

**You're listening to Imaginary Worlds, a show about how we create them and why we suspend our disbelief. I'm Eric Molinsky.**

**It's just after 10am on a Saturday. I'm at a game shop called The Brooklyn Strategist. Long time listeners might remember this is where I learned how to play D&D and Magic The Gathering. Today, I'm watching a Warhammer tournament.**

**There are a lot of different games in the Warhammer universe. The most famous one is Warhammer 40K. It takes place around 40,000 years in the future, and that's what everyone is playing here today.**

**There are about a dozen tables, with two opponents at each table. Now, there are huge, competitive championship tournaments out there for Warhammer. This one is fairly casual. Everyone is just playing rounds against the person standing across from them.**

**Everyone is taking out their dice, their laptops, and most importantly, figurines – armies of tiny, hand painted warriors. Now the figures are gray when you buy them. The players have to paint them. You actually lose points if you play the game with unpainted miniatures. And the sculpting on these figures is amazing. There is so much detail. And the players are placing them carefully on mats within these little plastic sets that look like the ruins of bombed out cities.**

**There are so many different armies you can choose to play -- Orks, Blood Angels, Space Marines, World Eaters, Chaos Daemons. And these tiny warriors all look bad ass. I asked some of the players to describe the armies they brought to the tournament today.**

**MICHAEL: I'm playing Chaos Knights. Basically, I'm a bad guy, and they were originally the good guy knights and then some of the houses broke off and became bad guys, and so that's basically what I'm running, I'm running big robots that are piloted by guys that were either affected by the warp, which is the negative energy in the universe.**

**BORIS: My army are called the Gene Steeler Cults. They worship an alien race called the Tyrranids. The Tyrranids are an intergalactic threat of brainless monsters that are controlled by a hive mind.**

**DANIEL: These are Gray Knights. They're um, essentially a bunch of dudes who hunt demons like the Ghostbusters of the Warhammer universe, their entire idea is they're incorruptible. Um, there's a lot of stuff out in the mean mod universe that wants to like**

take over your mind and then these guys will show up and get rid of that for you. The tricky part about them is because they're so secretive, they tend to kill whoever knows about them, friend or foe. Um, so it's a very me-me kind of like, oh, don't find out about us, we'll get you.

**As you can tell, there's a lot of backstory to Warhammer. But to sum it all up: everyone's at war with each other. The rules are pretty complicated in terms of how you move your armies on the board, especially because every army moves in their own unique way. And in the past whenever someone would try to explain the game to me, I got totally lost in the details. So I never bothered playing.**

**But I keep passing by this Warhammer store in Manhattan where they only sell Warhammer books, game pieces and art supplies for figurines. And real estate in Manhattan is very expensive. There's a lot of turnover. But that shop is still there, even after the pandemic. There actually are hundreds of stores like that around the world. And over the last 6 years, the company that makes Warhammer, Games Workshop, more than doubled their revenue to over \$500 million.**

JAMES: They are a colossal company. They are one of the 350 largest companies in the UK.

**James Wallis writes, designs and publishes games. His latest book is nonfiction. It's called Everybody Wins. It's about the best board games in the last 45 years. He says the company Games Workshop was never modest about their goals.**

JAMES: The phrase Total Global Domination would appear somewhere in the annual report every single year. The question was, is this a joke? Are they serious? Do they actually want to take over the world? It was printed in gold letters on the cover of the staff handbook that every member of staff received. It's tongue in cheek. It's not entirely serious. They don't actually want to take over the world, but they do want to be the best there is at what they do.

**And Warhammer may get bigger. The game has a very famous fan -- the actor Henry Cavil from the Superman movies and The Witcher TV show. He signed a deal to produce and star in Warhammer content for Amazon.**

JAMES: It's just teetering on the edge of mass awareness of it being almost a mass entertainment form. It's only going to take one thing, which I suspect may be a movie. Who knows? And suddenly Warhammer will be everywhere.

**This July is the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Warhammer. So, I made a goal for myself. I wanted to figure out why the game is so popular. What draws people in.**

**Two weeks before I went to that tournament. I stopped by the game shop on a quiet morning to get a tutorial. Ezekiel Lytle run Warhammer games for The Brooklyn Strategist. He learned how to play the game from his mother.**

EZEKIEL: She wanted me to like get into Warhammer, but she didn't really like push it. She was just like introducing me to other games and seeing like what direction I was going in. And then we went to this other like mega mall and I saw the Warhammer store and when I saw it, she was like, yep, I gotcha <laugh>. And she taught me how to play. Um, the first model she got me was a model after her army.

