



## Hammer and Anvil

*James Swallow*

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## **Hammer and Anvil** James Swallow

The Sisters of Battle are the Emperor's most devout worshippers, fierce warriors preaching the purity of the Imperium and scourging their enemies with bolter and flamer. When an Ecclesiarchy outpost, Sanctuary 101, comes under attack, the Sisters are quick to retaliate. But they face an unknown alien, an implacable foe that has never been encountered – the fearless, soulless necrons. With wave after wave of metallic nightmares assaulting the bastion, a vicious battle will be fought – one that can only end in the total destruction of the unrelenting xenos, or the annihilation of the proud Sororitas.

## **Hammer and Anvil Details**

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Author : James Swallow

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# From Reader Review Hammer and Anvil for online ebook

## Adam says

It wasn't as good as Mr Swallow's first Sisters of Battle book, but a solid read nonetheless.

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## Derek Weese says

For some reason, and I honestly don't know why, some fans don't like James Swallow. I remember my friend who got me into BL, only about three years ago now so I'm still playing catchup with the HUUUUGE back catalog, was not a fan and warned me away. I kind of wanted to check him out just because of the warning. Turns out I liked Mr. Swallow, and this book here: 'Hammer and Anvil', is, in my humble opinion, the best book he's written.

The story follows a group of Adepta Sororitas (Sisters of Battle) as they return to Sanctuary 101 to rebuild it following a mysterious loss of the entire installation and everyone in it. In the process they find a survivor of what happened to the original garrison/convent, get into a huge spat with the Mechanicus, get, essentially, abandoned by the Inquisition, and find out who, or what, destroyed the original installation.

The two main characters in this book are the same two from James first foray into the Sororitas, 'Faith and Fire': Sister Miriya and Hospitaller Verity. Rather than 'humanize' one or both of the characters to make them more relate-able to a modern audience James holds true to the rather brutal nature of faith and duty in the 40K universe and reminds us that far more than just pretty faces, the Sisters of Battle truly are warrior nuns (as Space Marines are, essentially, warrior monks) with all of the fierceness and unrelenting nature of their faith that comes along with it.

The action in this book, as in all of James books, is well written and in this one it is generally at a larger scale than much of the works he likes to create. This is due, in large part, to the nature of the baddies that the Sisters have to go up against: the Necrons.

Most writers (and so far I've only encountered Necrons from four authors- McNeill, Counter, Mitchell and Swallow) tend to show the Necrons as mindless automatons, mindlessly, yet efficiently, exterminating all life as they, slowly and ominously, march across the battlefields laying to waste both the warriors and the innocent that they encounter. Instead, in this book, Swallow actually delved into the Necron culture and the result is a far richer book for it.

Without giving too much away, this is a great read and the only disappointment with this duology is that it's the only Sororitas fiction out there. It is my hope that either James delves again into the ranks of the Sisters or some other author picks up a bolter and forges new sagas in their honor.

And on a side note: it'd be awesome if James would write a Necron novel, just a thought of mine. I doubt it would sell well as there are so few Necron players out there, but I'd still love to see them expanded upon. At least just a bit.

All in all an easy 4 stars and a worthy few hours of reading. Plus, there's little on the Sisters so this is about the best you can hope to find.

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## Jen says

If you're not at all into SciFi/Fantasy, this one's not for you.

If you are a SciFi fan, but you've never given Warhammer 40,000 a second glance because you're just not

into RPG's, I urge you to think again. Especially -- as bad as this may sound -- if you're a chick. We're talking about serious women with strong convictions, who happen to be in a futuristic setting. I have to say, even if I'd never played the game, this series would have turned me onto it.

I cannot give this author enough credit. It's one thing to go over source material prior to (and during) game play. It's quite another to pull out every single relevant detail and make it a FASCINATING read, as opposed to flavor text that should direct your RPG but is just too tedious to get through. Mr. Swallow takes the setting and makes it his. Quite honestly, he fleshes out the Battle Sisters' history better than the canon, and makes me feel completely inept as a role-player. And I'm loving it.

