



Baneblade

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By the blessing of the Omnissiah was the Mars Triumphant born – from the forges of the Adeptus Mechanicus, the mighty Baneblade super-heavy battle tank comes to bring death and destruction to the foes of the Imperium. As part of the Paragonian 7th Company, Honoured Lieutenant Marken Cortein Lo Bannick commands the venerable war machine in a bitter war against the orks in the Kalidar system. As the campaign grinds on it begins to take its toll upon his crew, and old clan prejudices from the regiment's home world arise once more. In a war which cannot be won by force of arms alone, such division may prove to be their undoing.

Baneblade Details

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From Reader Review Baneblade for online ebook

Mick says

War rages across the dust-ravaged surface of Kalidar, as the humans of the Imperial Guard battle Ork invaders for supremacy. Here, where even casual exposure to the planet's dust can mean certain and painful death, tanks rule the battlefield. After a battle in which he loses everything but shows his courage, tank-commander Lieutenant Colaron Artem Lo Bannick, a disgraced member of his planet's aristocracy, finds himself appointed to second in command of one of the Guard's massive Baneblade super-heavy tanks. It is a rare honour.

Resented by the mighty vehicle's current crew as a newcomer, Bannick is forced to find common ground with them while struggling with his disgraceful past - revealed in a series of flashbacks - and defeat a powerful Ork war machine.

Haley does an excellent job of fleshing out all the characters, making their personalities distinct and their interactions enjoyable to read, but neither they nor Bannick is the hero of *Baneblade*. The true star of the story is *Mars Triumphant*, a millenia-old Baneblade super-heavy tank. Players of Warhammer 40,000 will already know how even a single Baneblade can dominate a battlefield, but casual readers will soon catch up. If this was WW2, the *Mars Triumphant* would be the German *Königstiger*. As with William King's *The Macharian Crusade: Angel of Fire*, therefore, how you enjoy this novel will depend a lot on how much you enjoy descriptions of big tanks destroying things. For me, raised on Kelly's *Heroes* and *The Battle of the Bulge*, the answer is "a lot". Haley goes into great detail about the operation of the tank, helping to sell absurd scenarios by focusing on the small moments. It works, and others in Black Library's stable of authors should take note.

This is fun and thrilling military science fiction. Guy Haley writes a book that's accessible but shows that he has an excellent understanding of the Warhammer 40,000 universe, and I'm looking forward to more Black Library fiction from him.

Tony says

After reading the short story *Stormlord* there was no chance of me not giving this book a try. I play 40k and have done for years. I've always love the Baneblade. There is something intimidating about placing such a huge model on the board. It really does dwarf the other tanks on the board. I'm a big fan of changing my opponents battle plans before they've moved a single model and this is just that kind of asset. In fiction it is if anything even more scary and this comes across really well in this book.

I normally skim read prologues as they can be a bit weak but this one is fantastic. As a piece of flash fiction that introduction would stand proudly aloft praising the Omnisssiah. It sounds simple and a little boring when I say that it is about the final stages of construction and commissioning of the tank. It is so well done that it sticks with you all the way through the book to the end. There is a sense of synchronicity between the start and the finish which would leave the story unfulfilled without the prelude.

There is a dichotomy that runs through this book. The massive size of the Baneblade and the cramped interior that squeezes the tankers at every move can seem at odds. I've seen my share of tanks and even been

lucky enough to climb inside a few of them. The one thing they all have in common through the ages is that they are all cramped and hostile places. Fuel, ammo, electricity and people are not exactly four things I'd fancy having in close proximity for long periods of time. Tankers are a different breed and that come through in a way that helps shape the people and their interactions.

Orks and Imperial Guard always make for a nasty battle of attrition but when you add in Super Heavy Tanks and and Ork Super Heavy Walkers the carnage is greatly increased. Now throw in a powerful Weirdboy building a special walker and things get pretty nasty even for a Baneblade. The tension builds nicely in this book and the final third of this book flew by so fast I barely realized I was near the end. This is a great read and I now want to read one about all the over variants, especially the Shadowsword.