***So do you, do you play against your mom?***

EZEKIEL: Sometimes. Uh, she comes over every week and we like talk about like gardening and stuff like that. And then if we get a game and we get a game in or we like catch a movie or something.

***Hmm. Wow. I don't think my mother would be able to understand five minutes of this episode.***

EZEKIEL: <laughs>

**Now, typically, players come in with an army they want to play. To keep things simple, we picked Space Marines for both sides. They look like heavily armored medieval knights from the future. We also put down dreadnoughts, which are these lumbering robots filled to the brim with guns and missiles. Where you place them on the game board, and how they move is very important.**

EZEKIEL: So, uh, the game is played using tape measures or other forms of measurement tools. Uh, so we have like this little six inch easy to measure device where you have a three inch end, a two inch end, a one inch end, and a six inch end, because most units have a base movement of six inches, uh, it's always detailed in the different data sheets here.

**I was not surprised to see data sheets, or tape measures. Before coming in, I listened to a CBC documentary about Warhammer. And the reporter described Warhammer as a combination of Risk, Chess, D&D, and an Excel spreadsheet. But it's also a tabletop role-playing game. So, your fate is determined by strategy and luck – especially the roll of the dice. I didn't have any strategy or luck that day.**

EZEKIEL: So unfortunately, your dreadnought's going to die <laugh>. But the cool thing is does he explode? He does not explode. So when vehicles die, before you remove them, they have a chance to explode and do damage around them. So had it exploded, I would've taken three damage on my dreadnought.

**We played for an hour, but I still had trouble wrapping my head around the game. The thing I like about role-playing games is the role-playing. There's a phenomenon called theater of mind, where the world around you melts away. And in your mind, you're not at the game shop anymore, you're in a movie of the story you're making up.**

**But Warhammer seemed even less immersive than video games. So, I asked Ezekiel, why does he prefer playing this over something like Call of Duty?**

EZEKIEL: So I used to play, um, well, I guess semi-professionally, I used to play like Halo semi-professionally with my brother and a competitive team. Um, and I used to play a lot of Destiny 2. Uh, I used to be number six in the world, uh, for a U.S. rating.

**Wow!**

EZEKIEL: When it comes to playing Warhammer, I really enjoy the social aspect to it. I just get to sit with somebody for like two or three hours and just like basically just chat with them. Uh, I kind of look at it like blind dates. It's really funny and you have no clue who you're going to go into. So, it's a nice time to sit down and be like, Hey, like, that's a cool paint job, how did you do that effect? How cool is like this that you're doing right? And just like sitting down, getting to know the person that you're playing across the table.

**That's when I realized I had to go to a tournament to see the game in action. And right away, I got into the atmosphere. It was very friendly and collegial. I met these two guys, Harry and Boris.**

BORIS: I'm relatively new to the scene. Actually, June 1<sup>st</sup> is going to be my one-year Warhammer anniversary.

***So do you know this guy or you guys are just assigned to each other?***

BORIS: We are just assigned to each other, but I've played Harry many, many times. This is a community after all.

**I talked to a guy named Daniel, who is also kind of new to the game.**

DANIEL: So I'm approaching like a year and a half now. Um, And everyone here I've played, and I've mostly lost to.

Really?

DANIEL: Yeah, That's the beauty of Warhammer it's learning how to lose while making friends doing it.

**I asked him what made him want to play.**

DANIEL: I kind of started out as like a kid. I loved Star Wars and Star Trek and those are kind of both like gateway drugs to get into Warhammer just because you watch Star Wars, you watch Star Trek, like the stories that they tell you they make for you. One of the beauties of Warhammer is when you like build and paint your own miniatures, like you write your own heroes, you write your own stories. So, it's almost addicting where like you collect the model and in your head you write a story for him and then you get to come out like, and fight a battle against your friends with him and then you get to see that guy die.

***I was going to ask you that because I play a lot of D&D and the thing I like about D&D is the theater of the mind aspect. But I was wondering is that, does that happen with Warhammer?***

DANIEL: So, I think that it would be nice if I could do that. I think that I, um, I grew up playing chess and I do view playing a Warhammer game, kind of similar to chess. Um, but the theater of the mind is like when you're building and painting them, that's when the theater mind comes to play. Models at the table, when you're on the board, there's so many rules to handle. You have to interact with your opponent so much. It's difficult sometimes for me to maintain that level of immersion.

