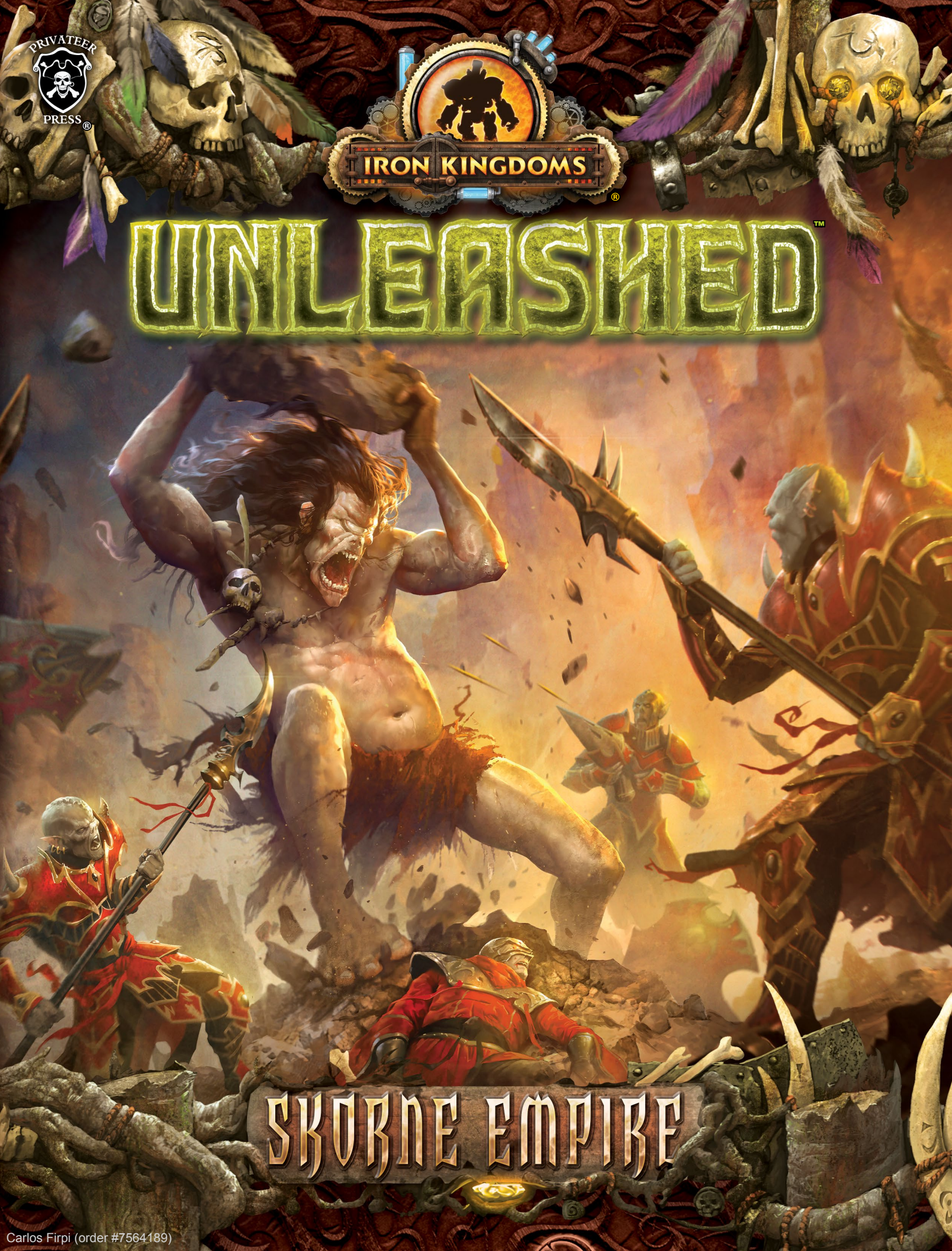




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Iron Kingdoms Unleashed: Skorne Empire. ISBN: 978-1-939480-67-5 PIP 419

CONQUER. ENSLAVE. EXALT.

Iron Kingdoms Unleashed introduced players to the untamed and dangerous wildernesses of western Immoren and the uncivilized races that inhabit them. Now, players can cross the Bloodstone Desert and seemingly bottomless Abyss to eastern Immoren, the treacherous wasteland home of the skorne race and seat of their sprawling empire.

The expanse dominated by the Skorne Empire is larger than the nations of Cygnar, Ord, and Llael combined, and their military has an ancient heritage of discipline and might. This great eastern power has set its sights on the rich lands of the west and crossed the Bloodstone Desert to conquer and subjugate her people.

With *Iron Kingdoms Unleashed: Skorne Empire*, prepare to explore the eastern empire in depth. This book provides detailed information on the history and culture of the skorne, the harsh world that shaped them, and the cities they have built. *Skorne Empire* gives players an unprecedented glimpse into the unique culture of the east and the opportunity to take on the role of the skorne.

Enhance your *Iron Kingdoms Unleashed* experience with all-new content. *Skorne Empire* contains a treasure trove of options for both player characters and antagonists, including new races, careers, abilities, spells, adventuring companies, gear, warbeasts, and more. Play entire campaigns in the arid lands of the Skorne Empire, join the Army of the Western Reaches as it strikes ever deeper into the heart of the west, or face off against the military might of the invading skorne and defend your home from conquest and bondage at the hands of their armies.

With this book in hand, you stand ready to lead your own invasion on the Iron Kingdoms. Wield the traditional weapons of your caste and command a cohort of brave warriors to strike against the west. Will you achieve glory in battle and join the hallowed ranks of your exalted ancestors? Adhere to the warrior code of *hoksune*, fight for the glory of your house, and perhaps the extollers will deem you worthy.

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THE SKORNE EMPIRE

Beyond the harsh and unforgiving expanse of the Bloodstone Desert lies a savage world of strange beasts and perilous lands utterly unlike the Iron Kingdoms. Divided from the west for millennia by a chasm that cracks the continent in two and the tempestuous Stormlands, eastern Immoren is a blasted, dangerous realm where only the strong survive.

Shaped by a cataclysm that split Immoren in half, eastern Immoren has always been a difficult land of barren expanses and desolate wastes. The arcane apocalypse brought on by the elves in the Time of the Burning Sky only intensified the dangers of the east, shaping the lands through storm and fire. The weak perished, while the powerful and ruthless thrived. A new landscape formed over many centuries of struggle and battle, creating an exotic region filled with menace and mystery.

From this place rose the skorne, a race of hardened survivors with a seemingly limitless appetite for conquest. When these brutal inhabitants of eastern Immoren learned of other nations across the great divide of the world, they made the perilous trek west. Emerging from the blasted expanse of the Bloodstone Desert, the warriors of the east fell upon the Iron Kingdoms like predators upon unsuspecting prey. Within three years the skorne army had carved out permanent fortifications on the western side of the chasm and could launch relentless assaults against the borders of the kingdoms of men.

The warriors of this army do not fight simply for conquest, but in the hope of earning immortality through great deeds. Skorne have no gods to protect them in death, believing their spirits fall into a never-ending torment in the Void instead of finding peace or rest. Most skorne accept this outcome as their likely fate, but some aspire to a greater destiny and strive to earn exaltation, or the preservation of their spirit in a sacrificial stone. Those warriors deemed worthy of this honor become the revered ancestor spirits of the skorne, glorious champions preserved and shielded from the torments of the Void.

The incursion of the skorne represents an invasion of western Immoren on a scale not seen since the landing of the Orgoth. Their militaristic society—with its prowess in battle, formidable numbers, and focus on conquest—is inimical to the survival of every race in western Immoren. Their goal is nothing less than the utter subjugation of the west, bringing its peoples into the Skorne Empire. Those who resist will be slaughtered in glorious battle; those who capitulate will be added to the ranks of slaves in servitude to the conquerors.

Skorne have been the dominant inhabitants of eastern Immoren for thousands of years. They came to prominence after the destruction of Lyoss in 4000 BR forced the surviving elves to flee into the west and settle in the kingdom of Ios. Skorne

occupy a similar niche in eastern Immoren as humans in the west, and recent events have brought both sides of the continent together in a violent clash.

Before the arrival of the former king of Cygnar, Vinter Raelthorne IV, the skorne lived as a fractured, feudal society consumed by inter-house warfare. The Conqueror used great strength of arms and charisma to convince skorne leaders he was one of their greatest ancestors born once again in living flesh. Known as the Reborn, Vinter used his martial skill to bend the legends of the skorne to his own designs. Entire armies swore fealty to him as he marched toward the great skorne city of Halaak, and the Conqueror built the Skorne Empire upon those who bent the knee to him.

Though Vinter's reign was brief, he instituted sweeping changes to skorne society, particularly in regard to its organization, castes, and approach to warfare. The impact of Vinter's reign was enormous. He transformed the skorne from a nation of feuding houses into a unified empire. By requiring skorne houses to support the Army of the Western Reaches and consolidating warriors into new houses, he forged a realm united in the thirst for conquest. Vinter planted the idea of plundering the untapped wealth in the west, since before his arrival the skorne were ignorant of anything beyond the Stormlands.

The Conqueror's reign came to an end at the hands of Makeda of House Balaash. After discovering Vinter's ultimate plan to use the skorne only as a weapon and means of reclaiming the Cygnaran throne, Makeda led the Army of the Western Reaches to besiege Vinter's Abyssal Fortress and unseat him. In the end Makeda succeeded, but not before Vinter slew many skilled tyrants loyal to her. Makeda could have returned to the east and dissolved the empire, but she chose to stay and remake Vinter's vision into a truly skorne image.

The new Supreme Archdomina Makeda of House Balaash has taken the reins of the empire. Makeda has a deep reverence for tradition, but she retained the governing reforms instituted by the Conqueror that helped create a single united empire. In particular, she preserved the infrastructure that facilitates the smooth functioning of her vast army. Conquest of the west remains the highest priority for the new leader of the Skorne Empire.

Nothing unifies a people more than war against an external enemy, particularly a people who view battle as a sacred necessity. The skorne see the value in putting aside their internal difficulties to focus on external conquest. Houses stake their fortunes on expanding the empire to gain new and fertile lands on foreign soil. Warriors strive to earn the honor of exaltation and stand among the paragons whose souls the extollers preserve past death.

One decade cannot erase thousands of years of history. The arrival of the Conqueror changed the focus and organization

DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE SKORNE EMPIRE

Ruler: Supreme Archdomina Makeda

Government Type: Military Tyranny

Capital: Halaak

Ethnic Groups & Approx. Population: Kademesh (2,565,000), Sortaani (1,750,000), Malzash (470,000), Kasortaan (355,000), Kajar (135,000), various slave populations (1,500,000)

Languages: Havaati (primary), Kadesh, Soresh (dialect of Havaati)

Climate: Temperate and moderate in the southeast, arid in the west and north. Mirketh Lake moderates the weather, sustaining a fertile river valley to the southeast. Winter brings a rainy season with sporadic and intense rainfall, but total annual rainfall remains low.

Terrain: Arid badlands to the east and desert to north, south, and west, with an extensive chain of weathered mountains north of Mirketh Lake. Scorched plains and savanna comprise much of the central and western region. Controlled territory includes parts of three deserts: the Blasted Desert in the north, the Mokkar to the south, and the Bloodstone Desert in the west.

Natural Resources: Copper, tin, salt, clay, iron ore, quartz, obsidian, basalt, granite, silver, gold, sulfur, marble, limestone, cattle, beasts, hides



of the skorne, but their culture and society remains intact. The skorne prosper despite harsh conditions and constant peril. They survive by embracing a degree of pragmatism that some would call cruelty.

HISTORY

For convenience this section uses the standard dating system of western Immoren, which divides history into two parts relative to the struggle against the Orgoth. Older dates count backward from the start of the Rebellion against the Orgoth and are given as BR (Before Rebellion). More recent dates count forward from that point and are given as AR (After Rebellion). As the skorne did not maintain written records until ~3000 BR and few systematic archives predate ~1000 BR, dates presented here are approximate reconstructions by extollers via communion with exalted ancestors.

An ancient people, the skorne claim thousands of years of history and countless legends, and each individual house maintains its own lengthy chronicle and roster of memorable ancestors. The following by necessity constitutes only a cursory overview of the major events that shaped the people of eastern Immoren and ultimately the Skorne Empire.

ORIGINS

The written history of the skorne stretches back thousands of years. Their verbal legends extend well before this, to a time when they were a race of tribal nomads ranging across southeastern Immoren. The skorne did not begin recording their history until long after they became a settled people and learned the means to preserve the spirits of their most revered leaders as exalted.

Most intelligent races on Immoren maintain myths and legends of their origins, tying their beginning to primal or ancient gods. The skorne disdain those who cling to myths and consider the worship of gods as a weakness. They disparage those who look to otherworldly beings more powerful than themselves for answers, an attitude that became deeply entrenched during their interactions with the elves of the Lyossan Empire. These self-indulgent and indolent neighbors embodied everything the skorne despised.

The skorne look to their ancestors for guidance and inspiration. They do not remember a myth that addresses their origins; if they ever had one, it has been swallowed by the passage of untold millennia. Skorne pride themselves on independence from eternal and unfathomable beings, preferring to remember the great heroes and thinkers of their own kind who carved legends from their hostile environment with blades and spears. The skorne do not lack faith or beliefs, but other inhabitants of the continent find their spiritual customs difficult to understand.

TRIBAL HISTORY

The houses of the skorne jealously guard ancestral records drawn from the memories of ancient spirits, and some houses disagree on the specifics of the most ancient times. However, the great houses have reached a general accord regarding the early history of their race.

SKORNE CALENDAR

Skorne dating begins loosely with the cataclysm of the fall of the Bridge of Worlds and its aftermath circa 4000 BR. This date was never firmly placed, however, since skorne writing did not develop for another thousand years. A widely adopted calendar system appeared circa 1000 BR, evolving over subsequent centuries. Former Supreme Archdominar Vinter Raelthorne introduced the western calendar to the skorne, but its adoption proceeds slowly outside Halaak. A general tendency toward imprecise dating by the skorne makes creating a definitive timeline challenging.

The skorne reckon the current year as 4526, 4370, or 4475 depending on the source. Skorne prefer to utilize generations, a period equal to roughly 20 years, to measure time. For example, some might describe the fall of Lyoss as "226 generations past," which translates into approximately 4,520 years. For all these reasons, accuracy demands reference to the dating system employed in western Immoren.

In the times before the Cataclysm, somewhere around 5000 BR, bands of skorne lived amid the badlands of southeastern Immoren and survived by hunting wild beasts and raiding the outlying communities of the elven Lyossan Empire. This empire was vast, occupying a substantial portion of central and eastern Immoren, and its largest cities were formidable and well guarded. The skorne avoided highly populated elven areas, since the elves possessed unfamiliar and deadly weapons as well as numerical superiority. Yet the elves were so many that their warriors could not protect the entire population at once. Outlying smaller elven communities were vulnerable, easy prey for the skorne.

For hundreds of years the skorne embodied an untamed menace to these elves, like a band of hungry wolves stalking beyond the firelight. If skorne raiding parties attracted the attention of organized Lyossan forces, retaliation was swift and brutal. But after each attack, the skorne withdrew into the arid regions where the elves were reluctant to give chase. Skorne tribal raids were swift and difficult to predict, and their lack of settled communities frustrated the ordinarily sedentary Lyossans. Lyoss protected its cities, but the elves repeatedly failed to eliminate the raiders that plagued their remote settlements.

Warlords sometimes came to prominence among the skorne tribes, some of whom would eventually bring together disparate tribes into larger, more powerful forces. When such warlords arose, the generals of Lyoss went to great lengths to exterminate them as expediently as possible to prevent substantial harm to the elven

empire. Without a powerful leader to hold the tribes together, the raiders took what they had seized and returned to their harsh lands, where they fell upon one another over the spoils.

VOSKUNE THE ASCETIC

For untold generations the skorne captured and subdued the useful beasts of their environments, not always consuming them as food. They trained suitable creatures as beasts of burden and mounts for war. From this rudimentary manipulation of beasts arose the first skorne mystical arts.

An ancient philosopher and ascetic named Voskune began the study of anatomy and bestial behavior. He did not consider himself separate from the beasts, seeing his own body as a similar subject for study and experimentation. After decades of mortifying his own flesh, fasting in the desert, and pitting his combat prowess against beasts many times his size, Voskune began to understand the link between the flesh and its essence—the spirit. Voskune dissected the living and the dead to make sense of this connection. He plucked out his own eye to learn the complex structure of tissue and fluids and replaced it with a polished orb of crystal that allowed him to perceive the vital essence of all living things, vivid in moments of anguish or when the body lingers near death. The moment of death was a particular fascination to him, and Voskune was the first to witness the spirits of slain skorne fall howling into a chasm he called the Void. This, he saw, was a place entirely separate from the world of the living, where the dead experienced endless torment and agony.

Voskune lived longer than most, but he too eventually died. His disciples carried his work forward. Ten generations after his death, two skorne named Ishoul and Kaleed worked together to achieve a breakthrough. Ishoul discovered that when cut and polished, certain stones pulled at a spirit, drawing it like water into a sponge. Ishoul and Kaleed spent their lives working with these stones, refining the process to increase the strength of this pull on the spirit. Both duplicated Voskune's sacrifice, removing an eye and replacing it with a crystal orb to perceive the spirits of the dead. Ishoul and Kaleed witnessed the ephemeral world of the spirits all around them and saw the essences of dying skorne consumed by the Void after death. These forebears of all extollers theorized that a skorne spirit might be preserved from this fate using one of their faceted stones.

VUXORIS THE FIRST EXALTED

The leader of Ishoul's and Kaleed's house, a venerable warlord named Vuxoris, became the First Exalted through their ministrations. In his youth, Vuxoris earned great fame for his prowess as a warrior and leader. In his later years, he formulated a warrior code and philosophy called *hoksune*. This doctrine detailed the higher ideals of skorne martial combat as well as the values, lifestyle, and mental strength expected of a true warrior. In the absence of a written skorne language, Vuxoris' teachings were passed directly from teachers to students for fourteen centuries before becoming one of the first subjects preserved in writing. Indeed, skorne writing came about specifically to preserve the teachings of such masters as Vuxoris and eventually the history of seminal mystics such as Voskune, Ishoul, and Kaleed.

Near the end of his life, Vuxoris brooded over the preservation of his teachings. Knowing the work of the great mystics, he asked Ishoul to preserve his spirit so his lore would not fade. As Vuxoris' death approached, Ishoul and Kaleed enacted rites to capture Vuxoris' spiritual essence in a polished obsidian vessel, the first sacral stone. They discovered that Vuxoris could be contacted, albeit with difficulty, and that he was now preserved and essentially immortal. The stone held great power and manifested strange phenomena, energized by the warrior's spirit within. Despite committing their remaining days to the study of Vuxoris' sacral stone, the pair failed to discover the full extent of the power of exalted ancestors. It would be many more generations before the skorne learned how to harness this power and call on the ancestors for aid.

Skorne philosophers record the creation of sacral stones as one of the most important events in their history. Yet from the beginning, the early mystics established that these rituals must be reserved for the greatest of skorne and that very few would be worthy of such preservation. Vuxoris was held up as a paragon others should hope to emulate—a warrior both intelligent and skilled, whose adherence to his strict code enabled him to rise above all others. Those of purely cerebral accomplishments were not deemed worthy of preservation. Though some scholars lamented that Voskune was lost and also considered it tragic that both Ishoul and Kaleed refused to benefit from the very arts they had pioneered, most skorne who came after saw in this distinction the foundation for their deepest beliefs. Being exalted was a state that must be reserved for the greatest practitioners of hoksune, those who followed the example of Vuxoris. Lesser castes contributed their intelligence and skills to the greatness of skorne society, each in their own way, but such individuals were expected to accept their fate—consignment to the Void after death to join such paragons as Ishoul, Kaleed, and Voskune.

In time other great skorne would build on the work of those who had come before. One of the most formidable arose twelve generations before the destruction of Lyoss. The philosopher-warrior named Morkaash focused on studying anatomy and the infliction of pain and agony. He believed sublime enlightenment was a result of suffering, and he sought to understand the mechanisms by which living bodies function. In the spark of pain he saw the crux of life and urge to survive, an impulse that could overwhelm rational thought and break the conscious will. Morkaash tested himself against the great beasts of the badlands by conquering them in battle, dissecting them, and studying their inner workings. His philosophy carried on after his death. His followers improved their techniques over many lifetimes, eventually giving rise to paingivers and surgeons.

In the centuries following the deaths of Voskune, Ishoul, Kaleed, and Morkaash, some continued to devote themselves to deeper mysteries. Though many extollers were content merely to undertake funerary rites and see to treasured ancestral stones, others sought a deeper understanding of the nature of the spirit. Some walked the path of Voskune or Morkaash, seeking deeper understanding of the sublime power of suffering and the divide between life and death. Over the centuries, the work of these mystics evolved into a uniquely skorne occult science called mortitheurgy.

THE CATACLYSM AND THE FIRST CITIES

Around 4000 BR a world-shaking event irrevocably changed the course of skorne history. The Empire of Lyoss obliterated itself during an attempt to bring the gods of the elves across their Bridge of Worlds. Unleashing forces powerful enough to split Caen in two, the Lyossans sundered Immoren and gave birth to the Abyss. For centuries after the Cataclysm, the continent endured supernatural earthquakes, storms, wildfires, and countless other disasters. The survivors of eastern Immoren were plunged into a dark age, struggling for basic survival. The details of the folly undertaken by the elves were not known to the skorne of the time, though they endured the aftermath.

The Cataclysm necessitated a transformation of skorne society away from its nomadic traditions. It became imperative to build permanent shelters against unpredictable and intense windstorms, dust gales, and flooding. The skorne who most successfully endured this period of hardship took to the shelter of the Shroudwall Mountains. Survival required mastery of masonry, engineering, and city building as these communities erected structures to withstand the supernatural forces that raged around them.

The first city of the skorne was founded in the shadow of the Shroudwall Mountains in the 3800s BR. Kelskor, the dominar of House Kraltash, named it Malphas. The largest and most established skorne tribes inhabiting this growing city coalesced into houses. Most houses maintained the former tribes' rivalries, and every house sought to arm and train a sizable force to protect its interests and wage war against its adversaries. The fractured houses continued to vie with one another for temporary dominance and crucial resources such as stone quarries, isolated plots of fertile soil, untainted wells, underground streams, and access to the east's difficult hunting grounds.

The more structured life afforded by the cities influenced the growth and refinement of many skorne arts, particularly the military arts. In these early years the skorne began to form distinct martial disciplines that would evolve into the Cataphracts, Praetorians, and Venators. As the skorne grew into an agricultural society, they rapidly advanced the arts of beast handling and mortitheurgy. Over the centuries paingivers began to experiment with an ever-growing variety of creatures. Their increasing knowledge of anatomy and the application of pain led to breakthroughs in their craft and in related mortitheurgical arts, paving the way for the first skorne warbeasts. Permanent settlements allowed mortitheurges to engage in precise study and allowed extollers to hone their spiritual arts. These highly skilled specialists quickly gained special stature as distinct sub-castes.

Two hundred years after its founding, the city of Malphas would give rise to the first archdominar. Murzoul the Tireless gained dominance over all the feuding houses of the city and was the first to use the title to represent his authority. Eventually Malphas became overcrowded and many of its houses abandoned the city to settle on the southern shores of Mirketh Lake and along the banks of its rivers. Shortly after this exodus, the city of Halaak was founded.

EXALTING THE LOWER CASTES

In order to receive exaltation upon death, a skorne must prove he is worthy of the honor. For a member of the warrior caste, this is a relatively straightforward process of impressing an extoller through adherence to *hoksune* and superiority in battle. Exaltation is rarely rewarded to members of the non-warrior castes, but senior extollers can grant exaltation to any skorne they deem worthy based on singular and significant contributions to skorne society. Some believe the greatest minds of the skorne should be valued equally alongside the greatest warriors, though this view is not without controversy. Most skorne mystics, for example, believe it is a tragedy that Voskune, Ishoul, and Kaleed were not exalted. The first and most notable scholar to receive this unusual honor was Kexorus, the Sage of Malphas. He earned exaltation around 3000 BR after inventing the skorne alphabet and carving its runes in stone to preserve ancient histories, legends, and the *hoksune* warrior code of Vuxoris.

Halaak grew in size and importance for hundreds of years, eventually becoming larger and grander than Malphas. This prompted more great houses of Malphas to abandon the ancient city in favor of building estates within or close to Halaak, cementing Halaak's role as the heart of skorne civilization.

Halaak's supremacy among the cities of the skorne went unchallenged for many centuries until a major rival appeared far to the southeast at the mouth of the Hezaat River. Skorne communities had existed along the river for more than a thousand years, but none had risen to any prominence. As the city of Kademe grew in power, the dominars of Halaak took notice, sending spies into the city in the guise of trade envoys.

In 1180 BR, the tension between Kademe and Halaak manifested violently when Lord Tyrant Hyvlaarik of House Kahzek in Kademe warned Halaak against violent intrusions into the area, boasting of the "invincible armies" of the thriving southern city. The lord tyrant executed fifty visitors as spies after submitting them to extensive interrogation by paingivers in his employ. This action sparked the First War of the Hezaat River, the War of Hezaat Retaliation, and the Second War of the Hezaat River. Fighting between houses in Halaak and Kademe continued for centuries. Halaak was never seriously threatened during this time, though vast numbers of enslaved warriors and Hestatians died defending the city.

The cycle of wars continued until Halaak forces pushed the Kademe warriors all the way back to their city and burned nearly half of it down. Several defending house lords fled by boat

and were thereafter vilified and exiled from their abandoned city. The triumphant houses of Halaak enslaved the region and compelled the elder houses of Kademe to sign humiliating promises of reparations and ongoing tribute. For two decades, an annual festival took place during which an heir of one of the Kademe houses was picked at random and dragged through the streets on a length of chain by a rampaging titan. Mortitheurges kept the victim alive until his body literally fell apart, at which time festivities praising Halaak carried on through the evening.

WAR OF THE EXALTED

The next few centuries following the wars of the Hezaat were relatively peaceful, at least by skorne standards. This changed in 707 BR with the outbreak of what would become known as the War of the Exalted. Dominar Helzar, leader of a house near what is now Kajim, claimed all titans of this region as his property and demanded tribute from any seeking to use these beasts. Houses from Kalvat contested this claim, and the ensuing war eventually drew in houses from every major settlement. The war ended in a massive six-way battle at a site now called the Graves of the Exalted, which few survived. More great warriors received exaltation in this battle than in any previous conflict. Dominar Helzar and his house were utterly crushed. Thereafter, surviving houses vowed to obliterate any faction that attempted to monopolize titans or other useful beasts.

MODERN SKORNE LANGUAGE

The skorne dialect known as Havaati, spoken by a majority of western skorne, can trace its roots to the aftermath of the War of the Exalted. In an attempt to record a definitive account of the events, the lord tyrant-turned-scholar Havaatan transcribed an epic rendition of these battles. This work codified many aspects of the language and grammar utilized by literate skorne.

The centuries following the War of the Exalted saw no large-scale wars among the skorne, though other significant events occurred. In 504 BR, the volcano Karrak erupted to the south of Halaak. Communities for miles around the mountain were obliterated. Halaak was far enough from the mountain to escape the initial explosion, but debris and ash rained down on the city for weeks. During what would be known as the "Month of Darkness," thousands died from choking ash. The eruption unbalanced the already-harsh environment and caused a famine that killed thousands in the years following. It took years for the region to fully recover from the eruption, and many smaller communities surrounding Halaak disappeared completely as the survivors fled to the crowded city in search of safety and food.

The next major event of this era took place nearly one thousand years after the eruption of Karrak and changed the way skorne would fight all future wars. A small group of skorne chymists created a highly volatile gas they named *venhokar*. This gas was treated as a scientific curiosity for nearly thirty years. This changed in 490 AR with the creation of the reiver firearm by a retired Praetorian-turned-engineer named Honaek of House Lushon. The Lushon dominar attempted to capitalize on the invention and create an edge over his rivals by producing a secret arsenal of reivers, but spies from stronger houses discovered the operation before its completion. To preserve his house, the dominar made an alliance with House Jakaar at unfavorable terms and surrendered the arsenal.

Over the next decade, other houses used spies and torture to learn the secret of the reiver. The widespread adoption of this weapon finally elevated the Venator discipline to its current position in skorne culture, despite the disapproval of Praetorians and Cataphracts. Warriors who had previously been relegated to the operation of siege engines or limited use as slingers could now take a greater part in house wars and hope to win the honor of exaltation.

One of the last great warlords during this period was Archdominar Vaactash of House Balaash. Through slaughter and careful politics he carved out a large territory north of Halaak. His rule outlasted any other archdominar on record, and he quashed numerous attempts by his subordinates to assassinate him. Vaactash eventually died and was succeeded by his grandson Akkad, which led to the Battle for Balaash. Vaactash's granddaughter Makeda, a firm adherent of hoksune, held that her brother assassinated their grandfather for control of Balaash. Her army launched an attack against Akkad's forces on the shores of Mirketh Lake as she infiltrated her brother's camp to confront him. Makeda slew her brother in a duel, assumed control of House Balaash, and secured her place in skorne history.