Gav Thorpe says

A thoroughly enjoyable read. A great blend of 40k madness with a more traditional sci-fi approach that doesn't feel laboured, in some ways more reminiscent of Rogue Trader days with its bizarre but slightly hard-sci-fi-ish world. The story trots along nicely, the setting is wonderfully evoked and the pay-off whilst not a shocker is nicely done.

One star dropped because there was just a couple of chapters around the midway mark that dragged a bit, particularly with the back story, and the ending was a bit too drawn out for my liking without quite concluding a couple of the sub-plots(felt more like an epilogue than a final chapter). aside from this, overall really good pacing, cool characterisation and some moments that had me really, really gritting my teeth and hoping things were going to turn out differently...

Oliver Eike says

A 40K Astra Militarum book set to a Company of Super-heavy tanks.

Whats not to love? Baneblades are massive tanks that make even the German Maus seem puny by comparison. Rolling into battle they are the Emperors fury made manifest.

I really like the book, there are however a few things id like to nitpick on. That primarily being the flashbacks that Bannick has. To many, to long and not to interesting. They to often broke my immersion into the story, because his background story was boring and something most of us have read a thousand times before.

The ending was good, i saw it coming a mile away, but i didnt mind. It was executed well. All in all a good read.

Sven Mysterioso says

This was a pretty decent tale from the 40k galaxy.

I've broken the addiction to the Astartes & Inquisition, and am branching out to the rest of the Imperials. I don't think I will be trying the Eldar books anytime soon, and any Ork book would be full of captial letters and the descriptions of eating... so here we are with the Guard.

Superheavies. These things have really interested me as some non-titan, more realistic version of space combat. A tank the size of a very-small fort. A crew of ten. Weapons for days. Enough armor to ignore pretty much anything short of a Titan. Yeah, these things are cool.

Of course, like anything else enormous and powerful, the drama and the story will involve the people, and their time OUTSIDE the giant machine-god death-altar construct. The psychology of the men who have to drive the unstoppable force. In this book, there is a horrid environmental condition that forces men to either stay inside these behemoths or otherwise cripple themselves with specialized gear.

We're following an old story. A young man, noble and proud, raised in aristocracy. There was a sin, some crime, some breach, that led him to enlist. In the 40k universe, the Imperial Guard wins through attrition. They will feed 2-3 million men into the warzone and win with numbers and equipment. So you know enlisting is a form of assisted suicide.

We follow him, and we do a formulaic delve into his backstory, which rides along with the forward progress of the novel's battle. We learn about him frontwards in his tank, and backwards as he steps through time to his sin and his need for absolution.

Its a good read, and Haley makes a novel of it. The characters are interesting, although most or discardable and trite. Our Romeo (his Juliet in this story is an amalgam of death in combat and the tank itself), has his Mercutio, in a rapscallion boyhood friend who gets his comeuppance earlier. There is the old Jedi master (his tank commander). There are the indigenous locals, who are spurned as fools and uncultured unclean swine, but hey they will teach you a few important lessons about survival and life (looking at you, Fremen).

Yeah, its a formula, but its a nice ride. From the gunner's seat of a massive super-heavy tank-god. Iv'e read much worse.

Christian says

This is the story of the human drama that surrounds the crew of a super-heavy Baneblade tank. I am starting to realize that I like Imperial Guard stories a little more than Space Marine stories because of how vulnerable human characters are and how much more loss is amplified. Like any good story, the focus is on character first and the reader sees that Imperial Guard soldiers are human beings trying to fight in some of the most insane conditions imaginable while dealing with their personal issues. Deaths are appropriately heroic AND random AND poignant.

Michael Alexander Henke says

The Baneblade is a super heavy tank and one of the most powerful weapons in the Imperium of Man's arsenal. It's a machine of destruction bringing to death to the enemies of mankind. With that in mind I wasn't expecting anything too deep from this book, just a whole lot of battles and action. Baneblade ended up

surprising me.

