



# Fistmas Fighting

*Phanta Claws is back! Along with a story, rules, pictures and a host of gaming advice to get in the spirit of the festive season.*

**By Michael Duxbury**



*The door to the bar burst open, the howling gale outside slamming it against the wall to its side. An icy chill blew through the building, forcing its occupants to reach out to catch their drinks before they fell. Some were too slow, and the harsh sounds of broken glass resounded over the noise of the wind, before the fragments of bottles and booze were swept along the floor too.*

*Stood within the doorway was the shape of a young man, two holsters clearly displayed, and with a large thick coat billowing theatrically behind him. The glow of the lamps outside were at the man's back, casting a shadow over his face and adding to the mystery of his identity. News travelled fast in Squatter's Hole, especially concerning the arrival of outlanders, but none could recognise the outline of the intruding warrior.*

*The man paused in the doorway a moment longer to make his entrance more dramatic, but a sudden gust of wind caught around his cloak and nearly floored him. Swaying to regain balance, he quickly scuttled into the bar and desperately slammed the door shut.*

*He turned to face the assembled inhabitants of the bar. The room was completely silent as each man glared at the newcomer angrily.*

*"Sorry," Laxx mumbled quietly.*

*A few seconds of uneasiness passed, before the occupants went back to their drinks. A trio of Goliath punks in the corner continued to eye Laxx menacingly, but eventually they too went back to their private conversation. Laxx sighed slightly, deciding to attribute their pacifism to his intimidating manner. Although, in all likelihood, he was simply so green that killing him wouldn't be worth risking the attention of the Watchmen.*

*He scanned the tavern for the man he was looking for, but couldn't find a match. Discretely drawing a photo from his long coat, he double checked the face with the boozebounds, but still came up with nothing. He sighed and made his way to the bar, sidestepping the drunk Orlock heavy coming the other way, and catching the attention of the nearest barmaid.*

*The ugly young wench stepped opposite him, regarding him with distaste.*

*"What you having?" she grunted in a vaguely feminine voice.*

*"Whatever's cheapest," Laxx answered, remembering his rapidly deteriorating credit supply.*

*She shrugged. "Puswater it is," she answered, reaching down for a filth-encrusted glass beneath the bar.*

*Laxx waited patiently for the woman to finish pouring his drink. Eventually she handed the glass to him, and he took a tentative sip. The drink was the foulest he had ever had, with a lingering taste of both alcohol and urine.*

*He spluttered as the woman began to walk away to another customer waiting to be served. Dropping the glass down, he reached out and grabbed her.*

*"I need something from you," he quickly whispered.*

*She eyed him up and down and shook off his grip. "I'm out of your price range, kid," she answered.*

*Laxx shuddered but carried on regardless. "No, I need your help. I'm trying to find a man called Lucas Holt -"*

*"Never heard of him," she answered honestly, and Laxx passed her the photo.*

*She glanced at the image and laughed. "You mean Loopy Luco?" she clarified.*

*"You know him?" Laxx exclaimed, his heart leaping. "Where can I find him?"*

*"Don't see ought in it for me," she dismissed, and he rolled his eyes, slipping her a few Guild Tokens clumsily.*

*The barmaid pocketed the tokens and pointed in the direction of the far corner, where the man Laxx had been looking for solitarily gulped his drink down, safe within the shadow of the staircase behind him. "Right there," she smiled in fake sweetness, and he snatched the photo back bitterly.*

*Cursing under his breath at being short-changed by the girl, Laxx negotiated the obstacles of the drinking hole and approached the man's table. One hand clasped around his drink and another hovered over his holster. The man seemed not to notice.*

*"You are Lucas Holt," Laxx stated as he reached his target's table.*

*Loopy Luco looked up once and right back down to his drink. "Frag off," he articulated.*

Laxx had come a long way to get to this point. He'd turned his back on his home in Hive City, forsaking his Moma, Papa and girlfriend by doing so. Everything he'd had there had been left behind so he could go on this mad hunt for Rick, and he sure as hell wasn't going to give up now.

"I don't think so," he answered, far more confidently than he felt. "I'm going to stay here, and you're going to answer my questions."

"And why would I do that?" Luco answered, shifting his weight so his bolt pistol holster was clearly visible.