***Yeah. And also, it feels kind of legalese like, you know, and a in a, in a, in a courtroom, the two lawyers have to show initially all the evidence they have ahead of time, so they know to prepare for each other. It's kind of like that.***

DANIEL: It's not only a lot of that, it's also a lot of like legalese declarations. So it's like at the start of battle round two, I'm going into The Tide of Shadows, which means you can't do this, that, that. And like there's a lot of gotchas. So, if you shoot me, I can just teleport away, you can't shoot me anymore. And there's a lot of etiquette when it comes to declaring, oh, it's risky for you to do that, you shouldn't do that. At the end of the day, we're just kids playing with action figures. Like, is my robot bigger than your monster? Yeah. It's, it's a lot of, a lot of, no, not my Dread Knight. Not the keeper of secrets!

***Yeah. It's like kids playing with action figures, but with agreed upon strict rules. So, you don't like, no, wait a second, I suddenly can do this.***

DANIEL: Yeah, exactly. It is exactly that. If you listen to a Warhammer game, it's just a very, very adult advanced narration of this guy does this, this guy does this, I'm moving here, I'm shooting there. It's lawyers playing with action figures. That's Warhammer.

JEFF: That's actually a good one!

***That is literally the best explanation I've ever heard of Warhammer!***

DANIEL: There's a lot of smart people who play. If you look around the room here, it's full of engineers. It's like a lot of people, like almost everyone here has a graduate degree or some very, very high level education. It's a lot of really smart people.

**Unfortunately, I don't have a mind for math or law. But I talked to another guy who does. His name is David.**

DAVID: So it's funny, you're talking to someone who's a JD MBA who works in finance. So from a rules lawyering perspective, uh, let me put it this way. Someone's good at Warhammer, they'll probably do pretty well in the bar exam. They'll probably do pretty well just in law school.

**But the game is good for all different ages. In fact, I found two kids in the other room. They were quietly assembling figures that they had just taken out of the box. This is Dante.**

DANTE: I'm putting together a contempt Dreadnaught from Horus Heresy but I'm using it for Warhammer 40K. Uh, it's going to be used as my heavy support for my black temp army.

***How long is it going to take to paint to put this together and paint it together?***

DANTE: Maybe put it together like two hours if I want to choose the guns correctly, but painting maybe like a day or a day? One day to three.

***Uh, do you guys know each other, or you just happen to be here?***

DANTE: Uh, we just happened to be here, but we've been talking.

**To really understand the appeal of Warhammer, we need to leave the Brooklyn Game Shop, actually we need to leave the United States, and go back in time to the culture where the game originally came from. We'll descend on that battlefield in just a moment.**

**BREAK**

**At the game shop, an hour into the tournament, the atmosphere was still friendly but getting a little tense. I talked with two players who had been assigned to each other, Mia and Jonathan.**

***So how's the game going so far?***

JONATHAN: It's been very, uh, in my face. She, their forces just slamming up against me, but it's, um, it's going okay so far,

***Actually, now I have to ask you.***

MIA: We'll see, after this turn, this turn will decide it.

***I feel like nobody ever feels confident, even if they're ahead.***

MIA: Oh no. Oh, well, I'm, I'm behind right now, but I....

JONATHAN: It's a dice game. So ultimately, like you can have the best strategy and then we can just like flop on you <laugh>.

**The company behind Warhammer, Games Workshop, is based in Nottingham in the UK. When I talked to the game designer and author James Wallis, he said the amazing thing about Games Workshop is that they started out with very humble beginnings.**

JAMES: The humble beginnings were extremely humble. It was three guys living out of and working out of the back of a van selling handmade wooden boards for, uh, traditional board games.

**Those three guys were Ian Livingstone, Steve Jackson and John Peake. They're no longer with the company. It's changed hands. Back in the '70s, they were making games and publishing a gaming magazine. One of their early fans was Gary Gygax, who co-created Dungeons & Dragons. Gygax sent them one of the first copies of D&D. They loved it. They ordered a bunch more, and Gygax gave them permission to distribute the game in Europe and the UK.**

**It was a very lucrative deal. From there, they opened a shop. And they went into the business of creating miniatures. At first, these miniatures were generic fantasy characters. You could use them in D&D, or any game you were playing.**

**In the early 1980s, Warhammer was developed by a team at the company led by Bryan Ansell, Rick Priestley and Richard Halliwell. The idea was to create a game that would require people to buy specific miniatures for that game. But James says, in terms of the game itself:**

JAMES: It wasn't terribly groundbreaking, there's nothing terribly new in there. But the, the combination of systems that it brings to it, if you are a geeky 12 year old or geeky 14 year old and you're good at maths, this is a game you can be good at. And the figures as well, the combination of this playing into your existing skills with the mechanics and then this wonderfully over the top background.

