



## The Last Ditch

*Sandy Mitchell*

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## **The Last Ditch** Sandy Mitchell

Commissar Cain returns to an icy planet to crush a new wave of ork attacks, but inadvertently disturbs a far greater threat which has lain frozen and dormant for centuries in a new hardcover edition.

Imperial commissar Ciaphas Cain returns to Nusquam Fundumentibus to crush the ork attacks which have been plaguing the frozen planet. But when his ship crashes into the wastelands outside the capital it disturbs a far greater enemy, one which has lain dormant under the permafrost since long before the Imperium came to this world, and could now threaten the whole sector. Faced with ongoing greenskin raids and keeping an over-enthusiastic novice commissar under control, Cain must rally his men and confront whatever emerges from beneath the rapidly melting ice...

## **The Last Ditch Details**

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Author : Sandy Mitchell

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## From Reader Review The Last Ditch for online ebook

### Hteph says

Light entertainment, but the author begins to fall into a pattern. You have to compare to Dan Abnett who writes in the same shared world with more or less the same set-up. But where Abnett have a rich crowd of characters to choose from to support and sometimes overshadow the main character, Mitchell limits himaelf to one, with side-kicks. This, in combination with the same plot structure (Abnett uses the whole of what can happen to a regiment in war) made me wonder if I hadn't read this bok before. Comissarie Cain arrives at world, fights enemy and produces one-liners, discovers that the enemy is not what it seems and everything ends in a big bang..... Yupp, been there before just changed the true enemy.., didn't even bother to change the scenery.... No, this series made a shark jump a book or two back....

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### Christian says

One of the more action packed entries in the series, Commissar Cain's unit is engaged in defending and ice world against Orks only to inadvertently awaken dormant Tyranids. It's a straight forward story with all the familiar bits in the Cain saga.

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### John says

Vanquishing the Emperor's enemies with the power of explosions, fire, Jurgen's body odor, and strategic cowardice that happens to be externally indistinguishable from outright heroism. It's a Cain book, alright.

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### Stephan says

One of the better Ciaphas Cain novels so far.

Mitchells use the same ingredients as before and manages to create an exiting, thrilling, engaging and, above all else, hilarious, story!

Cain and his regiment crash lands on the ice planet of Nusquam Fundamentibus (yes, really) when on their way to help the local garrison with a *minor* ork-problem. The orks never seem to be any big problem, it's almost too easy fighting them... But very soon Cain & Co find them selves knee deep in a war that might threaten the entire sector

The story's got quite a pace, with lots of action, subterranean motorcycle chases, daemons, orks, intriguing politicians and... something far worse.

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### Martin says

Anyone unfamiliar to the adventures of Ciaphas Cain need only know that he is a self-serving, incredibly

paranoid, skilled liar, who is happy to put as many bodies between him and the enemy as possible in order to save his own skin.

The only reason we sympathise with him as a character is because although underneath he may be completely craven, on the outside he has inadvertently created this persona as being a "Hero of The Imperium."

Cain, having observed the tendency of many members of the Commissariat to fall victim to "accidental" friendly fire, prefers to lead by example and encouragement instead of fear, and has gained a reputation for charismatic leadership, self-effacing heroism and concern for the common trooper. This has spiraled rather out of Cain's control and he now is frequently assigned to dangerous and suicidal missions. Dealing with legions of alien xenos or armies of depraved heretics should be no problem for the "Hero of The Imperium."

'The Last Ditch' is another great example of Cain and his (mis)adventures. Seeking as ever to be as far from the fighting as possible he finds himself once again squarely in the cross hairs of his enemies.

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### **John Chidley-Hill says**

These series of books definitely found their stride with book No. 7 and this one is pretty good too

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### **Stefan says**

I managed to read the entire book in one go, It took me about eleven hours if I remember correctly.

So it is safe to say that the story pretty much gripped me and did not let go. It was a true Cain tale filled with witty dialog and unlikely escapes. The only thing that was missing compared to most Cain tales was a female counterpart which in this case only added to the dynamic flow of the story instead of bog down the twist in the intervals between the action.

I can not wait for the next book which according to the friendly sales person in my local Games Workshop store is going to be available to me in the week before christmas instead of January as the Black library advertises on their website.

