library. The Iron Warriors (Chaos Space Marines) against Orks. There was a bit too much "IRON WARRIORS ARE AWESOME!" and not quite enough "Somehow the Orks actually outdid us". However, there was a lot of good easy to track action and a lot of clear illustrations that honor and loyalty don't survive in the long term when you are the bad guy. Fun enough, but not really worth recommending.

Callum Shephard says

Another book in the long running Space Marine Battles series, Siege of Castellax shifts focus to the traitor legions. Having long since liberated the planet from the Imperium of Man, the Iron Warriors Third Grand Company holds dominion over countless billions of slaves. With the mineral rich planet being continually strip mined for its wealth to supply their forces on Medregard, they soon find themselves under threat by a massive Ork WAAAGH! With their pride preventing them summoning reinforcements, the Iron Warriors will soon learn if their legendary resolve is enough to withstand this foe...

Along with the Night Lords and Word Bearers, the Iron Warriors are the most popular Chaos faction used by writers. It's easy to see why as well. With a very different attitude to Chaos, a callous disregard for life and an iron discipline many legions have since lost, they're an interesting force to see written about. The success and popularity of Storm of Iron definitely helped in this regard. Siege of Castellax wears that inspiration on its sleeve, both to its benefit and detriment. You can easily see the scope and many aspects of that book reflected here despite the Legio IV serving in a defensive role.

The siege itself is conducted in stages, initially encountering and engaging the orks in the void and then attempting to contain them at various landing points. At every turn the Iron Warriors and their regiments are seen attempting to combat them as best they can and draw up new defensive lines. Along with being an excellent sign of an escalating conflict, we see this through the eyes of many individuals. While the many astartes of the Iron Warriors themselves are at the forefront of this, a number of slaves and soldiers also serve as viewpoint characters.

The book gives some scale to events as you would expect with such a varied focus, but plays up the angle of the astartes' traitorous nature and the effects of their rule through fear and obedience. The various captains within the Third Grand Company are constantly fighting among themselves, constantly vying for power while at the same time adhering to an odd kind of code. The almost casual nature of their brutality and unwarranted acts of violence to simply remind the humans who commands them are quite often effective, and remind you why rebellion seemed like an impossibility.

Despite these qualities, easily the most interesting aspects of the book are when they try to explore the world itself and how Castellax has operated for years. Very early on the book goes into detail on how certain vessels have taken trophies from stricken ships, Castellax itself has become a polluted hellhole without any pure water and is less a fortress than a massive manufactory. It gives some idea of the planet's inner workings and just how life itself developed there; showing a new aspect to Iron Warriors' operations away from true fortresses. Unfortunately once the book departs from these details very early on, major problems start to appear.

Much of the book feels as if it was written with Storm of Iron used as a reference without fully understanding many events behind it. While a similar story structure and even certain ideas being taken are acceptable replications, at many points ideas are lifted wholesale. A certain scene with a surface to orbit

weapon and sub-plot with a Tech Priest are extremely similar, as is the constant overconfidence of the defenders.

The problem is that, while these ideas worked in the previous book, they are not nearly as effective here.

Take for example Warsmith Andraaz. Despite being the ruler of the world and a leader without equals, he barely involves himself with even basic planning of defending the planet. While the Warsmith of Storm of Iron had legitimate reasons for remaining outside the conflict, Andraaz has no such defense. It simply makes him look lazy and an ineffective leader unwilling to get his hands dirty. This is something only made worse when it's revealed there are barely sixty Iron Warriors on the whole planet, yet he and his elite terminators do little to nothing against the orks.

The same problem is evident with the politics within the Grand Company. All too often it seems to be overriding their efforts to actually defeat the orks. Even as their entire world is being demolished around them, the traitors' attention is less upon the orks and more about how they can one-up one another for favour. The book establishes the reason the Third Grand Company is so under strength is thanks to previous infighting, and it just ends up making the Iron Warriors look like halfwits who cannot focus upon a true threat.

In fact, far too many times it feels as if the servants of the Dark Gods are being played for laughs rather than as a force to be contended with. One millennia old superhuman warrior in service to Chaos is slapped across the head, declaring "Ow!" in response. A pilot of an advanced Iron Warriors' fighter dies effectively delivering a one liner worthy of a rimshot. Worse still, one Iron Warrior is crippled by what is effectively a light tap to the head through his helm. This is a level of obscenity even Vulkan Lives never achieved. If anything this book seems to be a counter point against other depictions of the Iron Warriors by showing them here as blithering incompetents.