Laxx considered his options and quickly began to think through a few alternatives. "Because the next round is on me," he promised.

Luco grunted, extending his feet to push aside a stool from under the table. Laxx graciously accepted the seat, as Luco signalled for another bargirl.

"Where you from?" Luco quizzed.

"Hive City. Van Saar."

The old veteran grunted again. "You don't look Van Saar."

"Neither do you."

Luco glanced suspiciously at his younger counterpart. "I have my reasons. As, I'm sure, do you."

The bargirl arrived. "What're you two boys having?"

"Whatever's most expensive," Luco responded cheerfully. Laxx groaned inwardly, waving his hand to show he was fine with what he had. Luco drained the last of his drink and handed the girl his empty glass, whilst Laxx stared into his Puswater glumly.

The bargirl left, and Luco span back to face Laxx. "You have until I finish my next drink. What do you want?" he insisted.

"I'm looking for a man called Rick Narlon. I'm told that you were the last person to see him before he disappeared."

Luco shook his head. "Never heard of him."

Laxx raised an eyebrow. "Would you prefer I cancelled your drink?"

"Alright, so I do know him. Who's asking?"

"I'm Laxx Narlon, Rick's brother. I've spent the last six months trying to find him."

Luco nodded as the bargirl returned with his drink - a bottle of comparatively refined brew. The veteran fighter snatched the bottle from the girl, taking a swig and savouring its taste, before waving the girl away.

"You look like Rick," he said eventually, with a slight smile. "Except scrawnier."

"Do you know where he is?"

Another draught. After this, Luco put the drink down and spoke slowly and seriously. "Rick's dead, Laxx. I'm the only one left."

Laxx's heart sank at this news, and he felt a moment of crushing tragedy and despair. But the sensation soon passed. He'd presumed the worst months ago.

"How?" he asked Luco quietly.

The warrior shook his head. "You wouldn't believe me if I told you."

"Try me."

A smirk. "You think I need someone else laughing at me? You don't want to know the truth kid. Pretend Rick died in some heroic gunbattle."

Luco went to lift his drink again, but Laxx reached out and grabbed the bottle first.

"Tell me," he insisted. "I've come so far, I have to know. Please, for Rick's sake."

Luco paused before shrugging, taking one more gulp and beginning his story.

"Tell me Laxx," he said. "Do you believe in Phanta Claws?"

\* \* \* \* \*

Kreg smiled grimly as he blasted the Cawdor fighter over the balcony, his stubber roaring as he turned to face the next immediate threat. A pair of the youths in red and blue robes rounded the corner, raising their handguns unsteadily. A few volleys from Kreg's gun sent them scrambling into cover, and he ran after them, relishing the chance to blow them to bits. As they ran round the side of the building, he saw the nerves of the Joves had been broken entirely, and that they were literally running for their lives. Even though they were longer a threat, Kreg put a shot into the back of one fighter's leg anyway.

He turned back to the main battle, peering over the balcony he'd sent the first Ganger toppling over. On the ground level, where fighters on either side desperately lurched from one section of rubble to another, the battle between his Van Saar gang and the enemy Cawdors seemed to hang in the balance. Mad Chad was busy bullying the new kid into drawing the fire of the enemy snipers opposite. As he kicked the Juve out into the open, the crack of lasgun fire opened up, and the kid ran terrified to the opposite side of the dome. With the marksmen distracted, Mad Chad casually stepped round the corner and opened fire with his bolter, downing the first sniper before a volley of high calibre autocannon ammo sent him diving back into cover.

A firefight between the two gangs had engulfed the upper levels of the ruins, but this was more one-sided - the Redemptionist wannabes would never beat the best of Van Saar in a shooting match. Kept safe by the covering fire of their friends, Kreg watched as Rick and Luco carefully stalked across a walkway leading to the last Cawdor stronghold. The two men gripped pistols and melee weapons, large fearsome axes and mauls with as much care demonstrated in their manufacture as all of Van Saar's equipment. Kreg's sharp eye noticed that there was only one other way that the Cawdor scum could escape from their tower - the second walkway a few metres away from him. He smiled briefly, noting the arrival of Sharpeye Bill and Armourer King with a curt nod. Gesturing to his two followers, he crossed the roof's perimeter to the nearby walkway and stealthily evaded across it.

