



## The Primarchs

*Christian Dunn (Editor) , Rob Sanders (Contributor) , Graham McNeill (Contributor) , Gav Thorpe (Contributor) , Nick Kyme (Contributor)*

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Created in the Emperor's own image, the primarchs had long thought themselves to be princes of the universe and masters of their own destiny – they led the Space Marine Legions in glorious conquest of the galaxy, and no enemy of the Imperium could stand against them. However, even amongst this legendary brotherhood, the seeds of dissent had been sown long before the treacherous Warmaster Horus declared his grand heresy.

Gathered within this anthology are four novellas focusing on some of the mightiest warriors and leaders that mankind has ever known – Fulgrim, Lion El'Jonson, Ferrus Manus and the twin primarchs Alpharius and Omegon – and the roles that they may have yet to play in a war which threatens to change the face of the Imperium forever.

## The Primarchs Details

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Author : Christian Dunn (Editor) , Rob Sanders (Contributor) , Graham McNeill (Contributor) , Gav Thorpe (Contributor) , Nick Kyme (Contributor)

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# From Reader Review The Primarchs for online ebook

## Jacob says

I like the idea of adding short story collections into the Heresy. Helps tell multiple angles of the conflict quickly. That said this one didn't feel like it was advancing the overall story much. The main issue I have with this series is how much time is spent on background or sideways plots instead of advancing the whole. Normally I can see beyond this and still enjoy the series, but this one dragged and made it difficult for me to finish it.

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## Rico says

worst book in the series by far

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## Joe says

I quit this one. It's a compilation of short stories following the Heresy. But I want this series to advance toward a conclusion, not just pfaft about exploring the inner workings of corrupt Legions. And the poor quality of the writing, along with the stagnant plot progression, means I pulled the plug. Too many better books to read.

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## Abhinav says

You can read the full review over at my blog:

<https://shadowhawksshade.wordpress.co...>

Shadowhawk reviews the third Horus Heresy anthology, a collection of four novellas focused exclusively on a Primarch: Fulgrim, Ferrus Manus, Lion El'Jonson and Alpharius.

“Some of the best Black Library authors writing some of its best fiction, The Primarchs is an absolute must-read because there has yet to be a collection like this in the grim darkness of the far future.” ~Shadowhawk, The Founding Fields

Note: some spoilers for previous Horus Heresy novels will be mentioned.

The Horus Heresy is hands down one of the best Science Fiction series ever, especially since its such a collaborative effort between so many authors, editors and all the fantastic artwork courtesy of the amazingly talented Neil Roberts. When last I dipped into the Thirtieth Millennium, it was with Dan Abnett's Know No Fear, a novel that told the tale of the first engagement of the Heresy between the Ultramarines and the Word Bearers Legions as the latter ambushed the former at their own stronghold of Calth! Know No Fear was quite an excellent read and set the bar quite high for future novels in the series to follow so it was with some tense

anticipation that I picked up *The Primarchs* novella anthology at Black Library Live! in early May. My expectations were quite high since each novella focuses on a single Primarch and his legion and thus the promise was quite high but really, I shouldn't have been so tense.

*The Primarchs* is a cracking read that makes you wish the anthology had gone on and on and not stopped.

First up is Graham McNeill's *The Reflection Crack'd* which focuses on the Third Legion and its Primarch: the Emperor's Children and Fulgrim respectively. The novella has been described in many places as "Exorcist in 40k". That really is not far off the mark and actually hits quite close to the truth of it. When Fulgrim ended, the Primarch had been completely possessed by a malicious daemon of Slaanesh and it was as if his fate was sealed, for none except Horus knew of this startling development and the Warmaster had vowed to free his brother. And then in Aaron Dembski-Bowden's *Aurelian* we saw Lorgar realizing that same truth and being quite physical with his opinions. The ending of it certainly created quite a buzz and it was with that ending that Graham begins the novella.