Another problem is actually showing the real scale and focus of the war. While the book does give a sense of escalation with the orks overcoming every bastion and defense placed in their way, it lacks impact thanks to how it is established. Rather than introducing certain locations very early on only for them to gradually be overcome by the orks or besieged, they are demolished within paragraphs of being shown to the reader for the first time. You have no time to take them into account or really be surprised by their fall because you're barely aware they even existed on the planet.

Oh, and the editing reaches the point of ludicrous when a character suddenly turns into a Techmarine for the final chapters.

The only thing which really saves Siege of Castellax is its depiction of the orks. One of three factions traditionally wheeled out to serve as punching bags for bigger foes, they are very rarely used as a true threat. Here you're given a real impression of them being a true threat on par with the Tyranids and just why they are so often thought as the force who truly rules the stars. Unfortunately, it's not really enough to truly justify the price here.

This book really needed to be better thought out and its elements reworked until they truly felt as if they were truly fine tuned. Skip it unless you truly want a positive example of how an Ork WAAAGH! can operate against a foe like Chaos.

Jamie Bruce says

I have generally enjoyed the SMB series, and a Chaos SM story is a refreshing spin on the idea. However, one of my favourite things about the series has been the way it humanises and personalises these super soldiers a bit, and in this way Castellax just didn't cut it for me. For the majority of the book, the Iron Warriors are ridiculously immortal, even for space marines. Further, it's really difficult to really barrack for any of the characters.

Regardless, it's a well-written and interesting book.

Diana H. says

A great introduction to the Chaos Space Marines. They aren't the good guys, they aren't the bad guys, but they are some kick butt fighters!

Milo (BOK) says

"Black Library have picked the right choice to start off with for Chaos Space Marine Battles Novels, The Siege of Castellax is Werner on top form – why hasn't he written any 40k novels before? This was an awesome read." ~The Founding Fields

As I've already mentioned, The Siege of Castellax is the first Space Marine Battles novel to focus on Chaos Space Marines. Black Library pulled a big gamble with this and getting CL Werner to write his first full Warhammer 40k novel, as although he's an experienced Warhammer Fantasy writer, The Siege of Castellax is his first venture into the grimdark backdrop of the far future. And he's chosen to focus in on the Iron Warriors as a legion, who as it stands, Graham McNeill is basically the Iron Warriors author, even if only with his one full novel on them - Storm of Iron.

But after reading The Siege of Castellax, I can firmly say that they picked the right man for the job. Even though I had a couple of minor issues with The Siege of Castellax, that's all they were – minor. I enjoyed the heck out of the latest Space Marine Battles novel and for me it's one of the better installments in the series that has been largely hit or miss.

"The Chaos Space Marines of the Iron Warriors Legion have long been renowned as the masters of siege warfare, able to inflict devastating firepower and unimaginable cruelty upon their foes. On the world of Castellax, twisted Warsmith Andraaz builds his own empire even as a system-crushing ork Waaagh! approaches, and drives his own slaves ever harder to meet their production quotas and supply materiel for the Legion's many warbands. Their walls are strong and their weapons ready, but how long can the planet hold out against the deadly greenskin invasion when whisperings of rebellion begin to pass between the Iron Warriors' downtrodden vassals?"

The first thing that's important to note about Siege of Castellax is that it's a Chaos Space Marine novel. We aren't focusing on loyalists here, which adds to the potential for some even more action and a refreshing break from what is usually loyalists defending from invading xenos armies, Rynn's World by Steve Parker, Fall of Damnos by Nick Kyme, The Purging of Kadillius by Gav Thorpe and Helsreach by Aaron Dembski-Bowden all fall into this category. Even though there have been a few exceptions, that's what the bulk of the Space Marine Battles novels have been about. And to an extent, this one is as well, it's Orks invading a planet controlled by Space Marines. Only, this time it's different. It's Chaos Space Marines, and there are no heroes here.

Read the Rest of the Review: <http://thefoundingfields.com/2012/12/...>

Tarl says

This is my second time reading this book, the first time seeing me unable to get more than half way after losing interest. Much to be said, the second time only took me a year, but I managed to do it.

