

CARDBOARD MANIFESTO



I WANT MORE GIRLS WITH GUNS, HELMETS AND APPROPRIATE FOOTWEAR IN TABLETOP MINIATURES, AND I WANT THEM NOW

Sara Elsam asks, where are the all the Ogre ladies?

Words by Sara Elsam

I was playing the *Blood Bowl* video game recently, and as I moved between lumbering orcs to terrifying rat people, I wondered, where are the women units? *Warhammer*, for all its blood-soaked wonders, has an absolute dearth of them across all of its games. I pondered this as a trove of scantily-clad white lady cheerleaders waved their pom poms about. Ah, here's where they are.

But still, I felt sad. Where was my bulky lady Ogre? Or even, gods forbid, a plain human unit, perhaps with a ponytail and practical armour. Nope, not here. It was just beards and pecs and occasionally a long-limbed sexy elf-lady super model. You know, like in reality.

It reminded me of the first time I came across *Kingdom Death: Monster*. I was sold pretty quickly on the ultra-violence and unending death of it all, until I saw them. The miniatures.

At first, they started out as multi-breasted monstrosities, which made me queasy, but I figured, 'all in the name of horror', before I came across the rest of it: tied up chicks with gagged child-like faces, pin-up style models donned in micro-bikinis and thigh-high boots (good to know someone could find breast implants in a post-apocalyptic world of eternal nightmares), or their Halloween treat, 'Devil Satan' who wears a dress held together with pentagrams and presumably, the sheer gravitational pull of her chest. She is also carrying a literal basket of dicks. According to the site, she's a 'fun' survivor stand-in. So, not even a character, just a flesh mound to gaze at with your mates. Not far removed from the cheerleaders of *Blood Bowl*, out on the sidelines but ever-so-attractive.

As I looked at the poor, horribly disfigured ladies of *Kingdom Death*, with their perfect

little 'oh' mouths and tender child-like limbs, it became pretty clear to me this game was made for men – not all men of course, but a type clearly present in the world of tabletop gaming.

That the erotic subtext didn't even stick out that much, because apparently, these male gamers like all their adventures caked in a bit of breast and gasping. Stoking the 'fires' of our imagination indeed. And it's a shame, because they're beautiful miniatures. Lovingly crafted. And that just seems more creepy than anything else, because of what they are.

And it's frustrating, because being a woman in the real-world is difficult, and you want to escape for a while into some fantasy world, whether it's murdering your friends or trekking across some vast black plain littered with rivers of blood or whatever. But there it is, the marker of reality: sexism. Running rampant in our imaginations as much as it marches ever grimly on in real life.

And men folks say, "it's just a fantasy" and I say, like future predictive authors of dystopias, "it's not, completely."

Because fantasy is just an extension, a dreamlike symbol vision if you will, of currently prevailing trends and notions. And the fantasy of women trussed up in revealing clothing, or not even being there at all, missing and silent, reflects the messed-up way a lot of folks see us. And the designers, creepy, or otherwise, that defend that egregious design decisions with claims that sex sells or it just doesn't matter, are really only justifying the objectification of women as a means of entertainment.

The fact that some men feel entitled to that vision says even more. I saw one board game company defend their decision for a white, rail-thin, big-bosomed medic as being a 'lady who likes to dress sexy' as part of her personality.

After all, nothing says character development like a mammoth rack. I for one, would prefer a woman noted for the blood she sheds on the football pitch, the cursed books she reads, or how gracefully she conjures up horrors from the beyond. Or even just women that can do everything a man does in these games: a regular marine, medic or librarian. Someone who gets a helmet and isn't donned in 'boob plate'. Someone who represents the woman we know, want to be and that can also maybe kill us at fifteen paces. ♣