



## Courage and Honour

*Graham McNeill*

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## **Courage and Honour** Graham McNeill

Courage and Honour is the fifth novel in the bestselling Ultramarines series.

### **Courage and Honour Details**

Date : Published May 26th 2009 by Games Workshop (first published May 16th 2009)

ISBN : 9781844167210

Author : Graham McNeill

Format : Hardcover 320 pages

Genre : 40k, Fiction, Science Fiction

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## From Reader Review Courage and Honour for online ebook

### Christian says

I don't know why this book was so badly reviewed in amazon.com. I found it exactly what I was expecting. We finally break away from small engagements to a huge planetary invasion from my favourite shooters- The Tau! And, unlike many pro-Space Marine books were enemies are stupid, the Tau give as good as they get. In fact, the Tau WIN but it is only politics that turn them away from occupying the planet. Great action.

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### Bob says

a good solid book, I liked how it brought the earlier books back into the story.

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### Nate says

I slogged 80% through and just couldn't take it anymore. I wanted to like it. I wanted to see the Tau. It is just too badly written and plotted to get through. I am surprised; I have liked other books from this author.

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### Tepintzin says

One of the less plot driven ones. I enjoyed meeting the Tau, as I hadn't come across them in fluff before. Too many points of view, too much dakka dakka, not enough Uriel Ventris.

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### Amanda says

The noble Ultramarines epitomise the Space Marines, the genetically enhanced warriors who protect the Imperium from its foes. Newly returned from the Eye of Terror, Captain Uriel Ventris must redeem himself in the eyes of his battle-brothers, who fear he may have been tainted by Chaos. When the planet Pavonis is invaded by tau, what better opportunity could Uriel have to join his Chapter in combat and prove that his honour is beyond reproach?

This is my second McNeill Warhammer 40K - the first being False Gods, in the Horus Heresy series - and I found the reading experience to be very similar. McNeill is quietly churning out good quality science fiction battle stories (albeit with some faults) and is quite clearly having a blast while doing it. The key essence to both of the books I have read by McNeill is the deep affection for the subject and an abiding desire to flesh out the 40K background with extra detail.

First of all, this is the fifth book in the Ultramarine series, and I did have my concerns that I wouldn't be able to pick everything up. Graham McNeill, however, does a good job in providing a gradual recap over the first few chapters which helps to bring new readers on board. I presume he manages this without boring current

readers, but obviously I don't know this for sure! He also makes it intriguing enough that I now want to read about the previous adventures of Uriel, especially his stint in the Eye of Terror.

There is plenty to like about this book. One factor I enjoyed was the enduring theme of courage and honour played out through the novel - what these concepts mean to different people and how hard they can be to stand by. Quotes such as the following litter the pages, and help to enforce the ideas of courage and honour:

" 'No, I don't,' agreed Lortuen, 'but I could not live with myself if fighting men died because I did nothing. How will you look yourself in the mirror every day with those deaths on your conscience? Think of your honour!'

'We are prisoners of war,' said Koudelkar. 'What honour do we have?'

'Only what we bring with us,' said Lortuen wearily, lapsing into silence.' "

McNeill has a heroic turn of phrase in the main which suitably conveys the baddassery of the Space Marines: "Emerging from the flaming wreckage of the tank assembly yards, the Space Marines came with fire and thunder... Behind them came the Space Marines, warriors in ultramarine whose weapons were hymnals to war and whose gold and blue flag was a beacon of righteousness among the slaughter." Every now and then, however, he lapses into rather cheesy lines which just fall a little flat or inadvertently cause amusement: "They were closer than friends, closer than brothers. They were Astartes." That particular line I can imagine being said in a booming voice over a film trailer.

Speaking of films, the whole novel is extremely cinematic, from quiet moments between two characters, to bitter declarations of betrayal, to the sweeping battle scenes that fill the second half of the book. Courage and Honour could honestly be a written representative of a film - a stonking summer blockbuster.

Once again with McNeill's work, I found myself struggling a little with the pacing. The start was quite slow burn, with a number of scenes between characters who had clearly been established in previous books (these were scenes that I might well have appreciated more had I read those books) but once battle was joined with the Tau, the book became less about the story and read more like a battle report. The relentless telling of various battles sat uneasily with the political machinations and quiet initial scenes between Uriel and various of his battle brothers.