I am a fan of Werner. He's one of my more favorite writers in Black Library's stable of writers. I wish he would do more. But for whatever reason, this book just didn't really do it for me. I mean, there were plenty of twists that were pretty outstanding, and worth reading the book for, but overall, it was just... boring.

Now, most Space Marine Battle books are long. Very long. They also detail huge battles, which a lot of fans love. But they are also difficult to write and keep the reader's interest. This is where Werner kind of fails with this novel. The massive battles are just... uninteresting. Yet, he makes up for this with pretty good character interactions involving the internal politics of the legion, their slaves, and even the orks for a wee bit.

He also does a fantastic job showing how later generations of inductees into the legions would suffer certain prejudices as they were not there for the opening war with the Imperium, and that was nice to see. Werner kept it simple and that helped drive a lot of the animosity against his protagonist. His take on the Obliterators was also fantastically done, where they are effective weapons but also disliked by those that use them.

In the end, this was an alright book in the Space Marine Battle series. I did enjoy it, but it didn't get me reading the pages at lightning speed, unable to put it down. If you are an Iron Warriors fan, this is worth reading for you as it will give you some good insights into them. But unfortunately, their own static nature does drag the tale down somewhat. Either way, it is worth reading if you want something involving the traitor legions.

Abhinav says

You can find the full review over at The Founding Fields:
<http://thefoundingfields.com/2012/12/...>

Shadowhawk reviews the latest Space Marine Battles novel by Black Library.

“Grim, brutal, and clinical, Siege of Castellax is an excellent representation of the Iron Warriors and of Warhammer 40,000.” ~The Founding Fields

Siege of Castellax marks C. L. Werner's first foray into full-length Warhammer 40,000 fiction for Black Library, although he has been writing in the Warhammer Fantasy setting for a number of years already and is one of the most experienced, and one of the best, writers for said setting. Siege of Castellax is another first in that it is the first Space Marine Battles novel to feature Chaos Space Marines as the primary cast of characters, though their enemies here, the Orks, are a common threat in the series (having already featured in Rynn's World and Purging of Kadillus for example). In those terms, the novel has a lot to live up to, especially since Werner is a writer noted for bringing out the inner... darkness of his characters and for his excellent atmospheric writing, such as you can find in Blood for the Blood God and Dead Winter.

As far as I'm concerned, Werner has proved admirably that he has what it takes to write full-on 40k fiction (he has written at least one short story previously), and GOOD 40k fiction at that.

The meta-plot is fairly simple: an Ork Waaagh! has descended upon the Iron Warriors-controlled planet of Castellax, somewhere near the Eye of Terror, and is intent on destroying everything in its path. Led by Warsmith Andraaz, the Iron Warriors are prepared to defend against the invaders at almost any cost and to keep their manufactories and workshops intact so they can keep their supply lines to the legion's daemon-world Medrengard open. There are of course several sub-plots that are woven into this larger narrative and they all serve to properly flesh out the nature of the Iron Warriors, their relationship to Chaos, and the manner in which Space Marines wage war against an enemy like an Ork Waaagh! composed of tens of millions of warriors.

Siege of Castellax is everything that I wanted from it and then some.

To start off with, Werner's characterisation is top-notch here. Raptor Captain Rhodaan, and Obliterator Merihem are definitely his standout characters here, both of them shining a spotlight on aspects of Chaos soldiery that are rarely, if ever explored in any depth. The closest I can recall to either is Lucoryphus and his Raptors warband, called the Bleeding Eye, from Aaron Dembski-Bowden Night Lords novels, and even then, his warband is little more than a footnote there. With Rhodaan, I got a Chaos Space Marine I can readily get behind, someone as nuanced and interesting and devious as Graham McNeill's Warsmith Honsou or William King's Sorcerer-Lord Madox. Rhodaan is a focal character in the novel and he drives a lot of the narrative since Werner plays up quite a bit of the internal Iron Warriors intrigue around him. He is a rising star of Andraaz's warband and his superior, Over-Captain Vallax, is determined to keep him in check, permanently if need be. Merihem is a former member of the Warband and one who has been incarcerated far away from the warband's base of operations as becoming an Obliterator, a potent mix of man, machine and Chaos, has unhinged him, making him a dangerous berserker who would sooner kill his brothers than the enemy. And it so happens that Rhodaan is sent to "ask" for his aid against the Orks. Merihem's deranged personality, his contempt for his brothers, and his very nature are quite fresh to read about. Characters like him are very, very few and far between in 40k fiction. He also gets some of the best lines in the novel, which serve to highlight the aforementioned contempt quite well.