If you're already a fan, please note: There was a gap in my memory regarding the end of 'Faith & Fire'. While 'Hammer & Anvil' alludes to those events, this book will NOT fill that gap. But I still highly recommend it, even if you can't find the first book right away.

I am now actually interested in reading his other W40k series, despite my antipathy toward Space Marines, et al.

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### **Anthony Giordano says**

"But what truly astounded me in Hammer & Anvil was the intricate, excellent detail of the Necron Tomb World. I mean, the attention to detail made this representation vivid and authentic to the source material. Enough credit cannot be given.

The other aspect of world building which Swallow did well (as in Faith & Fire) is in presenting canon technologies: the weaponry, tactics of each faction, etc. These are all done exceedingly well throughout. "

You can read the rest of my review here:

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

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### **Ted Henkle says**

Sometimes all it takes is a few scenes to turn a good book into a great book.

That's the case with Hammer & Anvil, the sequel to Faith & Fire and the subject of my previous book review.

In this story, Miriya and Verity are looking for peace and closure after the events of their initial adventure. Instead, they find anything but. Both wind up on the barren rock known as Sanctuary\_101, ten years after the massacre at an Adepta Sororitas fortress-convent, in effort to reconsecrate the site.

Or so they're told.

As with all things Warhammer 40,000 (WH40K): Factions within the Imperium of Man, in this case the Inquisition, the Adeptus Mechanicus, have their own hidden agendas. Even Canoness Sepherina isn't

completely forthcoming about full scope of their mission.

The book starts off as something of a mystery, and on page 55 of this 410 page book, the Sisters of Battle learn it was Necrons who were the mysterious attackers that wiped out their original convent (WH40K's "robot zombies").

The mystery continues to unfold, and by page 194 they learned the extent of the Necron threat to the Imperium. Although for WH40K fans who've already read the Fluff, this reveal isn't so revealing. What is finally disclosed on page 259 is the item Canoness Sepharina has been searching for: An artifact known as the Hammer and Anvil, believed to have been lost in the initial Necron attack. Which makes Hammer & Anvil something of a MacGuffinTitled book.

Even as the Second Battle of Sanctuary-101 got underway, I was about to give Hammer & Anvil a 3-star rating, like it's predecessor. However, the story took off with a "Hell Yes!" Moment on page 334, where-- spoiler alert--a tormented survivor of the original massacre exorcises her personal demon while fighting a Deathmark (an assassin android).

A few more "Hell Yes!" scenes followed close on the heels of the Deathmark's death: There is something of a "Men of Harlech" scene as the Necrons silently closed-in on the beleaguered Battle Sisters; when the treacherous Techpriest Tegas finds the Hammer and Anvil, hoping it's an ultimate weapon, but turns out to be merely a Memento MacGuffin; and finally the often-overlooked Verity helps bring down the Nemesor leading the current assault.

Among these high points of the last 76 pages are split action scenes of Verity assisting in battle at the fortress-convent, first as a healer, then as a combatant; and Miriya with a commando team infiltrating the Necron lair in Sanctuary-101's moon.

What I also found amusing was how the machine logic of both the Necrons and the techpriests were constantly confounded--and ultimately thwarted--by human illogical behavior and raw emotions.

All this was enough to bump Hammer & Anvil to a 4-star read. Average reviews on both Amazon.com and Goodreads are almost as good with 3.80 and 3.79-stars, respectively.

While Ciaphas Cain is still my favorite WH40K character, (because he's Harry Flashman, IN SPACE!), Miriya and Verity come in at #2 and #3 for me.

A Sisters of Battle Omnibus is due to hit the shelves next month. This tome will contain "... Faith & Fire and Hammer & Anvil, along with the prose version of the audio drama Red & Black and a new short story 'Heart & Soul', available in print for the first time."

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## **David Mandeville says**

In the Grim Darkness of the Distant future you sometimes find decent brain-candy fiction.

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## **Hakan says**

Quite interesting book that gives additional insights into the culture of the necron. While the book suffers from its share of cardboard characters, the silver-and-emerald-green robots of the necrons were especially bad in that regard. For me, it's my first book where some characterization of the necrons was visible.