Hakrab's Cawdor devotees had noted the closing of this trap, and immediately turned their fire on Kreg and his men. He dropped to the floor and let the stream of laser beams and solid ammunition sail overhead. Bill was too slow though, taking several shots to the chest that punched him off his feet effortlessly.

Kreg heard the sound of screaming and chanced a look upwards. He frowned - it sounded as though Hakrab's men had got stuck in close combat, but Rick and Luco were still a few yards away from them. Who were they fighting against?

He put the confusion from his mind as his two boldest fighters got stuck in, swinging their weapons around their heads as they took on the three Cawdor in front of them. Seeing his chance to lead from the front, Kreg scrambled up and dashed forward, drawing his chainsword and flicking the activation stud. A Cawdor Heavy stood in his path, and through the gold mask Kreg saw the doomed man's eyes widen. Granted strength by the impetus of the charge, Kreg swung his chainsword vertically downwards, sawing through the autocannon barrel clumsily raised to block him, and into the Heavy's torso.

He searched for his next target, but could find none. He turned right and saw Rick bludgeoning the last of his opponents, whilst Luco scanned for other threats. Kreg frowned again - he'd expected a hard fight to take the tower, but not it seemed deserted. An eerie calm fell upon the battlefield, and he wondered why he hadn't heard anything of the fight with Mad Chad and the Cawdor gangers below.

"Where is everyone?" he voiced, baffled.

He heard a feral snarl that made him yelp in fear, and turned to see a creature out of his worst nightmares. The monster wore a vaguely humanoid form, but it gigantic size and animalistic eyes were decidedly inhuman. Massive raking talons reached from its outstretched hands and bare feet, each sharp enough to tear through solid adamantium. For the slightest moment, Kreg imagined the faintest outline of a bushy white beard and red bobbly hat, but before he could regard the creature any longer it attacked.

It came for him first, and Kreg rolled aside, dodging the first swipe and blocking the next with the side of his chainsword. The fiend leapt back and noticed the other men drawing in around it, hissing at them evilly. It dived to strike at Armourer King, ripping across the fighter's leg with one claw and tearing out a huge chunk of his midsection with the other. The unfortunate warriors fell, and the monster was there, cackling malevolently as it ripped out the throat of its prone victim.

Kreg came to his senses and fired his stubber, missing by a fraction. The beast ignored him and went after the other two, roaring in bloodlust. Luco bottled it and ran back across the walkway, whilst Rick attempted a desperate but foolish last stand. He swung his axe, but the monster batted it aside; Rick came back with the reverse stroke, but it merely grabbed hold of the weapon by the shaft and wrenched it from his hand. Kreg and Rick fired with their pistols simultaneously, and the mutant howled in pain, but before either man could act again it retaliated by slashing its talons across Rick's face. He fell and did not rise, blood pouring from his mutilated features and covering the tower floor.

Enraged by the death of his employees and friends, Kreg drew back his chainsword and charged at the monster. It grinned in anticipation, ducking beneath Kreg's high strike and knocking aside his pistol. The beast's move had been a casual one, designed to divert the stubber as Kreg fired another shot, but such was its strength that the gun was sent toppling out of the leader's grip. Taking his chainsword two-handed, Kreg bellowed as he swung the chainsword back and forth with ever more elaborate strokes. The monster backed away slowly, fearing the swirling blades of the weapon, and he raised the motorised blade above his head as he prepared to smash it down onto his nemesis.

Kreg felt a sudden jolt of fear as he rammed the chainsword into the low walkway above, struggling in vain to retrieve the weapon. He was too slow; in that slightest moment of distraction, his inhuman opponent slashed its talons twice across his torso, before plunging them deep into his neck. Kreg gurgled, his hold on the chainsword slipping away as the life

seeped from his body. For one last moment he got a full glimpse of his killer's face, smiling grimly at the unbelievable sight before him.

Phanta Claws brought its bearded face to within an inch of Kreg's own, gurgling as it hissed in mutilated Low Gothic.

"Merry Fistmas," it snarled, as it wrenched the claws from the deceased leader's neck forcefully.

\* \* \* \* \*

Laxx continued to stare at Luco incredulously. At least now he knew how Luco had earned the nickname "Loopy".