EMERGENCE OF THE REBORN AND BIRTH OF THE EMPIRE

The arrival of the human outcast Vinter Raelthorne IV in 594 AR heralded the eventual establishment of a true Skorne Empire. Vinter's arrival at the outskirts of skorne territory resulted in immediate hostility, but he slew the first warriors who sought to put him down. Though he did not know their language, Vinter made his challenge clear to the leaders of these villages, calling them out to duel. Forced to defend their honor by the hoksune code, these minor tyrants were also slain, and by tradition the warriors of these houses were forced to bow to their conqueror.

Vinter soon learned the language of the skorne and found their warrior traditions suited him. His martial skill so impressed the warriors of these villages that many began to believe that Vinter was some sort of blood-mad messiah, while others thought him a vengeful kovaas spirit, not flesh at all. Vinter went from one village to the next, working his way inward toward the great city of Halaak, while his army of conquered warriors grew. It was clear to all that a force of change had arrived, though few initially welcomed it.

The fight for Halaak lasted a year before Vinter's forces finally subdued the city. Soon after that, Vinter faced one of the toughest battles of what became known as the First Unification when he crossed blades with Archdomina Makeda north of Halaak. Eventually overwhelmed, Makeda surrendered and offered her service to the Conqueror. Makeda was the first to speak of Vinter Raelthorne as the Reborn, proclaiming him to have the spirit of a skorne ancestor despite his human appearance.

Three years after the First Unification began, its last major battle was fought between Vinter and Narkuuru, an archdominar of Kademe, on the plains northwest of that city. This battle, which came to be called Narkuuru's Last Stand, signaled the end of the remaining skorne houses. Thereafter, all bent the knee to the Conqueror. In a ceremony in Halaak, Vinter Raelthorne took the title of Supreme Archdominar and founded the Skorne Empire.

Vinter spent the next few years consolidating his rule and rooting out subversive plots by houses seeking to regain independence. Vinter also used his experience governing a nation to reorganize some aspects of skorne society, dividing the empire into distinct regions called *tors*. He appointed leaders to govern the tors and ensure that subordinate houses contributed to an army of conquest. His greatest achievement was creating a military system that remained true to ancient skorne traditions and preserved their philosophies while supporting the logistics of assembling hundreds of thousands of warriors into a single army.

As soon as Vinter had the Skorne Empire under control, he turned his attention back to the west. His first act in what would become a war for domination of the Iron Kingdoms was

the construction of the Conqueror's Bridge and the Abyssal Fortress. These structures allowed large armies of skorne to be mustered and trained at a central location and then cross the Abyss, bringing the skorne into the western half of the continent for the first time.

Less than a decade after he arrived in eastern Immoren, Vinter Raelthorne led a vanguard into the west to seize Corvis as a mustering point for the full invasion. In Halaak, the house lords took the opportunity of Vinter's absence to rebel, disobeying standing orders to send additional forces. Without reinforcements, Vinter was driven from Corvis. Upon his return to Halaak he was forced to begin another war against malcontent dominars—the Second Unification.

Hoping to throw off the yoke of the Conqueror's rule, many houses turned on the loyalists still in the east. Late in the year, Vinter's army broke the extended siege around the fortress compound of House Balaash. Archdomina Makeda joined Vinter against the rebellious house lords, thereafter termed the Betrayers. Vinter made a special effort to capture these rebellious dominars. Those who failed to escape his agents were forced to endure torment beyond imagination at the hands of his personal paingiver, Master Tormentor Morghoul. As further insult, the Conqueror had them slaughtered and refused them funerary rites, including exaltation, as a lesson to their heirs.



In less than two years the Second Unification was complete. With the skorne once more under his control, Vinter Raelthorne moved his seat to the Abyssal Fortress and initiated reforms requiring all houses to contribute soldiers to the Army of the Western Reaches. As a reward for Archdomina Makeda's loyalty, Vinter granted her the dominion of the western empire and tasked her with leading the army he sent to conquer the west. Slaves and soldiers moved rapidly west to construct a supply chain of fortresses and waypoints beyond the Abyss, eventually occupying key points on the western fringes of the Iron Kingdoms.

While planning attacks upon Cygnaran fortifications, Makeda learned Vinter's true plans: to weaken the skorne and Cygnar both in order to reclaim his former throne. Makeda rebelled against Vinter's rule, redirecting her army to march against him. She drove the Conqueror from the Abyssal Fortress and claimed the title of Supreme Archdomina of the Skorne Empire. The fate of Vinter after being deposed is unknown.

SOCIETY

The skorne are one of Immoren's most ancient civilizations. Their culture developed apart from the forces that shaped the western nations, but though they never suffered the lash of the Orgoth or the conflicts of the west, they endured a litany of catastrophes and warfare. The skorne have been fundamentally shaped by tremendous destruction and suffering, beginning with the annihilation of the Empire of Lyoss and the supernatural cataclysm that consumed the east. Had the Lyossans not plunged the world into fire, though, the skorne would likely never have risen to prominence. From humble nomadic roots, the skorne established a permanent civilization in an era of dramatic upheaval. Over thousands of years spent thriving despite misfortune and learning to strengthen themselves through privation, the skorne developed into the dominant inhabitants of eastern Immoren and became one of the two most influential races on the continent.

The skorne are devotees of millennia-old philosophies that shaped a complex society with distinct concepts of honor, sacrifice, and morality. Their long history of struggling for survival and internecine warfare amid a desolate environment forged them into remarkable warriors who draw on a powerful and dark mystical tradition that taps into the very power of flesh and death. Though they were once fractured and divided, the unification of the skorne into an empire has turned them into an existential threat to the west, a culture of proud, united warriors boasting a singularly formidable army bent on conquest. For the skorne, the subjugation of the west is the only possible outcome of thousands of years of refining the arts of war.

Philosophy has played a key role in the evolution of the skorne people, including the central tenet of ancestor worship. The skorne do not acknowledge or revere gods but look instead to the great figures of their family lines and aspire to emulate those who have achieved greatness. Such a legacy is the closest most skorne can come to immortality; they have no expectation of enduring past death except in the memories of their kin. They have no knowledge of Urcaen. Instead, the skorne believe only annihilation awaits them as their spirits tumble into a hellish wasteland they call the Void.

Skorne society is strictly regimented, with the warrior caste above all others. Great warlords direct the course of skorne society, and the warrior caste subjugates the workers and scholars who advance skorne society in more subtle ways. Their tribal culture relies upon the enslavement of defeated enemies and the use of beasts of labor. All skorne dwelling within the empire know their place in society, who their betters are, and how to offer the proper amount of deference to their superiors. The caste system exists even among tribal nomads living beyond the borders, though not as rigidly enforced as within the great cities of eastern Immoren.



SKORNE HOUSES

The largest and most established skorne tribes coalesced into houses thousands of years ago, with some tracing their roots back to the establishment of Malphas, the first permanent city of the skorne. Most houses maintained the former tribes' rivalries, and every house sought to arm and train a sizable force to protect its interests and wage war against its adversaries. These house armies laid the foundation for the modern cohorts.

All skorne are born as members of a specific house or into its service, and they know their place within it from a very early age. Membership in a house can be abandoned by those entering into certain mystical traditions—a step not taken lightly, as such individuals can never return. Even small groups of skorne who live in nomadic groups maintain a similar structure, though their families may include fewer social strata. A tyrant or dominar who leads a house has complete power over its members and can do what he pleases, as long as he obeys the dominar or archdominar to whom he is sworn and honors the broad codes of skorne honor. A tyrant will designate a chosen heir, most often a first-born child, to be groomed for leadership.

Below the tyrant are senior military officers, often chosen from the tyrant's immediate family, who oversee the house's warriors, which comprise the house's army. Below the warriors are a house's workers, divided by function and led by masters in their respective fields. Lowest of all are the slaves. A house may employ individuals that are not technically members of the house, such as paingivers, who nonetheless must obey house leaders during their time of service.

Many houses were founded hundreds, if not thousands, of years ago and they still keep fortified palaces in the cities of the skorne homelands. These compounds can be truly enormous in the case of the wealthiest houses, which maintain equally impressive private armies. Sizable houses boast shrines to their great ancestors and the exalted members of their bloodlines. The pious spend time in meditation at these sacral-stone shrines, particularly before embarking on difficult tasks. As houses fell in the wars of unification over the past few decades, the victors claimed many of the sacral stones from these shrines. House Balaash holds a vast store of seized sacral stones from previous conquests. Now that it is the Imperial House, these stones and any newer exalted gathered in the course of ongoing conquest are under the care of Supreme Aptimus Zaal, who leads the entire extoller caste.

Before the founding of the Skorne Empire, wars between houses were common. The destruction caused by most of these wars was limited by the desire of each side to seize the lands and assets of the other. These assets included not only wealth and resources but also the members of the defeated house, who were enslaved as a matter of course. It was quite common for house members outside the warrior caste to endure these conflicts with little loss of life, changing one house allegiance for another as they became slaves of the victor. Nevertheless, skorne history is marked by a number of major wars involving large alliances between dozens of houses that reshaped the landscape of society and devastated cities, forcing the victors to rebuild what had been torn down.

Since the wars of unification, fighting between competing houses has been considerably reduced, but not entirely eliminated. The nature of skorne society traditionally made it difficult for groups to work together effectively across house divides, though communication has improved substantially since the reforms imposed by the Conqueror. Conflicts tend to be smaller in scale and ritually formalized since the imposition of empire, but remain a method of vying for political supremacy and settling disputes. Members of houses that are defeated can still be enslaved by the victors, an important aspect of the slave-based skorne economy.

DARK GIFTS

The skorne are an inherently gifted race and take easily to the study of the arcane arts. In addition to the extollers who are so vital in preserving the exalted from the Void, the skorne integrate magically gifted individuals throughout their societies. Indeed, the Gifted often rise to the highest echelons of skorne society. The great houses of the skorne are dominated by powerful tyrants and dominars who have mastered the arts of mortitheurgy and are able to command their subjects in life and in death.

CASTES

Caste means everything to the skorne. Each knows his exact place among his peers. The existence of castes predates the transition from nomadic to urban culture after the construction of Malphas. Urban living greatly accelerated these caste divisions, calcifying rapidly once the skorne settled in the Shroudwall Mountains following the Cataclysm that destroyed the ancient Lyossan Empire and shaped the land of Immoren into a clear east and west. The word for "warrior" has the same ancient root as "hunter" and meant those who stalked the plains. Today a distinct difference exists between these groups within the larger warrior caste.

Failing to practice proper caste conventions and show proper respect can provoke the insulted skorne to bloodshed. Cases of extreme insult can throw entire houses into war. The imposition of centralized rule has not changed this fundamental aspect of skorne society. Killing another skorne over insults remains perfectly acceptable behavior. Peers consider the death of one combatant as an affirmation of the loser's weakness and the end of the matter.

The caste system only indirectly affects governance. Caste represents a social force rather than chain of command. Two house lords, bitter rivals and enemies, may wage battle with all of the resources of their respective houses, yet they occupy the pinnacle of their castes and therefore remain peers. Even

enemies of lower caste owe them respect. A lowly soldier of an enemy house cannot voice an insult to an enemy house lord, for such a person stands far above his station. Making eye contact with an enemy lord may merit brutal punishment by the soldier's superiors regardless of the enmity between their respective houses.

The skorne are organized into three basic caste categories: warriors, workers, and slaves. Each of these categories encompasses additional layers added over the millennia. Additionally, two distinct special castes slightly transcend these categories: the paingivers and the extollers. Both technically fall within the worker caste, but their unique roles in skorne society afford them special respect and status above the rest of the worker caste. While sometimes inflexible, skorne society has evolved over time as the need arose. The emergence of Vinter Raelthorne forced adjustments in thinking by adding a layer of hierarchy to which the skorne are still adapting.

Birth determines a skorne's initial caste, and opportunities to attain a higher caste are severely limited. Some few raise themselves at the onset of adulthood through a demonstration of combat prowess or other exceptional skills, for example, but nearly all skorne remain in their birth caste for life. Rising above the slave caste is especially difficult—usually impossible within a single lifespan. More often the offspring of an enslaved generation have the opportunity to rise to the worker or warrior castes. A slave can be elevated beyond his birth caste through the intercession of his lord, but such occurrences are rare in the extreme.

A skorne with very specialized skills may perform two roles without loss of status. If a warrior also happens to be a weaponsmith, he receives the respect due his warrior status. This situation commonly arises among occultists and other intellectuals who also fight on the battlefield, such as mortitheurges and extollers. For example, Lord Tyrant Hexeris of House Kurshon acts as both a cohort leader and a master mortitheurge. His warrior standing takes precedence over his occult studies to determine caste standing. A Hestatian serving his liege as a weaponsmith remains a Hestatian, although his peers who fight more often hold him in lower regard. When a skorne gives up his weapons, whether from age or crippling injury, he falls from the warrior caste. Such skorne can become members of the worker caste, but few choose this fate, seeing such diminishment as worse than death. Some old or crippled warriors instead venture one last time into the wilds with a weapon readied, hoping for a death that is in keeping with the hoksune code.

A house lord poses the one exception to this general attitude. A lord always ranks among the warrior caste regardless of his fighting skill or actual presence on the battlefield, though there are strong social pressures for house lords to prove themselves worthy. Lords of active fighting houses command far greater prestige than their inactive peers. It is acceptable for older house lords to dabble in other areas of power, such as expanding their practice of mortitheurgy at the expense of their fighting prowess. However, younger heirs who desire to lead while in their prime may resort to violence in supplanting elder house lords. There are acceptable and unacceptable ways to go

about this: confronting a tyrant in a duel is honorable; having one killed via proxies or other indirect means is cowardly and dishonorable. A lord widely suspected of having secured his position dishonorably rarely lives long and is likely to be toppled in turn by an officer who is respected by his house army.

THE WARRIOR CASTE

Every skorne is keenly aware of the position of his caste and his level of prominence, and of the relation of these factors to those of his superiors, peers, and inferiors. Though all warriors in the skorne armies are members of the warrior caste, subtle but important distinctions exist within this group that provide different degrees of stature and esteem. Each warrior discipline has its own pride of place and values its distinct fighting style and discipline, but some are acknowledged to be closer to the core of hoksune than others.

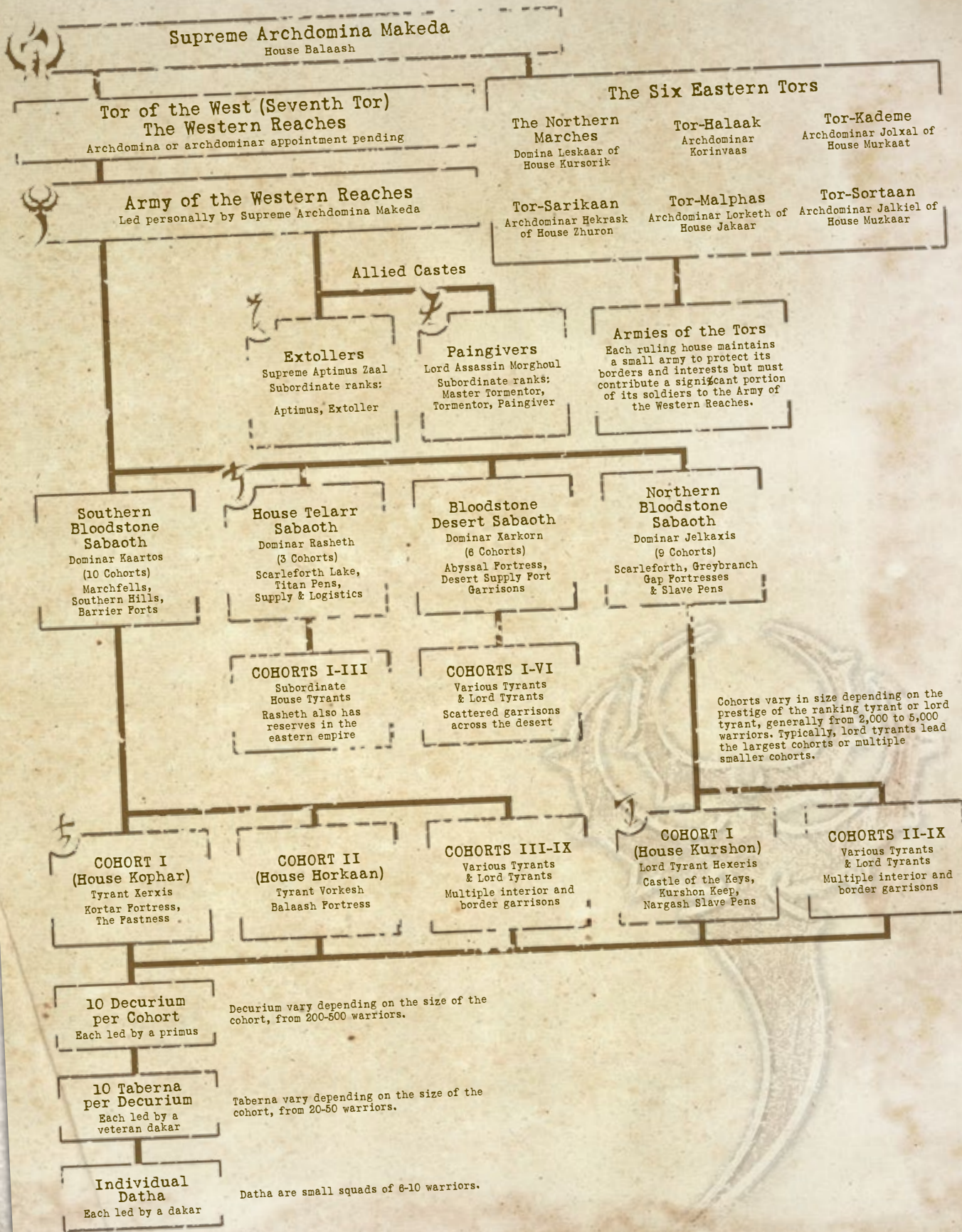
Because of the size of the warrior caste, many warriors also perform tasks normally relegated to lower castes in the day-to-day execution of their duties. For example, many houses encourage or require their warriors to learn the craft of making armor and weapons. The amount of this work a warrior might perform without loss of status comprises one of the indeterminate subtleties of skorne caste interaction. Among house armies in the east where workers and slaves are more numerous, a warrior has less need to lower himself to perform menial tasks. This situation changes considerably when lower-caste support is minimal, as within the Army of the Western Reaches. Soldiers in the field must be more flexible. They must contribute their efforts to the construction of new settlements and fortifications as well as the upkeep required to house and feed the army.

Whereas soldiers of other races fight for victory, survival, and the glory of their nations, the skorne desire only an honorable death after deeds worthy of exaltation. Every skorne knows that torment and annihilation await them in the afterlife and their only hope of escaping this fate is to embrace death through the pursuit of battlefield glory. This fatalistic outlook is a potent weapon: Soldiers of the Skorne Empire seek neither comfort nor recreation and can be pushed to incredible lengths in the pursuit of victory. Desertion from a cohort is nearly unheard of, since the warriors of the skorne embrace every opportunity to prove themselves in the hopes of earning eventual exaltation.

Skorne commanders subject their troops to the magic of mortitheurgy to enhance their vitality in combat and to bolster their endurance on long marches across harsh environs. Master mortitheurges can reduce a skorne's need for food and water by applying simple rituals and surgical procedures. These rites typically have deleterious consequences on affected souls but rarely impact morale, since skorne are raised from birth to expect and even embrace the realities of their society. In fact, some of the most powerful mortitheurges can transform the bodies of soldiers such that their flesh is no longer truly alive, feeling no need for food and no pain from injury until released from this state.

During the formative centuries of the first skorne cities the warrior caste divided itself by discipline and fighting style,

SKORNE MILITARY



eventually narrowing to the three fundamental modern military disciplines: Cataphracts, Praetorians, and Venators. Those warriors who fail to be recognized as Praetorians become members of the Hestatians, the lowest warrior caste, relegated to militia and sentry duties. Hestatians are still warriors, but are recognized as inferior ones, respected only above those who do not live by hoksune, and in some cases less than this. In practice, extollers and paingivers are often given greater respect than Hestatians.

ARMIES OF THE SKORNE EMPIRE

Before the military was reformed, the terms "cohort" and "army" were almost synonymous, and tyrants still informally refer to the soldiers under their command as a "house army." Dominars able to field multiple cohorts referred to their collected might as a "sabaoth," a term that signifies a great host of allied cohorts. Since Vinter's reforms, the term "army" formally denotes specific large regional forces comprising multiple sabaoths and commanded by an archdominar. An army protects each tor, which is a large administrative region of the Skorne Empire. Sabaoths are divisions of these armies, each controlled by individual dominars or, more rarely, lord tyrants. Beneath the sabaoth are cohorts commanded by subordinate tyrants and lord tyrants.

WARRIOR DISCIPLINES

Praetorians are the backbone of virtually all skorne armies, the baseline against which all warriors are measured. Their training emphasizes close-quarters fighting utilizing a variety of traditional weapons intended for distinct roles on the battlefield. These include the pikes and shields employed by the defensive karax, the long cavalry spears of the mounted ferox, and the dual blades wielded by the swordsmen majority. A longstanding rivalry exists between the Praetorians and Cataphracts as to which of their disciplines holds most true to the hoksune code. Praetorians believe they most closely represent the ideals of Vuxoris with their emphasis on first strikes, speed, and precision, but the Cataphracts are the most universally respected of the martial disciplines, famed for their resilience and stamina. Even warriors that excel as Praetorians might not be able to qualify as Cataphracts.

Only the largest and most physically powerful skorne warriors can become Cataphracts, and only the wealthiest houses can afford to outfit and maintain the exotic armor and weaponry they use. Many devoted adepts of the hoksune code are found among the Cataphracts, who have a reputation for incredible stoicism. Trained to endure extreme privation and the most

inhospitable of environments, Cataphracts embody their people's ideals of life and death. They are expected to hold the most dangerous positions in battle and revel in opportunities for glorious death. Many of the most honored exalted were Cataphracts in life, possibly including Vuxoris himself.

Venators, trained to fight at range with reivers and heavy siege weaponry, occupy a lower stratum of the warrior caste. Their betters view the Venator tradition with disdain because a focus on ranged warfare distances a warrior from his enemy at the time of death. In centuries past Venators fought with javelins, slings, and other thrown weaponry. Their modern armaments require significant skill and training, and they now play an integral role in skorne military strategy. Their tactical usefulness has led to a grudging respect for their discipline, particularly within the Army of the Western Reaches, but Venators are never candidates for full exaltation. The best they can hope for is to become revered companions (see p. 96) by the timely intervention of ancestral guardians in the heat of battle.

Among the Hestatians, it is rare to receive even this honor, given they are rarely afforded the opportunity to engage in major battles alongside ancestral guardians. Often the only chance a Hestatian has for glory is if his house is completely overrun, in which case every soldier is called upon for defense.

THE WORKER CASTE

The worker caste is responsible for trade, long-distance communication, construction, food production and distribution, and other vital tasks. Despite the essential duties performed by workers, their caste claims no glory, and warriors generally treat them with contempt. The worker caste is arguably the broadest and most diverse caste, with clearly differentiated strata. Dedicated mystics among the skorne fall into this caste, for example, but are generally afforded much more respect than laborers, in part because their powers often have use and utility on the battlefield. Members of this caste are often respected proportionately to how directly their work impacts the needs of the warrior caste. There exist several organizations within this caste that function outside the normal house structure so intrinsic to skorne society, a fact that places them at odds with traditionalists.

Each house is essentially self-sufficient. Prior to their unification as part of an empire, all houses saw to their own needs—from agriculture and mining to the training of a military force. The workers within a house would arrange trades with allied houses for commodities they could not produce. Since the formation of the empire houses still handle many of these vital matters internally, but complex exchanges require cooperation and communication between members of diverse houses and communities separated by great distances. Commerce, communications, construction, and other necessary tasks all fall to prestigious members of the worker caste. The nature of skorne society makes it difficult for specialized groups to effectively handle some of these tasks across house divides.

Individual industry and craft concerns sometimes organize themselves into local collectives loosely comparable to trade guilds in western Immoren. However, powerful skorne houses



view such groups with suspicion and suspect them of intrigues beyond their caste. House leaders gather up leaders of these collectives who overreach their bounds and submit them to paingivers for torture or execution. This bias has slowed the development of skorne civilization. More than once a house has developed a significant invention or engineering method in isolation, then extinguished its techniques in silence before others could learn or steal them. Such practices did not die out with the imposition of Vinter Raelthorne's central government. It may be some time yet before these collectives can readily share information and resources.

A well-maintained infrastructure, the flow of commerce between cities, a widely varied labor pool, continuing industry, and beneficial innovation—all these have become much more important to skorne society since the creation of a unified empire. This change has had a significant impact on members of the worker caste. Certain administrators and laborers are tasked with the smooth operation of large and far-reaching projects that may involve multiple tors. Members of this caste can now rise to a degree of responsibility and influence never before seen in skorne society, though even the most influential still must answer to members of the warrior caste who may have little comprehension of the details of their work.

THE BONDED PORTERS

Vinter Raelthorne instituted the Bonded Porters when he experienced the difficulty of ensuring the smooth operations of supply lines for essential materials when constructing the Abyssal Fortress. To prevent supply delays or interception, he instituted a law requiring each house to contribute members of its lower worker castes for two years of mandatory service among these bonded laborers. The ongoing war effort in the west has made the efforts of the Bonded Porters increasingly critical, forcing the organization to expand its numbers. This organization supervises caravans carrying goods from one major city to another across the empire and provides a supply chain through the Abyssal Fortress and the skorne forts across the Bloodstone Desert to reach the Army of the Western Reaches. Their purview also includes the major roads and shipping along the Hezaat River and Mirketh Lake. Though not soldiers, the Porters serve the war effort in a vital way.

The Bonded Porters operate along the lines of a military organization, starting with a period of strict training in isolation from their respective houses. When sent to join, each skorne must wear neutral garments, putting aside all signs of house affiliation. While working, they wear what amounts to a uniform: brown robes and a black cowed hood. No skorne may speak of his house or family while serving among the Bonded Porters, though in some cases this is common knowledge. The Porters tolerate no infighting or dueling and execute violators. Interfering with the Bonded Porters constitutes an attack on the servants of the Supreme Archdomina and her archdominars and always results in deadly reprisal.

The Bonded Porters deliver food, weapons, armor, and building supplies to the Army of the Western Reaches as their first priority, but they also move large shipments of a variety of

items across the empire. They frequently recruit young house warriors as escorts for long voyages. Some embrace this chance for danger and to prove their worth in distant places. Warriors stationed among the Bonded Porters are most often considered Hestatians, since they do not regularly confront enemies on the battlefield, though they are generally of higher fighting capability than Hestatians in house armies.

The Bonded Porters suffer some inevitable corruption, particularly regarding the shipping of non-military goods or when interacting with less influential houses. Nevertheless, they serve as an effective means of connecting the skorne cities. They allow the empire to exploit the resources of its various regions without inciting large house wars over these resources. After two years of service among the Porters, individuals may return to their house and continue their previous duties. Some decide to continue with the Porters and may eventually take on administrative tasks.

Criminals and escaped slaves can avoid punishment by choosing service among the Bonded Porters. Membership supersedes a skorne's past deeds for as long as he remains within the order. Such skorne usually choose to remain in service to the Bonded Porters far beyond the initial two-year membership, since these protections end the moment enrollment does.

THE CORPUSULEM

The Skorne Empire has no organized educational system. For generations learning was passed down from master to pupil within the traditions that eventually became chymistry and chirurgery. This lack of common learning was reinforced by the rivalries of the houses and the disdain of the dominant warrior caste of anything that did not relate directly to martial prowess.

A progressive group of surgeons came together in Malphas in 350 BR to challenge the status quo. The group intended to create a systematic methodology for compiling results of surgeries and experiments as well as recipes for poultices and salves. They called themselves the Corpusulem, and their efforts provided the foundation for most subsequent skorne scientific advancement.

Over the century following its founding the group added mortitheurges to its ranks, created the distinction between surgeons and chymists, and spread across skorne civilization. As it grew, the organization faced opposition from house leaders who feared conspiracies and spies who might pass information between houses. In most regions, the Corpusulem was declared a threat and its members faced persecution. This persecution did not completely destroy the group or prevent it from contributing to skorne society, but its membership dwindled over the years.

The modern incarnation of the Corpusulem emerged in 356 AR. A small circle of scholarly surgeons and mortitheurges in Malphas and Halaak reorganized the ideas of the original founders, adopting rules of procedure to allow members to withhold research with military applications to maintain house loyalty. Still, the group's membership remains small since many ruling tyrants and dominars still consider it seditious.

This venerable archive and scholarly fellowship has endured nearly a thousand years. Many refinements to skorne chymistry, surgery, and engineering science can trace their origin to the Corpusulem. The organization also must periodically hide its membership and operate as a secret society to avoid destruction at the hands of paranoid house lords. These tribulations led to members forming pacts that transcend loyalty to any particular house. Though cabals within the fellowship are sometimes at odds, members of the Corpusulem protect others of their order when asked, even from the Hestations of their own house lords. The Corpusulem keeps its central archive and headquarters well protected and secured in Malphas, but it has significant branches in Halaak and Kademe, and individual members reside in most major skorne communities. Communication between these branches is slow, but discoveries made in one branch eventually disseminate to all the others.

