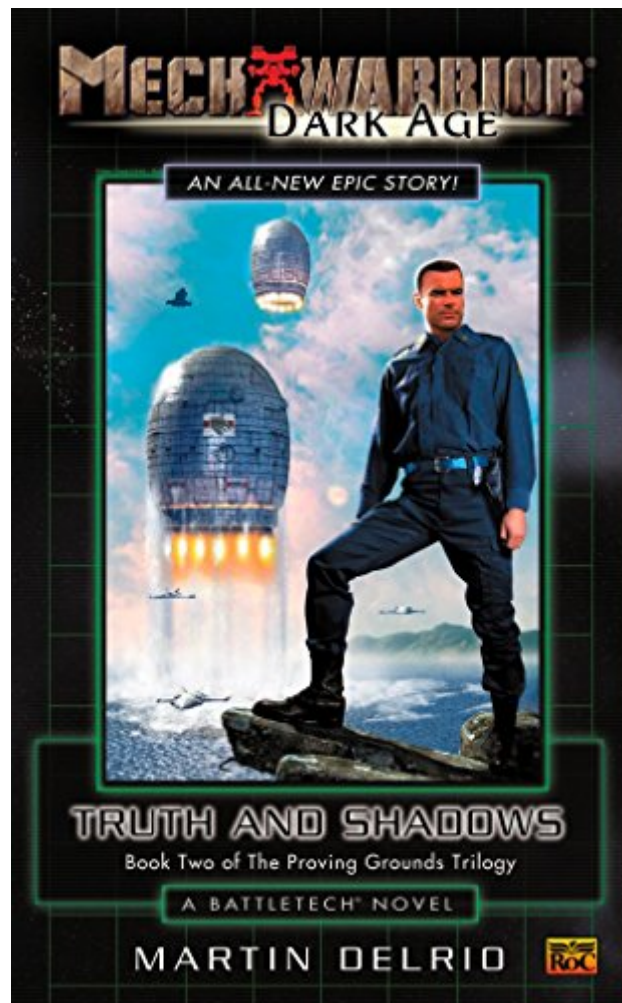




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# Mechwarrior: Dark Age #5: Truth And Shadows: (Book Two Of The Proving Grounds Trilogy)



## Synopsis

The Highlanders defeated Anastasia Kerensky the last time she attacked Northwind although she retreated with most of her troops. Now dispersed among several planets, the Highlanders will need a bigger edge if they are to end Kerensky's threat completely. A rumor places Anastasia Kerensky on Northwind. If that's true, then the Steel Wolves must be close by. Determined to locate them, Ezekial Crow and Tara Campbell order a reconnaissance unaware that their enemy may be closer than they think. With her forces on standby, Anastasia believes that there is little the embattled Republic can do to stop her from finally making a trophy of Northwind. What she doesn't realize is that she has allies she never imagined and enemies she never suspected. It's a moment of truth for Crow, Campbell and Kerensky, when lies emerge from the shadows, and the fate of a world hangs in the balance.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Yaaaar! It read like a swash-bucklin' tall of yon! This, like the other "Dark Age" books I have read, appears to be re-writing old adventure tales. This one seems to be a combination of "Treasure

Island" and a Zane Grey. It is an obvious "character introduction" story for an "important" Dark Age character...everything else is just lazy window dressing. It was Ok, I liked it, but the "introduction" stories are getting tedious.

Finally, after one horrible novel (Ruins of Power) and one so-so novel (A Silence In The Heavens), the new Mechwarrior line has once again reached the platinum standard with Truth and Shadows. Lost from the previous book in the trilogy is all of the self-brooding and what has been found are some familiar names such as "Dagger" Di Jones, Captain Tara Bishop, and "One Eyed" Jack Farrel with his mercenary company aka The Band of Five. Anastasia Kerensky remains the ultimate evil, only submersing herself in her Tassa Kay persona once for a very public hanging, but in the shadows lurks a greater evil that looks to ally itself with Kerensky and acts as a secret benefactor. Will Elliot and his infantry are once again thrust into these decisive battles, but here they are no longer the green troopers from the first book, but veteran soldiers who have some fire time under their belts. As for Paladin Ezekiel Crow, he remains the brooding stalwart of emotional detachment until his walls are broken down and we can see exactly how human he really is. This revelation will shock followers of not only the book line but the game story as well, especially with the upcoming release of the new expansion set Liao Incursion. Once the truth is pulled from the shadows, it will surely upend everything that we have come to know in the last year as the Republic of the Sphere and the veil of infallibility that seemingly shrouds their paladins. The book does start off relatively slowly, but by Chapter 6 the pace has picked up nicely. There is mech on mech action and infantry on mech action, and even VTOL on VTOL action. Although it is still in small amounts, the quality is superb. This book is a definite read for any Mechwarrior/BattleTech fan.