**The background was not that groundbreaking either. They were drawing from a lot of familiar sci-fi fantasy tropes. But everything they borrowed; they turned up**

**to 11. One of the fun things about Warhammer is that everything is to the max, totally over-the-top.**

**And they created an atmosphere that they called grimdark. The term grimdark has been used to describe a lot of fantasy worlds like Game of Thrones, but that word itself began with Warhammer.**

JAMES: I don't want to live there, but as a place to spend some time mentally thinking about the balance of powers and the tensions between the different factions where alliances way form where they may not the drama of the whole thing. It's so ready to create new stories on almost any level you want down, you know, the micro, the smallest character up to galaxy spanning epics of, you know, destruction and entire dimensions falling apart. It's all underlaying by the central premise of the whole thing, which they used to print on the box lid. I'm not sure they do anymore. "In the grim darkness of the far future there is only war!" And if that doesn't sound great to you, then Warhammer 40K is probably not for you. But I can tell you, if you were a 14 year old boy in the UK in the 1990s and you hadn't yet discovered either alcohol or whatever your form of music was, or motorbikes or an attraction to potential partners, that phrase just, you were sucked in at that point.

**James wrote novels that take place in the Warhammer universe. Although Warhammer is actually a multiverse. The novels he wrote took place in a universe called Warhammer Fantasy. It was more influenced by Lord of the Rings and Conan the Barbarian, as opposed to Warhammer 40K, which is more hard science fiction. I was curious how he wrote for a universe that is so grimdark. And he said, he didn't focus on the generals.**

JAMES: These were the low level characters within the world, scrabbling to make a living in this world where chaos could swoop in at any moment. You could be invaded there. You know, there might be, you might be rounded up for the army. It was the antithesis of Dungeons and Dragons, which is always about heroism and getting the gold. Whereas Warhammer fantasy role play has always been much more about can you survive until tomorrow? But you can always find characters who are going to be interesting. While I prefer to work with sympathetic characters, I have friends who almost specialize in taking characters who are, uh, brutal and finding an interesting angle to tell interesting stories about them.

**But there's danger to writing books in a world constantly at war.**



JAMES: They blew up the Warhammer world a few years ago. Literally, it no longer exists in the universe, except as a charred cinder, I'm kind of miffed about that cause I wrote some books for it and those immediately went out print. But Warhammer 40K, which has always sold better than Warhammer Fantasy. There are no good guys. There are no good races. It takes the same structure as, as Warhammer. All of these different, um, species and, and races and chapters, and none of them are good. Even the humans are, are dominated by this, essentially this religious cult based around the, the emperor who is functionally dead and has been for tens of thousands of years and requires sacrifices to keep his brain functions. It's all labyrinthine in that way that is really pleasing to puzzle out and put all the details of the background together and understand. But people go in going, oh yeah, I'll be the humans. They're, you know, they're, they're human. They're going to be the, the good people in this background. Plus they have, they're the, the Space Marines with the enormous power armor and they look really potent. And then slowly you realize that basically they're fascists, I mean religious fascists and with no, no tolerance for anything that disagrees with their dogma. And they're not pleasant people. So, I mean, again, Workshop we're always jokey about this stuff. They didn't take any of it terribly seriously.

**Some players did take it seriously. During the 2016 election, some people on the far right were equating Trump with the character of The God Emperor. There was also a segment of the players that were openly endorsing the fascist beliefs of the Space Marines. There were actually a lot of media stories around this from 2016 to 2020, and that caused a big backlash within the Warhammer community against these players.**

JAMES: The company itself has come out very publicly and said, um, it is the game is the game itself is not political. They do not welcome people following extreme political views to their events. They don't want them as part of their community. One of the things that made the company work, part of the magic formula that turned them from scrappy little games distributor into this global force is their chain of retailers. Because they're not just shops. Essentially, they're clubhouses. They are where like-minded individuals meet up and chat, find the latest news, get painting tips, buy stuff, and play the game. And so, they have actually worked to exclude people who want to subvert Warhammer for their own political ends.