EXTOLLERS

Extollers occupy the highest rung within the worker caste, serving as a vital bridge between other skorne and the exalted ancestors, and are generally referred to as a distinct caste despite also being workers. This function combined with the fact that they are the guardians of exaltation means even the most arrogant of warriors will think twice before insulting an extoller, especially one in charge of evaluating those worthy of preservation. Extollers remain members of their house, serving to preserve and honor the ancestors of that house and to determine who among the slain will join them. At the same time, extollers maintain significant solidarity. Even before the creation of the Skorne Empire it was common for extollers of different houses to communicate with one another. At one time, each house had an autonomous senior aptimus who led the extollers of his house, until the caste was unified under a single supreme aptimus in 600 AR.

Extollers occupy a variety of roles, including the fabrication of sacral stones and the statues into which they will be set, communicating with the ancestors, and accompanying warriors into battle to select those worthy of exaltation. Those who join an army in battle are respected the most, and they serve an extremely important battlefield function. The mere appearance of an extoller can raise troop morale, and few tyrants fail to take advantage of that fact. The most talented of extollers can persuade ancestors to accompany their descendants into battle and draw on their power to protect and assist living soldiers. Housed in carefully crafted vessels, the spirits of the exalted become powerful guardians. Many exalted, especially those recently transformed, yearn to take part once again in glorious battle. These ancestral guardians are potent warriors and can act as receptacles for the spirits of skorne who perish near them, allowing extollers time to decide which spirits are worthy of full exaltation and which will receive the lesser honor of becoming revered companions in the afterlife (see p. 96).

House leaders rely on their extollers beyond the battlefield as well. Communicating with venerable ancestral spirits is a difficult process expedited by the work of an extoller, so most tyrants and dominars have a number of extollers on hand. These extollers often dwell in chambers adjacent to the house shrine

and are expected to serve as intermediaries for their lords at all times of day and night. Skorne wishing to seek the guidance of their forebears must rely on extollers to serve as a bridge between the world of the living and the wisdom of the dead.

PAINGIVERS

Paingivers are also referred to as their own caste, occupying a status below the extollers, but above other workers. Through the application of pain and terror, paingivers master the gathering of information and become unequalled handlers of beasts. They can tame any living thing by crushing its spirit and forcing obedience. As interrogators, spies, and beast trainers, these cruel individuals learn every detail of living anatomy, memorizing nerve clusters, key arteries, and the placement of vital organs. Surgeons study these subjects to treat injury or prevent death by grievous wounds, but paingivers use this lore in battle or, more often, in the process of questioning captured enemies. Their ability to shape behavior through the application of pain affords them tremendous influence over creatures of weaker wills or simpler minds, like the animals utilized across skorne society as weapons or beasts of burden.

Paingivers do not practice these “arts” for pleasure, but out of a deep spiritual calling. They find the application of pain a science as valid as engineering or arcane ritual. They are highly educated and supremely skilled specialists in an ancient practice. In addition to a thorough knowledge of anatomy, paingivers must learn the application of poisons, elixirs, and alchemy for use on and off the battlefield. Paingivers believe truth lies in suffering. Their practices grow from an ancient ascetic philosophy that encourages the mortification of the flesh and pushing the body past its limits.

The paingiver caste is a manifestation of skorne philosophy. Interrogation by torture is hardly unique to the skorne, but acknowledging the paingiver as a recognized and respected caste is an inextricable element of skorne culture with no exact parallel in the west. Skorne do not view torture in the same way as westerners. A subordinate may be tortured by his superiors after failing at a critical task and then return to his duties afterward, with no resentment borne by either party.

Paingivers occupy a unique niche between the warrior and worker castes, entirely removed from house politics and loyalties. Paingivers often arise from the lower castes since their discipline requires initiates to forego all house affiliations, and such a prospect holds little appeal to those born to privilege and status. In rural areas, paingivers may emerge from the fringe communities that track or tame beasts. In urban areas, senior paingivers look for and recruit outcast or slave youths of exceptional latent talent, intelligence, and manual adroitness who often languish in poorer districts. Through their highly selective process, senior paingivers seek a special combination of survivability, talent, and a sense of self-worth and honor. Paingivers never recruit those they do not believe can rise above the caste of their birth.

Recruits endure grueling physical and academic training designed to discipline and strengthen body and mind. They must completely embrace the deeper philosophies of the great ancestor Morkaash before completing their initiation. This



process includes enduring an extended period of deprivation and performing difficult tasks while affected by starvation, extreme thirst, and lack of sleep. Once brought into the ranks of the paingivers, individuals dissolve former house loyalties and cannot restore them. The distinctive mask worn by paingivers in public is a symbol of their faceless resolve and aloof isolation.

Independent and freed from normal house duties, paingivers can share their services with any house that seeks them. This autonomy places them in a unique position in skorne society as unaffiliated and highly specialized professionals that perform tasks in great demand. Paingivers might be utilized as spies to gather information, as assassins to neutralize special targets, as beast-tamers to bring fresh military assets into a house, or as interrogators to pry secrets from captured enemies. Paingivers tend to specialize in one these roles and rarely attempt to master all of them. Some paingivers establish a reputation for their singular interrogation techniques, while others gain renown for their skill at rearing and training beasts of war.

Historically the scattered paingivers across skorne territories were only loosely connected and affiliated, with each city or region having its own local leaders, largely based on seniority. Competing master tormentors might vie for the respect of their peers. The rise of Supreme Archdomina Makeda also came with the elevation of Morghoul to lord assassin, unifying the entire paingiver caste under his leadership. Morghoul has begun to work toward creating closer ties and a greater sense of shared purpose among the paingivers, treating the caste more like a sprawling house under his rule. Paingivers now serve as an extended intelligence network and enforcement arm of the Skorne Empire, helping to protect against the rise of any internal threats to the supreme archdomina. Morghoul's control of the paingivers is limited and does not affect them on a day-to-day basis. In the far-flung corners of the empire, his orders may never be heard. Nonetheless most paingivers respect him and fear his wrath. The strongest and most organized senior paingivers who stood in opposition to the unification have disappeared.

SLAVE CASTE

To outsiders the skorne may seem cruel, but this perceived cruelty allowed their race and culture to thrive in an unforgiving environment. One facet of this cultural bias is the skorne approach to slavery. In the west it is a loathed practice, but the skorne see the widespread imposition of slavery as a fact of life. They consider the institution perfectly natural, whether applied to their own people or outsiders. Slaves occupy the lowest rung of skorne society. For skorne taken as slaves, there is the possibility of one day becoming elevated beyond this caste, but this does not often occur within a single generation. All that most enslaved skorne can hope for is that their children might eventually be adopted as full members of their captor's house.

Though lower in standing than free workers, slaves are vital to the infrastructure of each great house. When war breaks out between skorne houses, the victor commonly absorbs the losing house, including sworn slaves who may earn freedom only through service and the passage of time. In many cases the conquered generation remains enslaved until death, but

offspring have the chance for freedom by integrating into the victorious house. Fallen houses are absorbed and annihilated while the victorious preserve and extend their legacy.

A house's slaves are in some cases used as raw materials in mortitheurgical experimentation. The number of slaves a house maintains directly represents its wealth and degree of influence. The decrease in inter-house warfare since unification has reduced the availability of new slaves, and this could eventually have a significant impact on the economy of the empire. Some eastern houses resent House Balaash's influx of fresh slaves from the conquest of the west.

SKORNE PHILOSOPHY

Outsiders mistakenly believe that the skorne have no religion. In ancient times the elves of Lyoss called the skorne "godless" and "faithless." The first label is accurate, but the second is not. Their religion comprises a sophisticated form of ancestor worship that does not venerate any god or pantheon of gods.

Skorne accept that gods may exist, based on exposure to the power of religious figures in other cultures, especially the ancient Empire of Lyoss. However, the obliteration of Lyoss convinced them of the fickle nature of gods, and skorne see deities as a crutch for weaker peoples. Skorne philosophers take pride in having freed themselves from the divine and refuse to acknowledge a creator. They do not refute the possibility that a god may have had a hand in their creation, but they consider this notion irrelevant. They pass down no creation myth, believing instead that they have risen to greatness as a people on the strength of their will and the example of their ancestors.

Skorne ancestor worship focuses on those great individuals whose deeds are immortalized in legend, paragons of values the skorne consider vital. Different schools of philosophy center around the legends of specific skorne ancestors, and these comprise the varied "faiths" of the skorne. Myriad cults are dedicated to specific ancestors. Some remain exclusive to a single family or bloodline, while the entire skorne population reveres certain ancient and singular ancestors. A skorne may venerate multiple ancestors, but most choose two for the majority of their devotion. Usually they first select one of the great ancients whose legend all skorne know and who embodies the virtues of their caste. The second, typically exalted within recent memory, possesses a lineage deemed particularly admirable and has a more direct relation to the individual skorne.

Skorne demonstrate veneration in several ways, such as maintaining a small dedicated shrine in one's home or keeping an item associated with the ancestor on one's person. Some skorne inscribe ancestral names and symbols on weapons or armor. As in the west, individual piety varies. Some skorne rarely think of the ancestors, while others spend a lifetime painstakingly attempting to emulate them. Those who possess the core sacral stone of such a revered ancestor, or a fragment thereof, are particularly fortunate and favored, though this rarely occurs outside the extoller caste.

The skorne have a very different depiction of the afterlife than any religion of western Immoren. Skorne have no equivalent

to Urcaen and believe that nothing positive awaits them after death. After death, a skorne's spirit falls into the Void. Only by preservation in a sacral stone can this fate be avoided. A skorne earns preservation either by rising to greatness and being chosen by the extollers as exalted or by falling in battle near an ancestral guardian or an extoller who preserves his essence as an honored companion of the exalted (see p. 96). The number of individuals thus preserved is small; the vast majority are lost to the Void. Most skorne have a pragmatic attitude toward this reality and consider it a simple fact of life.

A desire to gain glory and honor motivates most pious skorne, particularly those of the warrior caste. This caste has the most reasonable expectation of earning preservation. Only very rarely do extollers judge a scholar, mortitheurge, or even a master builder worthy of preservation in a sacral stone. Even the majority of extollers face the Void; those who enter battle and die in combat occasionally earn preservation, but this is very rare.

While any notable ancestor can gain a cult following, several timeless traditions venerate only the greatest among them. Most skorne subscribe to one or more philosophical schools associated with these individuals. Sizable houses may boast shrines to all of the great ancestors in addition to shrines for notable members of their direct bloodline. Skorne do not gather for sermons or prayer, but the pious spend time at these shrines in meditation or contemplation, particularly before embarking on difficult tasks.

SCHOOL OF ISHOUL AND KALEED

These seminal extollers receive veneration as a pair. While their work derived from the genius of Voskune, Ishoul and Kaleed created the first sacral stone and made Voskune's belief in exaltation a physical reality. Extollers have the most interest in the philosophies of Ishoul and Kaleed that relate to the transience of the flesh and the immutable nature of the spirit. Philosophers of this school generate considerable material related to the connection between spirit and stone as demonstrated by the sacral crystallization process.

Those outside the ranks of extollers or advanced mortitheurges consider this school's writings esoteric and impenetrable. The school includes mystical speculation regarding the nature of the Void and the importance of preserving the greatest skorne spirits from its hunger. Some texts imply that ancients should risk madness as a kovaas instead of suffering the oblivion waiting in the Void. Fundamental texts of this school describe a hierarchy of states of spiritual being, similar to the caste hierarchy for the living, with the ancient exalted at the pinnacle and those consigned to the Void at the bottom.

Together with Voskune, Ishoul and Kaleed form a trio of highly revered ancestors not exalted after their deaths. Despite inventing the process, only warriors could exalt in the era of Ishoul and Kaleed. These brilliant extollers' status as workers exempted them from consideration.

SCHOOL OF KEXORUS

Revered by the educated among the working caste as the greatest and most ancient non-warrior exalted, Kexorus invented skorne writing, making him particularly admired by scholars and house historians. Extollers entrusted with preserving house lore pay Kexorus respect alongside Ishoul and Kaleed. His principles inspired an offshoot school of thought responsible for the majority of skorne advances in chymistry and engineering, as well as being the inspiration for the Corpusulem that served as the foundation for advances in chirurgery and mortitheurgy. Even warriors acknowledge the accomplishments of Kexorus for his work in preserving the hoksune code in writing for the first time.

SCHOOL OF MORKAASH

The first paingiver Morkaash learned to master the intricacies of anatomy and tested his limits for suffering twelve generations before the destruction of Lyoss. Like Voskune before him, he knew power arose from the mastery of flesh, but Morkaash focused this discipline inward. He sought to push his body past its breaking point and become the perfect hunter. His legends claim he spent weeks or even months forgoing food, water, and even breathing to await his prey. He used the carcasses of his kills as subjects for dissection and study to inform him of the workings of the flesh. The studies of Morkaash furthered the skorne understanding of mortitheurgy and were fundamental in the creation of the first skorne warbeasts.

Morkaash attracted followers even in life, but his philosophical teachings prospered in the centuries to follow and gave rise to the paingiver caste. Every paingiver holds Morkaash as a revered ancestor regardless of bloodline. Morkaash has a similarly devoted following among certain educated skorne, such as chirurgeons and chymists, who admire the systematic method by which he experimented with the essence of life. His philosophy underpins the nihilator cults that emulate his student, Xaavaax the Flayed. He has a smaller but loyal following among hunters in fringe communities, who look to his teachings as a tool for the perfection of their craft. The body of work produced by philosophers of this school includes extensive anatomical studies as well as esoteric meditations on achieving enlightenment through suffering.

SCHOOL OF VOSKUNE

Voskune is the greatest remembered ancestor from the time before exaltation. His devotees consider his loss a fundamental tragedy underlying all life and study it to reduce the fear of facing the Void. Members of the worker caste utter an aphorism as death approaches: "If Voskune can endure the Void, so can I." Voskune understood before anyone else that mortification of the flesh could bring arcane power. As the first extoller, he learned to pluck out his eye and replace it with a polished crystal through which he could view spirit in its natural shape. He became a master of the energies later named mortitheurgy, manipulated spirit to sustain his flesh past mortal limits, and forced reality to conform to his will.

All skorne know the legends of Voskune, but his true devotees come from those seeking to master mortitheurgy. Voskune began the work that Ishoul and Kaleed later completed and so holds singular importance for the extoller caste. No other philosophy among the skorne has inspired so many varied texts over the millennia. Voskune even inspired a specific brand of heresy in Malphas whose adherents believe the city hosts what they call the "Self-Exalted Trinity." They say the spirits of Voskune, Ishoul, and Kaleed resisted the pull of the Void by sheer force of will. Most shun followers of this belief, viewing them as bringers of ill luck since they often starve or bleed to death after sloppily blinding and maiming themselves in imitation of Voskune.

SCHOOL OF VUXORIS AND THE HOKSUNE CODE

First and greatest of the warrior-philosophers, Vuxoris remains a paragon of the warrior caste emulated by all skorne who march to battle. Vuxoris practiced a heavily armored martial tradition considered a precursor to the Cataphracts, who hold him in particular esteem. Vuxoris developed the *hoksune* warrior code that defined the principles still adhered to by skorne seeking honor and glory in battle. Before the invention of the alphabet, hoksune passed from mentor to student through oral tradition as a series of chanted verses, akin to poetic stanzas, in the style used by lore keepers. Students memorized and recited these chants continually until they internalized their logic in battle. This regimented training preserved the code for sixteen centuries until Kexorus, the Sage of Malphas, inscribed it.

One of Vuxoris' core philosophies states that a true warrior only really lives while risking his life in combat. A warrior becomes a mere shadow outside of combat, his spirit asleep and dying, and he only regains vitality with the first swing of battle. The risk of death is inseparable from true life. Hoksune teaches that each warrior must welcome the approach of death to fight with enlightened perfection. Vuxoris' teachings also emphasize the need to close with the enemy, to look in his eyes and witness the moment of his death. By this standard, killing from a distance carries less honor. This affects the respective standings between different warrior castes, such as the lower esteem given Venators compared to the more traditional Praetorians.

Vuxoris became the first ancestor exalted after death when Ishoul and Kaleed placed his spirit in the first sacral stone. His sacral stone has vanished and scholars believe it was destroyed, perhaps fractured and divided too often by descendents seeking to borrow his strength. Some among his widespread cult believe the sacral stone or its fragments might still exist and they seek any evidence of its survival.

Warriors who follow these beliefs work continually to improve their fighting prowess, which makes integrating Vuxoris' teaching into daily life quite simple. Time spent in drills, training, sparring, and ensuring weapons and armor remain in good repair make up the lifestyle of those who follow the code of hoksune. However, devotees know no amount of practice replaces the actual experience of bloodshed. The truly pious memorize the entire code, although most warriors can relay only a few passages from memory.



When Vinter began his conquest of the east, many who witnessed his skill in battle believed the Conqueror to be the spirit of Vuxoris reborn. Vinter capitalized on these beliefs, allowing him to bring to heel dominars who would have otherwise resisted him with greater fervor. Cults rose around this belief, and some still linger in the shadows of the empire despite the end of Vinter's reign.

HERESIES

Most of skorne society adheres closely to the dictates of hoksune, but new and sometimes disreputable philosophies occasionally appear. These heresies draw upon the long history and beliefs of the skorne, twisting them to fit the view of cult leaders and mystic cabals. Some reflect minor events and draw adherents in small numbers, but at times these heretical beliefs catch hold of the skorne and spread widely before being pushed back into the shadows from which they emerged. The greatest heresies attract skorne throughout eastern Immoren and persist long after their leaders are brought low, reduced to minor cults and circles of mystics.

Each house has its own method of dealing with them when they arise. Often the heretics are stripped of their caste or given over to the paingivers, depending on the gravity of the heresy.

CULT OF THE REBORN

The arrival of Vinter Raelthorne IV sent shockwaves through skorne society, simply for the fact that the skorne allowed a human to rule—even for the few years he remained in power. This process was advanced by the spread of rumors that Vinter was “the Reborn,” rumors which he embraced. This term denotes the belief of many skorne that Vinter contained the spiritual essence of a great ancient ancestor, typically Vuxoris. The most common explanation for this anomaly claimed that an ancient sacral stone might have shattered without producing a kovass because the spirit within had the exceptional strength to remain sane. That spirit then wandered for untold centuries until it finally found among the westerners a vessel worthy of housing it, and thus did Vinter Raelthorne IV enter this world a skorne in spirit if not in flesh.

The deeds of Vinter became legendary among the skorne, particularly the bloody exploits during the First and Second Unifications—deeds great enough to guarantee him a place among the exalted. Many skorne worshiped Vinter as if he was already exalted, including placing shrines in his name within their homes or scarring their flesh with sword-like symbols.

Not all skorne readily accepted Vinter's title of Reborn, though few spoke such doubts aloud. They acknowledged Vinter as a great warrior and tyrant but did not believe him to have a skorne essence. The extollers said little on this topic, though many influential exalted expressed their support of the supreme archdominar. They sent ancestral guardians into the west as a sign of their intention to preserve the great heroes among the Army of the Western Reaches, which increased the morale of warriors destined to fight alongside them. While many house ancestors gave their clear support to Vinter, none sent specific confirmation of his claim as Reborn, nor did they provide any identification of the specific reincarnated spirit.

Cults of the Reborn were driven underground following Archdomina Makeda's ascendance to supreme archdomina. Vinter's ouster forced these cults to evolve their teaching to explain his removal from power, but they remain doggedly faithful to their belief in the Reborn. Schisms of the cult have broken away, with charismatic skorne professing to be the Reborn themselves, which has led to secret wars between the cults in several tors.

HERESY OF NORVAAK

In 1700 BR, the ruler of House Bashek caused enormous destruction in Halaak by shattering the sacral stones of three tremendously powerful ancestors to set kovaas spirits on the city as a curse against his rivals. Norvaak died as he released these spirits. Aspiring extollers learn of Lord Tyrant and Supreme Aptimus Norvaak as a cautionary tale. The upper extollers of most houses consider revering Norvaak a heresy and the destruction of a sacral stone to manipulate a kovaas an expressly forbidden taboo. Some venerate Norvaak regardless and study his art as a natural extension of drawing on ancestral strength. Followers of Norvaak aspire to control kovaas spirits. Rumors persisted that the Conqueror sponsored those versed in these arts, seeing them as just another weapon to employ against his enemies. After Vinter's expulsion some high-ranking extollers attempted to purge any who dabbled in the art, but Supreme Aptimus Zaal has taken measures to limit support of such efforts, accusing extollers who advocate banishment as wasting valuable resources in a time of great need.

SKORNE ETHNICITIES

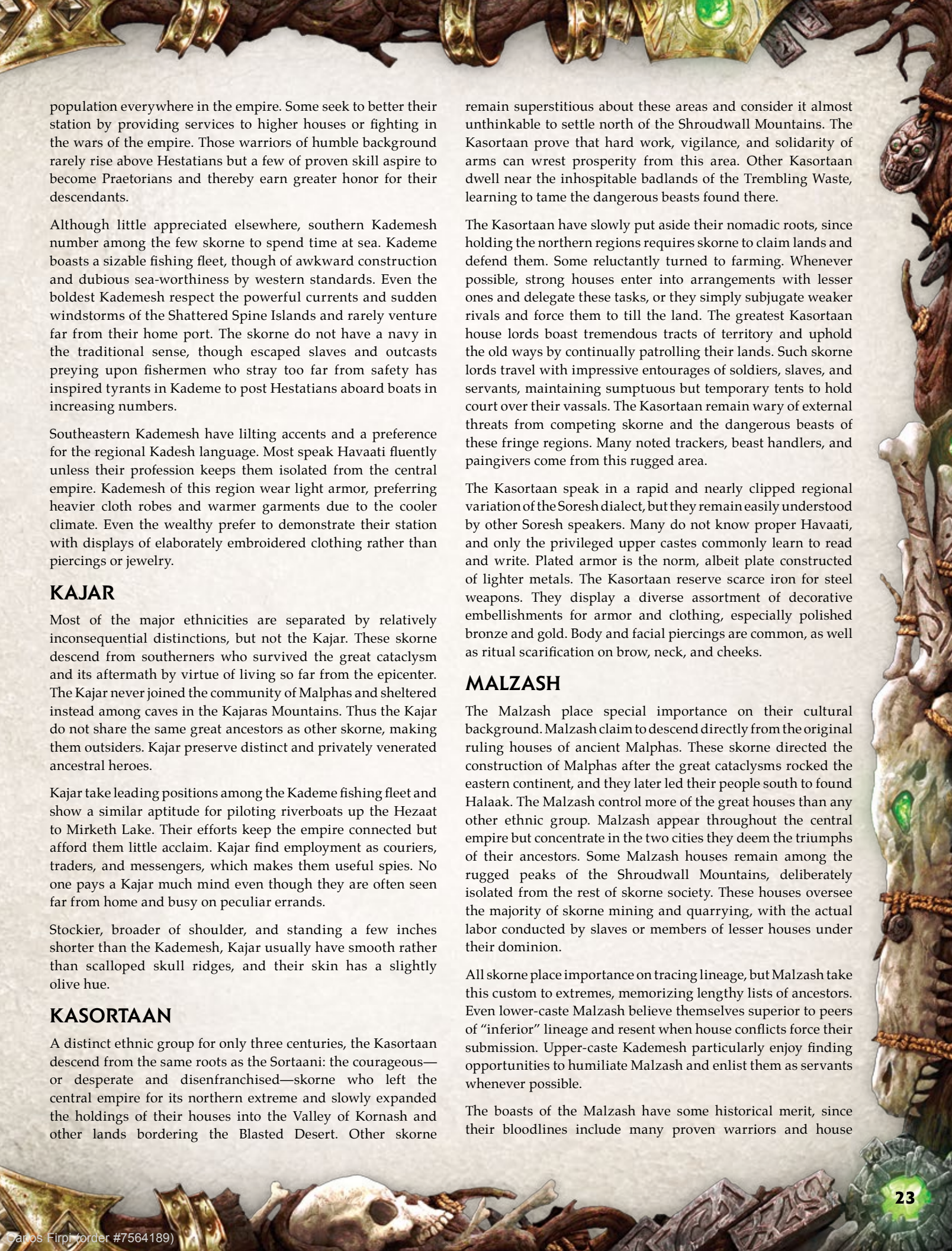
Skorne ethnicities hold trivial importance compared to caste and house. Nonetheless, regional groups are aware of their shared heritage. These groups display only subtle physical differences compared to the diversity seen among humans or even trollkin in the west, and outsiders find it difficult to recognize individual skorne based on ethnic group. More obvious variance exists in dialect, accent, and manner of dress.

Each of the following five groups contains myriad subcultures that display minor regional differences not listed here.

KADEMESH

The largest ethnic group of the Skorne Empire, the Kademesh hail originally from the fertile areas of the southeast, including natives of Kademe and dozens of large villages and settlements along the Hezaat River. The plentiful food and water in this area encourages larger families. This does not necessarily translate to wealth by skorne reckoning and many of these houses lack esteem and station. No matter how well fed, a wealthy house built on farming never commands the respect of even a small and impoverished house noted for its warriors and the volume of slaves it has taken in battle. Productive farms send the bulk of their crops to their “betters” elsewhere in the empire, including to the ravenous capital.

Houses seeking slave stock traditionally find excellent hunting in the southeast. Slave-gathering expeditions occur more rarely since the arrival of Vinter and the attack on the west, but southeastern houses remain tainted by this history. Despite this lingering stigma, Kademesh remain the dominant



population everywhere in the empire. Some seek to better their station by providing services to higher houses or fighting in the wars of the empire. Those warriors of humble background rarely rise above Hestatians but a few of proven skill aspire to become Praetorians and thereby earn greater honor for their descendants.

Although little appreciated elsewhere, southern Kademesh number among the few skorne to spend time at sea. Kademe boasts a sizable fishing fleet, though of awkward construction and dubious sea-worthiness by western standards. Even the boldest Kademesh respect the powerful currents and sudden windstorms of the Shattered Spine Islands and rarely venture far from their home port. The skorne do not have a navy in the traditional sense, though escaped slaves and outcasts preying upon fishermen who stray too far from safety has inspired tyrants in Kademe to post Hestatians aboard boats in increasing numbers.

Southeastern Kademesh have lilting accents and a preference for the regional Kadesh language. Most speak Havaati fluently unless their profession keeps them isolated from the central empire. Kademesh of this region wear light armor, preferring heavier cloth robes and warmer garments due to the cooler climate. Even the wealthy prefer to demonstrate their station with displays of elaborately embroidered clothing rather than piercings or jewelry.

KAJAR

Most of the major ethnicities are separated by relatively inconsequential distinctions, but not the Kajar. These skorne descend from southerners who survived the great cataclysm and its aftermath by virtue of living so far from the epicenter. The Kajar never joined the community of Malphas and sheltered instead among caves in the Kajaras Mountains. Thus the Kajar do not share the same great ancestors as other skorne, making them outsiders. Kajar preserve distinct and privately venerated ancestral heroes.

Kajar take leading positions among the Kademe fishing fleet and show a similar aptitude for piloting riverboats up the Hezaat to Mirketh Lake. Their efforts keep the empire connected but afford them little acclaim. Kajar find employment as couriers, traders, and messengers, which makes them useful spies. No one pays a Kajar much mind even though they are often seen far from home and busy on peculiar errands.

Stockier, broader of shoulder, and standing a few inches shorter than the Kademesh, Kajar usually have smooth rather than scalloped skull ridges, and their skin has a slightly olive hue.

KASORTAAN

A distinct ethnic group for only three centuries, the Kasortaan descend from the same roots as the Sortaani: the courageous—or desperate and disenfranchised—skorne who left the central empire for its northern extreme and slowly expanded the holdings of their houses into the Valley of Kornash and other lands bordering the Blasted Desert. Other skorne

remain superstitious about these areas and consider it almost unthinkable to settle north of the Shroudwall Mountains. The Kasortaan prove that hard work, vigilance, and solidarity of arms can wrest prosperity from this area. Other Kasortaan dwell near the inhospitable badlands of the Trembling Waste, learning to tame the dangerous beasts found there.

The Kasortaan have slowly put aside their nomadic roots, since holding the northern regions requires skorne to claim lands and defend them. Some reluctantly turned to farming. Whenever possible, strong houses enter into arrangements with lesser ones and delegate these tasks, or they simply subjugate weaker rivals and force them to till the land. The greatest Kasortaan house lords boast tremendous tracts of territory and uphold the old ways by continually patrolling their lands. Such skorne lords travel with impressive entourages of soldiers, slaves, and servants, maintaining sumptuous but temporary tents to hold court over their vassals. The Kasortaan remain wary of external threats from competing skorne and the dangerous beasts of these fringe regions. Many noted trackers, beast handlers, and paingivers come from this rugged area.

The Kasortaan speak in a rapid and nearly clipped regional variation of the Soresh dialect, but they remain easily understood by other Soresh speakers. Many do not know proper Havaati, and only the privileged upper castes commonly learn to read and write. Plated armor is the norm, albeit plate constructed of lighter metals. The Kasortaan reserve scarce iron for steel weapons. They display a diverse assortment of decorative embellishments for armor and clothing, especially polished bronze and gold. Body and facial piercings are common, as well as ritual scarification on brow, neck, and cheeks.

MALZASH

The Malzash place special importance on their cultural background. Malzash claim to descend directly from the original ruling houses of ancient Malphas. These skorne directed the construction of Malphas after the great cataclysms rocked the eastern continent, and they later led their people south to found Halaak. The Malzash control more of the great houses than any other ethnic group. Malzash appear throughout the central empire but concentrate in the two cities they deem the triumphs of their ancestors. Some Malzash houses remain among the rugged peaks of the Shroudwall Mountains, deliberately isolated from the rest of skorne society. These houses oversee the majority of skorne mining and quarrying, with the actual labor conducted by slaves or members of lesser houses under their dominion.