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### **Robert H says**

This particular story is set during Cain's time with the Valhallan 597th, and details the events occurring when the regiment is dispatched to the iceworld of Nusquam Fundamentibus to help suppress a secondary outbreak of orks following the original invasion which the Valhallan 296th had been part of defeating. Of course, the fact that Cain is involved means that nothing is anywhere near as straight forward as originally imagined, and there will be even further complications along the way.

The book features the usual sarcasm and lack of heroism from Cain who, ably assisted by his aide Jurgen, interacts with the members of the regiment, the crew of a transport ship, governor of the planet, the Commissar attached to another regiment already in place on Nusquam Fundamentibus who is of course not

at all aligned with Cain's way of thinking, and of course innumerable xenos who die in massive numbers.

There isn't anything particularly outstanding about the book, but suffice to say that if you enjoy the Ciaphas Cain novels by Sandy Mitchell, then you'll enjoy this book. I know I do, and completed the reading in a few hours. If that's not a sufficient recommendation, I'm not sure what is.

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## C.T. Phipps says

The Last Ditch by Sandy Mitchell is the eighth novel in Black Library's Ciaphas Cain series. For those unfamiliar with the series, it is about a ostensibly cowardly commissar (political officer) assigned to a mixed-gender unit of the Imperial Guard. Set in the Warhammer 40K universe, it follows Commissar Cain as he recounts his biography and how he went from being a lowly junior officer to one of the greatest heroes of the Imperium. The joke being that Ciaphas Cain considers himself to be nothing of the sort due to the fact that most of his victories come from either blind luck or due to exercising his well-honed instinct for self-preservation.

I'm a fan of the series, enjoying it in its entirety. Unfortunately, the formula is something I'm not sure will stand up indefinitely. The Last Ditch feels like a retread, repeating the same basic story arc of a number of previous books. Ciaphas Cain goes to a planet that's imperiled, finds an unexpected threat, manages to deal with it, deals with an obstructive bureaucracy. I'm sorry to say that I didn't really enjoy it. It's more or less a retelling of Caves of Ice, even ending the same way, which seriously undermines my enjoyment factor.

It's not that I expect epic character arcs, Ciaphas Cain is a static character by nature since we know he remains a arguable coward for the entirety of his life. It's just I expect the author to try to come up with a new story. Unfortunately, he didn't, and the story is problematic to review. If it continues to simply rehash old stories, however, I may have to ditch it. Well, that's probably unfair. Ciaphas Cain is a series I will continue to purchase the remainder of, especially since it has credibility to burn with me. I loved the original seven books and only occasionally thought they were repeating the same formula. I mean, it took me until Fate of the Jedi to realize the Star Wars Expanded Universe had burned every last bit of goodwill it had with me.

The basic conceit of the story is still there and enjoyable. Ciaphas Cain is a man who is utterly insincere with all the people around him who believe he's a ridiculously talented warrior. In fact, Ciaphas Cain is simply practical and takes time to figure out how he's going to get out of any situation he gets into. In the setting of Warhammer 40K, where everyone is a religious fanatic for the God Emperor of Mankind, this makes him a military genius. It's also hilarious to see how he keeps getting into trouble no matter how hard he tries to stay out of it.

I'm also a fan of Ciaphas Cain's editor, Amberley Vale, who is also an Inquisitor of the Imperium. Amberley is Ciaphas Cain's infrequent love interest and the editor of his books. Amberly annotates the entirety of the novel and they're usually hilarious, filling in details about the Warhammer 40K universe or satirizing pop culture at equal turns. It's hard to say which of the two is snarkier and those are qualities I like in my protagonists. All of this remains true in The Last Ditch, though the humor isn't quite as sharp as it usually is.

Really, though I think my favorite character is probably Kasteen. She's one of the rare action girls in the Warhammer 40K universe since we rarely get to see the Sisters of Battle. Kasteen is a no-nonsense soldier who backs up Ciaphas Cain no matter what his decision and a romance never develops. That's practically

unprecedented in the fiction I read, I'm shocked. She too, gets to do some impressive things in the story.

Unfortunately, that's about it. The new character of Commissar Flores makes a bunch of mistakes but doesn't really serve as anything like a rival to Commissar Cain. Mostly, she just seems to annoy him a couple of times before the plot is unceremoniously resolved. The antagonists, themselves, are completely mindless so there's no real villain. Since we don't care about any of the new characters, know Commissar Cain will live to write his memoirs, and the planet is undeveloped - I can't say the book has much in the way of tension. In short, I didn't like it but it's not badly written. Take it for what it's worth.