The characters in the book are well written, all with different and believable motivations. The orks are a very formidable foe and the planet itself, a desert world covered in deadly sandstorms, acts as a character itself. There are plenty of battles and lots of action, all well written, but also a lot of character moments and development. This book didn't really have to be any of that to be entertaining, but it was, and it was better for it.

Michael Dodd says

While tanks are obviously a hugely important (and entertaining) part of the Imperial Guard, a book solely about a tank is perhaps not the most exciting prospect. Thankfully then, Guy Haley's *Baneblade* – despite the title – is very much a human story. Yes, in true 40k style we get to see a bit of the tank's personality in terms of its machine spirit, but this is really a story about two men's different viewpoints on and relationships with the tank.

Read the rest of the review at <http://trackofwords.wordpress.com/201...>

Conor says

What a relief to read a warhammer novel as good as this. I've read quite a few this year, but none ever measure up to Dan Abnett. This one, though, it comes close, and reminds me why I keep persisting reading books in the 40k and fantasy setting.

It falls into passive voice, but you know, I struggle to find a novel that doesn't, which means there's two possibilities: I need to read better novels, or maybe it's not such a great sin used in moderation. I'm thinking it's more the latter than the former.

The writing really is good. He doesn't botch sentences like McNeill does, and best of all, the characterisation is, while not full of depth, handled with a deft touch. The two stand-out characters are Bannick and Cortein. Cortein's a great venerable tank commander of the Mars Triumphant Baneblade, and realises he's nearing the end of his life.

Bannick is a Paragonian noble seeking redemption from a crime he committed, which isn't fully revealed until the finale. Turns out, he killed his cousin in a duel in self-defence and was dishonoured as a result. The structure of the book is very interesting. It's Bannick's first tour of duty, and there's periodic flashback chapters leading backwards through time to the final reveal and the duel. And you know, this works great for the story, as the climax of the war on Kalidar is accompanied by the revelation of what past Bannick is escaping from.

On another note, it's great to see a 40k novel with Orks as a powerful enemy in their own right, not just a foil for Chaos (Firewarrior, Dawn of War, Space Marine...Yawn).

Last thing I want to say is that what sets this book apart, even from Dan Abnett's novels, is its exploration of complex themes, in particular honour and glory. Bannick learns over the course of the novel that he can't escape his dishonourable past in an attempt to achieve glory—that would be in bad faith. He has to learn to let go of all notion of honour and glory, and dedicate himself to service and to duty. It's only by doing this that he has any hope of restoring his honour.

It's maybe not the most complex exploration of a theme like that, but it's just great that Haley's tackling it, and in a Warhammer novel no less.

So...Haley's an author to watch in future. Maybe this isn't the last we'll see of Bannick.

It's nice that in the end Bannick gets his new command Baneblade, named: Honoured Cortein. Cortein, while the archetypal taciturn and white-haired commander, was a great character.

Andrey Nalyotov says

Probably the least interesting and amazing book from truly talented and amazing author Guy Haley. The story are not as interesting as his other stuff and in general battles are bland - but that could be forgiven, after all - that was one of his first 'not short story' written type for BL. But it contains a lot of W40K madness + truly 'heavy' armour - so probably all the fans of the mechanised columns should be happy

Stuart says

"Meat for the Imperial grinder"

Black Library have given us some wonderful novels about the Imperial Guard, such (anti)heroes as Caphias Cain and Gaunt are the staple of any BL fan. Generally were presented with the foot-sloggers of the Imperium, however with "Baneblade" by Guy Haley, we're given a taste of tank warfare in the 41st millennium.

Say hello to a young Paragonian Lieutenant Lo Bannick, a disgraced aristocrat, who decides to enlist for a muster call, so he avoids the authorities. Sneaky huh! The regiment raising is urgently needed to fight off a Ork horde which has besieged Kalidar IV, a planet in the middle of nowhere (isn't that always the case?). So why not just *extremis terminatus* that planet? The planets mantle is rich with rare mineral deposits of lorelei crystals, which are used to make psychic weapons, such as those used by the Grey Knights. The real bugger is conditions on the world itself. Racked with sandstorms that can strip the skin off in you seconds, it's not a pleasant place to holiday for the Guard. Visibility is near zero, vox is unreliable. Not a good start.