"You're saying that my brother was murdered by Phanta Claws," he clarified. "As in the fictional children's character?"

Luco, who had already begun to drink again, slammed the bottle down and glared at Laxx furiously.

"I was there," he hissed. "I was there the day that monster killed Rick, and Kreg, and a lot of other good men. I saw it all, and I swear upon the Golden Throne itself that what I saw that day was anything but the work of fiction."

He leaned in closer to Laxx, and started to whisper menacingly.

"You've heard the stories, haven't you? Tales of a creature from the dawn of the Imperium, impelled by the Primarchs themselves to fulfil its murderous task? It makes two lists, they say. The first one's the good list, and if you're on that you're safe, it can't touch you. But if not, then you're in trouble. Once you end up on Phanta Claws' kill list, that's it, game over. There can be no escape from those blood soaked talons and razor sharp teeth, nor from its animal intellect. The ultimate hunter-creature, driven mad by an insatiable desire for its one true release - the thirst for human blood."

Luco smiled evilly, and Laxx sat back unnerved. For the slightest of moments, he imagined he could hear a voice carry upon the chill wind outside and he shuddered fearfully.

He looked around the bar and his nervousness turned to terror. He hadn't imagined the cry. Around the tavern, the other patrons looked to the doors and windows, listening for the monstrous howl of a creature millennia old. Strangely enough, only Luco seemed unafraid, and Laxx turned back aghast to the storyteller.

"I shouldn't have run," Luco recounted bitterly. "I should have known then that there could be no escape. Only now, at the end, do I realise the truth. He's written his list. He's checked it twice."

"Phanta Claws is coming to town."

## Phanta Claws

Profile	M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld
Phanta	6	6	0	4	4	2	5	2	8

### SPECIAL RULES

#### Killer Reputation

No grown man would ever admit to believing in Phanta Claws – which makes actually witnessing one and its murderous rampage all the more chilling. As such Phanta Claws has the Ferocity skill Killer Reputation.

#### Monstrosity

Phanta Claws' are barely sane monsters used to hunting alone in the wastes with only their stunted craftsmen followers for

company. A Phanta Claws always counts as having a friend 2", regardless of whether this is the case or not. This means it can always test to avoid being pinned in place.

#### Rending Claws

Phanta Claws' have huge raking talons which can rip through the thickest armour. A Phanta Claws counts as being armed with a knife at all times, except that it has an armour save modifier of -6 (!).

They are not used to using any kind of technology however, so they may never use any other weapons or equipment.

## USING PHANTA CLAWS IN GAMES OF NECROMUNDA

Including the monstrous Phanta Claws in your games of Necromunda is a great way of getting yourself in the mood for the festive season. The main reason for this - other than the hat and beard of course - is the creature's unpredictability, and the light-hearted fun that goes along with it. If using him as a neutral party, there is no telling whether this combat monster is going to tear the heart out of your opponent's gang or hunt for yours instead. Most of the time, Phanta Claws will be going for the closest target it can charge, so the best advice when coming up against it is to stay well away...

There are three ways of using Phanta Claws in your games of Necromunda. The first is to "employ" the beast as a Hired Gun. If you decide to do this, you should probably have a look at the "Legend of Phanta Claws" Fanatic article from two years ago. This will have all the stuff you need (like hiring fees) and some other nice options to customise your creature randomly.

The second possibility is finding a third player to join in with the fun. This shouldn't be too difficult, as the opportunity to laugh evilly as you prey upon the weakling fighters of two opposing gangs is one that your average Necromunda gamer is unlikely to pass up. If you do this, however, you should expect the balance of the game to shift wildly, as your extra player shifts Phanta Claws from gang to gang in response to the players' bribes and threats. Ultimately, the onus is on the third gamer to play fair, or else you might end with a game that two players enjoy far more than the other.

However, what if you don't have a third player handy, or don't fancy having Phanta Claws taking one side over the other? What if you fancy a bit of impartiality? Well, in that case, it's time to take advantage of some of the ideas suggested below. The rules for Phanta Claws' inclusion have been written with respect to a few basic scenarios, but with a bit of work you can adapt them to fit whatever other outlandish scenarios you come up with as well. Of course, you could always just play "The Fight before Fistmas" and save yourself the effort and time!