All skorne place importance on tracing lineage, but Malzash take this custom to extremes, memorizing lengthy lists of ancestors. Even lower-caste Malzash believe themselves superior to peers of “inferior” lineage and resent when house conflicts force their submission. Upper-caste Kademesh particularly enjoy finding opportunities to humiliate Malzash and enlist them as servants whenever possible.

The boasts of the Malzash have some historical merit, since their bloodlines include many proven warriors and house

leaders. They claim great attunement to mortitheurgy and the spiritual path of the extollers. Malzash speak only Havaati, disdaining the crude sound of Kadesh and the rural dialects of Soresh. Most consider education a point of honor and necessary to become leaders in their houses or upper officers in the military. Some also take pains to learn the western language of Cygnaran, although the use of this language remains rare and infrequent. Originally useful among those who had direct contact with the Conqueror, Cygnaran has become a crucial language among paingivers who must torture information out of captives taken in the west.

Urban Malzash, keenly aware of their caste and station, meticulously dress for their position. They prefer formal house armor and Malzash walk the streets fully equipped for battle. They commonly pierce the head ridge, ears, lips, or brow.

SORTAANI

The widely scattered Sortaani, originating from the rural outlands, compose the second largest skorne ethnicity. Masters of savannas, deserts, and the rugged plains, Sortaani ancestors sought shelter among the Shroudwall Mountains and the city of Malphas after the Cataclysm but returned to the plains once the worst of the storms passed. While some Sortaani live in every skorne city, the majority live in smaller villages scattered on the fringes of the empire.

A number of outer Sortaani houses remain nomads. The most influential families control lands, construct semi-permanent dwellings, maintain profitable herds of belek, korbesh, kopaar, or other livestock, and enlist warriors to protect them. Sortaani living traditionally on the savannas have little regard for skorne who have given up those customs to live in the cities. Sortaani consider "river people" little better than pampered slaves. Nor do they have kind words for the urban Malzash, whom they feel city living has made soft. Only the Kasortaan, who share the same ancestry, rouse any feelings of affinity. Some inevitable tension exists between "true" Sortaani and those who increasingly answer the lure of opportunities in Halaak or other skorne cities. In some cases families disown, or at the least make unwelcome, those who make this transition. Those accepted as paingivers constitute an exception, since Sortaani deem this profession a great honor and a part of their tradition.

The Sortaani pride themselves on their herds of livestock and their ability to hunt and tame dangerous beasts of the wild. Many of the best skorne cavalry come from among these people, and several influential Sortaani houses have earned their reputation capturing, breeding, and training the ferox and warbeasts utilized by other houses in battle. The need for these powerful beasts has only increased with recent military excursions into the foreign west.

The Sortaani developed the Soresh dialect over the centuries, a rapidly spoken offshoot of Havaati that includes a simpler and less ornate alphabet. Though Sortaani can speak proper Havaati, speaking Soresh demonstrates pride in one's background. The Sortaani, particularly those dwelling on the fringes, wear more subdued colors than other skorne, choosing attire that blends into their surroundings. They

have a fondness for body and facial piercings, some of which have special significance among their peers. They commonly wear veils, hoods, and armored masks, since rural Sortaani refuse to show faces to strangers. Morkaash the First Paingiver arose from these people, and his followers took their masked tradition from his teachings.

SKORNE ECONOMICS: SLAVERS OF THE EAST

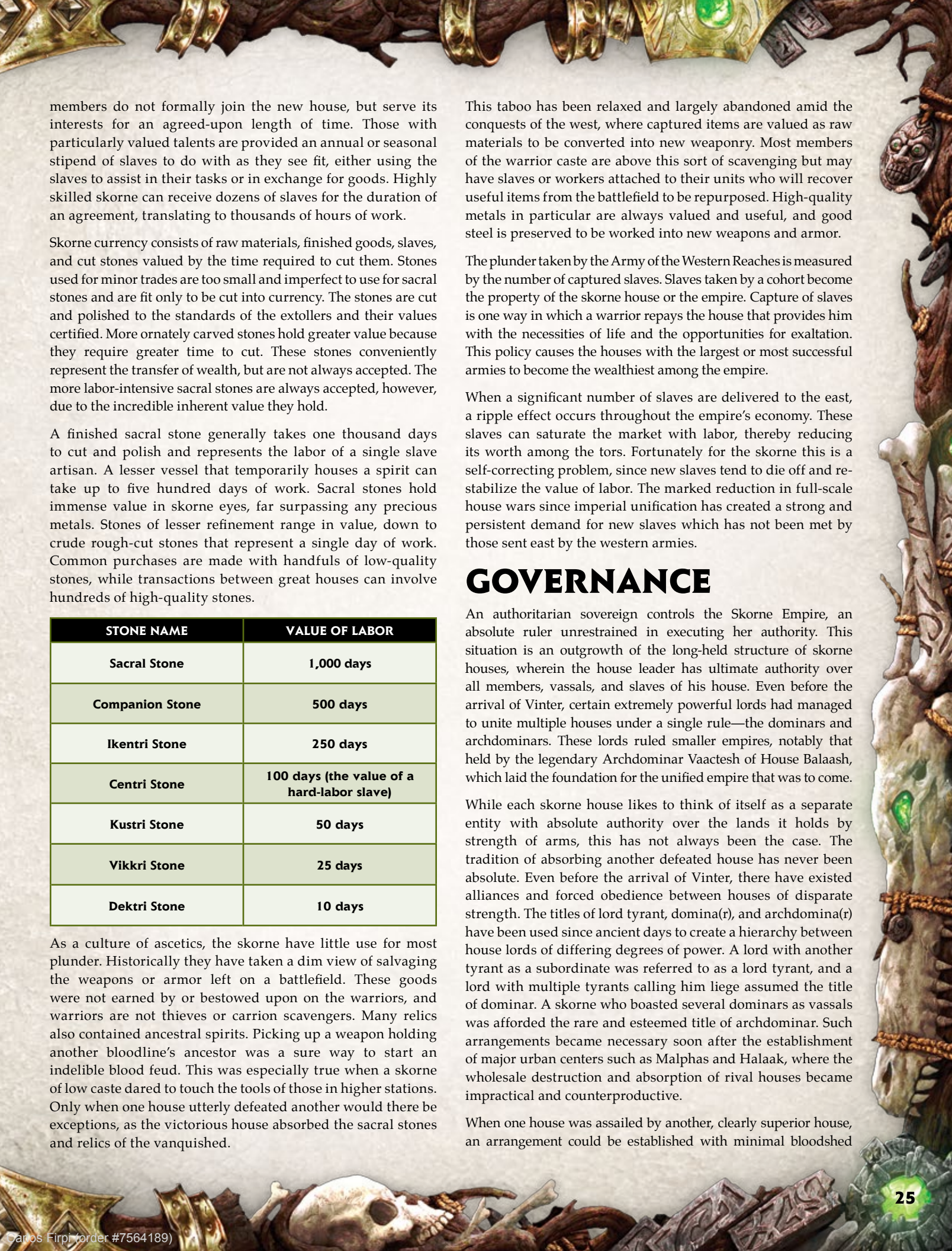
Skorne warriors view the work of merchants and traders as lowly and unworthy, but it is an essential function in any society. Merchants are members of the worker caste who handle the responsibility of trade and handling house finances, freeing the house leader from menial tasks. Higher-ranking administrators see to the financial records of the house to ensure no enterprising merchants line their own pockets with the resources of their masters. Those found guilty of theft are lucky if they are only mutilated, branded, and cast out with their lives—far more often they become playthings of the paingivers to serve as examples.

The skorne economy is based on slave labor and bartering. The most basic measure of value among the skorne is a single slave's labor for one day. A hard-labor slave's worth is set at 100 days of work, about as long as he is expected to survive toiling under the harshest conditions. Skilled or particularly hardy slaves command greater value. Houses barter with one another for the goods they produce with slave labor, balancing the number of days spent from one product to the next. Many houses possess the means to gather raw materials and refine them into necessary tools and weapons, all of which is performed by the house's many slaves. The value of these items is set according to the amount a slave can be expected to harvest or refine in a single day.

Slaves occupy every sector of the skorne economy. Though individual slaves possess a wide range of skills and proficiencies, even unskilled slaves work at all levels of society. Dangerous and physically demanding tasks such as mining and construction are the exclusive purview of the slave caste.

The vast majority of slaves come from houses destroyed or absorbed in warfare and skorne drawn from outside the major urban centers of the empire. There are notable exceptions, like croaks from the Shattered Spine Islands to the south, the occasional efaarit, and rural skorne from the northern fringes. Since the invasion of the west, more races have entered the slave caste to fill out its ranks.

Accomplished skorne do not sell their labor in the manner of western Immoren. A skilled paingiver establishes a contract with a house lord for a period of time, during which he is provided housing, food, and the implements required to work his trade. This practice can extend to other careers and castes, especially for a house that is lacking in one specific area. They may barter with members of another house to borrow skilled workers, such as extollers, mortitheurges, builders, or merchants. The loaning house and potentially the skilled individuals are compensated for this exchange and loaned



members do not formally join the new house, but serve its interests for an agreed-upon length of time. Those with particularly valued talents are provided an annual or seasonal stipend of slaves to do with as they see fit, either using the slaves to assist in their tasks or in exchange for goods. Highly skilled skorne can receive dozens of slaves for the duration of an agreement, translating to thousands of hours of work.

Skorne currency consists of raw materials, finished goods, slaves, and cut stones valued by the time required to cut them. Stones used for minor trades are too small and imperfect to use for sacral stones and are fit only to be cut into currency. The stones are cut and polished to the standards of the extollers and their values certified. More ornately carved stones hold greater value because they require greater time to cut. These stones conveniently represent the transfer of wealth, but are not always accepted. The more labor-intensive sacral stones are always accepted, however, due to the incredible inherent value they hold.

A finished sacral stone generally takes one thousand days to cut and polish and represents the labor of a single slave artisan. A lesser vessel that temporarily houses a spirit can take up to five hundred days of work. Sacral stones hold immense value in skorne eyes, far surpassing any precious metals. Stones of lesser refinement range in value, down to crude rough-cut stones that represent a single day of work. Common purchases are made with handfuls of low-quality stones, while transactions between great houses can involve hundreds of high-quality stones.

STONE NAME	VALUE OF LABOR
Sacral Stone	1,000 days
Companion Stone	500 days
Ikentri Stone	250 days
Centri Stone	100 days (the value of a hard-labor slave)
Kustri Stone	50 days
Vikkri Stone	25 days
Dektri Stone	10 days

As a culture of ascetics, the skorne have little use for most plunder. Historically they have taken a dim view of salvaging the weapons or armor left on a battlefield. These goods were not earned by or bestowed upon on the warriors, and warriors are not thieves or carrion scavengers. Many relics also contained ancestral spirits. Picking up a weapon holding another bloodline's ancestor was a sure way to start an indelible blood feud. This was especially true when a skorne of low caste dared to touch the tools of those in higher stations. Only when one house utterly defeated another would there be exceptions, as the victorious house absorbed the sacral stones and relics of the vanquished.

This taboo has been relaxed and largely abandoned amid the conquests of the west, where captured items are valued as raw materials to be converted into new weaponry. Most members of the warrior caste are above this sort of scavenging but may have slaves or workers attached to their units who will recover useful items from the battlefield to be repurposed. High-quality metals in particular are always valued and useful, and good steel is preserved to be worked into new weapons and armor.

The plunder taken by the Army of the Western Reaches is measured by the number of captured slaves. Slaves taken by a cohort become the property of the skorne house or the empire. Capture of slaves is one way in which a warrior repays the house that provides him with the necessities of life and the opportunities for exaltation. This policy causes the houses with the largest or most successful armies to become the wealthiest among the empire.

When a significant number of slaves are delivered to the east, a ripple effect occurs throughout the empire's economy. These slaves can saturate the market with labor, thereby reducing its worth among the tors. Fortunately for the skorne this is a self-correcting problem, since new slaves tend to die off and restabilize the value of labor. The marked reduction in full-scale house wars since imperial unification has created a strong and persistent demand for new slaves which has not been met by those sent east by the western armies.

GOVERNANCE

An authoritarian sovereign controls the Skorne Empire, an absolute ruler unrestrained in executing her authority. This situation is an outgrowth of the long-held structure of skorne houses, wherein the house leader has ultimate authority over all members, vassals, and slaves of his house. Even before the arrival of Vinter, certain extremely powerful lords had managed to unite multiple houses under a single rule—the dominars and archdominars. These lords ruled smaller empires, notably that held by the legendary Archdominar Vaactesh of House Balaash, which laid the foundation for the unified empire that was to come.

While each skorne house likes to think of itself as a separate entity with absolute authority over the lands it holds by strength of arms, this has not always been the case. The tradition of absorbing another defeated house has never been absolute. Even before the arrival of Vinter, there have existed alliances and forced obedience between houses of disparate strength. The titles of lord tyrant, domina(r), and archdomina(r) have been used since ancient days to create a hierarchy between house lords of differing degrees of power. A lord with another tyrant as a subordinate was referred to as a lord tyrant, and a lord with multiple tyrants calling him liege assumed the title of dominar. A skorne who boasted several dominars as vassals was afforded the rare and esteemed title of archdominar. Such arrangements became necessary soon after the establishment of major urban centers such as Malphas and Halaak, where the wholesale destruction and absorption of rival houses became impractical and counterproductive.

When one house was assailed by another, clearly superior house, an arrangement could be established with minimal bloodshed



Blackice Mountains

Ngalos

Lost Forest of Ngalos

Sky Mirror Lake

KHADOR

RHUL

SHYRR

HAEL

IOS

MERIN

CYGNAR

BLOODSTONE DESERT

CRYX

PROTECTORATE

SKEN

IMCR

CASPIA

ALCHIERE SUBCONTINENT

in which the weaker house bowed to the greater. Sometimes the concession was formalized in a duel or ritualized combat between senior officers of each house, allowing the warriors of the subordinate house to preserve honor. Arrangements were often made for subordinate houses to lend specialized warriors to the greater house, contributing to a mightier combined house army.

In other cases, houses engaged in a war ended their strife not with enslavement but with enforced vassalage. This was more likely to happen when the primary assets of the losing house were its warriors, whom the victor wished to preserve. One of the most noteworthy examples of such an arrangement happened between House Balaash and House Kophar. Kophar was defeated by Archdominar Vaactesh, but its warriors so impressed the archdominar that he killed only as many as was necessary to secure victory. Rather than enslave the house, he preserved it intact and honored its lord with praise. House Kophar was famed for its peerless Cataphracts; since that day, Kophar Cataphracts have served House Balaash.

The loyalty and lasting ties between Balaash and Kophar were not typical. Historically there are more examples of lingering hostility and the necessity for a greater house to watch subordinates for treachery. Subordinate house lords expect to be given autonomy and to retain control and oversight over internal matters. With overreaching dominars, it is not uncommon for subordinate houses to plot against them until they are strong enough to rebel, reversing their positions or enslaving those to whom they had once answered. Few archdominars possessed the strength or inspired sufficient terror to retain a stable empire until the arrival of Vinter Raelthorne, who united all houses under a single banner. Many traditionalists consider the empire unnatural and chafe at its imposed hierarchy. Many older tyrants and dominars still view their peers with hostility and would leap at the opportunity to rekindle old conflicts.

The Skorne Empire is presently divided into seven tors, each ruled by an archdominar who is the executor of Supreme Archdomina Makeda's will in the territories he controls. Archdominars are expected to contribute both materiel and warriors to the ongoing conquest of the west as well as manage the oversight of their tors. Beneath them are the dominars and tyrants, who enact and enforce the archdominar's orders.

ARCHDOMINA

The highest power in the Skorne Empire, the supreme archdomina(r) has uncontested authority equivalent to an emperor or empress. The position was created by Vinter Raelthorne when he unified the skorne to create the Skorne Empire. By overthrowing Supreme Archdominar Vinter Raelthorne, Archdomina Makeda seized the position and control of the entire Skorne Empire.

Makeda is still determining how best to govern the empire. Some aspects of the upper hierarchy and management of the empire are still evolving, particularly with the supreme archdomina engaged in wars to the west. Makeda has carried forward some of the institutions and divisions created by Vinter, as well as some of the empire's economical underpinnings, but other aspects have yet to be settled under her rule.

The supreme archdomina's powers are absolute, including the ability to declare and wage wars against the western kingdoms. Only time will tell if the archdominars of the greatest rival houses will continue to consent to such autocratic rule.

Makeda of House Balaash has worked to strengthen the continuing supremacy of the position. She is a respected leader who constantly shows her devotion to hoksune and the power of her people. Her house is strong and occupies a significant place among the great houses of the skorne. Still, she is not without enemies. Not every house is content to live under her rule, and only through strength of arms can she guarantee her position.

The remote manner in which she governs has forced Makeda to rely on trustworthy individuals to handle the quotidian aspects of government. In the capital these skorne speak with her authority and manage domestic aspects of the government. Makeda hand-picked her surrogates from the most loyal among her vassals, but she cannot afford to blindly trust them. Lord Assassin Morghoul's finest assassins watch them constantly, ready to eliminate sedition before it can gain momentum on the home front. The paingiver caste has become one of the most important tools at Makeda's disposal to ensure ongoing obedience from her distant vassals. Though Makeda herself is far from the center of the empire, Morghoul's subordinate paingivers remain close at hand, a sinister threat.

POLITICS

Vinter appointed an archdominar or archdomina to rule each tor in his name. These leaders still represent the highest authority in the empire, submitting only to the supreme archdomina. Not all tors are equally compliant, and some archdominars feign loyalty. Each commands a great army to protect his borders and significant settlements.

The three interior tors contain the largest populations and wield the most economic and political power. First among these in both wealth and prominence is Tor-Halaak, which includes the skorne capital of Halaak and is led by the ruthless Archdominar Korinvaas. Tor-Kademe in the southeast is the empire's most fertile territory and produces the bulk of its food, which lends undeniable clout to the ruling Archdominar Jolxal of House Murkaat. This region also includes the expansive Ocean of Grass, where most of the empire's titans originate. Here skorne such as Dominar Rasheth of House Telarr made their fortunes. The third major interior region is Tor-Malphas, named for the first skorne city and set deep within the Shroudfall Mountains. Archdominar Lorketh of House Jakaar rules here.

The newly unified paingiver caste under the command of Lord Assassin Morghoul ensures the obedience of the eastern tors. Many paingivers have joined the western conquest, but a great number remain in the east to safe guard against conspiracy. Another essential tool in service to the empire's unity and oversight is the Bonded Porters, established by Vinter to ensure the flow of supplies across the empire despite the competing interests of individual houses. Though individually powerless as an extension of the worker caste, this group is vital to the empire's logistics and is protected from interference by harsh laws. The Porters have smoothly adapted to the new supreme



archdomina, although they are considerably more prone to internal corruption than the paingiver caste. As long as supplies continue to flow, small internal indiscretions are overlooked.

The skorne traditionally have not considered themselves a unified people, invariably looking no further than their immediate tyrant for direction. The numerous houses are prone to vicious feuds, and it takes an extraordinary individual to maintain power over the complex inter-house rivalries. The supreme archdomina possesses enormous political capital, however, and the obvious loyalty of Lord Assassin Morghoul is a formidable deterrent to outright rebellion. House Balaash retains its estates near the capital and from there exercises considerable influence over the eastern center of government. Dominar Lonzaal of House Balaash, a respected warrior and blood relative of Makeda, has been promoted to maintain the family estates and to wield House Balaash's political might in the capital during Makeda's absence. Feuds and battles between houses still occur, and so long as the intensity of these fights does not disrupt a region's economic or political stability, such conflicts are allowed. Both dominars and the archdominar of a region will watch these battles and may keep their own armies ready to intervene. If this becomes necessary, the punishments against the offending lords may be severe.

LAW

The skorne have a different approach to laws and the enforcement of order than the west. Skorne do not expect fair or equal treatment and have a radically different concept of justice. They find the idea of a single cohesive body of laws to govern all skorne entirely alien, and even Vinter did not attempt to introduce this concept. Skorne law revolves around the dictates of a house lord and his control over his people. Most other societal restrictions and restraints have more to do with caste divisions than formal written law.

Vinter's comfort with being a tyrant made it easy for him to acclimate to skorne society and governance. He did not put great effort into instituting western laws or trying to change traditional attitudes. He focused instead on ensuring absolute obedience to his commands and the punishment or execution of those who worked against him. Skorne saw this as entirely proper behavior, a view which strengthened the role of the paingiver caste as the foremost means of delivering punishment and ensuring proper fear and obedience in the archdominar's subjects. After Makeda's rise to power, this outlook remained. Skorne do not see obeying the archdomina's decrees in the context of "laws," but rather as commands from their supreme lord and master. Her power over their lives gives her the right to order her subjects to do anything she may require, so long as she remains true to the expectations of an exemplar of the warrior caste.

While they have little in the way of written or formal law, skorne obey many unwritten expectations of behavior and consider their violation criminal. Theft, murder without cause, lashing out at higher castes, and disobedience or betrayal of one's rightful lord or other superiors all constitute offenses in skorne society. The warriors of powerful houses within a city deal with these matters rather than a separate group specifically established to enforce the law. Even after Vinter's

unification, enforcing order in a given town or city falls to the prevailing houses. The archdominars ultimately ensure the smooth operations of the empire, but they in turn delegate these tasks to lesser houses under their dominion, who in turn often delegate specific actions to local paingivers. Clashes and fighting over topics of honor, insults, or perceived meddling or intrusion remain common and tolerated as long as they do not result in large scale open war between houses that would disrupt other important business.

These more limited clashes between skorne houses might appear similar to the struggles between clans in Rhul, but in truth the Skorne Empire operates quite differently. In Rhul the Codex and its many laws regulate clan feuding and include possible intervention by Moot Judges. The skorne have nothing similar to the Codex. Losing houses can only appeal to the next higher lord in their feudal structure, who is unlikely to look kindly on such martial weakness. Duels between individual warriors are not regulated by complex protocols or systems and can occur spontaneously, without warning. So long as each participant obeys hoksune, participation in these duels does not bring negative consequences upon the victor.

Skorne society's tight regimentation comes from its castes, not the enforcement of laws. Individual house lords rightfully claim the title of tyrants. They tolerate no limit to their power over their households, consider no punishment too brutal for any offense, and brook no excuses for disobedience.

SKORNE CRIMINALS

Among the lower castes and on the fringes of skorne society lurk those who do not live within the accepted order. Most often a house exiles such cast-offs or they flee into hiding to escape the wrath of their lord. Some belong to extinct houses that avoided enslavement and turned to crime to survive. Thievery runs rampant in Halaak and other good-sized skorne communities, although such thieves' exploits rarely venture above the level of petty survival. Street criminals are essentially outcasts and viewed with greater disdain than the lowest slaves, who at least have trade value and who might be forced to produce useful labor.

The most subtle and successful criminals maintain a veneer of respectability. They remain members of a house and offer the appearance of proper behavior while secretly indulging in corruption. This performance carries great dangers, since house lords can execute their subjects on a whim for even the slightest offense. However, some house lords indulge criminals in their midst as long as it profits the house. They claim ignorance until presented with evidence of the criminal activity, and then they can execute those responsible without any risk to their status.

For minor offenses some criminals receive branding rather than execution, a process generally handled by paingivers tasked to that purpose. This extremely brutal process applies brands liberally across the entire body including the face, neck, arms, and hands. Branded criminals commonly expire during the application of this "merciful" punishment. Criminals fear paingivers more than any other authority, since paingivers almost invariably have the task of rooting out the guilty and delivering proper punishment or execution.

THE ARMY OF THE WESTERN REACHES

The Army of the Western Reaches is the Skorne Empire's invading arm. All houses are required to contribute forces to the army, which is led directly by the supreme archdomina. It is the largest and most effective armed force ever raised by the skorne, and it benefited greatly from Vinter's organizational and command expertise. In the west, the army is firmly established in the Bloodstone Marches with a number of garrisons and forts. Its supply chain across the Bloodstone Desert leading back to the heart of the empire grows more secure each day, though any passage across that wasteland remains a dangerous undertaking.

Within the hierarchy of the empire, the Western Reaches was made into the sixth tor, unlike the Northern Marches. Until Makeda seized power from Vinter, she was the archdomina in control of this vast region and its massive army. This tor is far larger than any other—technically larger than the entire eastern empire—though most of its unsettled territory serves as a geographical barrier between the Abyssal Fortress in the east and the newly secured territory in the Bloodstone Marches to the west. It remains to be seen if Supreme Archdomina Makeda will appoint an archdominar to govern this region in her stead. The need to promote a vassal is less pressing since she leads from the front rather than remaining behind at the Abyssal Fortress, as Vinter did. After defeating Vinter's forces at the fortress, Makeda immediately led her army back west to resume the conquest and oversight of this newly settled region. Lord Assassin Morghoul went east to Halaak to seize control of the paingiver caste and transform it into a peerless tool of the newly unified state.

The Conqueror integrated most of the contributed forces into mixed cohorts required to wear the colors of House Balaash in an effort to break old house loyalties. The supreme archdomina retains this practice but applies it more discriminately. Tyrants and dominars who have earned Makeda's favor are permitted to retain their house colors on the armor and standards of their troops, provided they include at least a token item in the vermilion of House Balaash. Some of her subordinate dominars have reverted to their house colors in a passive display of resistance to Makeda's assumption of ultimate power. Makeda nonetheless retains the power to reform and reshape cohorts as she wishes—an effective means of disrupting pockets of potential armed insurrection.

The Abyssal Fortress is an important base and a training ground for the Army of the Western Reaches. Its elite black-armored garrison was once responsible for Vinter's safety. Preliminary to her march on the Abyssal Fortress, Makeda used her authority to position a number of her highest-ranking and most trusted subordinates within Vinter's inner guard. She intended these key figures to aid in the overthrow, but her efforts did not escape his detection. Even as the fortress came under siege, Vinter summoned these officers to attend him—allowing them their traditional arms—and struck them down en masse with his own blade. This bloodbath greatly impacted Makeda's command structure, since many of her most experienced dominars, lord tyrants, and tyrants were killed in the massacre. Makeda has promoted worthy successors in their stead, but the command structure will take some time to recover.



The Army of the Western Reaches is divided into four sabaoths. The majority of Makeda's most devoted and esteemed soldiers belong to the Southern Bloodstone sabaoth led by Dominar Kaartos, who is Makeda's blood relative and also of House Balaash. The ten cohorts under his command occupy the largest and best fortified of the new skorne fortresses and are the most actively engaged in warfare abroad. These forces are positioned close to the border shared with Cygnar near the Marchfells and the border shared with the Protectorate of Menoth to the south.

The second-largest division, the Northern Bloodstone sabaoth, is led by Dominar Xarkorn, who was promoted to the position after Vinter slew his predecessor. This sabaoth spreads across a region that includes Scarleforth Lake, the Castle of the Keys, and a number of northern and western hill fortresses. Though the dominar is nominally in charge, there is no denying the pervasive influence of Lord Tyrant Hexeris of House Kurshon, who was appointed to govern the western settlements while Makeda marched on the Abyssal Fortress. The master mortitheurge has demonstrable power on the battlefield as well as peerless influence over the skorne occultists of this sabaoth. Supreme Aptimus Zaal also fights with this sabaoth, and though his subordinate extollers serve throughout the army, they are concentrated here.

The Bloodstone Desert sabaoth is less involved in active conquest; instead, it garrisons the dozens of fortresses between the Bloodstone Marches and the eastern empire. This includes two entire cohorts kept at the Abyssal Fortress, where Makeda has left a number of trusted senior officers to ensure communication between east and west. Dominar Jelkaxis, who earned esteem fighting against Cygnar in the west, was promoted to supervise these cohorts and facilitate secured communications between the far-flung members of the paingiver caste. The forces in this sabaoth include fresh soldiers being trained to join the Army of the Western Reaches as required by the ongoing casualties.

House Telarr Saoaoth is the smallest and newest segment of the Army of the Western Reaches, a force overseen by the unpopular but wealthy and influential Dominar Rasheth. His inclusion into Makeda's army is not without controversy, as Rasheth is a fat and indolent house lord who pays not the least attention to the hoksune code and is only technically a member of the warrior caste. Nonetheless, Rasheth is a powerful mortitheurge and maintains vast and impressive warbeast breeding programs. The influx of warbeasts he has brought to the west have provided vital support to the ongoing war efforts, as have the soldiers of his house army. These forces are not blended with other cohorts per private arrangements between Makeda and Rasheth.

TORS OF THE SKORNE EMPIRE

The Skorne Empire consists of six tors and the Northern Marches. Tors loosely correspond to provinces, duchies, gravs, or volozskya among the western nations. Only after the Second Unification did Vinter Raelthorne formally delineate the borders of these settled regions into controlled territories.

TOR-HALAAK

Named after the largest city and capital of the Skorne Empire, this tor and its territories comprise the heart of skorne civilization. Tor-Halaak encompasses the looming volcano named Karrak, the bulk of the southern shore of Mirketh Lake, Melhaas Lake, and the lands west of the Hezaat River, including the arid Mokkar. An expanse of meager but vital farmland occupies the region north of the dry plateau along the southern shore of Mirketh Lake. Plagued by thorny weeds and suffering periodic swarms of pernicious insects, this region makes farming difficult work.