**What really annoyed a lot of Warhammer players was that the fascist element of the fanbase clearly missed the fact that the game is a satire – specifically a British satire. At the game shop in Brooklyn, a couple players including Harry told me that's what they liked about the game.**

HARRY: Some proof of that is the fact that one of the scariest creatures, Ghazghkull Mag Uruk Thraka, the leader of the Orks is directly named after Margaret Thatcher. Yeah. There's just a lot of funny stuff like that that's in the game, which is also funny. I know. I have friends who just love talking about the lore.

JAMES: A lot of these are drawing on the same influences, particularly the British class, awareness of class. And also, a number of British authors, Michael Moorcock in particular, they take quite a lot from Michael Moorcock. The idea of chaos comes from, from Moorcock, but also the idea of eternal struggle against implacable forces. The company's been, it was originally founded in London, but these days, it's, it's been in Nottingham since the mid '80s. Um, Nottingham, a post-industrial town has been through some considerable hardships, um, you know, part of the, the coal and steel belt back in the day. Those industries literally no longer exist in this country. So, they know about depression, they know about hardship. So that sense of grimness and at the same time, silly humor and puns scattered through the background all the way. So just as you're expecting, could this get any grimmer, there will be a daft joke. I mean, it, it comes out of also, you know, the British, depending on who you spoke speak to, but as far as the British are concerned, we invented Heavy Metal and things that the, and the influence not only of the, that music and its tone, but also the graphic design of the album covers. You can see a lot of that. Games Workshop's logo itself looks like the logo of a Heavy Metal band from about 1978.

***It's interesting. I feel like the word tone to me is really important because I think that's kind of the secret sauce is that no matter what it is, whether it's the role playing itself, the miniatures, the lore, there's a particular tone that's kind of, that's so over the top. Like, it's so, like when people say grimdark, you think of depressing, you think of just a grind. You think of things that are gray, colorless, bloody. But I think that the, the thing that I think you're missing is that there's something almost silly in the term grimdark because it's, you know, it, it it's, um, redundant. It's not so dark, it's grimdark!***

JAMES: Yes, absolutely. The overriding tone is, is dark, but finding the flashes of humor and the silliness and the weirdness as well, the weirdness is really important. The other thing, it's not dark graphically, it's not dark. Colorfully, this, this stuff is, it is bright. It is very, very attractive. It is immediately recognizable. The Necrons who were the undead Terminator style robots, but with Egypt style lore built in. And again, when they came out, we were looking at going, it's Egyptian Terminators. I'm not sure about this. Give Workshop a couple of years. They've sorted it out. They have their, their own look and feel and tone. And now people are collecting these things. There's a rare, uh, range of kind of water creatures and air creatures and they look like, in plastic, gusts of wind or showers of, of, and it's, how?! How can you do that in plastic?! It's just, I don't

understand how these things hold together and just don't fall apart the moment anyone picks them up.

**If the tone is the secret sauce, I think the miniatures are the killer app – to use a phrase from the tech industry. Buying miniatures can be so expensive and so addictive, The Guardian described Warhammer, as quote, “heroin for middle-class nerds.”**

JAMES: You know what churn is? Churn is the, the amount of time that a company can hold a customer's focus. Games Workshop used to have churn of about two years. They'd expect kids to come in at the age of 12. And then by 14 they were interested in motorbikes and people of the opposite or the same sex. Those kids have grown up now, they've got jobs, they've gotten income, and they can go out and spend the Warhammer equivalent of the \$500 Millennium Falcon set. And that exists within the Warhammer world. There's a story that they have a division, Forge World. that creates beautiful high, high size, big size resin, miniatures of, of things within the Warhammer 40K background. There are giant robots, basically, these are Gothic giant robots. They look like walking cathedrals. They created a titan in resin and took it to a Workshop event thinking that there might be a global market for I think about 20, maybe 25 of them. And one guy came up seeing this, this enormous thing and said, is that for sale? And they said, well, not the specific one, but we're taking orders. He said, I'll have seven.

**<laugh>**

JAMES: Um, and now it's just part of the production line and these retail for hundreds of pounds. And there are people who, who will bring to the table entire armies of them because they have the disposable income to do that. These were the things they lusted after when they were kids. Now they can afford them. They're living the dream. It may not be your dream, but it's their dream and they're very happy.

**I started thinking about Warhammer as three subcultures rolled into one. There's the game itself and people who enjoy the strategizing and the socializing. But if you just care about the lore, there are novels, video games and other content that you can delve into without even playing the game.**

**And then there are the miniatures. There's an entire community around the world of people who are just into painting those figures. There are major contests like the Golden Demon Award to recognize the best miniature painting. And these artists have huge followings across social media. They set a high bar.**

**At the Game Shop, Daniel told me he feels the pressure to live up to those standards.**

DANIEL: There's a lot of technique that goes into it. So, I've, I've gone back and watched like painting tutorials about like how like I, I do a lot of fire painting, so like going back and seeing how like classical Renaissance artists paint fire, that's where I drew my inspiration.