### Gang Fight

The two gangs have strayed into territory within Phanta Claws' domain, or else the monster has come actively searching for them to be crossed off "the list". Caught in the crossfire of the rival fighters, the beast fights fang and claw against its immediate enemies, with no regard for their side or allegiance.

At the start of each player's turn other than the first, the player whose turn it is rolls two D6. The player may then choose any one of the dice rolls. If the number displayed is LESS than the number of game turns that have currently been played, then Phanta Claws has arrived. To see where he turns up, assign the two side (non-player) board edges as edge 1 or edge 2. Then roll a D6: on a 1-2 he arrives against board edge 1 (placed by the player whose turn it currently is), 3-4 he arrives against board edge 2 (again, positioned by the player) on a 5-6 he burrows up from the earth and arrives right in the centre of the table, at ground level.

In the turn immediately following his arrival, before the other player is offered a chance to take his turn, Phanta Claws will take his first turn. Phanta Claws will then continue to take his turn at this stage (ie immediately following the turn of the player who deployed him) for the rest of the game. As Phanta Claws' movement is defined by a series of strict criteria, a third player is not needed to control him, and he can be moved by either player.

When moving, Phanta Claws will move as quickly as possible towards the closest visible fighter of either side, charging if possible. If no enemies are visible, then roll a D6 to determine Phanta Claws' movement. On a 1-3 it will prowl, moving 6" in a random direction as determined by the scatter dice. On a 4-6 it will skulk, moving as fast as possible towards the nearest cover and staying there until its next turn.

Phanta Claws will never bottle out, although casualties caused by Phanta Claws will count towards a gang's total when determining when they need to take bottle tests etc. If Phanta Claws is successfully taken out of action during a game (or is taken down, and subsequently goes out of action at the game's end), then the winning gang will get to raid the monster's grotto and make off with a bag of Fistmas Presents. Roll on the table below; any items gained are free and are added to your roster as though it was an item which you had purchased normally.

### D6 Present

- 1 *A Woolly Jumper.* Unfortunately this has no in game effect on your gang- unless you wish to model it onto your gang leader!
- 2 *Explosive Crackers.* Outwardly these resemble ordinary Fistmas Crackers, but they are in fact packed with explosive charge! These use the rules for frag grenades, and can be given to any one of your gangs.
- 3 *Ornament.* You have managed to steal a potentially valuable decorative ornament. However, there's no accounting for taste so it may be nothing more than an ugly scrap of metal. Counts as a Mung vase.
- 4 *Money.* Now we're talking! Add D6x10 credits to your stash immediately.
- 5 *Dog.* You have managed to steal a Cyber Mastiff. The Cyber Mastiff uses all the rules for Cyber Mastiffs included in Enforcer gangs, except that one member of your gang of your choice counts as the handler in all respects, and it has a value of 75 for purposes of determining gang rating. See Fanatic Magazine 1 or the Necromunda website for Enforcer rules- if this is not available for whatever reason, re-roll on this chart.
- 6 *Surprise!* You have earned some random rare item. Roll on the Rare Trade chart immediately- add whatever you find to your gang roster for free.

### Scavengers

In the dark of an abandoned dome, Phanta Claws senses an opportunity. As two gangs arrive to scavenge from the forgotten wasteland, they are unaware that the being that haunts these ruins is more ancient and twisted than anything they could ever have imagined...

When playing the scenario, players may make "The Monster Roll" at the start of their opponent's turn as normal. However, instead of rolling on the table in the rulebook to determine the fate of the unfortunate fighter, resolve it as specified below.

As Phanta Claws looms from the shadows, the fighter will get one chance to shoot at the creature. This shot will happen at short range, but will count as being against a rapidly appearing target and therefore suffer a -1 modifier. The fighter may fire on sustained fire, and use any appropriate energy settings or shell options - they may not, however, use any grenades or blast weapons, as they are as likely to blow themselves up as the enemy!

If this free shot hits AND wounds, then Phanta Claws has been driven off. If not, then the monster will strike - fight a round of close combat as though the fighter had been charged by Phanta Claws. After this one round of combat, Phanta Claws will disappear into the shadows once more - if the fighter is lucky enough to still be standing he can breathe a big sigh of relief at this point.