For the Emperor's Children leadership is finally beginning to suspect that all is not well with Fulgrim and that their gene-sire may just not be who he is after all. What follows is a brutal and visceral story of the Legion's officers attempting to find the truth. *The Reflection Crack'd* is, in my humble opinion, the story that Fulgrim should have been and what it came quite close to being. The novella is a no-holds barred narrative that sees the Emperor's Children embracing their Slaaneshi heritage in full and becoming true champions of the Dark Prince in the mortal realms. From start to finish Graham sets a tough pace for the reader with the promise that the secrets of the Third Legion are just around the corner and that you should keep reading lest you be left behind.

Revisiting Lucius, that depraved bastard from Fulgrim who ended up betraying his closest brothers for power and more power is back and Graham puts him in the spotlight as the focal character of the novella through which we see the narrative unfold. It really is some kind of an irony that it is Lucius of all people who should be the level-headed one in the novella and that he is the one who convinces his brothers that something is amiss with Fulgrim. The future great champion of Slaanesh finally comes into his own in the novella and it is an absolute joy to read more of him. The conclusion of the novella is intrinsically tied to Lucius and the way it ends, some pretty big things are on the horizon for the novella sets up Graham's next full-length Horus Heresy outing: *Angel Exterminatus*, a novel with the Emperor's Children fighting alongside their brother traitor legion, the Iron Warriors, against the Iron Hands. This will be great fun!

All in all, for its brilliant writing, and the various twists and revelations that are carried forwards from Fulgrim and towards *Angel Exterminatus*, plus the incredible "Exorcist in 40k" scenes, I recommend that even if you don't get the anthology, get the novella as an eBook.

Rating: 10/10

Next we have Nick Kyme tackling the Iron Hands and their Primarch, Ferrus Manus the Gorgon, in *Feat of Iron*. Ferrus is an interesting character because it so happens that he is the first Primarch to die in the 40k-verse, and that too at the Heresy's most defining moment: the Istvaan V Dropsite Massacre. In Fulgrim we see how the long-standing friendship and brotherhood between the Gorgon and the Phoenician (Fulgrim) is sundered and how that divide is taken to its inevitable conclusion. As such, it was always a question as to what Nick could do with him in light of this what kind of a narrative we would get from the perspective of a character who was, it seems, fated to one day lord over the Mechanicum,

Turns out that Nick took a really interesting approach with him. The events of *Feat of Iron* are set in parallel

to the events of and take place on the same planet as in Promethean Sun, Nick's previous Horus Heresy novella which was about Vulkan and his Salamanders. As far as I am concerned, the novella breathed Iron Hands for me, right from his characterisation of the Gorgon and to the characterisation of his Astartes. Additionally, seeing the Tenth Legion's credo "Flesh is weak" turned on its head and biting them in their collective backsides was a big moment for me. What Nick did with the Astartes was a classic approach wherein you present your characters with a situation that is so inimical to them and where everything they know is challenged, right down to their very core. That, and seeing the Iron Hands attempting to fight against the Eldar of all races.

Overall, Nick has carried on with what Graham created back in Fulgrim with ease. The Iron Hands Terminators, known as the Morlocks, and their leader, Gabriel Santar had some of the best scenes in the novella and with Nick expanding the cast of the legion leadership beyond what we saw in Fulgrim, it was all very cool. It was a little weird reading about the Iron Hands though, given the disaster on Istvaan V a few decades later, and Nick definitely had that fatalistic atmosphere in the narrative. Especially with Ferrus, who is forced to confront a certain truth about his future and it was almost heartbreaking for me to see him standing so firm against his destiny. More so when we see how much faith and trust Ferrus Manus has in his brothers.

In closing, the novella has a good pacing, although it gets a little slow in a few places, especially when Ferrus Manus is undergoing that confrontation with his future and the Eldar are making their play to turn him towards a different course. But still, I really liked the novella, because for me it shows that Nick can successfully write about a legion/chapter other than the Salamanders!