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## **Brian says**

I hate the Necron.

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## **Jerry says**

I enjoyed this book, though not as much as the first one in the series. We get to see characters from the first book appear again in this one. While that's nice, they remained the same characters they were in the first book. You would think their experiences would have changed them. The plot was much like the first book, also. None of that was really a deal-breaker for me.

My largest complaint is that subplot threads were introduced and never tied off or even developed. I don't want to reveal the story; so I won't mention what those were. But keep your eyes open and you will see that some things promised at the start were not delivered at the end.

Overall, I can recommend this story as a fun, light read. If you enjoy the Warhammer 40,000 universe and the Sisters of Battle in particular, you won't be disappointed. I particularly enjoyed the Necrons, the Terminator-style of enemy in this book. Getting to see the Necros up close was enjoyable.

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## **Ahzek says**

As a long time player of the table top games (necron army 2K PTS) and as a reader of the Black Library this book cuts me a bit deep. Let me explain.

This book, while great in its affects of the Sisters of Battle and the Order of Our Martyred Lady, the pieces about the Necrons themselves and their points of view are nearly unreadable and in my opinion completely and utterly unacceptable. I've seen the Necrons transform from a feared robotic species to a touchy-feely xenos species. The entire premise of the Necrons when they were introduced formally was that of the ultimate end to the galaxy. They felt no pity, were not to be reasoned with and that was pretty much that. It was perfect and needed nothing else. However, thanks to the cementing of books like this (and a tubby author who will not be named), the Necrons are now little more than bickering tots.

Injecting the Necrons and projecting human emotions onto them does not make them feel alien, but does the complete opposite: it makes them undeniably more human than they ever were before; capable of anger, distrust, and perhaps even fear, jealousy and obsession. If you took out the Necron elements and substituted the Gauss weapons with Shard pistols and Dark Eldar the book would read pretty much the same. The Necrons feel so much more human than even the members of the Adeptus Mechanicus for crying out loud!

Necrons featured in Dark Apostle (See: Word Bearers novel/Ben Counter) and the subsequent books are handled with a much deal more respect than any book following the Necrons new codex.

Even the idea of the new Necrons is appalling and many cannot see why I complain so much about it. It just feels wrong:

1) The Necrons fight amongst themselves.

2) The Necrons talk to organic species and even ally themselves with them on occasion (See: Blood Angels/Necrons/Matt Ward).

3) The Necrons have emotions. The Necrons now have a huge weakness; before the Necrons could only be 'survived' and now they can be beaten back after their sense of superiority is removed.

4) The Necrons are referred to as 'He' and not an 'it'. These are machines that have no recollection of their past lives eons ago, so any semblance to gender is a moot point and specifically crafted for the reader.

5) The biggest doozy of them all: The Necrons overthrew their Gods. How about this sentence: Abaddon and his Black Legion overthrew their Dark Gods. It makes no sense and it is a worthless concept. The C'Tan removed the souls and personalities of the Necrontyr as a race, leaving no trace memories or notions of 'rebellion' in place. The Necrons served them for time immemorial and 2012 came about and they gained conscious thought.

/End rant

Now, the book is written well and I was almost obligated to read it by reading the first one and it flows nicely in regards to the previous book. However the entire plot grates me due to the aforementioned enemy losing only due to its arrogance that shouldn't have been there in the first place! If you skip the pieces where the Necrons start 'thinking' to themselves than you'll have a much better time of it.

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## **Ross Hamilton says**

James Swallow is one of the more accomplished Black Library authors with eight novels, four audio dramas and various short fiction pieces in various Warhammer/Warhammer 40,000 anthologies. I thought his Flight of the Eisenstein in the Horus Heresy series was quite striking. I was therefore quite interested to see what he was going to do with the Sisters of the Battle, the Order of Our Martyred Lady in conflict with the necron.

It has taken ten years for the Sisterhood to be able to return to Sanctuary 101 and reconsecrate the site. But as a result of politics, the Sisters are accompanied by Tegas of the Adeptus Mechanicus for some purpose of his own. And Canoness Sepherenia has some deeper purpose of her own, beyond the reconsecration of their convent and memorialising their fallen sisters.