Keep track of wounds inflicted on Phanta Claws' - should he suffer a second wound, then roll on the Injuries table as normal. Flesh Wounds will deduct from Phanta Claws' WS as normal. If Down or Out of Action is rolled, then Phanta Claws disappears, but will not attack for the rest of the game - neither player may make "The Monster Roll" again that game. If the beast is taken down, then roll to see if it is taken Out of Action at the game's end. If Phanta Claws does go Out of Action, then the winning

gang may roll a D6 on the table above to see what prize they get (in addition to any Loot Counters).

### **Hit and Run**

When playing the Hit and Run scenario with Phanta Claws involved, the location of the loot counter becomes very important if the "Stick Up" mission is being played. This is because the loot actually represents a bag of Fistmas Presents stolen from the creature's grotto, and an unhappy monster is out for revenge.

Determine when Phanta Claws arrives and acts exactly as described for the Gang Fight scenario. However, when finding out where Phanta Claws arrives from, designate each of the four corners a number between 1 and 4, and roll a D6. On a 1-4, he arrives upon the corresponding table edge (at a place chosen by the player whose turn it currently is); on a 5-6 he comes from the centre of the table at ground level.

When moving Phanta Claws, the criteria for his actions is slightly different. Whilst he will normally move towards the nearest closest visible model and charge them (or prowl/skulk if none are visible), if any fighter picks up the Loot Counter he will immediately switch targets to attack them as a matter of priority. If engaged in close combat, then he will move towards the model with the Loot Counter at the next possible opportunity.

If the attacker is playing the mission "Stick Up" and wins, then he will gain a free Fistmas Present (in addition to any normal amount of loot) determined from the table above. If Phanta Claws is taken out of action, then the rules for gaining Fistmas Presents as stated in the Gang Fight scenario will apply in addition to this.

### **Ambush**

The rules for including Phanta Claws in this scenario are exactly the same as for a Gang Fight, with the following exception. When finding out where Phanta Claws arrives from, designate each of the four corners a number between 1 and 4, and roll a D6. On a 1-4, he arrives upon the corresponding table edge (at a place chosen by the player whose turn it currently is); on a 5-6 he comes from the centre of the table at ground level.

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## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Michael Duxbury is a frequent tabletop wargamer, with gangs and armies for Necromunda, Mordheim, Inquisitor and the Battle of Five Armies, as well as all three of Games Workshop's Core Games. In Necromunda he uses a Cawdor gang, often supported by a Phanta Claws Hired Gun. This is his fifth Fanatic Article.

Michael would like to thank the late Clement Clarke Moore, Andrew Woolhead, Kit Stevens and Stephen Duxbury for their assistance in creating this article.

## **Rescue**

The defending gang has made a terrible error: as well as capturing a member of a rival gang, they have also been (un)fortunate enough to imprison Phanta Claws at their base. The monster is worth a great deal alive to the various freak show artists and circus masters that make a living on Necromunda. Wouldn't it be terribly unfortunate if, in the chaos of the battle, the beast was to escape somehow...?

When the defending gang positions the attacker's imprisoned fighter at the start of the game, he will also choose the location of the captive Phanta Claws. Until released, the creature will follow identical rules to the prisoner - it may not move, be shot, attack or be attacked.

Phanta Claws can be freed from its cage in the same way as the Prisoner, except that fighters of either side can let it free. Immediately after being let loose, the monster will move 2D6" in a direction specified by the freeing player. The beast will then act after the current player's turn, but before the next player's, continuing to act at this time for the rest of the game. It will then move and act as specified in the rules for a Gang Fight (even if that means attacking its liberator!), and will distribute a Fistmas Present to the winning player if taken out of action.

## **He's Behind You...**

I hope this exploration of the dreaded Phanta Claws has been interesting for people out there. Now all you need to do is go out there and get a model for use in the festive season! Although I have included by own ideas for Phanta Claws' appearance with the model in the photos above, there's no reason why this interpretation needs to be the same as yours. Simply take your favourite gribbly monster, give it a festive slant, and you have your Phanta Claws model. Now all you need to do is play a normal Necromunda game and, with the gaming suggestions above, throw in a monster for added fun.

Merry Fistmas one and all, and have a happy new year!