Rating: 9/10

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### **Dylan Murphy says**

The Reflection Crack'd by Graham McNeill

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

5/5

Feat of Iron by Nick Kyme

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

3/5

The Lion by Gav Thorpe

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

4/5

The Serpent Beneath by Rob Sanders

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

5/5

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### **Tom says**

A pretty entertaining but kind of forgettable collection of short stories from the Horus Heresy series. I enjoyed the Fulgrim/Emperor's Children story 'The Reflection Crack'd' by Graham McNeil the most and 'The Serpent Beneath' by Rob Sanders was also quite good (love seeing the Alpha Legion in action).

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## **Chamois says**

This set of four novellas was a real mixed bag in terms of approach.

The first story focuses on Fulgrim and the Emperor's Legion, with his men suspecting something isn't right with The Phoenician. I was really excited for this story, and it turned out to be the weakest of the four. The methods used by the Emperor's Children to try and get the truth about Fulgrim were true to the Legion, but were written in a way that was ham-fisted and over the top.

The second story about Ferrus Manus is less-heavy on the battle scenes and more about the mind of the Primarch before Fulgrim's betrayal. Interesting, full of foreboding, and underlines just what those two meant to each other. Also great to find out more about a Legion who has so heavily gone down the augmentation path.

The third focuses on Lion El'Jonson. I knew nothing about the Legion or Primarch, so it was an interesting look at a Primarch under immediate and long-term pressure who is maybe allowing jealousy of his more-favoured brothers get the better of him. Heavy on the battle stuff, and if you like your weapons you'll love this one.

The last focused on the Alpha Legion, and was a very fun romp with double crosses to the nth-degree, almost parodying the idea of a secret agency and leaving us no clearer about Alpharius or Omegon...or are we?

Overall a good mix of styles and content focus to keep the battle kids and mythology nerds happy.

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## **Simon says**

One great short story, one average, and one truly awful.

Hard to give this more than one star when it's a single short story padded out to novel length.

Come on Black Library, get on with the story already.

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## **Adam O'Grady says**

Given the option this would get 3.5 stars. My rating comes as a fan of Warhammer 40K with a keen interest in the Horus Heresy time period.

Most of my issues with this set of novellas centers on the first in the book "The Reflection Crack'D", surrounding Fulgrim and his legion of Slaanesh-worshipping Emperor's Children. Other books featuring these voluptuaries have shown that writing doesn't need to focus just on the gory aspects, nor does it need to

try and proselytise on the philosophy behind their hedonistic habits. While the start of this book has some interesting potential, it quickly falls into a drawn out body horror scene that takes up the majority of the novella and pollutes it with some pretty boring philosophy.

The second novella about Ferrus Manus and his Iron Hands has more promise. Opposite of the Emperor's Children, the Iron Hands are single minded pragmatists who believe that strength comes replacing weak flesh with iron. The books explores encounters where rigid dogma and lack of humanity falls to their detriment in one plot, while in the other plot we see the same stubbornness and bloody-mindedness in the Primarch potentially doom humanity.

I usually prefer novels that follow "interesting" space marine chapters, those with some complexities in their doctrine and lore (Alpha Legion, Iron Hands, Iron Warriors, Emperor's Children) that aren't too vanilla (Ultramarines) or edgy (Night Lords). I feel the Dark Angel's still sit in the same category as the Ultramarines despite their spotty history, however this book presented interesting scenarios and moral quandaries for a primarch. While we can agree with some of his actions we are confronted by others, watching those "shades of grey" actions take a pretty dark turn under heavy pressure.

Lastly we have an Alpha Legion novella that wins hand down. Rob Sanders writes an enigmatic tale of double-crosses, fratricide, and subterfuge. This is like Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Space Marines, with a touch of the usual twisted Alpha Legion mind games.

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## **Stuart says**

The stories were a bit far fetched and added more questions then answers. I am slowly losing patience with the Horus Heresy series.