TOR-HALAAK

Largest Ethnic Groups: Kademesh, Malzash, Sortaani

Important Cities: Halaak, Kaleed, Verskone

Significant Towns (not on the map): Arddar, Arjaat, Hamra, Hejrass, Ixeal, Jorlass, Kasheed, Merenash, Murkash, Skotaan, Tokeer, Voskkaa, Vuxtaam, Xeskone

Lord: Archdominar Korinvaas of House Keth

Korinvaas, the Archdominar of Tor-Halaak, was counted as among the most ruthless of Vinter's vassals who remained in the east. Following the Conqueror's iron-heeled example he punished the slightest whispers of disloyalty, monopolizing the services of the capital's paingivers to quash any rebellion. Supreme Archdomina Makeda allowed Korinvaas to retain his position in Halaak, though she keeps a wary eye on his activities through Morghoul's spies. Should Korinvaas' loyalties prove to be with the Conqueror rather than the Supreme Archdomina, elite bloodrunners stand ready to clear the way for his replacement.

With Makeda engaged in the east, Korinvaas views himself as the archdomina's proxy. He is ruthless and quick to put down any perceived sedition, retaining a specially trained force of Cataphracts that serve as his gauntleted fist within the tor. These warriors have overthrown a half-dozen houses Korinvaas viewed as threats to the empire, claiming all their wealth and slaves for his house.

Korinvaas is the highest-placed skorne who is still a member of a Cult of the Reborn, a fact that he keeps a guarded secret. His ruthless actions preserve the secrecy of his membership, and he has begun scouring the city for other members of the cult who could reveal his secrets to Makeda's spies. He retains his belief in the Reborn and is willing to sacrifice the entirety of cultists in Halaak to ensure he will be in a position of power should Vinter return.

Seat: House Keth Compound in Halaak

HALAAK

Ruler: Archdominar Korinvaas**Population:** 570,000 skorne

Description: The greatest city of the skorne, Halaak now serves as the capital of the Skorne Empire. Though Vinter Raelthorne introduced the concept of a capital with unified rule, skorne culture has revolved around Halaak for thousands of years. The great houses of Halaak, counted the most powerful of the empire, outshine all peers of lesser cities. Decisions made here unleash ripples across the region, whether from great wars between leading houses, innovations in chymistry, mortitheurgy, and tactics, or shifts in culture and caste. The habits of Halaak's great and powerful quickly see emulation abroad.

An imposing wall surrounds this sprawling city of great stone buildings on the southern shore of Mirketh Lake. Fertile

farmland in the region lies to the east, and access to the great lake has allowed for a small amount of shipping including vessels journeying from Kademe up the Hezaat River. Tremendous statues guard Halaak's gates, several of them instilled with the exalted spirits of great ancestors who gave their lives in defense of the city. Some whisper these statues serve only as decoration, their ancestors too far removed from the world to act. When Vinter Raelthorne and his army arrived in 595 AR, the guardians did not move to intercept him. Some see this as confirmation of his Reborn status, while others claim their lack of animation simply proves the statues' non-sentence.

Extremely large thoroughfares divide Halaak into districts. These broad roads provide traffic for the tremendous enslaved beasts that labor in the capital, including titans, mammoths, and other captured beasts of the plains. Construction always continues in Halaak as houses dismantle old buildings and



MIRKETH LAKE

While described as a lake, this vast body of water truly constitutes an inland sea. The waters stabilize the weather in the region, which allows the skorne to thrive. The depths of this lake have never been explored and most shipping on Mirketh remains close to the southern shore. Rumors persist of vast creatures dwelling in its waters closer to the Shroudwall, and ships occasionally go missing. Despite this, incidental fishing of Mirketh Lake provides a significant secondary source of food for many skorne communities. Just south of the Mirketh Lake lie its smaller companions Melhaas Lake and Scourge Lake. The latter's name derives from a period in the ancient past when it held toxic and deadly waters. Some claim something foul still lurks at its bottom of Scourge Lake and mistrust it, but little trace remains today of its former corruption.

erect new towers. This work reflects the fates of individual houses as compounds shrink or expand, and the city grows to accumulate new residents. Several small clusters of houses exist outside the eastern wall in a poorer district primarily occupied by slaves. In time, as merchants erect trade booths here, this area may become another district of the city, at which point the outer wall will expand to encircle and absorb it.

Within the larger districts the streets become a tighter maze of narrow alleys and winding paths occupied by the cowed shapes of the lower castes. Smaller cramped buildings cluster near the grand estates of the ruling elite as if offering support. The exact inhabitants of these estates have changed considerably in the last two decades as the arrival of Vinter Raelthorne prompted widespread changes in status across Halaak. The lowly but loyal rose to replace the once-great Betrayers. Once Makeda overthrew Vinter, she made her position clear as new Supreme Archdomina of the Skorne Empire. Those whose loyalties remained with the Conqueror were weeded out or cast down to the slave caste, once again throwing the status of citizens into disarray.

At the heart of Halaak a great open plaza serves as a bazaar for merchants and traders as well as a public gathering place for the uneasy meetings of rival houses as they discuss terms or demands. A tremendous statue of Morkaash dominates the plaza near its center, and at his feet stands an elevated platform upon which master tormentors of the paingiver caste perform public torments and executions. For many centuries this stage has displayed the agony of those fallen in house wars as a warning from one great house to another. A victorious house would contract the paingivers to publicly humiliate and cow rivals, bringing favored heirs or relatives captured in war to face their doom before the watching crowds.

Paingivers consider this stage sacred. Many meet here even when excruciations aren't taking place to share information and to seek employment, and no better location exists in the capital for those seeking to recruit paingivers and negotiate terms of contract. A house of respite called the Surcease owned by the paingivers of the capital sits off the plaza facing this square, and its dark windows witness rites performed there. Lord Assassin Morghoul executed the Betrayers here, and the plaza has remained particularly active since the Second Unification. The Betrayers' steamed and polished skulls rest on display just below the lip of the platform, each bearing a plaque describing his misdeeds.

KALEED

Ruler: Dominar Voskat of House Veskaar

Population: 70,000 skorne

Description: The largest settlement along the northern section of the Hezaat River and just south of Mirketh Lake, Kaled draws its name from the great ancient who assisted in the creation of the first sacral stone. Its inhabitants claim he arose from this community. A sizable veneration shrine exists here, even though Malphas boasts the larger share of his following. Kaled hosts a relatively impressive library among lesser settlements and a notable local following of philosophers, mortitheurges, and others among the educated worker caste. Many of the best riverboats and lake boats are built in Kaled, one of its more important local industries.

THE MOKKAR

Skorne note this small but extremely hostile desert in the Empire's southern section for its biting winds, shifting dunes, and a trackless geography that makes it very easy to lose one's way. Legends describe the Mokkar as a living enemy seeking to devour any hapless skorne who venture into its depths. Rumors also portray it as a place of wisdom where certain ancestors challenged their fortitude and survived to find enlightenment, collapsing upon the southern shore in a haze of heat-blasted delirium. Tribes of efaarit have appeared in the western portion of the Mokkar, although they seem to prefer the Blasted Desert north of the Skorne Empire.

VERSKONE

Ruler: Dominar Kortaash of House Kolvat

Population: 20,000 skorne

Description: Verskone sits south of the Mokkar, certainly the most disconnected and isolated skorne settlement south of the Shroudwall. Its inhabitants live relatively simple lives by fishing

or subsisting on meager farming on the few good areas of land in this region and have very little awareness of the goings-on in the empire. Its only contact to the rest of the Empire comes through the trickle of trade and visitors from Kademe. While not well known abroad, boats crafted in Verskone serve marginally better for ocean travel than those built in Kademe for the Hezaat River. A number of local carpentry traditions make these vessels more rugged, waterproof, and stable on rough waters, though they would still be deemed inadequate by western standards.

TOR-KADEME

Although named after the empire's only major port city and containing Scourge Lake, this southeastern region consists mostly of the sweeping Ocean of Grass. The most fertile area in the skorne settled region, this tor contains the largest farmlands and grassy plains that support herds of titans, cattle, and the skorne who rely upon them for their livelihoods. The best farmlands lie adjacent the Hezaat River, which feeds most of the empire. While lush to the skorne, this farmland is paltry by western standards and each field only reluctantly yields its crop. Some of the river valley regions contain more bogs than proper farmland, and the arid areas away from the river require irrigation and suffer periodic draughts. This tor has the highest total population in the empire with skorne living across scattered villages, towns, outlying settlements, and the region's most populous cities: Kademe and the river city Konesaan.

KADEME

Ruler: Domina Telzesh of House Korinaax

Population: 190,000 skorne

Description: Largest city of the southeast, Kademe serves as the center of Kademesh culture, although in recent decades the large river city Konesaan to the north has increasingly become a central hub for politics and intrigue. The only significant port city of the skorne, Kademe hosts a large assortment of fishing vessels that ply the nearby coast and channels of the Shattered Spine Islands. Fishing remains the dominant industry and trade for Kademe, with the catches shipped up the Hezaat River to the capital and other communities.

TOR-KADEME

Largest Ethnic Groups: Kademesh, Kajar, Sortaani

Important Cities: Kademe, Kalvat, Konesaan

Significant Towns (not on the map): Arekk, Eshuur, Hasaan, Honaak, Jelxat, Jorzak, Kaljat, Kishras, Lekshar, Makesan, Sorkar, Wajeet, Zelxal

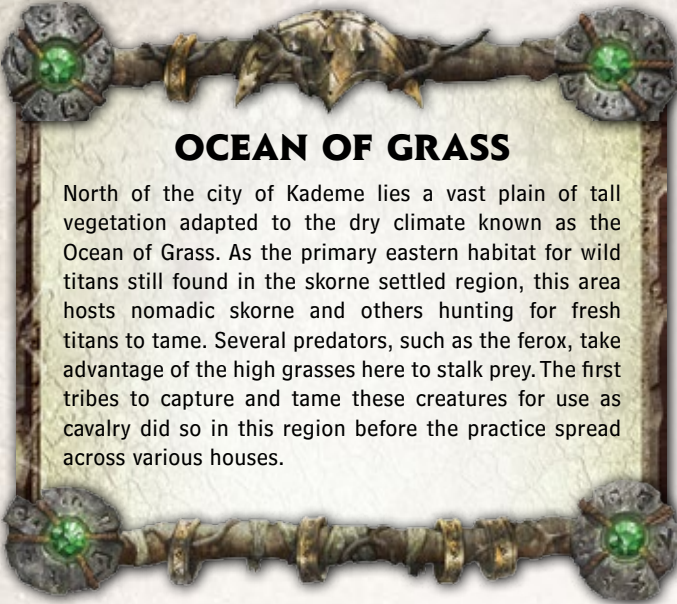
Lord: Archdominar Jolxal of House Murkaat

Archdominar Jolxal is an opportunistic and bloody-minded skorne. Jolxal originally hails from Kademe, his house previously one of small influence in the port city. A noted gambler and risk taker, Jolxal joined Vinter's side during the Second Unification to elevate his standing. His gamble paid off as he joined the ranks of the most wealthy and influential skorne in the empire. Jolxal holds court in a massive fortified complex just outside Konesaan, sitting on an elevated throne and expecting his vassals to treat him as the emperor of the river territory. Jolxal's loyalty to Vinter was predicated entirely on the gains he could acquire from such a move, and he threw in with Archdomina Makeda with the same speed. Should another rise to take her place, Jolxal's loyalty is sure to follow.

Jolxal is not a popular archdominar, and many dominars within his tor resent him. There has not yet been an organized attempt to depose him, but the leaders of other powerful houses chafe under the rule of the archdominar. They view him as an up-jumped dominar who lacks the strength and authority to hold such a high station.

Seat: Recently built Murkaat Compound outside Konesaan





OCEAN OF GRASS

North of the city of Kademe lies a vast plain of tall vegetation adapted to the dry climate known as the Ocean of Grass. As the primary eastern habitat for wild titans still found in the skorne settled region, this area hosts nomadic skorne and others hunting for fresh titans to tame. Several predators, such as the ferox, take advantage of the high grasses here to stalk prey. The first tribes to capture and tame these creatures for use as cavalry did so in this region before the practice spread across various houses.

In ancient times a very significant divide between eastern and western skorne resulted in a number of brutal wars kept quite vividly alive through legends passed down over the generations. The most extreme of these, the Second War of the Hezaat River in 1000 BR, enjoys frequent retelling at gatherings of all sizes as if it were a recent event. Western houses took many Kademesh elsewhere as slaves and servants, or subjugated them for farming and other ignoble labor. Because of this, considerable animosity lingers between the southeastern skorne and those of the capital. The imposition of Vinter's rule ended large-scale violence between these groups but not the ongoing tension or prejudice with which each side views the other. Additionally, the decrees of the supreme archdomina impact the skorne of this far-removed region less directly, and they feel at greater liberty to speak their minds. Such "traitors" must still watch their backs. Paingivers lurk in Kademe as elsewhere, but they have fewer numbers and a greater sense of liberty prevails here. The residents of Kademe answer to Archdominar Jolxal, who fortunately for them spends more of his time in Konesaan.

The major fishing houses that control the fleet in Kademe command limited respect in the capital, but they rule life in Kademe. Their word is law to the many captains, sailors, and their families who make their living here. Westerners would consider the shipbuilding here antiquated and inadequate, and the skorne do not build ships adequate for the open sea.

Along with fishing, the city relies on a number of small, poor mines in the Kajaras Mountains just northeast of the city. These cannot enable Kademe to become self-sufficient and force trade with the capital and Malphas for additional materials. The tense relations between the houses that conduct these negotiations hum with the possibility of bloodshed.

House Hovelak, arguably the strongest house in Kademe, boasts the largest fishing fleet and the most able-bodied warriors in the city. The house maintains a large fortified compound directly on the piers of Kademe that extends well into the eastern section of the city. House Hovelak controls a significant portion of the piers and fishing industry, and its representatives ruthlessly extort their rivals. The lord of Hovelak, a bitter elderly skorne named Gelkash,

has long resented his archdominar. He is poised to rally the greatest houses of Kademe against Jolxal, believing that the supreme archdomina's attention is caught up in the west. Should he attack, the resulting major house war in the southeast could interfere with the transport of supplies to the Army of the Western Reaches.

KALVAT

Ruler: Dominar Hajeed of House Melkash

Population: 55,000 skorne

Description: The largest community near Melhaas Lake, Kalvat's primary importance lies in its massive outdoor market for the sale of warbeasts. The industry of the city revolves around the support of this market and the feeding of the warbeasts brought here for sale. The city sees an unusual number of fresh titans captured on the plains that still require subduing and tormenting into proper behavior, which occasionally results in incidental death and destruction. Despite this, Kalvat's great market has proven very profitable to the inhabitants and it has become a destination of choice for paingivers specializing in the training and taming of beasts.

Near the market stands the Blood Sand Arena, where warbeasts fight for the enjoyment of spectators and the speculation of potential buyers. Overseen by skilled mortitheurges and surgeons, these events rarely last to the death since everyone considers the participating beasts to be prime assets. Buyers view these combats as good training and practice for the beasts as well as a fine initial test of their mettle.

KONESAAN

Ruler: Archdominar Jolxal of House Murkaat

Population: 125,000 skorne

Description: Konesaan's importance has grown and it may one day eclipse Kademe as a major southeastern city. The largest city in the fertile region surrounding the Hezaat River, Konesaan benefits from considerable trade by river as well as via the major road to the capital, and it serves as a hub for the bulk of the farming and ranching in the Skorne Empire. Historically, myriad competing houses handled this unregulated trade, but measures taken by the Conqueror brought this region more firmly under the control of the capital. The region's inhabitants consider themselves almost a nation apart, and even Archdominar Jolxal conducts himself as an emperor in his own right.

Several arching bridges connect this sprawling and disorganized settlement as it spreads on both sides of the river. A thick, high wall surrounds the city on the western shore, but the eastern half remains open and continues to expand.

TOR-MALPHAS

This area extends across the western Shroudfall Mountains and includes the prestigious ancient city of Malphas. It also contains the desolate western area bordering on the Abyss, mostly uninhabited by skorne except for a few rugged villages that stand wary vigilance against attacks by efaarit. A large number of isolated mountain communities lie scattered throughout the Shroudfall and look to Malphas to represent their interests.

Distrustful of outsiders, these communities conduct raids against their neighbors and rivals and largely ignore the precepts put in place during the Second Unification.

The skorne consider the mountain range their salvation from the ancient catastrophes that engulfed Lyoss. The city of Malphas remains its largest settlement, but many smaller mountain communities lie scattered throughout its peaks and valleys despite the fact that the rugged terrain offers little in the way of useful sustenance. A number of skorne houses explore these regions for likely places to establish mines, since these mountains boast the largest sources of iron found in the region.

MALPHAS

Ruler: Archdominar Lorketh of House Jakaar

Population: 230,000 skorne (mostly Malzash)

Description: First city of the skorne, Malphas resonates with ancestral power even among those who have never visited its cramped streets and claustrophobic alleys. This tremendous sprawl of buildings clusters under the cliffs of Telkaris Mountain, where a powerful stream cuts a divide into the peaks to create a sheltered and fertile valley. The protection afforded by this cliff face and the surrounding peaks staved off the brunt of the supernatural climate changes and storms that followed the destruction of Lyoss forty-six centuries ago. Despite Malphas'

storied history, Halaak has overshadowed Malphas for centuries since the older city remains a remote mountain community of crowded buildings and feuding, insular houses that boast local influence but little say in the goings-on of the capital.

In ancient times the city divided into three fortified wards, but only remnants of this division remain. The city has expanded several times and little room remains for additional construction within the confines of the sheltered cliff facing. The layered and terraced city layout quickly confuses everyone except those who have lived their lives here. Several competing fanatic sects that worship the original ancestors have taken up the cause of protecting the oldest buildings in Malphas. They inhabit these nearly ruined structures and attack interlopers who fail to show respect. These militant sects indulge in self-mortification by slicing their arms and faces, giving them a terrifying visage in battle. Many old caves and vaults extend into the mountain behind the homes of Malphas, forming a secret warren utilized by members of the lower castes. Rumors claim that collapsed ancient sections of the city conceal sacral stones or other tools of power under their rubble. A number of significant mines and quarries surround the city and provide much needed materials to the capital or other communities. Many of the Empire's best sources of iron lie in this area.

Malphas is home to the Hoksune Shrine, a place of great honor for all skorne. The first written transcription of Vuxoris' *hoksune* warrior code lies preserved in this small and dark shrine high up the terraced face of the city. This site receives a constant line of pilgrims, pious members of the warrior caste who revere the First Exalted and mourn the disappearance of his sacral stone. The great ancestor Kexorus inscribed this text in stone circa 3000 BR, and he remains in this chamber as a tremendously powerful ancestral guardian charged with watching over this relic. As many visitors come to lay eyes on the living statue containing Kexorus as to examine the hoksune text. A small sect of honored extollers, sworn to avoid speaking directly to this ancient ancestor except at extremely infrequent intervals, attends to Kexorus and his honored companions.

The city also houses the original home of the Corpusulem and its largest archive of knowledge. As the center of this prestigious if controversial fellowship, this singularly impressive archive contains centuries of skorne scientific and occult lore. The tremendous maze of cramped shelves and cases holds countless tomes, scrolls, charts, diagrams, and other materials. Emaciated clerks occupy the archive night and day, copying or restoring documents and managing the voluminous ongoing correspondence of the organization's membership. A number of sages who boast phenomenal memories catalog the contents and can recover information for copying and distribution.

Unlike the Hoksune Shrine, the Corpusulem maintains the archive in careful secrecy and security, relying on the protection of a sizable group of rugged fanatic warriors willing to kill any who enter without invitation. Access to the archive requires petitioning its governing administrators, all of them jealous of their positions and wary of outsiders. Despite this, they have done a passable job of maintaining the spirit of the archive by encouraging continuous communication with scholars, chymists, surgeons, and mortitheurges abroad.

TOR-MALPHAS

Largest Ethnic Groups: Malzash, Sortaani

Important Cities: Malphas

Significant Towns (not on the map): Haleel, Hamsek, Ishaal, Malraat, Soreketh, Vokaar

Lord: Archdominar Lorketh of House Jakaar

Archdominar Lorketh controls this important tor from the impressive fortified estate of his house in the ancient city. Though he leads an old and respected house notable for organizing the first Venators, Lorketh was young and untested when rose to his post after his predecessor's torture and execution in the Second Unification. Lorketh convinced Vinter that he could marshal the city's assets in Vinter's favor and thus prevented the full wrath of the Conqueror from falling on House Jakaar. Despite this, relations between the ruling houses of Malphas and Halaak remain tense and rife with the promise of bloodshed. Makeda comprehends the precarious position Lorketh is now in, and she uses Lorketh's inexperience and the threat of conflict between houses as a means to ensure the archdominar's loyalty.

Seat: Jakaar Compound in Malphas

Malphas remains the largest of the Shroudwall mountain communities. Some here believe they could cast aside the yoke of the Empire should they put the strength of their houses to the task, but unity rarely materializes. While the supreme archdomina has a far from absolute grip, her agents listen for seditious talk and make examples on those who dare voice open defiance. This has kept the houses of Malphas reluctantly in line.

While the city lacks political influence in the capital, it remains a bastion of skorne scholars. Malphas produces notable masters of mortitheurgy and chymistry, and periodically great engineers. These professions remain inferior to warriors but enjoy greater esteem and consideration in Malphas than in most skorne communities. A decided rivalry exists between the educated circles of Malphas and Halaak, and the most famed of these skorne thinkers find no welcome in the opposite city.

TOR-SARIKAAN

Poorest of the tors and sparsely inhabited, this northeastern area includes the Trembling Waste, the Shadow of Gelaash, a baleful valley along the Fractured Peaks, and a small stretch of less arid land north of the waste. The skorne have proven reluctant to claim these lands due to the occasional bursts of violent weather. Nevertheless, the last remnants of the millennia past unnatural disasters have finally begun to fade, and this region has seen an influx of recent settlement. The skorne here live nomadic lives similar to those of the neighboring Northern Marches. While the region is dotted with a number of villages and small encampments, only the town of Kajim just south of the Trembling Waste has any sizable population.

A smaller community has formed in the shadow of Kortarn Fortress, which once marked the northern border of the skorne settled region. The soldiers here muster against all dangers, including the untamed and peculiar beasts inhabiting the Trembling Waste.

TREMBLING WASTE

This craggy desolate region east of the Shroudwall takes its name from its frequent earthquakes. Tall plateaus and craggy spires cover the landscape, occasionally crumbling and crashing to earth. Basilisks originally came from this region, apparently at home within its strange shifting boundaries. The weather here acts as unpredictably as the earth, with long periods of draught followed by flash floods of tremendous intensity. Little grows here other than tenacious vines and weeds, some of which have razor-sharp leaves and poisonous thorns. A number of other peculiar creatures, including oversized bloodthirsty insect-like creatures and a wide variety of reptiles, have carved niches for themselves here.

TOR-SARIKAAN

Largest Ethnic Groups: Kademesh, Kajar, Sortaani

Important Cities: Kajim

Significant Towns (not on the map): Ashaak, Halmok, Halsaan, Kanlos, Keleek, Kornvash, Laasm, Malraas, Mijlash, Mokraas, Solaak, Sorkar, Veraak, Vukal, Xaashet

Lord: Archdominar Hekrask of House Zhuron

Age has taken its toll on Archdominar Hekrask, the once-noted warrior who controls this region, and he has grown paranoid of his subordinates. He holds the least sway among the archdominars, but most deem his house's fortress impervious to outside attack.

Seat: House Zhuron Fortress in Kajim

KAJIM

Ruler: Archdominar Hekrask of House Zhuron

Population: 35,000 skorne

Description: Kajim is the only settlement of note in Tor-Sarikaan and the last major supply and trade point south of the treacherous Trembling Waste. This well fortified and defended town once served as the easternmost limit of the skorne settled area, until settlers braved the Waste to settle the Northern Marches. Kajim remains an important point of resupply and contact between the remote northern communities living beyond the Shroudwall and the rest of the Skorne Empire. The most influential houses in Kajim tame the great beasts of the Wastes and trade them with military houses in the west. This includes the profitable trade in aradus and rhinodons captured in the Wastes, tamed, and then conditioned. These great beasts increasingly serve in roles similar to titans among the great houses and the Army of the Western Reaches.

TOR-SORTAAN

Until recently, this expanse made up primarily by the Plains of Sortaan formed the western edge of the skorne inhabited region. While the eastern Ocean of Grass is famed for its wild titans, tremendous herds of belek, korbesh, and kopaar, creatures kept as cattle that are vital to skorne survival inhabit the Plains of Sortaan. Numerous small villages and settlements dot these sparsely inhabited plains, dominated by the two largest communities: Kalos, just west of Halaak, and the trade hub of Tokraas to the south. Settlements thin considerably to the west as the Stormlands loom on the horizon, although a few rugged outlaw bands inhabit this area.

Vinter made his historic first crossing at this tor's furthest western extreme. Here he encountered skorne communities

and gathered warriors for the First Unification. Most of these fringe communities still fully believe in Vinter as the Reborn and number among his most devoted supporters. Western villages erected several small shrines in his honor, although the more orthodox urban skorne considered this custom distasteful at best. Cults of the Reborn have a strong presence here, though their shrines are now hidden away from view. This region enthusiastically answered the call to war in the west, and opportunists have exploited the fact that many of these communities' warriors have left for the western battlefields.

KALOS

Ruler: Archdominar Jalkiel of House Muzkaar

Population: 20,000 skorne

Description: A small but important settlement west of Halaak, Kalos profits from the ongoing traffic between the Abyssal Fortress and the capital. It serves as an important military mustering point for aspiring soldiers joining the western conquest. Before the war, it served as a location for western plains dwellers to trade supplies, hides, and other goods with merchants who served as an intermediary with the larger markets in the capital.

TOR-SORTAAN

Largest Ethnic Groups: Kajar, Sortaani

Important Cities: Kalos and Tokraas

Significant Towns (not on the map): Ashmok, Edarash, Eddeth, Helkone, Makriis, Rasash, Saerluk, Shijaar, Tanveer, Tokkar, Xerash, Xisvoul

Lord: Archdominar Jalkiel of House Muzkaar

The unpopular Archdominar Jalkiel holds court in Kalos. Jalkiel's peers consider him a money-grubbing merchant unworthy of his caste. His house has never commanded much esteem for its shrewd business acumen, an anomaly among a people who place no value on such a skill.

Jalkiel gained prominence under Vinter's reign. The Conqueror considered him a vital point in the flow of supplies to the Abyssal Fortress and from there to the Western Reaches. Promises to destroy any house that interfered with Jalkiel gave his house a great measure of security from potential rivals. That Archdomina Makeda deigns to keep Jalkiel in such a prominent position proves his mercantile talents, though she has made her contempt for him clear on more than one occasion. If another skorne were better suited to his task, she would likely have Jalkiel supplanted without a second thought.

Seat: House Muzkaar Compound in Kalos

Kalos' outlying retaining wall only partially protects this settlement of low buildings from the powerful wind and dust storms that frequently sweep through. During certain months of the year, its residents work vigilantly to prevent the shifting southernmost tendrils of the Blasted Desert from burying the northwestern side of town in sand.

TOKRAAS

Ruler: Domina Eshkereet of House Vurkorash

Population: 35,000 skorne

Description: Since Kalos began supporting the military supply lines to the Abyssal Fortress, Tokraas has grown into the most important trade hub of the southwestern skorne settled region. It connects the nomadic and rustic skorne living in the Ocean of Grass with those living on the fringes of the Mokkar and farther east to the Hezaat River. This town also handles trade with the settlements south of the Mokkar along the coast. A settlement of narrow streets and tightly packed buildings perched atop a small plateau just southwest of the great volcano Karrak, Tokraas' strong fortifications have preserved it more than once from conquest by rival houses of the plains.

The volcano looming to the northeast dominates all views in the city, and ash and smoke continuously drift into the sky from its peak. The city endures near-constant ashfall from the volcano, coating all surfaces eventually and leaving a lingering smell of sulfur. Slaves endlessly sweep and gather this ash. The inhabitants of Tokraas suffer from a number of mild throat and skin afflictions as a result of breathing this ash.

TOR OF THE WESTERN REACHES

The newest and largest tor, the Western Reaches encompasses a vague dominion arguably stretching from the Abyss to the borders of the Iron Kingdoms. Vinter intended this area as just the first of several territories to be claimed as his army conquered the Iron Kingdoms. This region supports no skorne communities, but Vinter erected a series of fortress supply points across the Bloodstone Desert to facilitate the forces sent west. Vinter deemed the distance too great to attempt a simple seizure of power, and he intended to wear the westerners down over an extended campaign. To this end, the skorne control several routes west that pass both north and south of the Bitter Sea. The Conqueror designed the fortresses to allow for fallback and mustering positions should forward forces need to retreat and regroup. The brutal and unrelenting geography takes its toll on even well prepared and conditioned soldiers with considerable experience in this territory. Those skorne entrusted with maintaining these fortresses quickly became experts on this desert and know its hazards and geography better than any explorers from the west.

Prior to her elevation to the role of supreme archdomina, Makeda of House Balaash held this region in a slightly different fashion than her peers. Under Vinter, the archdomina served first and foremost as the supreme general of the Army of the Western Reaches. Now that she is the supreme leader of her people she remains in the west, relying on loyal vassals in the empire to execute her wishes while she pursues war.