5/10

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### **Andy says**

A solid return to the brisk action, pure tension, and hilarious backstory comedy of the reluctant hero, Ciaphas Cain, as Cain and his band of protagonists set out to wipe out a band of orks invading a desired planet and sector of the galaxy and discover a much larger and more dangerous foe has set up residence (tyranids!!). This is the book that Cain's Last Stand wanted to be, and I really enjoyed the author's stepping up and slamming the story in a format that was easy to read and exciting as well. Cain as a main character has never been better than in this story, and I dare say this may have been the best of the Cain books to date, excepting the first, which had a powerful effect on this reader.

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### **Mick says**

Ciaphas Cain, hero of the Imperium, is back, this time on the implausibly named frozen planet of Nusquam Fundumentibus. The locals have a bit of an Ork problem, and the stalwart women and men of the Valhallan 597th are looking forward to a relaxing bit of counterinsurgency in a suitable (for them, at least) climate. Then, naturally, everything goes to hell.

This is the eighth book featuring Ciaphas Cain (in order of publication, that is; chronologically it takes place sometime after Duty Calls), so it's not going to be full of surprises. Cain is as wry and self-interested as ever, and Jurgen as phlegmatic. The major characters of the 597th are all here, Lord General Zyvan has a cameo, and as always Inquisitor Vail provides commentary and amusing footnote abuse. Joining the cast this time are an icy planetary governor and the inexperienced Commissar Flores, who starts off eager but wisens considerably throughout the course of the novel. It's good to see Mitchell continue his tradition of writing strong female characters into the Warhammer 40k universe, something few of the Black Library stable of authors seem able or willing to do.

Action-wise, the novel suffers in comparison to some of Cain's previous adventures. There are a few terrific set-pieces, including a battle against Orks on a crashed spaceship on the surfact of a melting ice lake and an alien attack on a refugee column which brings to mind scenes from the earlier Death or Glory, but much of the action including the climax involves repetitive bug-hunts through icy corridors and Mechanicus shrines. The humour is as strong as ever, though, and I found myself chuckling along and even laughed out loud at a few jokes.

This is not one of the strongest Cain novels, but it provided enough solid action and laughs that I couldn't

help but read it all in one go. As a result, I'm pretty happy with it.

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### **Traci Lee says**

I adore the Cain novels and this one didn't disappoint. There is tons of action and a good dose of humor. Unlike so many 40k books, the Cain novels don't seem to take themselves too seriously. (Can a book take itself seriously?) Anyway, I love the self-deprecating wit of Ciaphus. Every bit of The Last Ditch is a page turner, as I found when I finished the book and realized it was 5 am. I can't wait to read The Greater Good! Keep them coming! (I would love to read about Cain coming out of retirement for the Black Crusade \*hint\* \*hint\*)

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### **Poe says**

I really quite liked this, and much moreso than the last book as I have mentioned before. The pace is lively and never drags. The action is clear and well-narrated. The particular brand of humor employed by both Cain and Amberley's footnotes is a refreshing contrast to otherwise spartan military verbiage.

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### **Mary Catelli says**

Another Ciaphas Cain book. There are only a few points that might boggle the reader who has not read the previous books in the series, but there are some.

Cain is, of course, Cain, recounting his adventures with his usual professions of cowardice and total self-interest, with Amberley making her usual comments in footnotes including pointing out that he's missing his own virtues, as his regiment heads back to an iceworld to fight orks -- much to the delight of the troopers, who stem from an iceworld once invaded by orks, as it affords them a chance to live in climates more normal for them, and fight the hated orks.

The ship they are flown in on is rather decrepit. So decrepit in fact that it crash-lands. Surviving that, they find fighting the orks rather easier than expect. Unsurprisingly, this leads to the discovery that there's a reason for that, and it's not a pleasant one.

Evacuating civilians, arguing with the governor, dealing with power plants that need more maintenance than they are getting -- it adds up to one more of Cain's grand adventures. Though Cain would never admit that.

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### **Alex Smith says**

Another enjoyable escapade featuring Ciaphas Cain. They're becoming a little bit formulaic, but Sandy Mitchell's slightly lighter take on the grimdark 40k universe always makes for an entertaining evening's read.

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