Also, I believe there were a few flashbacks, but, if there were (I'm still unsure) then they weren't made particularly clear.

My last main issue was with some of the slightly clumsy exposition work. For instance, we have two pre-eminent Adeptus Astartes talking in a detailed fashion about the Codex Astartes, which both would know inside out and upside down, and would have no need to remind the other about. I do realise that the particular scene I have in mind was posed as a moment of epiphany for Uriel, but it still felt quite clunky and artificial.

Oh, and one minor point, which could well be a matter of taste: some of the bullets 'whickered' during the battle. Now, to me, whickering is a soft sound that a horse makes, so you can understand that I would find it an unusual choice of word to describe the sound of bullets!

Apart from those matters detailed above, one of the biggest strengths of this novel is the depiction of the Tau. They are a xenos race, anathema to the Space Marines and the forces of the Empire, and McNeill gives them an eerie and very alien personality. With descriptions such as: "They offer you slavery and call it freedom, a

prison you do not know you are in until it is too late. They offer a choice, that is no choice at all" McNeill develops an image of a race that is clinical, dispassionate and fiercely intelligent - not the sort of enemy you wish to have. This is compounded when McNeill writes: "The tau made war with such precision that it left precious little room for notions of honour or courage. To the tau, war was a science like any other: precise, empirical and a matter of cause and effect."

The basic conclusion to this review is that you should know what you're getting with a Black Library book - it will never be the most well-written novel in the world (although McNeill is one of the best writing for Black Library in the 40K universe), but you should get a novel that is entertaining with pulse-pounding battle scenes. McNeill delivers this in spades. I guess the biggest compliment that can be paid to him is that I wanted to rush out and buy an Ultramarine army on completion of Courage and Honour.

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### **Elijah Gregory says**

great action, with epic battles. Its kinda startin to turn into a cliche though.

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### **Abhinav says**

You really have to look at this novel as the start of a new story for Uriel Ventris, even though this is the fifth novel in the series, and the second in the third trilogy.

It is very much a symbolic novel that brings Uriel and the 4th Company back to the world of Pavonis to deal with recidivism and the threat of the expansionist Tau who want the world. The action is simply awesome here, as are Uriel's relationships with everyone around him, from the commander of the Lavrentian Hussars Imperial Guard to his own warriors, especially his First Sergeant Learchus and Chaplain Clausel. This is everything that The Killing Ground should have been but wasn't. Its not an entirely fair comparison but I do feel compelled to point that out. The Tau are also well-done and have some great scenes themselves.

You can also check out a slightly longer review over on the page for Ultramarines: The Second Omnibus

<http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/13...>

A full review for the novel is now available over at The Founding Fields

<http://thefoundingfields.com/2012/05/...>

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### **Meitnerio says**

Tenemos un libro con todo lo que tiene que tener una novela de Wh40k: acción bien resuelta, una trama mínima pero aceptable, personajes sólidos, un par de momentos para fliparse un poco y un buen ritmo que asegure buena diversión.

Para fans de la franquicia, se convierte en una ensalada de tiros más que correcta y contribuye a aumentar el nivel de la saga a falta del colofón final.

Un poco más de chicha en la trama se hubiera agradecido pero divierte con ganas.

Para más detalles ;)

<http://meitnerio.blogspot.com.es/2013...>

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### **Sud666 says**

Courage and Honor continues the Ultramarines story. In this, Uriel Ventris from the Ultramarines Omnibus returns. Following the events described in that Omnibus, Capt Ventris is reinstated into the ranks of the Chapter. Just in time to be sent to Pavonis (also a site that was in the omnibus) in order to deal with a relatively new threat- the Tau Empire.

It seems in the aftermath of the destruction of Pavonis during it's uprising, the powers-that-be have decided to seek alternatives. While the old Planetary Governor was replaced by her nephew, she still manages a covert contact with the Tau. When the new governor finds out, it's already too late since the Tau have landed.

The Ultramarines along with an Imperial Guard unit are sent in to keep an eye on things, but they are not prepared nor do they have the numbers to hold off any assault by the Tau. This was an interesting tale as the Tau are an odd enemy. They aren't horrible destructive xenos like Orcs, nor ravenous beasts like the Tyrannids and certainly not the malevolently evil Chaos Marines/Daemons nor Dark Eldarr.