Makeda's powerful house remains near the capital of Halaak, although prestigious Balaash warriors have joined Makeda's army as significant officers and assist her in the difficult logistics of ongoing attacks and plans of conquest.

TOR OF THE WESTERN REACHES

Largest Ethnic Groups: Kademesh, Kajar, Malzash

Important Cities: Abyssal Fortress, Sunhammer Fortress, Tyrant's Lash, Kortar Fastness, Balaash Fortress, Klokhor Fortress

Significant Towns (not on the map): Minor supply forts

Lord: Supreme Archdomina Makeda of House Balaash

Since ascending to her position as supreme archdomina of the Skorne Empire, Makeda has maintained her command of the Army of the Western Reaches and the ongoing conquest of the west. Balaash Fortress in the Greybranch Mountains is the central seat of Makeda's evolving domain and has become the main mustering point for soldiers sent from the east. While the army's administrative headquarters is here, Makeda's place is most often on the battlefield. In her stead, many minor tasks fall to Dominar Kaartos of House Balaash, a blood relative of Makeda and leader of the Southern Bloodstone sabaoth. His coordinating efforts allows the supreme archdomina to focus her efforts where they are most needed on the front line against the empire's western enemies. Makeda is often accompanied by several particularly vigilant exalted guardians drawn from the heroes of her bloodline.

Seat: Balaash Fortress

KOTAAN

Ruler: Domina Leskaar of House Kursorik

Population: 20,000 skorne

Description: The inhabitants of this rustic and unsophisticated town receive little respect or even notice in the capital. However, the skorne of this region remain proud of their strength and ability to wrest a living from territories once considered anathema and cursed. Kotaan's walls stand atop a gradually sloping hill fortified to serve as a stronghold against the dangerous creatures roaming the wild northern region. Along with its permanent inhabitants, the town sees considerable traffic from the nomadic houses of the Northern Marches, and it serves as a central gathering point for the trade of goods and information. Domina Leskaar of House Kursorik controls the largest building in town as her estate.

NORTHERN MARCHES

Largest Ethnic Groups: Kasortaani, Malzash, Sortaani

Important Cities: Kotaan

Significant Towns (not on the map): Aarah, Ethmeer, Hejraat, Helkar, Kaadu, Kaljat, Keshmaat, Kurtan, Lorketh, Telax, Xakone

Lord: Domina Leskaar of House Kursorik

Domina Leskaar of House Kursorik, a minor house that loaned its soldiers to the Second Unification, serves as the supreme archdomina's vassal here. The house lords of the marches pay deference to the domina, but she has little direct influence over them or their vassals.

Seat: House Kursorik Estate in Kotaan

THE NORTHERN MARCHES

The Northern Marches include the sparsely settled lands beyond the Shroudwall Mountains, including Kunharaak Valley, Helkan's Reward, and the Swamp of Gaaketa. Only the remote town of Kotaan qualifies as a large settlement. No archdominar oversees this fringe territory, since it is not a proper tor. The Conqueror never visited this area, and the isolated and aloof Kasortaan skorne have felt the least impact from the momentous events of the last two decades. This region contains a greater quantity of fertile land than the skorne can currently exploit. The region holds many threats including tribes of feral cyclopes, gigantic hydras, and warlike bands of indefatigable giants that inhabit the untamed lands to the north. The skorne here live rustic and nomadic lives with little contact or news from the central empire.

HELKAN'S REWARD

The most fertile and lush region of skorne settled territory just north of the Shroudwall Mountains, this area serves as the foundation for recent emigration of skorne into this region. Its name comes from the first skorne house to discover and exploit its possibilities, but the area soon attracted competitors among what would become the Kasortaan people. Control over this region remains contested among the various powerful families of the Northern Marches.



CHARACTERS, GEAR, AND CHYMISTRY

This chapter details a number of new careers, adventuring companies, abilities, skills, and equipment suitable for skorne characters in games of *Iron Kingdoms Unleashed*. Also included is information about the art and science of chymistry, a subtle and powerful craft unique to the skorne.

PLAYING SKORNE CHARACTERS

Skorne characters present new roleplaying opportunities to groups interested in exploring eastern Immoren or joining the vast war hosts gathered on the borders of the Iron Kingdoms. These characters come from an utterly different world than that presented in *Iron Kingdoms Unleashed Roleplaying Game: Core Rules*. They are unsympathetic to the plight of the wild peoples of western Immoren, seeing them only as chattel to be conquered, enslaved, and otherwise exploited. Similarly, westerners view the skorne as a terrifying race of invaders who must be driven back into the wastes.

Unless circumstances and backgrounds are specifically engineered by a Game Master to accommodate them, skorne characters are not suited to inclusion in groups of other *Unleashed* characters. Only under specific and narrow circumstances are skorne characters willing to work closely with outsiders. Indeed, skorne culture is so rigid that certain types of skorne have difficulty working together if they are from different castes or rival houses. Most interaction between the skorne and the inhabitants of western Immoren takes place on the battlefield, or after the westerners are taken as skorne slaves. (Game Masters should see “Unleashing the Skorne,” p. 153.)

Still, it would be a mistake to simply label the skorne as evil. Though their culture, morality, and philosophy are decidedly alien to those in the west, the skorne live by rigid codes that define their worldview and their place within society. They have been shaped by the tribulations their culture has endured to survive their hostile lands. They are beholden to the rigid caste system that has arisen from thousands of years of bloody strife, adhering to a notion of honor distinctly their own. Skorne prove their worth chiefly by engaging in unflinching warfare. They seek conquest not merely for the spoils, but because battle is the only way the warrior caste can escape the nightmare afterlife of the Void and achieve immortality and lasting glory.

Skorne-based *Unleashed* games have the distinction of spanning the entire continent of Immoren. Players can take on the role of warriors, mystics, and leaders of the far east, exploring the dangerous and exotic lands of the Skorne Empire. They can also take part in the campaign to conquer western Immoren as part of the Army of the Western Reaches. These characters face new and dangerous situations in an unfamiliar land fraught with peril and conflict.

SKORNE AND THE GIFTED ARCHETYPE

All skorne have the potential to use magic in the form of mortitheurgy. In most cases this art is practiced at a rudimentary level, such as in the work of chymists and certain paingivers. Some skorne delve deeper into the study of mortitheurgy, however, and harness the full power of this unique school of magic.

Certain spellcasting careers in this book do not require a character to have the Gifted archetype, but skorne characters can still benefit from selecting the archetype. A skorne character with the Gifted archetype is either a particularly powerful individual or one who committed early to the study of this field. A Gifted skorne begins the game with an ARC score appropriate to his arcane tradition (for example, ARC 2 for harnessers, ARC 3 for will weavers). Other skorne characters begin the game with ARC 1 but can use their advancement points to increase their ARC whether or not they have the Gifted archetype. For details on increasing stats, see p. 150 in *Iron Kingdoms Unleashed Roleplaying Game: Core Rules*.

Players who wish to select spellcasting careers for their skorne character after character creation must first have the Mortitheurge career.

CAREER OPTIONS

In addition to the careers listed in this book, at the Game Master's discretion skorne characters can also utilize careers found in *Iron Kingdoms Unleashed Roleplaying Game: Core Rules*. Skorne characters can select the Archer, Brigand, Chieftain, Monster Hunter, Scout, and Warrior careers. Skorne characters cannot take the Bone Grinder or Sorcerer careers and instead have their own arcane traditions.

For skorne, some careers are more appropriate than others. A skorne Brigand is certain to be a criminal from the lower castes, while a Chieftain, Monster Hunter, Scout, or Warrior is likely to represent a more tribal or savage skorne from the fringes of the empire. These skorne are unlikely to be affiliated with a major skorne house, though the Warrior career in particular might signify a trained combatant who rose from outside the warrior caste, such as a paingiver who devoted himself to skill at arms. Finally, though the skorne are familiar with archery, their culture does not place much value on the art of the bow. Skorne Archers are exceedingly rare.

SKORNE



The skorne are the dominant race of eastern Immoren. Though tall and lean of build, they are strong and naturally rugged. From their roots as tribal nomads, the skorne rose to build an empire that stretches from the Mizrah Sea to the great Abyss. The desolate land they call home has forged the skorne into an impressive race. While not as physically robust as trollkin or ogrun, the skorne ability to press on despite pain or physical injury is terrifying to the men of the west.

SKORNE

	STARTING VALUE	HERO LIMIT	VET LIMIT	EPIC LIMIT
PHY	5	7	8	8
SPD	6	7	7	7
STR	5	7	8	8
AGL	3	5	6	7
PRW	4	5	6	7
POI	4	5	6	7
INT	3	5	6	7
ARC	1	4	6	8
PER	3	5	6	7

The skorne have no gods and believe in no afterlife. When they die, their souls are consumed by the Void. The skorne combat the finality of death through exaltation, the preservation of the spirit in a sacral stone. This privilege is reserved for the greatest skorne, those warriors who die in glorious battle.

This belief shapes skorne society. Their culture is stratified into several castes, with the warriors at the top of the hierarchy. Skorne warriors live by the tenets of *hoksune*, a philosophy and code laid out by the ascetic and peerless warrior Vuxoris the First Exalted. Even non-warrior castes make it their life's work to support their house's military, since all tasks are geared toward elevating the greatness of the house and its ability to wage war.

Archetypes: Cunning, Gifted, Mighty, Skilled

Languages: A skorne starts the game with three languages. Choose two from among Havaati, Kadesh, or Soresh, plus one other language he has picked up on his travels.

Height: 66–83 inches male, 61–77 inches female

Weight: 110–200 pounds male, 90–180 pounds female

Additional Characteristics:

- **Arcane Potential** – All skorne possess an ARC stat and the potential to gain arcane careers. For more information, see p. 89.
- **Caste** – Prior to selecting careers, choose a caste from warrior, extoller, paingiver, worker, slave, or outcast (p. 43). Skorne of a higher caste sometimes fill the role of a lower caste, provided it is suitable for someone of their station. A tyrant would never stoop so low as to perform a task of the worker caste, for instance, but a paingiver may choose to explore the work of the surgeons.
- **Limited Arcane Tradition** – Skorne magic is based on the art of mortitheurgy and is unlike the arcane traditions of the west. Skorne characters cannot have the Bone Grinder or Sorcerer careers.

SKORNE CASTES

All skorne characters have a caste. A character's caste largely defines his role in skorne society as well as the career options available to him. When creating a skorne character, select a starting caste before choosing careers. Each caste grants an inherent benefit at character creation. Stats modified by a character's caste do not affect his racial maximums.

The skorne castes are, in descending order: warrior, extoller, paingiver, worker, slave, and outcast.

Typically a character's caste is determined early in life, but some skorne belong to castes other than the one they were born into. Skorne are born into the warrior, worker, or slave castes. Other castes represent life choices or events that happen after birth but prior to character creation.

Paingivers arise from youths of the worker or slave castes who draw the attention of senior paingivers, having recognized a potential aptitude for their art. Such youths are taken away as recruits, abandoning former house affiliations to be trained as junior paingivers. Extollers are selected from among those born to the worker caste who show gifted arcane talent and who develop a strong affinity and respect for the exalted ancestors. Some extollers were once mortitheurges with special aptitudes who were offered the chance to join this esteemed caste to conduct its vital responsibilities. Both extollers and paingivers are highly valued in skorne culture, yet each of these castes exists apart from ordinary society.

Not all castes are so revered. Former warriors might be enslaved after the defeat of their house, and criminals can become outcasts by fleeing punishment and attempting to survive on the fringes of skorne society. Members of the slave and outcast castes are social pariahs, but they have unique benefits from their station and gain access to special abilities, contacts, and skills.

Changing one's caste is a life-defining event that only rarely results in an improvement in a character's station. Some few members of lower castes do take up arms later in life, learn the *hoksune* code, and enter battle with sufficient skill to impress a

ranking tyrant or dominar, thereafter becoming members of the warrior caste. This is unlikely and rare; it is far more common for a skorne to remain in the same caste his entire life or to find his status degraded after setbacks and misfortune.

A skorne character can belong to only one caste. If an event occurs that alters a character's caste, the new caste replaces any prior caste. A skorne character can receive the benefit of a caste only at character creation. A change in a character's caste later on affects his position in society but does not confer any additional benefits after character creation.

EXAMPLE: The house of Gabe's Cataphract is crushed in battle against House Halaak and he is taken as a slave. Gabe is reduced to the slave caste. He retains the benefits granted at character creation from starting in the warrior caste but does not gain the benefits granted by the slave caste.

WARRIOR

Skorne warriors train rigorously in their chosen martial traditions to hone themselves into weapons worthy of exaltation. As the uppermost caste, warriors tend not to worry about anything beyond the study and perfection of their warrior art, whether as a Praetorian, Cataphract, or Venator. In addition to training the body, warriors must train the mind, memorizing and adhering to the philosophy of *hoksune*.

Special Rules: Characters created as members of the warrior caste begin the game with +1 PRW or POI and Lore (*hoksune* code) 1.

EXTOLLER

Extollers are members of the worker caste, but they occupy its upper echelon and are afforded special status. As spiritual advisors and the gatekeepers of the process of exaltation, extollers spend countless hours in study of their specialized branch of mortitheurgy. Contact with the revered spirits of ancestors requires a deep understanding of the extoller's art; anything less would be an insult to the ancestor.

Special Rules: Characters created as members of the extoller caste begin the game with +1 ARC and the Exalted Dialogue ability (p. 63).

PAINGIVER

Though members of the worker caste, paingivers hold a special place in skorne society. Paingivers can be spies, torturers, and beast handlers, ranging from the taskmasters who oversee the work of slave crews to the beast handlers who acquire and break new warbeasts. Some paingivers also serve as covert agents of their lords and are responsible for rooting out sedition through spying and interrogation. Paingivers who prove themselves in battle may be afforded similar status as the lowest members of the warrior caste.

Special Rules: Characters created as members of the paingiver caste begin the game with +1 AGL and the Anatomical Precision ability.

WORKER

The worker caste is a broad category encompassing many important roles, including surgeons and chymists, architects, engineers, laborers, mortitheurges, and most other non-warrior occupations among the skorne. The extollers and paingivers fall in this caste, though the importance of their work places them in a special category above the rest. Workers are responsible for managing the tasks of commerce, construction, and the general management of a house's affairs, so skorne of this caste must be hardy and intelligent.

Special Rules: Characters created as members of the worker caste begin the game with +1 STR or INT and gain boosted Craft rolls.

SLAVE

Slaves in eastern Immoren are regularly pushed to their physical limits. Taskmasters draw on subtle mortitheurgy to ensure the bodies of these slaves do not give out until the work is complete. Skorne slaves fall into three main categories. The first are skorne born to the caste, the children of slaves. These slaves understand their lot in life and require the least amount of physical punishment by the taskmasters. Next are slaves who once belonged to different castes. Often they were warriors and workers of a defeated house, taken as captives by the victor. These slaves hope that one day their children or grandchildren will be elevated from the slave caste to worker. Last are the slaves taken from other races. They are the most likely to be recalcitrant and violent, often requiring the agonizing guidance of the taskmasters.

Special Rules: Characters created as members of the slave caste begin the game with +1 PHY and gains the Tough Mighty archetype benefit, whether or not he meets the prerequisites.

OUTCAST

Outcasts are the lowest members of skorne society, not even worthy of membership among the slaves. Known outcasts are hunted by the paingivers to pay for their crimes. If caught, an outcast is publicly tortured as a warning to others prior to his execution.

Outcasts must be cautious while traveling anywhere near skorne cities. Most are branded with visible marks that distinguish them as outcasts. If discovered walking among non-outcast skorne, their lives are forfeit. Outcasts in the east are nomads living off the land, who prey on their fellow skorne like hungry wolves. Outcast warlocks and mortitheurges often seek out ascetics to continue their studies into the magic of the skorne. Outcast warriors become bloodthirsty brigands no longer bound by the code of hoksune. These skorne are indulgent and fatalistic since they know that the hope of exaltation is gone forever, like their spirits will be upon their death. Outcasts living beyond the grasp of the empire have no better life. They must contend with enemies on all sides, from the skorne cohorts who would see them executed for their actions to the inhabitants of the west who simply see them as more skorne invaders to destroy.

Special Rules: Characters created as members of the outcasts ignore any caste career prerequisites, but they roll one fewer die on all non-Intimidation social skill rolls made involving non-outcast skorne. Outcast skorne are unwelcome anywhere among the skorne and likely to be attacked on sight if their status is discovered. Outcasts may be actively hunted by the Skorne Empire for their crimes.

ADDING CAREERS FROM ANOTHER CASTE

Ordinarily a character cannot acquire a career with prerequisites for a caste different from his own. Special exceptions can be made, though not without permission and dedicated effort. Characters who advance to the Veteran or Epic level can seek provisional training in another caste for the purpose of acquiring a specific career. Access to specialized caste knowledge is controlled by leaders of the caste, who must be formally petitioned. This process allows a character to ignore the caste prerequisite for a career, though other prerequisites must be met.

Provisional access to the extoller career requires petitioning a house's ranking aptimus or the supreme aptimus. Access to paingiver careers requires petitioning a master tormentor or higher ranking paingiver. Access to worker careers requires petitioning a master in a specific field. Access to warrior caste careers requires petitioning a tyrant or higher ranking house leader and also requires the character to swear fealty, if he has not already done so. Game masters decide if a caste leader is willing to train an outsider. Such training might require demonstrations of commitment through ritualized trials or the petitioner to perform specific tasks.

Even members of the warrior caste are expected to treat leaders of lower castes with respect when seeking their knowledge, and to honor the outcome of a petition. This is solely a matter of etiquette, and nothing prevents a powerful tyrant from lashing out if refused. Most masters consider it a dishonor to teach their arts to an unworthy petitioner and refuse despite threats. Senior extollers are especially protective of their caste and teach only those willing to make a full commitment. Learning this career requires a petitioner to accept all the caste's duties and responsibilities. At the Game Master's discretion, learning the fundamentals of a new career might require a period of intensive training and seclusion lasting from weeks to months. Provisional training does not affect the character's actual caste. For example, adding a career from the warrior caste does not make a character a member of that caste.

NEW CAREERS

The new careers detailed here represent options available only to skorne characters. Each career description includes starting abilities, skills, and assets as well as the abilities, connections,

and skills a character with that career can gain as he advances through play. (For more information on choosing careers, see *Iron Kingdoms Unleashed Roleplaying Game: Core Rules*, p. 112.)

ASCETIC

PREREQUISITES: SKORNE

STARTING ABILITIES AND SKILLS	Abilities: Flesh of Steel, Long Lived, Pain Monger (p. 65) Military Skills: Unarmed Combat 1 Occupational Skills: Climbing 1, Detection 1, Jumping 1, Lore (philosophy of Morkaash) 1
STARTING ASSETS	10 sl worth of equipment
ASCETIC ABILITIES	Acrobatics, Aegis, Blood Trade, Circular Vision (p. 62), Disease Resistance, Dodger, Exalted (p. 63), Excruciator (p. 63), Fleet Foot, Flesh of Steel, Flying Fists (p. 64), Hardened Strike (p. 64), Immunity: Cold, Immunity: Fire, Iron Will, Long Lived, Overtake, Pain Monger (p. 65), Poison Resistance, Rock Solid, Serpent Strike (p. 65), Specialization (Katara), Transcend the Flesh (p. 66), Trip (p. 66), Two-Weapon Fighting, Whirlwind (p. 66)
ASCETIC CONNECTIONS	—
ASCETIC MILITARY SKILLS	Hand Weapon 3, Thrown Weapon 3, Unarmed Combat 4
ASCETIC OCCUPATIONAL SKILLS	Cryptography 4, Escape Artist 4, General Skills 4, Medicine 4, Oratory 4, Sneak 3, Survival 4

Most skorne live an austere lifestyle, particularly in comparison to the relative decadence of those dwelling in the west, but some follow a path of even greater self-deprivation. They are ascetics, warrior-philosophers of the skorne who seek enlightenment through excruciating pain. Ascetics internalize the philosophies of Morkaash, using their own flesh as the path to true understanding. Skorne ascetics go far beyond privation and denial, indulging in ritual self-mutilation as a means of unlocking the mysteries of the greater world. An ascetic's self-inflicted wounds are the means through which he refines his body, the pain he endures the fuel of his meditation. The ascetic's understanding of his own pain is so perfect that efforts by others to harm him are paltry in comparison. No enemy's blade can touch him where he has not already carefully and patiently carved his own flesh. This practice is connected to the foundations of both mortitheurgy and the paingiver arts, though its masters consider it a distinct and separate study.

Playing an Ascetic: Play the Ascetic if you like the idea of a warrior-philosopher who bends pain into personal perfection. The Ascetic's skills increase his physical capabilities, and his suite of abilities gives him unparalleled skill in unarmed combat. Abilities such as Flesh of Steel and Pain Monger allow the Ascetic to endure powerful blows without wearing armor and transform pain into even greater resilience. An Ascetic's ability to fight in unarmed combat is unrivaled thanks to abilities such as Flying Fists, Hardened Strike, and Serpent Strike. The Mighty and Skilled archetypes are attractive choices for an Ascetic, but this career can also be a good pairing for Gifted careers like the Mortitheurge and Warlock, combining arcane power with incredible physical durability and martial prowess. At the Veteran level the Whirlwind ability vastly increases the Ascetic's combat ability, particularly if he has Circular Vision.



BEAST HANDLER

PREREQUISITES: SKORNE, PAINGIVER CASTE

STARTING ABILITIES, CONNECTIONS, AND SKILLS	Special: A character starting with the Beast Handler career must choose Bloodrunner (p. 47), Chirurgeon (p. 49), Chymist (p. 50), Monster Hunter, Mortitheurge (p. 53), Scout, Tormentor (p. 56), or Warlock: Skorne (p. 59) for his other career. Abilities: Animal Control (p. 62), Beast Manipulation: Enrage (p. 62), Specialization (Barbed Whip) Connections: Connections (paingivers) Military Skills: Hand Weapon 1 Occupational Skills: Animal Handling 1, Lore (extraordinary zoology), Lore (philosophy of Morkaash) 1, Medicine 1, Tracking 1
STARTING ASSETS	Barbed whip (p. 72), paingiver armor (p. 72), paingiver mask (p. 78)
BEAST HANDLER ABILITIES	Animal Control (p. 62), Beast Handler, Beast Manipulation: Dominator (p. 62), Beast Manipulation: Enrage (p. 62), Beast Manipulation: Medicate (p. 62), Big Game Hunter, Conditioning (p. 63), Inflict Pain, Poison Resistance, Precision Strike, Skilled Trapper, Specialization (Barbed Whip), Specialization (Man Catcher), Staredown, Take Down (p. 66)
BEAST HANDLER CONNECTIONS	Connections (Army of the Western Reaches), Connections (paingivers), Connections (skorne house)
BEAST HANDLER MILITARY SKILLS	Great Weapon 2, Hand Weapon 3, Unarmed Combat 3
BEAST HANDLER OCCUPATIONAL SKILLS	Command 2, General Skills 4, Interrogation 2, Medicine 4, Navigation 3, Rope Use 4, Sneak 3, Survival 3, Tracking 4

Beast handlers are a class of paingivers skilled at tracking, subduing, and controlling the beasts of eastern Immoren. By applying the philosophies of Morkaash, beast handlers can induce great strength and ferocity in beasts or subdue them in an instant. They are familiar with the nervous systems and anatomy of many creatures and know the most effective locations to apply force for a desired result.

Through careful administration of painful lashes and expertly inserting pain hooks into a creature's flesh, beast handlers can bring all manner of creatures under control. Once a creature

is subjected to expert pain techniques, it can be trained as a part of the empire's living arsenal of warbeasts. Beast handlers join hunting expeditions to gather these beasts and are skilled trackers, and hunters. Often working for months in the unforgiving eastern wilderness from the Blasted Desert to the Trembling Wastes, beast masters must be self-sufficient and talented survivalists if they hope to return to the empire with their controlled beasts.

Playing a Beast Handler: If the idea of wielding a barbed lash and using pain to drive powerful monsters to savagery appeals to you, play the Beast Handler. Beast Handler is a specialized career that focuses on the transformation and control of eastern Immoren's most powerful creatures. Beast Handlers have a suite of abilities that allow them to manipulate and enhance any nearby warbeasts. The Beast Handler's Beast Manipulation abilities dramatically affect warbeasts (both friendly and enemy!) and abilities like Big Game Hunter, Precision Strike, and Take Down allow him to capture potential warbeasts without extreme harm.

At the Veteran level, the Conditioning ability allows Beast Handlers to transform the creatures of the east into warbeasts in a manner similar to warlocks.

BLOODRUNNER

PREREQUISITES: SKORNE, PAINGIVER CASTE

STARTING ABILITIES, CONNECTIONS, AND SKILLS	Special: A character starting with the Bloodrunner career must choose Beast Handler (p. 46), Brigand, Mortitheurge (p. 53), Scout, Tormentor (p. 56), or Warlock: Skorne (p. 59) for his other career. Abilities: Prowl, Specialization (Assassin's Blade) Connections: Connections (paingivers) Military Skills: Hand Weapon 1 Occupational Skills: Detection 1, Lore (philosophy of Morkaash) 1, Sneak 1
STARTING ASSETS	Assassin's blade, paingiver armor (p. 72), paingiver mask (p. 78)
BLOODRUNNER ABILITIES	Acrobatics, Ambush, Backstab, Battle Plan: Coordinated Strike, Blood Spiller, Deadly Skill, Fast Draw, Fleet Foot, Overtake, Precision Strike, Pursuit, Prowl, Roll With It, Shadow Magic, Signal Language, Specialization (Assassin's Blade), Specialization (Fighting Claws), Sprint, Two-Weapon Fighting
BLOODRUNNER CONNECTIONS	Connections (Army of the Western Reaches), Connections (paingivers), Connections (skorne house)
BLOODRUNNER MILITARY SKILLS	Great Weapon 2, Hand Weapon 4, Thrown Weapon 3, Unarmed Combat 4
BLOODRUNNER OCCUPATIONAL SKILLS	Command 2, Cryptography 1, Disguise 4, Escape Artist 4, General Skills 4, Interrogation 2, Medicine 2, Sneak 4

Bloodrunners are the premier spies and assassins of the Skorne Empire. Walking the narrow line between warriors and their own caste, bloodrunners are a shadowy sect among the paingivers. The bloodrunner tradition has existed for centuries, counted as the closest to warriors among the paingiver caste, but they are not fettered by the limitations of the *hoksune* code. Bloodrunners see no shame in striking an unaware opponent from the shadows or employing weapons more traditional warriors would consider dishonorable.

Bloodrunners immerse themselves in the teachings of Morkaash, learning to exploit anatomical vulnerabilities in battle to deliver deadly strikes. Those of their tradition were initially employed in small groups, performing surgical strikes in bloody house feuds. Bloodrunner assassins would eliminate a rival house's leadership with a swift attack, leaving the house's warriors intact to be assimilated by their rivals. In recent years their numbers have swelled. Bloodrunners are employed throughout the empire to root out and eliminate the enemies of the empire.

Playing a Bloodrunner: Choose the Bloodrunner career if you want to play a swift and deadly assassin who uses his knowledge of anatomy to murder powerful individuals. The Bloodrunner has the capacity to outrun and outmaneuver most opposition as he stealthily reaches his target. Once in position a Bloodrunner can maximize a deadly back strike, combining the Ambush and Backstab abilities with his Specialization with the assassin's blade to deliver a single devastating blow. The Skilled archetype is a natural fit for Bloodrunners thanks to many archetype abilities that

feed into their swift and deadly style, but Mighty or Cunning Bloodrunners also have tools to make them exceptional assassins. At the Veteran level the Bloodrunner has the ability to pick up two abilities useful to any assassin, Blood Spiller and Deadly Skill, which not only increase the Bloodrunner's damage against living targets but also ensure that they will not recover from the wounds he inflicts.



CATAPHRACT

PREREQUISITES: SKORNE, WARRIOR CASTE, PHY 7 (SEE BELOW)

SPECIAL	A Cataphract must use his initial stat increases to improve his PHY stat.
STARTING ABILITIES, CONNECTIONS, AND SKILLS	Special: A character starting with the Cataphract career must choose Monster Hunter, Mortitheurge (p. 53), Praetorian (p. 55), Tyrant (p. 57), Warlock: Skorne (p. 59), or Warrior for his other career. Abilities: Cataphract (p. 62), Defensive Line, Load Bearing Connections: Connections (skorne house) Military Skills: Great Weapon 1 and Shield 1 Occupational Skills: Command 1 and Lore (hoksune code) 1
STARTING ASSETS	Cataphract armor (p. 71), shield, war spear

CATAPHRACT ABILITIES	Broad Stroke, Cataphract (p. 62), Cleave, Defensive Line, Exalted (p. 63), Fast Rearm (arcus) (p. 64), Fearless, Hard, Iron Will, Load Bearing, Precision Strike, Relentless Charge, Retaliatory Strike, Rock Solid, Set Defense, Shield Slam, Specialization (Arcus), Specialization (Incindus), Specialization (War Spear)
CATAPHRACT CONNECTIONS	Connections (Army of the Western Reaches), Connections (skorne house)
CATAPHRACT MILITARY SKILLS	Crossbow 3, Great Weapon 4, Hand Weapon 4, Light Artillery 3, Shield 4, Unarmed Combat 4
CATAPHRACT OCCUPATIONAL SKILLS	Command 3, General Skills 4, Survival 3

The Cataphracts are an esteemed order within the skorne warrior caste. These powerful soldiers are endowed with the finest weapons and equipment available to a house. Only the largest and most physically powerful skorne are candidates to join the ranks of the Cataphracts, and only the wealthiest houses can afford to outfit and maintain them. Trained to endure extreme privation and inhospitable environments, Cataphracts are expected to hold the most dangerous positions in battle and revel in opportunities for glorious death.