By the way, that's Captain Rhodaan on the cover. His "jump-pack" is actually a "demi-organic wings" that he divested a former Iron Warrior of at some time in the past. One thing that always came to mind whenever I was reading Rhodaan's scenes was "You Are Not Prepared". High-five if you get the reference!

El-jorro says

Bookworm Speaks!

The Siege of Castellax

by CL Werner

The Story: The Chaos Space Marines of the Iron Warriors Legion have long been renowned as the masters of siege warfare able to inflict devastating firepower and unimaginable cruelty upon their foes. On the world of Castellax, twisted Warsmith Andraaz builds his own empire even as a system crushing ork Waaagh! approaches, and drives his own slaves ever harder to meet their production quotas and supply material for the

Legion's many Warbands. Their walls are strong and their weapons ready, but how long can the planet hold out against the deadly, greenskin invasion when whisperings of a rebellion begin to pass between the Iron Warriors' downtrodden vassals.

The Good: Among the enemies that mankind faces in the grim, dark, future, Orks are probably Bookworm's favorite. They are the perfect enemy for nearly anyone who indulges in dreams of war and conquest. There are no innocent members of their society, no women or children, just an enemy that dreams of nothing but fighting. That is why zombie media still holds such a strong sway. There is no possibility of empathizing with the enemy, just kill and kill and kill without anyone bringing up those pesky ethics. We get plenty of that in this text.

Nonstop, gunpowder and gasoline fueled combat fuels the action in this book and it does not disappoint. The orks are just so mindlessly focused on destruction that the Iron Warrior's have their work cut out for them. In the real world, war is not that much fun. In the book though...it is made to be fun. Seeing the human slaves and the Iron Warriors clash against the orks is just as fun as it is in Orks vs Space Marines in Rynn's World. As for the Iron Warrior's themselves, they do not disappoint.

There are two main ways to make a good villain. The first is to make them sympathetic, the heroes of their own stories. The second way is to completely rob them of sympathy, make them full-blown diabolical and just a ton of fun. That is the way the author goes in the text and it really pays off. The Iron Warriors are just so deliciously evil, they all hate each other to the fullest extent and the way they regard their human slaves as 'The Flesh' in a singular term is just so indicative of their mindset. While it can get a little dull if it is focused on too much, it is nice to see the Iron Warrior's focused on things such as logistics and manpower during the course of the war. All too often, the warriors of Chaos are described as slathering beasts, little better than the orks themselves, this book helps break that mold and gives another layer to the Iron Warriors' character.

During the action and adventure...we see the affairs of various slaves of the Iron Warriors who serve as the laborers and soldiers of Castellax. Bookworm really likes it when we see humans and Astartes in the same story, and to see slaves born and bred to be the servants of the Iron Warriors and to see them to whatever it takes to see tomorrow. That is what makes Warhammer 40k so appealing. Even in the face of a nightmare future, the will to survive is as strong as it has always been in the hearts of humanity.

The Flaws: Bookworm throws his hat into the ring of the Imperium of Man, for all of its faults. While reading this book, any other loyal servant of the Emperor will be waiting for the deaths of one of the foul traitors of the Iron Warriors, and there are not that many who meet the end they so rightly deserve. That is also indicative of a problem with this text in that it tends to drag in some parts. The Orks shoot and blow stuff up and the Iron Warriors shoot back and blow stuff up. This back and forth barrage continues in several places and it gets a little wearing at times.

What also gets wearing is the continual references to the plight of the human slaves. We get in the first chapter that the Iron Warriors don't give a damn about them and they are basically little more than cattle. We get that...it does not need to be referenced every other page.

Something that pops up fairly frequently in tomes of the Black Library is pervasive head hopping. The text juggles almost a dozen different perspectives from various members of the Iron Warriors, to various human slaves, and a hidden tech-priest. It doesn't help that many of the human slaves have similar sounding names. As a result, it can get a little confusing about who exactly is talking at the moment and what story arc we are returning to at the moment. Further adding to the confusion, is how the Iron Warriors, while not uninteresting, have basically identical personalities. This is also common in the Black Library: there is not a great deal of variety when it comes to those who follow the eight-fold path. The only real way to tell them apart is by their names and various details about their appearances.