Great book

TRUTH AND SHADOWS continues the storyline of Northwind that began in A Silence in the Heavens, again utilizing a structure similar to its predecessor. This time, it's Ezekiel Crow, Paladin of the Sphere, who undergoes life-altering changes. It's been several months since the Steel Wolves have been seen, and Northwind is finally starting to breathe easy. But Crow can't really do so "not when the specter of Liao is being hung over his head by an unknown party. As before, much of the first two-thirds is spent on character development, with some minor action from the secondary cast. Only towards the end do Tara Campbell and Crow hop into their BattleMechs and join the fray. The Wolves' defeat feels more honest this time, in that they weren't actually defeated. Rather, in the face

of the scorched earth tactics the Highlanders used ("If we can't have it, you can't either"), the Wolves decide that Northwind is more trouble than it's worth, and set their sights on a new target in time for the trilogy's conclusion: Terra. While the structure of the trilogy has already gotten repetitive, "Delrio"'s strong writing more than makes up for it. The lies, deception, and betrayals keep the reader guessing even as the story moves on towards a conflict that's been over a decade in the waiting.

Truth and Shadows is the second book of the "Proving Grounds Trilogy" and follows "A Silence in the Heavens." I liked "Silence" very much. I was glad to see that Truth and Shadows carries forward the plot very well. More battles take place in a campaign by the Steel Wolves to conquer Northwind, but this time the war undergoes some original and unexpected turns. For example, you will be surprised to discover where the Wolves have hidden their dropships-- but I won't spoil the story by telling you. Characters are very interesting. We learn a lot more about Ezekiel Crow. He turns out to be more complex than he seemed at first-- not just a "boy scout" type of straight arrow. In fact, he acts decisively in Truth and Shadows -- to find out whether he is a good guy or a villain, or how to interpret his actions, we will need the third and final novel of the trilogy-- not yet published. The three motley "ground pounders" have now been promoted to sergeants, but still function wonderfully to bring us the dust and noise of battle from a grassroots view. All in all, author Delrio is to be commended for flowing the second book naturally from the first-- using the larger canvas to brush in more enriching details. The Prefect, Duchess Tara Campbell, never comes alive for me too well, but her aide-de-camp, Captain Tara Bishop, emerges as a very interesting and important character. Another well-drawn character is the civilian medic who is taken as a bondsman by Anastasia Kerensky. This character, Ian Murchison, promises to have a major part in the coming third and final novel. Anastasia Kerensky is her evil and sexy best-- her rock-star leathers display a figure that could cause a bishop to kick out a stained glass window. She's tougher, crueler, and lovelier than any of the other Steel Wolves she rules. She doesn't get as much play as in "Silence," but where she does appear she really steals the spotlight. Part angel, part devil, she both kills and loves without mercy and without regret. Truly a classic femme fatale. Mr. Delrio, give us more of her! One quirk of the book that struck me is the abrupt way it ends. Many trilogies end each separate volume with some sort of reconciliation, some semi- or tentative conclusion. This book just slams on the brakes with little logic. Suddenly, one of the combatants just states, "okay, back off, cease hostilities." We know this is just a pause in the war, and it seems unmotivated. Possibly Mr. Delrio checked the word count of the manuscript, figured out he had penned the necessary 280 pages or

so, and said, "hey-- time to go fishing." I wish he had shaped the ending of this book more skillfully. Especially since the third book -- which will clear up all the dangling loose ends-- is almost certainly some months away. The way Delrio writes, one gets a real sense of the mud, the pain, the laser smoke, the fatigue of a major battle. Delrio may have some military background, or, if not, he has certainly done his homework. He makes the battlefield seem very real and very gripping. I have read all but one of the new MechWarrior Dark Age series of novels. A couple of the others were pretty good-- and, alas, a couple were simply awful. Delrio's efforts are definitely right up there with the very best. With Delrio and Coleman writing more novels in the new series, I have hopes some good reading is in store for us. An excellent entertainment, and I highly recommend it.

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