Several martial traditions have evolved among the Cataphracts. Members of the oldest school of war (called cetrati) wield the skorne war spear and shield, but the ever-changing needs of warfare have led to the development of arcuarii and incindiarii. These Cataphracts wield weapons able to engage enemies at a distance or close with them to fight in brutal personal combat as outlined by the tenets of *hoksune*.

Playing a Cataphract: Play the Cataphract if you want to be a prestigious warrior of the skorne able to withstand incredible damage and mete out punishing attacks using brutal weaponry. Cataphracts are the premier heavy infantry of a cohort, an elite society of warriors. A Cataphract wears the heaviest armor available and fights alongside his brethren with shield and war spear, but he can also use more exotic arms like the arcus and incindus. As he gains experience, the Cataphract can gain abilities such as Rock Solid and Set Defense that increase his already impressive durability, as well as means to improve his offensive capabilities. Broad Stroke and Cleave both allow the Cataphract to deal with numerous low-vitality opponents.

CHIRURGEON

PREREQUISITES: SKORNE, WORKER CASTE

STARTING ABILITIES, CONNECTIONS, AND SKILLS	Abilities: Pain Flow (p. 65) and Remedy (p. 65) Connections: Connections (Corpusuleum) Military Skills: Hand Weapon 1 Occupational Skills: Lore (philosophy of Kexorus) 1, Lore (philosophy of Morkaash) 1, Medicine 1, Research 1
STARTING ASSETS	Chirurgion's toolkit, 25 sl
CHIRURGEON ABILITIES	Anatomical Precision, Anatomist (p. 62), Anesthetize (p. 62), Bloodletting, Disease Resistance, Fleshcrafting (p. 64), Pain Flow (p. 65), Precision Strike, Remedy (p. 65), Studios (p. 66), Take Down (p. 66)
CHIRURGEON CONNECTIONS	Connections (Corpusuleum), Connections (skorne house)
CHIRURGEON MILITARY SKILLS	Hand Weapon 3
CHIRURGEON OCCUPATIONAL SKILLS	Craft (any) 2, Cryptography 2, Etiquette 2, General Skills 4, Investigation 4, Medicine 4, Research 4

Chirurgions are the medical practitioners of the skorne. Their understanding of skorne physiology is peerless in the world. Combining a studied understanding of anatomy and natural science with a lower form of mortitheurgy, a chirurgion's bloodletting and poultices can keep grievously injured soldiers fighting and return the wounded from the brink of the Void.

A chirurgion's first patient is, by tradition, the chirurgion himself. Testing his techniques on his own flesh gives the chirurgion a perfect understanding of how far the flesh can be manipulated before it can no longer heal and allows the chirurgion to understand what his patients will endure. Chirurgions share much in common with the paingivers, but rather than turning their knowledge of anatomy to torture, they use it to preserve life.

Playing a Chirurgion: Play the Chirurgion if you want to be a physician who treats his patients through a deep understanding of the body's physical limits. The Chirurgion is a strong support career with abilities geared toward aiding his wounded comrades, but he is entirely capable of dealing with opponents. Anatomical Precision and Precision Strike let the Chirurgion whittle away at a powerful opponent's most vulnerable Life Spiral aspects. A Chirurgion with the Cunning archetype makes good use of the Genius ability, which improves his chances with nearly every occupational skill at his disposal. At the Veteran level, the Chirurgion's Fleshcrafting ability allows him to greatly increase the capabilities of his allies—at the cost of a little pain.



CHYMIST

PREREQUISITES: SKORNE, WORKER CASTE

STARTING ABILITIES AND SKILLS	Abilities: Distiller (p. 63) and Poison Resistance Military Skills: Hand Weapon 1 Occupational Skills: Chymistry 1, Lore (philosophy of Kexorus) 1, Research 1
STARTING ASSETS	Chymist's kit, 10 sl, 10 sl of chymical items and ingredients
CHYMIST ABILITIES	Conniver, Distiller (p. 63), Improvised Formula (p. 65), Master Chymist (p. 65), Poison Resistance, Poison Glaze (p. 65), Poisoner (p. 65), Quick Chymist (p. 65), Student of Kexorus (p. 66), Studious (p. 66), Thick Skin (p. 66)
CHYMIST CONNECTIONS	Connections (Corpusulem), Connections (skorne house)
CHYMIST MILITARY SKILLS	Hand Weapon 3, Thrown Weapon 3
CHYMIST OCCUPATIONAL SKILLS	Chymistry 4, Craft (any) 4, Cryptography 2, Deception 2, Etiquette 2, General Skills 4, Research 4, Sneak 2

The chymist is trained in the art of combining and refining natural ingredients into powerful chymical concoctions, including the manufacture of weapons and poisons. A chymist might have learned his art within the order of the Corpusulem (p. 17), working from ancient tomes and formulae in an effort to increase the skorne's understanding of chymical science and engineering. Or he could be in service to one of the skorne houses as a bonded agent who produces weapons for his master's armies.

The life of a chymist is not without danger. Some chymists are required to travel with the military to produce munitions while on campaign. Others strike out into the dangerous wilderness in search of vital ingredients that cannot be found within the cities of the Empire, putting their lives in danger in the pursuit of knowledge. A rare few even act as specialist assassins, brewing deadly concoctions to eliminate enemies of their house beyond the bounds of honorable combat.

Playing a Chymist: The Chymist career is defined by the ability to perform chymistry, the skorne equivalent of alchemy. These students of Kexorus use this ability to create powerful chymical items like explosive *hokar* and a wide range of poisons, from debilitating toxins to those that can kill a powerful tyrant outright. Chymists are lower caste and must serve the wishes of their tyrants, but they are clever and devious characters who work well in the shadows. The Cunning archetype is a natural fit for most Chymists, but a Skilled Chymist can quickly bring down enemies with his poisoned strikes. The Virtuoso ability from the Skilled archetype turns a blade-throwing Chymist into a deadly opponent able to throw a flurry of poison blades thanks to the Poison Glaze ability. At the Veteran level, a Chymist can pick up the Master Chymist ability and vastly increase his ability to produce items.



EXTOLLER

PREREQUISITES: SKORNE, GIFTED, EXTOLLER CASTE

STARTING ABILITIES AND SKILLS	Abilities: Extoller (p. 64) Occupational Skills: Detection 1, Lore (extoller) 1, Lore (philosophy of Voskune) 1, Negotiation 1, Oratory 1 Spells: Banishing Ward, Grave Whispers, Shadow Sight (p. 92)
STARTING ASSETS	Oculus (p. 94), 14 sl
EXTOLLER ABILITIES	Advisor, Astute, Doom Gaze (p. 63), Extoller (p. 64), Ghost Shield (p. 64), Grave Man, Iron Will, Poltergeist (p. 65), Spirit Guide
EXTOLLER CONNECTIONS	Connections (Army of the Western Reaches), Connections (skorne house)
EXTOLLER MILITARY SKILLS	Great Weapon 2
EXTOLLER OCCUPATIONAL SKILLS	Command 2, Craft (stoneworking) 4, Deception 3, General Skills 4, Interrogation 3, Investigation 4, Negotiation 4, Oratory 4, Research 4

The skorne are a people without gods, but they do revere their great ancestors. The extollers preserve and communicate with the exalted ancestors, and they are the closest analog skorne society possesses to clergy. Extollers choose those deemed worthy to become exalted, bearing the sacral stones that allow the greatest skorne to be saved from the Void. The presence of an extoller on the battlefield drives skorne warriors to fight with greater determination as each hopes to prove worthy of exaltation.

As part of his training, each extoller cuts out one of his eyes and replaces it with a crystal oculus. The oculus allows the extoller to see the spiritual essence around him, giving him unique insight and facilitating his function. Extollers can manipulate spirits, both to preserve the worthy and to rend the essence of their foes with a look. They alone are privileged to commune directly with the exalted ancestors, receiving their wisdom. No great house goes without the service of the extollers. Through them, the words of the ancients are passed down and the greatest warriors of each generation are preserved as treasures to enrich their houses.

Playing an Extoller: If the idea of choosing whether your fellow skorne are worthy of exaltation or their souls are consigned to the Void appeals to you, play an Extoller. Extollers are a powerful and versatile Gifted career. An Extoller has a unique capability to preserve spirits in sacral stones and can bring back fallen comrades through the creation of ancestral guardians and immortals. These powerful stone constructs are animated by a spirit residing in a sacral stone and allow ancestor spirits to walk among the living warriors of the skorne. Harnessing these spirits in battle can place the Extoller in dangerous territory as he stands alongside the warrior caste, but an extoller's spell list and Doom Gaze ability allow him to weather the trials of combat. At the Veteran level, the Poltergeist ability lets the Extoller force back enemies who come too close for comfort.



FEROX RIDER

PREREQUISITES: SKORNE, WARRIOR CASTE

STARTING ABILITIES, CONNECTIONS, AND SKILLS

Special: A character starting with the Ferox Rider career must choose Monster Hunter, Mortitheurge (p. 53), Praetorian (p. 55), Scout, Tyrant (p. 57), Venator (p. 58), Warlock: Skorne (p. 59), or Warrior for his other career.

Abilities: Cavalry Charge, Specialization (Cavalry Spear), Trained Rider (Ferox)

Connections: Connections (skorne house)

Military Skills: Great Weapon 1 and Shield 1

Occupational Skills: Animal Handling 1, Lore (hoksune code) 1, Riding 1

STARTING ASSETS

Ferox (p. 79), tack, cavalry spear (p. 74), shield, Praetorian armor (p. 72)

FEROX RIDER ABILITIES

Ambush, Cavalry Charge, Evasive Rider (p. 63), Expert Rider, Maul (p. 65), Mount Attack (Ferox), Mounted: Bounding Leap (p. 65), Ride-By-Attack, Specialization (Cavalry Spear), Swift Rider, Trained Rider (Ferox)

FEROX RIDER CONNECTIONS

Connections (Army of the Western Reaches), Connections (skorne house)

FEROX RIDER MILITARY SKILLS

Great Weapon 4, Hand Weapon 3, Shield 3, Unarmed Combat 3

FEROX RIDER OCCUPATIONAL SKILLS

Command 3, General Skills 4, Survival 3, Tracking 3

Since their days as nomads on the fringe of the Lyossan Empire, the skorne have used the vicious desert cats called ferox as mounts. Skorne beast handlers preserve the natural savagery of the ferox, so riders bear scars from when their mounts inevitably lash out in anger. The relationship between ferox rider and mount is much more adversarial than that practiced by the horsemen of the west. There is a wary mutual respect shared by two deadly predators.

Among Praetorians, one martial tradition involves riding the savage desert beasts in battle. The ferox riders bound toward enemy lines wielding cavalry spears, dealing devastating blows on the charge before allowing their belligerent mounts to rip apart enemy soldiers with tooth and claw.

Playing a Ferox Rider: If the idea of fighting atop a fierce sabretoothed cat is appealing, choose the Ferox Rider career. The Ferox Rider is a fast cavalry career that benefits from great mobility. The Ferox Rider's definitive characteristic is the deadly beast he rides, the ferox itself. Able to vault over the heads of the enemy thanks to the Mounted: Bounding Leap ability, a Ferox Rider is an unpredictable force on the battlefield. Adding to his effectiveness, the Ferox Rider has numerous riding abilities allow a speedy delivery of a savage mauling or spear to the chest. At the Veteran Level, the Maul ability allows the Ferox Rider to goad his mount into performing a deadly second attack.



MORTITHEURGE

PREREQUISITES: SKORNE, ARC 2

STARTING ABILITIES AND SKILLS	Abilities: Iron Will Occupational Skills: Lore (philosophy of Voskune) 1 and Medicine 1 Spells: Influence, Inviolable Resolve, Stranglehold Special: A character who chooses Mortitheurge as one of his two starting careers gains the Feat: Revitalize Mighty archetype benefit.
STARTING ASSETS	25 sl
MORTITHEURGE ABILITIES	Blood Trade, Dark Dominion (p. 63), Flesh of Steel, Iron Will, Life Drinker, Stay Death (p. 66)
MORTITHEURGE CONNECTIONS	Connections (Army of the Western Reaches), Connections (skorne house)
MORTITHEURGE MILITARY SKILLS	—
MORTITHEURGE OCCUPATIONAL SKILLS	General Skills 4, Medicine 3, Research 3
MORTITHEURGE SPELLS	Spells from the Mortitheurge spell list (p. 90)

A mortitheurge practices the unique arcane tradition of the skorne. Mortitheurges come to their arcane powers through a unique blend of philosophy, the study of anatomy, and deep insight into the fundamental nature of the power inherent in the divide between life and death. They understand that blood and living tissue have an innate power they can tap and harness. Although mortitheurges bear superficial similarities to western necromancers, they arrive at their power by distinctive means and wield it quite differently. They learn how to enhance their power by mortifying their own bodies, drawing on the essence of those around them, and manipulating the body in life and death.

In the hands of a mortitheurge, living allies become tools and weapons to use and dispose of at leisure. Their dominion over the powers of life and death are such that living creatures become flesh and blood machines that exist to fuel their powers. The power of mortitheurgy underlies nearly all mystical traditions of the skorne, but a master mortitheurge understands and manipulates its deepest principles.

Playing a Mortitheurge: Choose the Mortitheurge if you want to play a character who transforms pain and death into incredible arcane might, and who can take control of the bodies of other characters to use as puppets for his cruel will. The Mortitheurge's spell list contains spells that allow him to manipulate and controls the bodies of others. His spells range from purely beneficial spells like Inviolable Resolve to cruel powers like Psychic Vampire that allow him to siphon the life essence of others. The Mortitheurge is the embodiment of control, as demonstrated by the Dark Dominion ability that allows him to take control of a fallen ally in the final moments before collapse. The Veteran ability Stay Death even allows the Mortitheurge to decide when his allies will die, giving him the power to keep them from the void—and make use of them a while longer.



NIHILATOR

PREREQUISITES: SKORNE

STARTING ABILITIES, CONNECTIONS, AND SKILLS	Abilities: Berserk and Fearless Connections: Connections (nihilator cult) Military Skills: Great Weapon 1 Occupational Skills: Intimidation 1, Lore (hoksune code) 1, Lore (philosophy of Morkaash) 1 Special: A character who chooses Nihilator as one of his two starting careers gains the Tough Mighty archetype benefit.
STARTING ASSETS	Great sword, 12 sl
NIHILATOR ABILITIES	Berserk, Blood Frenzy (p. 62), Dual Fighter, Exalted (p. 63), Excruciator (p. 63), Fearless, Flesh of Steel, Relentless Advance, Silence (p. 65), Sprint, Strength of Arms (p. 66)
NIHILATOR CONNECTIONS	Connections (Army of the Western Reaches), Connections (nihilator cult)
NIHILATOR MILITARY SKILLS	Great Weapon 4, Unarmed Combat 4
NIHILATOR OCCUPATIONAL SKILLS	General Skills 4

Nihilators are members of an ascetic cult whose roots lie in the earliest days of skorne society. The cult's founder, Xaavaax the Flayed, was one of Morkaash's premier students. After Morkaash's death, Xaavaax and a small group of adherents went into the Shroudfall Mountains to test the limits of mortification. The nihilator cult enacts rituals that are a radical reinterpretation of Morkaash's teachings about enlightenment through suffering mixed with the code of honor outlined by Voskune.

Whereas the paingivers learn anatomy for excruciation of their enemies and beasts, nihilators seek to transcend their physical limits by excruciating their own bodies. They achieve a meditative state through ritual self-mutilation that allows them to ignore even crippling injuries. In battle they enter a blood frenzy as they pursue glorious death in the hopes of earning exaltation, since all nihilators view themselves as warriors regardless of their caste.

Playing a Nihilator: Choose the Nihilator career if you want to be a tough and fearless fighter capable of enduring excruciating pain on his quest for exaltation. The Nihilator is a frenzied close combatant. The Berserk and Dual Fighter abilities allow the Nihilator to deliver multiple deadly strikes a turn, a perfect pairing for the Mighty archetype. The

Nihilator's occupational skills are limited to General skills, so a player looking for a character with more options should consider pairing the Nihilator with careers like Warrior or Mortitheurge to increase his options.

As the Nihilator gains experience, he has the ability to become a true melee powerhouse. The abilities Dual Fighter and Strength of Arms allow the Nihilator to wield two great swords simultaneously, albeit with a slight reduction in accuracy and power.

PRAETORIAN

PREREQUISITES: SKORNE, WARRIOR CASTE

STARTING ABILITIES, CONNECTIONS, AND SKILLS	Special: A character starting with the Praetorian career must choose Cataphract (p. 48), Ferox Rider (p. 52), Monster Hunter, Mortitheurge (p. 53), Nihilator (p. 54), Scout, Tyrant (p. 57), Warlock: Skorne (p. 59), or Warrior for his other career. Abilities: First to Fight, and choose one of the following for which the character meets the requirements: Specialization (Karax Shield), Specialization (Toboresh), or Two-Weapon Fighting Connections: Connections (skorne house) Military Skills: Choose two: Great Weapon 1, Hand Weapon 1, Shield 1, Unarmed Combat 1 Occupational Skills: Command 1, Detection 1, Intimidation 1, Lore (hoksune code) 1
STARTING ASSETS	Praetorian plate (p. 72) and choose one: a toboresh (p. 75), karax shield (p. 74) and pike (p. 73), or a pair of Praetorian swords (p. 74)
PRAETORIAN ABILITIES	Blade Shield (toboresh), Cleave, Combo Strike (Praetorian Sword) (p. 62), Defensive Line, Exalted (p. 63), Fast Draw, First to Fight (p. 64), Hyper Awareness, Load Bearing, Natural Leader, Precision Strike, Overtake, Roll with It, Specialization (Karax Shield), Specialization (Toboresh), Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Master (Praetorian Sword) (p. 66)
PRAETORIAN CONNECTIONS	Connections (Army of the Western Reaches), Connections (skorne house)
PRAETORIAN MILITARY SKILLS	Great Weapon 4, Hand Weapon 4, Shield 4, Unarmed Combat 4
PRAETORIAN OCCUPATIONAL SKILLS	Command 3, General Skills 4, Survival 3



Praetorians embody one of the fundamental military disciplines of the skorne. They make up the bulk of most houses' military strength. Praetorians train rigorously in endless drills while constantly reciting the ancient *hoksune* code. Their training emphasizes close-quarters fighting and expertise in a variety of traditional weapons designed for distinct roles on the battlefield.

Praetorian karax wielding pikes and heavy shields fight in blocks of infantry that can halt an enemy charge, while the dual blades of the Praetorian swordsmen allow them to perform swift and deadly close-fighting offensive maneuvers. The fighting style and long, double-bladed weapon of the Praetorian keltarii strikes a balance between offense and defense, giving each warrior the ability to deflect enemy attacks and respond with decisive counterblows.

Playing a Praetorian: Praetorian is a versatile career that includes three major specializations. Along with the First to Fight ability that gives Praetorians an edge on Initiative rolls, Praetorians have their pick of unique packages. For players interested in a heavily defensive role, specializing in the karax shield is a good option. For a more offensive role, Two-Weapon fighting and a matched pair of swords is a great choice. Players looking for a balance should specialize in the double-bladed tobresh. As the Praetorian gains experience, he can continue down the road of his chosen specialization or branch out, picking up offensive and defensive abilities such as Cleave and Blade Shield (tobresh). At the Veteran level, no sword-wielding Praetorian should be without the Weapon Master ability, which dramatically increases the damage of his strikes.

TORMENTOR

PREREQUISITES: SKORNE, PAINGIVER CASTE

STARTING ABILITIES, CONNECTIONS, AND SKILLS	Special: A character starting with the Tormentor career must choose Beast Handler (p. 46), Bloodrunner (p. 47), Chirurgeon (p. 49), Chymist (p. 50), Mortitheurge (p. 53), or Warlock: Skorne (p. 59) for his other career. Abilities: Take Down (p. 66) and Torture (p. 66) Connections: Connections (paingivers) Military Skills: Hand Weapon 1 Occupational Skills: Detection 1, Interrogation 1, Investigation 1, Lore (philosophy of Morkaash) 1, Medicine 1
STARTING ASSETS	Paingiver armor (p. 72), Paingiver mask (p. 78), 11 sl
TORMENTOR ABILITIES	Advisor, Astute, Binding, Dominating Presence, Inflict Pain, Iron Will, Language (any), Specialization (Fighting Claws), Specialization (Man Catcher), Take Down (p. 66), Torture (p. 66), Truth Reader (p. 66), Two-Weapon Fighting, Waylay
TORMENTOR CONNECTIONS	Connections (Army of the Western Reaches), Connections (paingivers), Connections (skorne house)
TORMENTOR MILITARY SKILLS	Great Weapon 3, Hand Weapon 3
TORMENTOR OCCUPATIONAL SKILLS	Command 2, Cryptography 4, Deception 4, Interrogation 4, Investigation 4, Medicine 4, Negotiation 4, Rope Use 4, Sneak 3

Tormentors are experts in torture and interrogation, trained in the use of an array of implements designed to excruciate subjects. They consider themselves to be disciples of the purest essence of the paingiver arts. Their knowledge of anatomy and the infliction of pain grants them formidable capabilities both on and off the battlefield. When a tormentor begins his work, death would be a relief to a victim compared to the agonies he can evoke. Tormentors understand the limits of the flesh and can bring their subjects to the very brink of death, playing their razors and hooks across skin, sinew, and muscle like a musician coaxing notes from an instrument.

Tyrants and dominars make frequent use of tormentors, who interrogate enemy captives to discover critical information. Some tormentors keep watch over the cohort's many slaves in a fashion similar to beast handlers. Captive slaves from defeated houses or enemy armies are used as an irregular force in battle, goaded forward by the blinding pain the tormentors dish out with their instruments. Tormentors are versatile agents, sent to capture outcasts who have wronged or dishonored a clan or tasked to penetrate enemy headquarters to secure a key captive. A competitive rivalry exists between bloodrunners and tormentors, though some ambitious paingivers seek to master both disciplines.

Playing a Tormentor: Tormentors have numerous abilities to serve their tyrants in and out of battle. A Tormentor can choose his specialty from a robust selection of occupational skills. For example, skills such as Interrogation and Investigation pair well with

the Torture and Truth Reader abilities for a Tormentor looking to gain valuable intelligence from a captured opponent.

The Tormentor's abilities enable him to take captives alive for interrogation. The starting ability Take Down lets him control whether or not he destroys an opponent, and later on the Binding ability allows a Tormentor to quickly secure an unconscious prisoner. At the Veteran Level, the Tormentor should pick up the Dominating Presence ability to gain the edge in social situations, letting him intimidate even strong-willed prisoners.



TYRANT

PREREQUISITES: SKORNE, WARRIOR CASTE

STARTING ABILITIES, CONNECTIONS, AND SKILLS	Special: A character starting with the Tyrant career must choose Cataphract (p. 48), Ferox Rider (p. 52), Monster Hunter, Mortitheurge (p. 53), Praetorian (p. 55), Scout, Warlock: Skorne (p. 59), or Warrior for his other career. Abilities: Battle Plan: Call to Action and Natural Leader Connections: Connections (skorne house) Military Skills: Great Weapon 1 and Hand Weapon 1 Occupational Skills: Command 1, Intimidation 1, Lore (hoksune code) 1, Lore (household)
STARTING ASSETS	100 sl
TYRANT ABILITIES	Battle Commander, Battle Plan: Call to Action, Battle Plan: Press Forward (p. 62), Battle Plan: Relentless Charge (p. 62), Cavalry Charge, Conniver, Dodger, Dominating Presence, Exalted (p. 63), Hyper Awareness, Iron Will, Load Bearing, Natural Leader, Poison Resistance, Rallying Cry, Roll with It, Trained Rider (Ferox)
TYRANT CONNECTIONS	Connections (any)
TYRANT MILITARY SKILLS	Great Weapon 4, Hand Weapon 4, Unarmed Combat 3
TYRANT OCCUPATIONAL SKILLS	Bribery 4, Command 4, Cryptography 3, Deception 3, General Skills 4, Interrogation 3, Investigation 2, Negotiation 4, Oratory 4



Tyrants are house leaders who command entire cohorts of skorne warriors in battle. Often subordinate to powerful dominars, among the skorne tyrants are the equivalent of either high-ranking officers or significant nobility of traditional societies. Any warrior promoted to this rank who does not already command a house is given the permission to found one, which will be subordinate to the house of the tyrant's dominar. A tyrants who grows in power and influence may one day rise to the station of dominar to establish his own coalitions of houses, cementing his dynasty for generations to come.

Following Vinter's reforms, tyrants have been promoted in greater numbers to serve as commanding officers in the Army of the Western Reaches. Tyrants are expected to be equal parts tactician and warrior, lending strength and battle prowess to their cohort. Tyrants fight alongside their warriors and many lead from the front according to the tenets of *hoksune*, accepting the likely inevitability of death. Many tyrants are accompanied by standard bearers that bear sigils showing the honors a tyrant's forces have earned. These banners give the cohort a visible rallying point in battle.

Playing a Tyrant: Play a Tyrant if you want to be a respected military leader who coordinates and commands the forces of his house. A Tyrant is more than a military commander; he is the unquestioned authority of his house, its tactical mastermind, and one of its stalwart champions. Tyrants come from all military traditions and can choose from many warrior caste careers as a secondary career option.

A Tyrant's ability selection allows him to specialize in the administration of his house and social dominance, or he can become a fearsome battlefield leader with abilities like Battle Plan: Press Forward and Battle Plan: Relentless Charge. The Tyrant's diverse occupational skill selection ensures that his skills complement whatever role he pursues. At the Veteran level, the Battle Commander ability lets the Tyrant make use of his Battle Plans without expending a valuable feat point.

VENATOR

PREREQUISITES: SKORNE, WARRIOR CASTE

STARTING ABILITIES AND SKILLS	Abilities: Fast Reload, Sentry, Specialization (Reiver) Military Skills: Hand Weapon 1, Reiver 1, Thrown Weapon 1 Occupational Skills: Detection 1 and Survival 1
STARTING ASSETS	Skorne infantry armor (p. 72), reiver (p. 77), 4 ammo cones, 2 gas canisters, reiver ammo bandolier (p. 79), 12 sl
VENATOR ABILITIES	Covering Fire (p. 63), Crackshot, Fast Reload, Fall Back, Find Cover, High-Pressure Fire (p. 64), Hit the Deck! (p. 64), Return Fire (p. 65), Roll with It, Saddle Shot, Sentry, Street Sweeper (p. 66), Specialization (Reiver), Specialization (Sling), Swift Hunter
VENATOR CONNECTIONS	Connections (Army of the Western Reaches), Connections (skorne house)
VENATOR MILITARY SKILLS	Hand Weapon 3, Light Artillery 3, Reiver (p. 77) 4, Thrown Weapon 4
VENATOR OCCUPATIONAL SKILLS	Command 3, General Skills 4, Survival 3

Venators are the ranged fighters of the skorne. The Venators are ranked among the lowest of the warrior caste, since they destroy their foes from a distance rather than closing to fight in personal combat. While the tactical need for such warriors has been recognized for centuries, this consideration has never meshed well with the principles of *hoksune*. The role of the Venator is vital, however. As the Army of the Western Reaches moves into western Immoren, the deadly skill of the Venators makes them crucial instruments against the military forces of the Iron Kingdoms, which fully embrace ranged firepower.

The leaders of the Army of the Western Reaches increasingly depend upon the Venators. Rank-and file-Cataphracts and Praetorians still disdain Venators for their approach to war, but the Venators are no less fiercely devoted to their interpretation of *hoksune*. Venators tend to be more pragmatic and tactical in their approach to war than most skorne warriors.

Playing a Venator: If the idea of mastering a ranged weapon and rending targets apart with a cloud of razor-sharp needles or raining down a shower of chymical shells is appealing, choose the Venator career. These specialists carry the deadly reiver and have numerous abilities that allow them to coax all sorts of tricks out of their gas-powered weapons. Abilities like Covering Fire, High-Pressure Fire, and Street Sweeper let the Venator transform his weapon, giving him a toolbox of options with which to destroy his enemies. These abilities require the Venator to have Reiver 2, so picking up an additional rank in the skill should be a high priority. As Venators gain experience, they can branch out and take on diverse ranged weapons, from sling-hurled alchemical projectiles to artillery pieces vital to the armies of the skorne. At the Veteran level, Swift Hunter allows the reiver to destroy his enemies with a blast of reiver fire and immediately step out of sight to avoid a return volley.