The Tau are expansionist, but they at least offer humans they conquer some measure of a normal life. At least that is what this story portrays them as. Proud and honorable fighters with great tech, they often try to reach out to human worlds in hopes of setting up trade. Of course, this usually ends in conquest, but compared to other xenos or Warp threats they seemed fairly tame. It was interesting to read about the Tau and their tactics.

I enjoyed this return of Ventris and the 4th Company. The story is fun and action packed. There are plenty of different weapons and tactics on display. The strangest thing is that the Tau are not the type of enemy that inspires great hate or fear (compared to other xenos) and that gives us a different look at what the Imperium and the Tau stand for-and the Imperium isn't always shown to be better. That gives this an interesting twist, but that is also the case for Capt. Ventris who tends to bend the Codex Astartes sometimes.

Overall an enjoyable read and a welcome addition to the Ultramarine story line.

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### **Jeff says**

Courage and Honour is the fifth book in the hugely successful Ultramarines series featuring the Courageous Captain Uriel Ventris and his Veteran Sergeant Pasanius.

This book is in many ways like coming full circle in the series. Uriel Ventris' first mission as captain was to put down a rebellion on the Imperial world, Pavonis and this novel has the 4th company returning to the same troubled planet.

Following shortly after the events of The Killing Ground, we are shown flashback scenes of the testing of Ventris and Pasanius. Testing them both for purity: Mind and Body. After all, these two Astartes have been

alone and fighting their way back from the Eye of Terror, a mission which should have most likely claimed his life (and possibly his soul).

For those not familiar, Uriel Ventris and Pasanius were found guilty of heretical deviations from the Codex Astartes, the penalty for which is death. In lieu of death they were bound by a Death Oath and exiled from the Chapter. Tasked to hunt down daemons by Marneus Calgar they embarked on a long series of adventures in the Eye of Terror, only barely surviving to tell the tale. For these stories see the Ultramarines Omnibus and The Killing Ground, same publisher, same author.

Upon arriving on Pavonis things are awkward. The remaining characters from the previous time the Ultramarines were on Pavonis are still here, albeit much older. Not everything has gone as planned. Also present are a number of new characters which are rich and colorful. Thankfully Graham McNeill has done a wonderful job of giving each of the characters some “camera time” in order to really flesh them out. When reading any book I really want to have some connection to the characters. I don’t have to necessarily relate to them, but I have to at least care a little about them otherwise they are just names on a page, which is almost pointless. McNeill is a pro when it comes to this.

In addition to being “An Ultramarines Novel” you get to see several other things which some may love, and others may hate. There are two allied forces on Pavonis as well: the Planetary Defense Forces and a Regiment of Imperial Guard. Both are led by interesting characters who contribute in very cool ways to the plot.

The antagonists to the story are The Tau Empire. The insight in to the methodology of this Xenos race is fantastic. McNeill really nailed it. On one hand he makes the “Greater Good” of the Tau seem totally preferable to the (honestly) heinously fascist Imperium of Man... Yet on the other you see an insidious side that says “Join us...OR ELSE”.

Anyone who knows anything of the Warhammer 40,000 universe knows that it is DARK. It is a GRIM future where Humanity is beset on all sides by Chaos and Xenos races out to destroy it. The Imperium of Man is also of the mindset of “KILL THEM ALL” in order to insure the manifest destiny of the supremacy of mankind. The Imperium is a horrific place, without a doubt. It’s against this oppressive backdrop that the colorful characters, great deeds of selflessness, honor and courage are illuminated.

Graham McNeill does a wonderful job of peeking under the hood of the almost “altruistically good” seeming Xenos and showing both sides of that face.

As far as the battle scenes, they were good. Some were better than others. With any war novel it can seem like battle scenes take almost too long. Ironically many of the battle scenes could have been lifted from Team-Yankee by Harold Coyle or Red Storm Rising by Tom Clancy. The smell of promethium or cordite, the taste of gravel, dust and muck. The blinding flash of tank rounds impacting and the destruction of buildings and bridges easily could have been from World War 2 or Vietnam. The scenes fit the setting, and were “real enough” to have come from actual reports of battle.