***Tell me about that. Yeah, so what did you, what you studied like, uh, famous artists or to, to figure out how to paint?***

DANIEL: So there's a lot of nature painting done by the Hudson School and like the, when I, I moved to New York about a couple years ago and I went to The Met and I saw some of the Hudson School art paintings and the way they did the reflections of, of the sun on water and it looks like the sky was on fire. That's what gave me a lot of inspiration to paint them. And then there's a million YouTube tutorials about how to paint. There are a million different products online and tutorials online about how to paint a good miniature. It's like a, it's a bit of a, like a drip, drip, drip of you start painting, you start painting and at first, it seems hard. I don't know how to paint. Next thing you know, it's 18 months later and you're looking up to Torres about how Caravaggio is doing fire.

***Wow. Hudson's Hudson School and Caravaggio. You're, uh, doing some, I, my, my, my art school background is, uh, is definitely being put to use today.***

**I talked to another guy named Ronnie who rejects all of that. On that particular day, his army was painted but:**

RONNIE: Everybody knows that I don't paint, so this is like a miracle. Painting is a, painting is a sensitive topic with me.

***Wait, why?***

RONNIE: I hate painting. I have, it's not part of the game that I enjoy at all. I really just like playing the game. I like building this. I like doing everything else but painting. Uh, I have had people that help me out with the painting. Uh, so some of the friends have taken pity on me and, uh, offered to paint my stuff because they're tired, sick and tired of seeing me just playing gray models for year, year after year after year.

***What, what inspired you to finally start painting?***

RONNIE: I wanted to play them competitive, basically is that rule where you give up 10 points, uh, for unpainted. I had it bite me in the butt several times. So, I was like, you know what, I'm going to just paint these models and I'm going to stop giving up these handicaps to people like this game. Like this game! Oh! Yeah, this game would've been a game that I would've lost if I was given up the 10 points on plane because it was 75 82. I would've had 72 and then I would've been like, aaaaah, painting gets me again.

**After a few hours, the tournament was heading into a lunch break. So I checked in with everyone to see how the first round went. The tone was still very friendly. In fact, when I talked with Boris and Harry, Harry was being so self-critical about how he played, I thought he lost.**

BORIS: No, he won the game. He annihilated me, he's scoring maximum points. He's, he scored a hundred.

HARRY: I have literally the worst matchup for him in the entire game. Like maybe is there anyone who's the worst matchup?

***The way that you're talking, I thought you lost. Cause you're just like, oh, well if you had gone first.***

HARRY: No, I had a really good match, I think I played well.

BORIS: He didn't just win, he like annihilated me.

**<laughs>**

HARRY: To be fair, I didn't understand how bad the matchup is (FADE OUT)

**And poor Daniel continued his losing streak to almost everyone he's played. But he still had fun.**

DANIEL: At the end of the day, I, I didn't respect his speed and I deployed my army too far forward, who's able to essentially walk up the board. He had the first turn, he walked up the board and kind of just *killed* me. And that was that. It's pretty much if, if on the Bridge of Khazad-dûm in Lord of the Rings, if when Gandalf goes, you shall not pass the Balrog, like flaps his wings and flies over him and still passes. That's kind of, that's kind of what happened.

***Whoops.***

**When people talk about Warhammer, they often use the word is hobby. They'll say, "it's a great hobby." And I think hobbies don't get enough respect. As adults, we sometimes can think of them as trivial, a form of escape. They're not practical.**

**But doctors have actually recommended hobbies as being good for your mental and even physical health. Doing a hobby can declutter your mind and take time for yourself. They're also a way to find community and open up your world. Warhammer is so multifaceted; it can be a great hobby for a lot of different types of people.**

**It's still not for me. But the fun everybody was having was infectious. I came away feeling inspired to do more of the games I enjoy doing. In fact, I realized that I've let some of my hobbies slide. Having fun shouldn't be a guilty pleasure. It can be**

**a noble pursuit – like total global domination with miniatures, spreadsheets and tape measures.**

**That's it for this week, thank you for listening. Special thanks to James Wallis, Ezekiel Lytle and everyone at the Brooklyn Strategist. I put pictures of the Warhammer tournament on the show's Instagram page.**

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