If a Titan is a living God of the battlefield, then a Baneblade is a living demi-God of the battlefield. Bannick finds himself thrust into service after losing his Leman Russ once again, with the Baneblade *Mars Triumphant*. A engine with the 7th Super-Heavy Tank Company, this demi-god has seen nearly a thousand years of service with the Imperium. Commanded by Honoured Captain Cortein, who seems to be dead to the world in regard to personality.

As for the antagonists, the Orks are not your run of the mill *Tactica Imperialis* sort. They've got brainz behind their brain. Well that being one Greeneye, apparently the most powerful Weirdboy ever. With his psychic power amplified by the crystals, he is more than a match for the tactics that the Guard have in their arsenal. I personally liked the Orks actually having a brain, for example laying in wait for a assault column to pass then attack from the rear. The other scene I enjoyed was when the Orks attacked the Guards base during a severe sandstorm.

As for characterisation, Cortein is terribly in my opinion. He has about as much personality as a mute. I realise he was meant to come across as someone (whom) felt his doom upon him, but then why make him so amiable with the crew? Didn't really make sense to me. Bannick was a joy to read however, as was Brasslock, the Tech-Adept, who finds himself in the most unfortunate situation in the final third of the novel.

Radden, now there is a man who doesn't shut up - through his own admission. I took a instant like to him, as this trait is common with some of my students who are nervous when starting university. On the Ork side of things, Greeneye (to me) really just came across as a human. I struggled to believe he was actual a Ork.

The story jumps between past and present. One story moving forward and one moving back. Essentially the backstory presents us with how Bannick finds himself in the Imperial Guard. Guy Haley is rather subtle with feeding you pieces of what happened. It keeps you guessing until the end, where the real truth is revealed. I know the ending per se is meant to do that, but as I mentioned it's not obvious from the outset. Something that BL has lacked in their novels, subtly.

Surprisingly I do have a few gripes. There are various errors in the book. For example, there is a mix-up with the names of crew members towards the end of the novel. It didn't help that a chap who died a few pages back was running around in the final engagement! There was also a point in "Baneblade" which made no sense to me from a grammatical point of view. Perhaps it was a typo - continuity is possibly the most important aspect of writing a novel.

Having said all that, I'd give "Baneblade" ago. For a debut novel for BL it's good, especially if you like military science fiction and the Guard.

Justin Howe says

For a novel about a three-story tank battling its way across a grimdark future this was much better than it needed to be.

Hawke Embers says

What I was expecting was a claustrophobic tense engagement between tanks and other nasties, similar to that of John French's excellent Tallarn works'. What I got was a coming of age story; featuring a young protagonist with a troubled past that happened to have a fair chunk of tank action in it.... And you know what, I'm OK with that.

In this novel there is a LOT of tank action, but after reading this novel you realize that the tank and military action is the plot that moves the drama along. Whereas the real heart of the story lies in that of the main character "Bannick" attempting to find his place in the galaxy and hoping to atone for his past transgressions. On some level I think most readers' will identify with Bannick, he is the underdog in many ways but he is a likable fellow with a backstory that remains interesting. The tank battles are also solid, gritty and compelling and the campaign to take back and Imperial world is an enjoyable one. I did feel the tank battles were not as good as the stories set on Tallarn but I was invested all the same.

Overall a good book. Not what I was initially expecting but that didn't end up being a bad thing. I give Baneblade by Guy Haley a 4 out of 5.

Anthony Giordano says

More like 3 1/2 stars.

My full review on Baneblade can be read here:

<http://hachisnaxreads.blogspot.com/20...>

Frank says

Like 'Imperial Glory', 'Fire Caste' and 'Straken', I think this safely sits in the very top tier of 40k stories. That is: Imperial Guard (ahem: Astra Militarum) stories that are relatively small scale and low-key for 40k. Big armies, sure, but not the very finest of all armies fighting the very worst enemies.

As I said - low-key, but extremely tightly and evocatively done.