Final Verdict: The Siege of Castellax is a good change in perspective from the other side of the Warhammer 40K coin: The Ways of Chaos.

Four out of Five Stars

thecultureworm.blogspot.com

Sven Mysterioso says

So, a 40k book where it pits two OTHER armies against each other, you say? Orks versus Chaos, you say? The Imperium gets a break for a few hundred pages?

Interesting. I have to say I am not a huge fan of Chaos. The concept doesn't sit well with me. You have an organized band of super-warriors, which embody the highest arts of both technology and bioengineering possible. And they worship entropy. In neat ranks with a strict hierarchy.

You see why I struggle with them philosophically.

The Orks are great. They truly ARE chaos. Just fling themselves at whatever bauble attracts them, be it a planet, resources, a bloody death. Its irrelevant and subject to CHANGE without notice. Very chaotic.

So the book. The Iron Warriors are a messed up band of people. But they are written very compellingly. You want to find out what happens. The Fleshsmith with his cloak, Our 'hero' and his rivals within the 3rd Company. You read and you want to read more. That's a good feeling.

You already know there won't be a winner. Its two villains beating each other's brains in. So sit back and be disgusted by the slaving beasts. And the orks too.

Christian says

Hyper-sadism coupled with a god complex (Iron Legion) vs. almost unthinking, elemental brutality (orks). What's not to like? I really enjoyed the way Werner developed the Iron Legion to the point that the reader can understand them and kind of root for them as a lesser evil. The betrayal in the book was absolutely heart wrenching; good job! Orks, in their multitude, are no joke! This is almost bolter porn (but I REALLY like bolter porn)with action on an epic scale (millions of combatants) and interesting characters.

Jared Bond says

It was a fine action book set in the Warhammer 40k universe. Orks vs the uncaring Iron Warriors. I was hoping for some more Obliterator action, but it was a fun read regardless.

Marc says

I usually like Werner. But when, early in the book, he had a Chaos Space Marine say "Ow," I nearly tossed the book in the trash. But, being a sucker, I plowed through the rest of it. His characterization of the Iron Warrior marines was similarly lame for the most part. And the idea of 64 marines holding off a billion orks (who are nearly as hardy as marines in the damage they can take) is ludicrous. The IW commander barely took part in the planning of the defense, instead leaving it up to his inept and bickering captains which cost them the war (they apparently didn't know the ork mentality despite having been around for a few thousand years). And the alpha-level psyker mentioned in the beginning was forgotten, violating Chekhov's gun principle.

The only reason I gave it 2 stars was for some of the siege scenes which were fun, and the idea of the constant back-stabbing among the marines (though this was at odds with their constant lip-service to "honor" mantras).

DarkChaplain says

[Hold your butts, Night Lords fans... (hide spoiler)]

Ned Leffingwell says

In the grim dark future, there is only war, everything sucks, and everyone is a jerk. *The Siege of Castellax* is a novel set in the universe of the popular Warhammer 40k miniautres game (also known as 40k). 40k started out as a space version of Games Workshop's Warhammer Fantasy game, where instead of knights battling orcs, space marines battled space orcs. Over the years 40k developed more of a backstory, adding alien races and choas gods into the mix. All of this fluff and backstory is just an excuse to have cool miniautres on a tabletop battling each other.

The Siege of Castellax takes place on a world controlled by Choas Space Marines, who are super-armored soldiers who have been corrupted by otherworldly forces. The Choas Marines oversee a dystopian planet whose environment has been destroyed as slave labor is forced to churn out resources for the never ending wars of the 40k universe. Crap happens when orks [sic] decide to invade. The book is full of cartoonish violence and action. The ork invasion provides a bit of comic relief against the stern and overly harsh rule of the Chaos Marines. The ork's main spaceship is essentially a hollowed-out asteroid with huge guns built on the surface.

The book follows the marines as well as human slaves as they try to repel the ork invasion. The story is slow to start, but about halfway through the reading discovers twists in the plot that reveal that everything isn't what it seems. If you want some popcorn reading where heads are blown off by the dozen, then read this. If you want to read about life in the 40k universe, try Dan Abnett's *Eisenhorn* series. Recommended for fans of 40k and death metal.