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## **Lexicanum says**

Mixed feelings about this one, so I'll break it down to the individual stories:

- "The Reflection Crack'd" by Graham McNeill: 3/5. Nice but got a bit muddled in the end with the whole place swapping thing.
- "Feat of Iron" by Nick Kyme: 4/5. I really enjoyed this one. Other people seem not to, but hey, it's all subjective (and no, I am not a particular IH fanboy ;))
- "The Lion" by Gav Thorpe: Erm. Sorry. 1/5. Didn't like it at all. Jonson acts like spoilt kindergarden brat and the whole way the story is told is a bit unconvincing.
- "The Serpent beneath" by Rob Sanders: 3/5. Nice to read but in the end left me confused as to who was informed about what and why certain things had to be done. Maybe that is the intention to set up the Alpha legion in the background. Me personally I felt confused in the end.

So overall: liked it, but there's better. And I really, really, really pray that we will see a bit of improvement with the Dark Angels.

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## Brian says

Finished "The Lion" 7/9 \*\*\*\*. It seemed disjointed in its telling at times. Was Corswain the focus or Lion El'Jonson or Midoa and Typhon. Otherwise great action and a more comprehensive look at the Lion than in other novels."

Finished "The Reflection Crack'd" 7/14 \*\*\*\*\*. Fulgrim, Lucius and other EC's of note. Really good story focus is on the two above named characters. There is a bit of ickiness at the end, but not graphically. If you read Fulgrim you'll be okay."

Finished "The Serpent Beneath" 7/17 \*\*\*. I am not really sure about this one. I liked it but at times found it to be kind of just ok. Has some great stuff, but the end confused me a little and the flashbacks had an Oceans 11 movie type feel that seemed unnecessary."

Finished "Feat of Iron" 7/24\*\*\* I wasn't even going to read it. I am not a fan of the Iron Hands. But I do like Ferrus Manus and the eldar."

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## Grant says

\*Sigh\* Back to the usual drivel.

The Space Marines need to just shag their Primarchs and quit fawning over them and getting all weak the knees everytime they speak to them.

Plus, explaining basic physics to the authors would be a good step.

Legionaires or legionaries?

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## Phil says

Only one story of real significance, the lion el'johnson one. Fulgrim was ok, ferrus was pointless and the alparius story, lets just say I had to look at the back of the book before writing this review in order to remember it.

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## Ross Falcone says

This book contains four short stories that center around different Primarchs of each legion. Without giving anything away here are my thoughts about each story.

The Reflection Crack'd

This story focuses on Primarch Fulgrim of the Emperor's Children. Basically the story centers around questions concerning the Primarch's loyalty and devolves into about 15 pages of torture porn. At the end of it I was left asking myself, "What was the point of that story?" Honestly, I felt like I just wasted two hours of my life reading 100+ pages that amounted to nothing and did nothing to move the Horus Heresy story line forward.

Feat Of Iron



This story focuses on Primarch Manus and the Iron Hands Legion. It has a few good battle scenes but the whole story is about an Eldar Seer trying to give Manus important information about the future. Once again the story does little to move the Horus Heresy story line forward nor appears that it will have any lasting affects on future stories.

#### The Lion

This story focuses on Primarch Lion El Jonson and the Dark Angels. The story starts off great, has great pacing, we learn new things about Chaos, the return/use of Psychers by forces loyal to the Emporor come into question again, and the story is about the recovery of a xenos artifact that would grant the owner great powers and abilities concerning warp travel. Everything I want in a Horus Heresy story. But the story falls apart during the last 20 pages and I felt like nothing was accomplished by any of the characters. Once again, not moving the story forward.

#### The Serpent Beneath

This story focuses on Alpha Legion and the twin Primarchs Omegon and Alpharius. Usually I hate stories about the Alpha Legion but this story was probably the strongest of the four. A powerful artifact needs to be destroyed in order to prevent it from falling into the hands of forces loyal to the Emperor. This artifact could change the course of the war and swing it in favor of the Emperor. Good story but in the end there is the typical Alpha Legion, "Things aren't what they appear to be," and a giant plot contradiction.

At the end of the day I was pretty disappointed in this book. I felt like the Black Library put this book out there just to sell a few extra 100,000 units this year. I would not recommend reading this book. If you are one of those people who are "completists" (like me) and are reading everything in the Horus Heresy no matter what, get ready for 440 pages of frustration.

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