The novel definitely has a message. It goes over why Uriel Ventris’ decision to deviate from the Codex Astartes was ultimately wrong. It identifies this and in the end re-hashes it repeatedly. It’s kind of like being beaned in the head with the Codex Astartes. Now I realize that this is a story coming full circle. While the Ultramarines seem hidebound and rigid in adherence to the very letter of the law/ codex this novel reinforces the WHY of it in spades. My take on it is that it’s a little overdone, but I can understand why. In some ways it seems like it illustrates throughout the novel “Adhere to the codex= Success, Deviate from the codex

=Fail".

There ARE some interesting lessons learned. Hubris is possible in anyone. We see it in the antagonists, but we can also see it in the heroes. Self-Belief is good, but at some point it can turn in to arrogance...and we get to see that in some of the characters in the novel. It's good to see how characters you admire or kind of like, can turn on you and go down a path that you feel awkward with and see that slippery slope down in to "evil". Again Graham McNeill tells a story that has little snippets that can easily apply today. Issues that could easily be pulled from today's newspaper. I can't speak for everyone but I love that. It reminds me of TV shows and Movies that have stories that are fictional, yet speak volumes about the issues of the day.

Overall it's a good novel. I burned through it in one sitting and only had one moment where I was lost (I had apparently skipped a page). I think Ultramarines fans will get more out of this than your general reader. It's a good war novel, but in many ways it the standard Space Marine fare; a little less memorable than Graham McNeill's other efforts. This is hard to grade because I've read books by this author that literally blew me away; knocked my socks off. So judging honestly, this novel on it's own versus other novels (and a hint of what I know the author can do) I'm grading this one 3 out of 5 Stars.

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### **Thomas Zakrzewski says**

Awesome story. Totally gripping. You truly feel pulled into the 40k universe and can imagine yourself fighting along side the Ultramarines and Guardsmen. This book does the 40k universe justice by providing an awesome story!

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### **Lexicanum says**

Average Space Marine novel, I give the rating "okay".

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### **Robert McCarthy says**

An awesome book. All the characters are truly coming full circle. They are maturing and falling into place. However, the hole left by Pasanius' absence and incarceration for skirting chapter rules on honesty, is keenly felt by this reader, but in the end Pasanius' absence allows us to explore more deeply Uriel's character and how far along he's come. In the first book of this series he was an arrogant company commander and by this book he has learned what his mistakes were. Piecing together all the events that have happened in the last five books. The trip to Medengard, the rioting of the killing ground, the mistakes of youthful arrogance and hubris. McNeil also attempts to introduce us to the noble, but sometimes churlish and underhanded Sergeant Learchus who learns of the difficult choices made by Captain Uriel and the fact that he now faces the very situations that led to Uriel's own expulsion from chapter.

Graham McNeil also introduces people to the army and culture of the Tau. The Tau who also go by the name of the Empire of the Greater Good, are a young expansionist race who are loosely based on alienized version of the Star Trek universe absorbing smaller less sophisticated races into their empire which is loosely based on socialist beliefs but maintains a caste system which is "separate but equal" and at some points discriminates against these lesser cultures. The empire while incapable of faster than light also known as

warp-speed travel (the Tau as a whole are too young to exhibit a psychic signature in the warp) are none the less capable of incredible feats of technology.

The book also does an excellent job of reintroducing old characters from the first book of the series. The governing body of Pavonis Mykola Shonai for example, who has suffered under the stress of rebuilding her society and SPOILER ALERT makes some decisions that could have dire consequences. The story also reintroduces Petrjed from the first book the elderly and cynical assistant to Inquisitor Ario. Who is now the most senior Administratum (Byzantine style bureaucracy that represents the federal government of Earth to its citizens). Overall an excellent book must read if you are a Warhammer fan.

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### **Andrew Ziegler says**

Returning to the planet that birthed Uriel Ventris' saga as Captain of the 4th company of Ultramarines is an interesting turn after the last novels turn away from the normal bloodshed and grand scale battling of past McNeill marine novels.

Uriel stands trial on his home world and is found innocent, he is then put back in command of his company and sent forth on a mission, one last test to make sure the taint of Chaos is not in him. His best friend and confidant is sentenced to a term away from the marines because he withheld his taint from those in charge. Uriel is put to the test to save the world he saved from the dreaded NightBringer.

It all felt like a build up to something else, and with the cliffhanger that ends this book, it seems as though it is. A good read, and if you are a fan of the series, a must. It had nowhere the impact of the 3rd book, or the raw emotion of the 4th, I am hoping Chapter's Due is what is due to the readers as well.

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