Strangely, the bodies of the sisters previously slain by the necron ten years before had previously been claimed by the xenophobic Order Xenos.

Things become that much murkier when the sisters find a strange, single metallic head. An alien artifact? The necron.

With the Adeptus Mechanicus secretly delving in what they believe to be the ruins of a necron stronghold, they awaken far more than they anticipated. Tegas also discovers Sepherenia's true purpose, desiring it for himself.

I have to admit being a little disappointed with Swallow's depiction of the necron. While I believe I understand what he was trying to achieve, indicating that there is more to the strange necron than we have previously thought, the result was giving the two senior necron more personality that I suspect may have been the intention. The necron also consider themselves virtually free of emotions yet the interaction between that pair was clearly emotive. Even the way in which the over-whelming necron force was thrown against the Sisters seemed emotionally driven.

The Sisters themselves were well-characterised and there is action and intrigue a-plenty for the reader to become immersed in.

Not my favourite Warhammer 40,000 novel but worth a read all the same.

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### **Frank says**

Though it's light and straight-forward in its broader concepts and plot, it deals with them very well and tells a remarkably riveting story with a truly delightful enthusiasm for 'technobabble' and invoking fairly outlandish concepts. By the nature of everything involved, it's very far from 'hard sci-fi', but it makes for a very solid and almost deadpan take on the universe. Swallow's skill and experience in shared universes really shines through in the depiction of the the Necrons.

Easily the best take yet of a Necron viewpoint in the 40k books, combined with a very pleasing examination (and continuation of the story) of the Adepta Sororitas. This is thoroughly augmented by the wry and engaging presentation of the Machine Priests spread throughout the book.

It begins somewhat slowly for my taste and meanders in the early portion, but the mid-book change of pace came as a very pleasant surprise. I'd argue, personally, that an altered ending would have significantly enhanced the book, but nevertheless: it's a surprisingly enjoyable book that, for at least a good hundred pages or so around the middle, really exceeds any expectations I'd had.

Solid, enjoyable and vivid.

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### **Filipa says**

Hammer and Anvil keeps track of what happened to sister Miriya (and I will not tell what, because it is a spoil for the ones that want to read Faith and Fire) and sister Verity. Loosing their purpose, specially sister Miriya, they go into a journey to the far away world of Sanctuary 101 and discover it wiped out by Necrons. The mission of the sisterhood lays, at the beginning, to reconsecrate the site. But in the end, their mission lays on wiping out the necrons.

And Miriya and Verity get new friends. And face old enemies.



This book is a bit better, in my opinion, than the previous. Maybe because we have a bigger insight of the Necrons (the biggest I ever read in Warhammer 40K books so far) or maybe because the plot twists, although still predictable, are well written in this book. We can get to feel the frustration of the characters almost as our own.

Still I remember when I read both books I've liked the first one better. Now with the distance of memory, I find Hammer and Anvil more interesting and insightful of the Adepta Sororitas.

In the end, the collection of one audiobook (that I did not listen) and two books so far is worthy reading.

I liked them.

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### **Kirk Barrett says**

This book involves 3 primary 'races' from within the Warhammer 40k universe, the Sisters of Battle, the Adeptus Mechanicus and the Necrons. The book is the second in the series involving the Sisters of Battle and as such does little to introduce the Sisters of Battle and the events that obviously led to a couple of the central characters travelling with the Sisters on a mission to rebuild and reconsecrate a holy site, destroyed 10 years earlier, on the edge of human space.

The other interesting aspect of the book was that of gaining insight into the world and backstory of the Necron race.

If you enjoy stories set in the Warhammer 40k universe then you will more than likely enjoy this book

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### **Christian says**

Sister Miriya returns in this Adepta Sororitas vs. Necrons battle on the planet of Sanctuary 101. It was an excellent read that continued to cement my like for the Sisters and the Necrons who come across as suitably callous and condescending. The setting and nature of the battle remind me of the movie March or Die. I hope that the projected Sisters Renaissance in 2019 kicks off more Sister Miriya tales and excellent stirring Sisters stories.

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