WARLOCK: SKORNE

PREREQUISITES: SKORNE

STARTING ABILITIES, SKILLS, AND SPELLS	Special: A character who selects this career after character creation must have either the Gifted archetype or the Mortitheurge career. Abilities: Resonance: Skorne Warbeast (p. 65) and Warlock Bond Military Skills: Great Weapon 1 or Hand Weapon 1 Occupational Skills: Command 1, Detection 1, Lore (philosophy of Morkaash) 1 Spells: Medicate and Muzzle Special: Change the character's arcane tradition to harnesser if he has another arcane career. A warlock can only boost with magical weapons.
STARTING ASSETS	A medium-based Skorne warbeast that begins the game bonded to the warlock, 12 sl

SKORNE WARLOCK ABILITIES	Blood Trade, Empower Weapon, Field Marshal: Relentless Charge, Maltreatment, Resonance: Skorne Warbeast (p. 65), Spirit Eater, Vampiric Harvest (p. 66), Warlock Bond
SKORNE WARLOCK CONNECTIONS	Connections (Army of the Western Reaches), Connections (skorne house)
SKORNE WARLOCK MILITARY SKILLS	Great Weapon 3, Hand Weapon 3
SKORNE WARLOCK OCCUPATIONAL SKILLS	Animal Handling 2, Command 3, General Skills 4

Unlike the warlocks of the west, skorne warlocks achieve their talent through dedicated study of mortitheurgy rather than any inborn talent. All skorne warlocks are trained in mortitheurgy, and through its power they dominate the wills of their slaves and vassals and draw strength from their mighty warbeasts. Though all warlocks practice the art, a deep divide exists between those who harness the power of mortitheurgy for the advantages it grants them in battle and those who plumb its deeper mysteries.



A house's ruler and its heir are traditionally expected to learn the fundamentals of controlling warbeasts, but many stop there. Those who take this pursuit more seriously become the most formidable adversaries to the Skorne Empire's enemies.

Warlocks are pivotally important to the empire's westward expansion, and their efforts make the difference between victory and defeat. Eager to earn further glory and renown for themselves and the houses they lead, they display discipline and fearlessness in battle, often earning the privilege of exaltation.

Playing a Skorne Warlock: The Skorne Warlock is the perfect career for players looking to smash the enemies of the Empire in the fists of eastern Immoren's exotic beasts. The Warlock is a versatile career that pairs well with almost any other career. To the Skorne Warlock, his warbeasts are powerful weapons that suffer and die at his whim and command. Warlocks are of the highest importance to skorne armies, particularly in the Army of the Western Reaches, and commanding the great beasts of the empire in battle is means through which a skorne can secure his exaltation.

The Skorne Warlock's selection of beasts is incredibly diverse, including warbeasts to suit almost any play style. The career also has a potent suite of spells that allow the Warlock to eke even more deadly force out of his already powerful warbeasts, like Abuse and Wild Aggression. As the Skorne Warlock gains experience, he should pick up the Field Marshal: Relentless Charge ability to allow his beasts to crash forward into the enemy lines without worrying about the terrain, or Maltreatment to maximize his spellcasting and combat ability (at the cost of a little damage to the beast). At the Veteran level, the Vampiric Harvest ability allows the Skorne Warlock to transform the suffering and death of his enemies into vitality for himself and his beasts, ensuring that they win any engagement they enter.

SKORNE ADVENTURING COMPANIES

The following adventuring companies are available to characters in skorne campaigns. If the group contains a character with the Tyrant career, that character is in charge of the adventuring company unless otherwise noted. If the group contains more than one Tyrant, the warrior caste characters should choose one to be the leader of the company.

Otherwise, characters select a leader based on caste hierarchy, with a warrior preferred. The chosen leader then selects a second in command, either another warrior or a complementary support caste. Depending on the company and campaign, an extoller or paingiver can make for an excellent second.

ARMY OF THE WESTERN REACHES

The characters are members of a cohort of the Army of the Western Reaches. They are a special unit that can draw upon the varying traditions of the Skorne Empire. Rather than fighting on the front lines, they are trusted with the execution of special tasks of military importance critical to the empire's efforts in the west.

Requirements: The members of the company must be skorne or slaves taken from other races. The company must be led by a member of the warrior caste.

Benefits: The characters in the company receive regular assignments and information of military significance along with the equipment necessary to carry out the mission. Additionally, skorne members in the group can requisition up to 100 sl (collectively) in skorne arms, ammunition, and gear each month.

The leader of the company gains the Battlefield Coordination Cunning archetype benefit whether or not he meets the requirements. Each member of the company begins with one additional occupational skill level in one of the following skills: Animal Handling, Climbing, Command, Detection, Intimidation, Medicine, Navigation, Riding, Sneak, or Survival.

BEAST HUNTERS

This adventuring company represents a group of beast hunters, brave individuals who track down and capture powerful creatures to be used as warbeasts. They may be associates of one of the larger organizations of Immoren that utilizes warbeasts, such as the Army of the Western Reaches, Blindwater Congregation, Circle Orboros, Thornfall Alliance, or United Kriels. They may also be independent agents who capture these creatures to sell or trade them to warlocks.

The work of the beast hunters takes them directly into the territories of the most dangerous creatures. The greater and more lethal the beast, the higher price it commands, so beast hunters must be prepared to fend off and defeat truly terrifying

wildlife if they hope to earn a significant profit. They must be able to subdue the creatures without killing them, an even greater challenge.

This adventuring company is appropriate for both skorne and other *Unleashed* characters.

Requirements: Characters in the company must have one of the following careers: Beast Handler, Bloodtracker, Monster Hunter, Raptor, Scout, Warrior, or Warlock. The characters choose one of their number to be the leader of the company. The leader then designates a second in command.

Benefits: A character created as a member of the company gains the Take Down ability whether or not he meets the requirements. Each character created as a member of the company gains one additional occupational skill level in Lore (extraordinary zoology) and treats it as a career skill regardless of his careers. The leader of a company operating in eastern Immoren also gains Connections (skorne house), since the company is employed by a house to secure beasts for their use.

Additionally, the company begins the game with three sets of beast restraints and a large wagon hauled by draft animals that the Game Master deems most appropriate for the characters' culture. In western Immoren horses and bison are common, while skorne beast hunters use enslaved cyclopes as beasts of burden.

BONDED PORTERS

The characters are members of the bonded porters (see p. 17), transporting vital materiel through the Skorne Empire and to the Army of the Western Reaches. They travel through the deadly Stormlands and across the Bloodstone Desert, protecting their cargo from countless deadly threats.

Requirements: Each member of the company must be skorne or slaves taken from other races. The porters should choose one of their number to be the leader. The leader then designates a character to serve as his second.

Benefits: The characters receive regular assignments to deliver supplies throughout the Skorne Empire and to the Army of the Western Reaches. They are expected to protect the supplies from brigands and see to their safe delivery.

The characters begin the game with three large wagons, each pulled by an enslaved cyclops (p. 126).

Each character created as part of the company gains an additional rank in one of the following occupational skills: Animal Handling, Driving, Medicine, Navigation, or Survival.

HOUSE TABERNA

The characters are a taberna of guards in service to one of the great skorne houses. Their highest duty is the protection of a ranking tyrant, the heir apparent, or the dominar and his family. The characters might be commanded to accompany their leader as he travels to meet with the heads of other houses or assigned to him as a personal guard when he marches to war.

Requirements: Each member of the company must be skorne with one of the following careers: Cataphract, Ferox Rider, Praetorian, Tyrant, or Venator.

Benefits: The characters are expected to pursue the goals of their house. They could be tasked with providing armed escort when the house leader travels to meet with other houses, rooting out sedition among the members of the house, leading the house's forces in battle, advancing its agendas and increasing its standing in the east, or putting down rebellious slaves. The leader of the company is the commanding officer in charge of the escorting taberna, while the Game Master controls the tyrant or dominar they protect.

The house has a compound that is home to other warriors, workers, and slaves. The house is expected to contribute to the ongoing conquest of the west through the production of needed materials, acquisition and training of warbeasts, and contribution of trained warriors to the Army of the Western Reaches.

The characters have access to the resources of the house at the house leader's discretion. The characters can call upon the skills and abilities of the other castes within the house, which could include the production of arms and armor, personnel, and contact with any ancestral spirits kept within the house shrine. Each month the house can provide a useable surplus of up to 300 sl.

MYSTICS

The characters are a cabal of mystics working to understand esoteric knowledge of mortitheurgy, the Void, or some other great mystery. The search for such knowledge is not without its cost, however, and requires the cabal to strike out from the safety of their homes to find illumination wherever it may hide. The mystics might be a group of extollers seeking to commune with ancestral spirits thought lost centuries ago, mortitheurges trying to refine their understanding of death's mystical power, or ascetics working to perfect their souls through excruciation of their flesh and voluntary exposure to unusual threats.

Requirements: The members of the company must be skorne with one of the following careers: Ascetic, Extoller, Mortitheurge, Nihilator, or Warlock. One or more characters will be members of the inner circle of dedicated mystics and others might be specially trained bodyguards, agents, or protégés. The mystics should choose one of their number to be the leader. The leader then designates a character to serve as his second.

Benefits: The leader gains the Team Leader ability as well as +2 on social rolls against other members of the company.

Gifted characters begin with the Occult Secrets Gifted archetype benefit. Other characters gain the Shield Guard ability whether or not they meet the prerequisites.

NOMADS

The characters are a group of nomads who wander the vast expanses of Immoren. They could be a tribe whose way of life follows the migration of particular herds or a group of merchants offering their wares to settlements along a seasonal circuit.

Nomads are not as common among the skorne as they once were, but many still live on the fringes of the empire. Nomads are also found among the peoples of western Immoren such as the Idrians, Radiz, Sinari, and Yhari-Umbreans.

This company is appropriate for skorne and other *Unleashed* characters. It is recommended that a nomad company be formed of characters from one culture rather than several, or from only eastern or western cultures, not both.

Requirements: Characters in the company must have one of the following careers: Beast Handler, Bushwhacker, Chieftain, Guide, Monster Hunter, Raptor, Scout, Warrior, or Wolf Rider. The players in the group should choose one of their number to be the chief. The chief then designates a character to serve as his second.

Benefits: The company begins the game with a large wagon pulled by a draft animal appropriate to their origin as determined by the Game Master. For example, a group of skorne nomads uses an enslaved cyclops, while a band of nomadic trollkin uses a trained bison. The group likely contains a number of children or NPC characters that must be protected.

The leader of the company gains the Battle Plan: Shadow ability whether or not he meets the requirements. Each member of the company begins with one additional occupational skill level in one of the following skills: Animal Handling, Driving, Negotiation, Riding, Survival, or Tracking.

RENEGADES

The characters are renegades that have been driven to the outskirts of society for their actions. They could be deserters from a military unit, criminals, or renegade slaves. They are fugitives on the run brought together by a common threat, and together must struggle to survive against hostile environments, other lawless individuals, and those who have been sent to hunt them down.

This adventuring company is appropriate for both skorne and traditional *Unleashed* characters.

Requirements: Any character can be a part of this adventuring company. Each character created as part of the company should work with the Game Master to determine the nature of his crimes. Depending on a character's crime, he might be actively hunted by agents loyal to whomever the character wronged.

The players in the group should designate one member of the company to be the leader. The leader then chooses a lieutenant to serve as his second.

Benefits: The company begins the game with one or more hideouts somewhere in the wilderness. Each hideout consists of a meeting area, sleeping chambers, hidden rooms, and a number of secret exits or hidden passages.

Each character created as part of the company gains the Ambush and Traceless Path abilities in addition to any abilities granted by his careers.

NEW ABILITIES

ANATOMIST

Prerequisite: INT 6, Medicine 2

This character gains an additional die on Medicine skill rolls.

ANESTHETIZE

Prerequisite: Medicine 2

This character can spend a quick action to give characters B2B with him the Tough Mighty archetype benefit for one round.

ANIMAL CONTROL

Prerequisite: Animal Handling 1

This character can direct a natural animal or beast native to the wilds of Immoren to act. The character takes control of the target creature and determines its actions during its next activation.

Taking control of the creature requires the character to be B2B with it and spend a full action.

The creature automatically follows simple commands given by the character, such as moving in a particular direction. To give the creature a complex command, such as attacking a specific target, the character must spend a full action and make an Animal Handling skill roll against a target number equal to the creature's Willpower. If the roll succeeds, the creature follows the command to the best of its ability.

The character cannot affect a creature bonded to a warlock.

BATTLE PLAN: PRESS FORWARD

Prerequisite: Command 3

This character can spend 1 feat point and a quick action to use this battle plan. When a character uses this battle plan, each friendly character who follows this character's orders gains +2 SPD when making a full advance. Battle Plan: Press Forward lasts for one round.

BATTLE PLAN: RELENTLESS CHARGE

Prerequisite: Command 2

This character can spend 1 feat point and a quick action to use this battle plan. When a character uses this battle plan, each friendly character who follows this character's orders gains Relentless Charge for one round. (A character with Relentless Charge ignores penalties for rough terrain during an Activation Phase in which he charges.)

BEAST MANIPULATION: DOMINATOR

Prerequisite: Animal Handling 2

While B2B with a warbeast, this character can spend a full action to use this ability on the warbeast. When Beast Manipulation: Dominator is used, this character places any number of fury points on or removes any number of fury points from the affected warbeast.

BEAST MANIPULATION: ENRAGE

Prerequisite: Animal Handling 2

While B2B with a friendly warbeast, this character can spend a full action to use this ability on the warbeast. The warbeast gains +2 STR and must charge or make a slam or trample power attack without being forced during its next turn. Beast Manipulation: Enrage lasts for one round.

BEAST MANIPULATION: MEDICATE

Prerequisite: Animal Handling 1

While B2B with a friendly warbeast, this character can spend a full action to use this ability on the warbeast. The warbeast immediately regains d3 vitality points.

BEAST MANIPULATION: TOUGHEN

Prerequisite: Animal Handling 2

While B2B with a friendly warbeast, this character can spend a full action to use this ability on the warbeast. The warbeast gains +2 ARM for one round.

BLOOD FRENZY

Prerequisite: PHY 7

While damaged, this character gains boosted Willpower rolls but rolls one less die on INT and non-Intimidation Social rolls.

BLOODLETTING

Prerequisite: Medicine 2

When this character damages a living character with a melee attack, he can spend 1 feat point to cause the character hit to suffer the effects of a crippled life spiral aspect in the first aspect damaged for one round. Characters without a life spiral suffer -2 to attack and damage rolls for one round.

CATAPHRACT

Prerequisite: PHY 7

This character can wear Cataphract armor.

CIRCULAR VISION

Prerequisite: PER 5

This character's front arc extends to 360°.

COMBO STRIKE (PRAETORIAN SWORD)

Prerequisite: Two-Weapon Fighting

While armed with a pair of Praetorian swords, instead of attacking with each sword separately during his turn, this character can strike with both blades simultaneously. Make one attack roll. If the attack hits, double the POW of the Praetorian sword when resolving the damage roll. A character does not gain an attack from Two-Weapon Fighting during a turn he uses Combo Strike.

CONDITIONING

Prerequisite: Animal Handling 3

This character can condition a creature to become a warbeast. The character requires paingiver's tools such as a barbed whip, pain hooks, and chymical substances to condition the warbeast as outlined in the warbeast conditioning rules (p. 104).

COVERING FIRE

Prerequisite: Reiver 2

While armed with a reiver, instead of attacking with the weapon, this character can make a full action to place a 3" AOE anywhere completely in the weapon's range and in his line of sight, ignoring intervening characters. A character entering or ending his turn in the AOE suffers a damage roll with POW equal to the POW of the reiver (add +1 to damage rolls against characters with medium bases and +2 to damage rolls against characters with large or huge bases as normal). The AOE remains in play for one round. If this character is incapacitated or destroyed, immediately remove the AOE from play. Each time the character uses this ability, he expends three shots worth of ammunition and gas.

DARK DOMINION

Prerequisite: ARC 5

When a friendly living character is destroyed in this character's command range, this character can spend 1 feat point to immediately take control of the destroyed character. This character can cause the destroyed character to make a full advance followed by a normal melee attack. Then the destroyed character is removed from the table.

DISTILLER

Prerequisite: Chymistry 1

When this character distills an alchemical or chymical item, he can extract each ingredient used to create the substance, rather than just a single ingredient.

DOOM GAZE

Prerequisite: ARC 4, PER 5

When this character makes an oculus (p. 94) ranged attack, he can spend feat points to gain the following effects at the cost of 1 feat point per effect:

- The oculus ranged attack is increased to RNG 12.
- The oculus ranged attack becomes AOE 3.
- The attack roll is boosted.
- All damage rolls resulting from the attack are boosted.



EVASIVE RIDER

Prerequisite: Riding 2

While mounted, the character gains +2 DEF during turns he runs.

EXALTED

Prerequisite: Willpower 13

This character is acknowledged to be exalted and his spirit will be preserved at the time of his death, if possible. Exalted characters gain boosted social rolls when dealing with other skorne.

EXALTED DIALOGUE

Prerequisite: Extoller caste

This character has the ability to communicate with exalted spirits.

EXCRUCIATOR

Prerequisite: Lore (philosophy of Morkaash) 2

This character has transcended the physical limits of this body through self-excruciation. He no longer suffers the effects of crippled aspects.

EARNING EXALTATION THROUGH DEEDS

A character who does not meet the prerequisite for the Exalted ability can earn the privilege of exaltation at the Game Master's discretion. Barring exceptional circumstances most house lords are preserved, as are warriors who have demonstrated devotion to *hoksune* and outstanding martial talent. The determination of who qualifies for exaltation on the battlefield falls to individual extollers, whether PC or NPC. Whenever a significant skorne dies, the extoller on hand decides whether or not to intervene.

The Game Master can determine that a particular's character's actions are sufficient for him to deserve exaltation, such as a warrior who fights through an enemy army to defeat its general in single combat. He may reduce or eliminate the prerequisite for the Exalted ability, or for truly spectacular displays grant it to the character outright. Bestowing exaltation should not be taken lightly, and the honor should be reserved for only the most tremendous or heroic deeds.

EXTOLLER

Prerequisite: None

This character gains a soul token when a friendly living skorne character is destroyed in his control area. This character can have a number of soul tokens up to his ARC stat at any time. After six hours, any soul tokens still on this character are lost to the Void unless transferred to a sacral stone (p. 95).

FAST REARM

Prerequisite: None

This character gains one extra quick action each turn that can be used only to rearm a weapon of the type noted, such as an arcus. A character can take this ability several times, each time choosing a different specified weapon.

FIRST TO FIGHT

Prerequisites: None

This character gains an additional die on initiative rolls. Drop the low die of each roll.

FLESHCRAFTING

Prerequisites: Medicine 3

This character can spend a quick action to cause a friendly character B2B with him to suffer 1 damage point. The damaged character gains one pain token. A character can have up to three pain tokens at a time. A character with a pain token can spend it to make additional attacks or boost attack or damage rolls at one token per attack or boost.

FLYING FISTS

Prerequisite: Unarmed Combat 2

While fighting unarmed or with a weapon in only one hand, this character gains an additional punch unarmed melee attack with his other hand.

GHOST SHIELD

Prerequisite: Ability to gain souls

This character gains +1 ARM for each soul token he currently has.

HARDENED STRIKE

Prerequisite: Unarmed Combat 1

This character's kick and punch unarmed melee attack damage rolls are automatically boosted. At Veteran level, the character gains an additional die on kick and punch unarmed melee attack damage rolls instead of automatically boosting them.

HIGH-PRESSURE FIRE

Prerequisite: Reiver 2

This character can take a quick action to tamper with the gas flow of his reiver to increase the effective range of his next attack with the weapon by twenty-four feet (4'). This ability has no effect if the character's next reiver attack is a spray attack. Each time the character uses this ability, he expends an additional shot worth of gas from his reiver's canister.

HIT THE DECK!

Prerequisite: None

The character is so accustomed to catastrophic explosions in his presence that he has developed the uncanny ability to hit the ground the second before he is affected by a blast. While prone, the character does not suffer damage from AOE's unless he is directly hit by the AOE. If the character is caught in an AOE that would cause blast damage but was not directly hit by the AOE, he goes prone but suffers no damage.

IMPROVISED FORMULA

Prerequisite: Chymistry 1

This character can improvise the ingredients in his chymical compounds. This allows the character to attempt to replace a specific ingredient with a substitute. This requires a Chymistry skill roll with a target number equal to 10 plus the value (in sl) of the ingredient being substituted.

This ability also allows the character to get by with less expensive versions of common chymical ingredients, reducing the cost of his chymical compounds by 1 sl each (to a minimum of 1 sl). Chymical compounds brewed using this skill vary slightly in appearance or physical quality from items created by following time-tested recipes.

MASTER CHYMIST

Prerequisite: Chymistry 3

When this character creates a chymical item, he creates twice the normal amount.

MAUL

Prerequisite: Riding 3

Once per turn when this character's mount performs a mount attack, once the attack is resolved his mount performs a second attack. If the second attack hits, after resolving damage the target is knocked down.

MOUNTED: BOUNDING LEAP

Prerequisite: Riding 2

While this character is riding a ferox, he gains the Feat: Bounding Leap Mighty archetype benefit.

PAIN FLOW

Prerequisite: Lore (philosophy of Morkaash) 1, Medicine 1

When this character suffers damage, he determines the branch of his life spiral affected.

PAIN MONGER

Prerequisite: Lore (philosophy of Morkaash) 1

When this character suffers damage from an attack, he gains one blood token. For each blood token on this model, he gains +1 STR and ARM. A Hero-level character can have up to three blood tokens, a Veteran-level character can have up to four blood tokens, and an Epic-level character can have up to five blood tokens at any time. Remove one blood token from this character at the start of his Control Phase.

POISON GLAZE

Prerequisite: None

This character gains an extra quick action each turn that can be used only to coat one of his weapons with poison.

POISONER

Prerequisite: Chymistry 2

The target number to resist poisons brewed by this character increases by 1 for each level of his Chymistry skill.

POLTERGEIST

Prerequisite: ARC 5

When an enemy misses this character with an attack, immediately after the attack is resolved this character can choose to push the enemy d3" directly away from him.

QUICK CHYMIST

Prerequisite: Chymistry 1

This character can produce chymical items in half the usual required time.

REMEDY

Prerequisite: Medicine 1

When this character is B2B with a non-incapacitated living character, he can use a quick action and spend 1 feat point to cause any continuous effects on that character to expire. Alternatively, while B2B the character can spend 1 feat point to grant a friendly non-incapacitated living character an additional die on his next roll to resist poisons, toxins, or disease.

RESONANCE: SKORNE WARBEAST

Prerequisite: None

The warlock can bond to skorne warbeasts.

RETURN FIRE

Prerequisite: AGL 5

Once per round when this character is missed by an enemy's ranged attack, immediately after the attack is resolved he can make one normal attack against the attacking enemy. To make a ranged attack, the character's ranged weapon must be loaded.

SERPENT STRIKE

Prerequisite: Unarmed Combat 2

This character's kick unarmed melee attacks gain Reach.

SILENCE

Prerequisite: Berserk, Great Weapon 3

When this character is forced to make an attack as a result of Berserk, he can choose to make a Willpower roll against a target number of 15 to resist performing the attack. If the roll succeeds, he does not make the attack. If the roll fails, he must make the attack normally.

STAY DEATH**Prerequisite:** ARC 6

Once per turn, when a friendly living character is disabled in this character's command range, this character can spend 1 feat point to cause the disabled character to regain d3 vitality points.

STREET SWEEPER**Prerequisite:** Reiver 2

This character's mastery of the reiver has developed to the point that he is able to unleash long bursts of fire to carpet whole areas. Instead of using the normal range of the weapon, once per round the character can use this ability to change the effective range of this weapon to SP 8 for a single attack. Each time the character uses this ability, he expends three shots worth of ammunition and gas.

STRENGTH OF ARMS**Prerequisite:** STR 7, Great Weapon 2

This character can use a great weapon one-handed, though the weapon's POW is reduced by 1 while doing so.

STUDENT OF KEXORUS**Prerequisite:** Chymistry 1

This character can reroll failed Chymistry skill rolls. A failed roll may be rerolled only once due to Student of Kexorus.

STUDIOUS**Prerequisite:** None

This character gains boosted Research skill rolls and requires half as much time to research an archive when using the Research skill.

TAKE DOWN**Prerequisite:** None

This character can use Take Down any time he incapacitates another character with an attack and while the incapacitated character is in this character's melee range. The incapacitated character regains 1 vitality point and is no longer incapacitated but is considered to be manacled, tied up, unconscious, or otherwise out of action for the rest of the encounter. Once the combat portion of the encounter has ended, the subject of Take Down is at the mercy of the victors to be questioned or worse.

THICK SKIN**Prerequisite:** None

This character can reroll the die to determine whether or not a continuous effect affecting him expires. A roll can be rerolled only one time per turn as a result of Thick Skin.

TORTURE**Prerequisite:** None

This character can torture a helpless subject within his power. For every two hours he spends torturing a subject, the subject loses 1 PHY. If the subject is reduced to 0 PHY, he dies. The subject regains +1 PHY for each complete day he is not tortured. Subjects reduced to 1 PHY will say anything they believe the torturer wants to hear to end the torture. Torture is especially effective at attaining confessions, regardless of actual guilt. Skillful interrogators combine a variety of methods to arrive at the "truth."

TRANSCEND THE FLESH**Prerequisite:** Lore (philosophy of Morkaash) 2

This character gains boosted PHY rolls. At the Veteran level, the character gains an additional die on PHY rolls.

TRIP**Prerequisite:** None

When resolving a kick unarmed melee attack, on a critical hit the target is knocked down.

TRUTH READER**Prerequisite:** Detection 3

This character automatically knows when someone is lying to him. Keep in mind that knowing someone is lying is different than discerning the truth.

VAMPIRIC HARVEST**Prerequisite:** ARC 5

When a living enemy is destroyed in this character's control range, one character in this character's battlegroup in his control range can regain 1 vitality point.

WEAPON MASTER (PRAETORIAN SWORD)**Prerequisite:** Hand Weapon 3

When resolving a Praetorian sword melee attack, the character's damage roll is boosted.

WHIRLWIND**Prerequisite:** Flying Fists, Unarmed Combat 3

This character has nearly perfected unarmed combat skills and can lash out with a flurry of powerful blows in the blink of an eye. When the character makes his first unarmed melee attack during his turn each round, he can perform a thresher attack instead of making a normal attack. A character making a thresher attack makes one unarmed melee attack against each character in his LOS and in his melee range.

NEW CONNECTIONS

Skorne society is insular and heavily stratified. Caste determines an individual's place in the world, and also how he is regarded among the various tribes and organizations of the skorne world.

A character's caste influences how his skorne connections treat him. Characters of the warrior caste are regarded with respect and deference by other castes, but some connections will view them as outsiders. Each caste and profession takes pride in its specialized lore and views their own concerns as especially significant. Even if a character has a connection with another caste or profession, he may not be trusted to share its inner rituals and secrets.

For instance, a tyrant character's paingivers connection treat him with deference, but the tyrant will not receive the same treatment a fellow paingiver would. By contrast, a character of the lowest castes with connections above his station might not have direct contact or communication with specific individuals.

Such a character might instead be in a position to overhear information. A slave with connections to a skorne house might be able to walk its halls unnoticed and glean information from those speaking in his vicinity, for example.

The Game Master should take a character's caste into consideration when determining the nature and disposition of his connections, and how best to reflect the character's place in society when deciding how the connection responds to the character's queries.

Army of the Western Reaches: The character has a connection to the Army of the Western Reaches. He can be a part of the army itself, whether a lowly soldier among its ranks or a tyrant in command of a cohort, or simply have a contact within the army. Members of the army are expected to serve the interests of the empire in its conquest of the west. Characters who are not a part of the army are still expected to serve when commanded. Members of the army can expect to be supplied with ammunition, food, and materiel while on campaign, as well as access to forts and temporary bivouacs for shelter.

Affiliates, provided they do not act counter to the interests of the Army, can expect safe passage and opportunity to earn glory for the Empire. Being affiliated with this army also brings with it no small degree of peril.

Corpusulem: The character has a connection to the Corpusulem (see p. 17), most likely as a member. The character can rely on his connection to provide information about recent discoveries or developments pioneered by the Corpusulem and has access to the information archives available in its chambers. If the character is a member, he can expect to be provided with a safe space in which to work, such as an operating chamber or chymist's workroom. Members are expected to share the fruits of their work with other members of the Corpusulem, whether discoveries or inventions.

Exalted Ancestor: The character is connected to an exalted ancestor. The ancestor could be a member of the character's own house, or one that was captured following the defeat of another house. Through the extollers, the character can communicate with the ancestor's spirit and expect it to provide him with information related to the history of the spirit's house, its military accomplishments, and the circumstances of its exaltation, and potentially cryptic warnings about potential threats. Communication with the ancestor is likely to be infrequent, but the contact can be quite fruitful and informative.

Any skorne of the warrior or extoller caste may gain this connection.



Nihilator Cult: The character has connection to one of the nihilator cults, most likely as a member of the cult. A member of the cult can expect to be included in its activities and rituals, he and can expect to draw upon the wisdom of the cult's membership. This wisdom comes at a great price, however, as the character may be invited to share in the practice of excruciation as a path to understanding. Characters seeking to make use of this contact must be prepared to test the limits of their flesh.

Outlawed Sect: The character has connection to an outlawed sect, such as a cult of the Reborn. A member of the sect is expected to participate in its rituals and to defend its members against outside interference. Affiliates are not inculcated into inner circle of the sect but can draw upon its members for information about local activities, the location of safe houses within a city or region, and the identities of the sect's rivals. In exchange, the affiliate character is expected to preserve the secrecy of the sect.

Any outcast skorne may gain this connection.

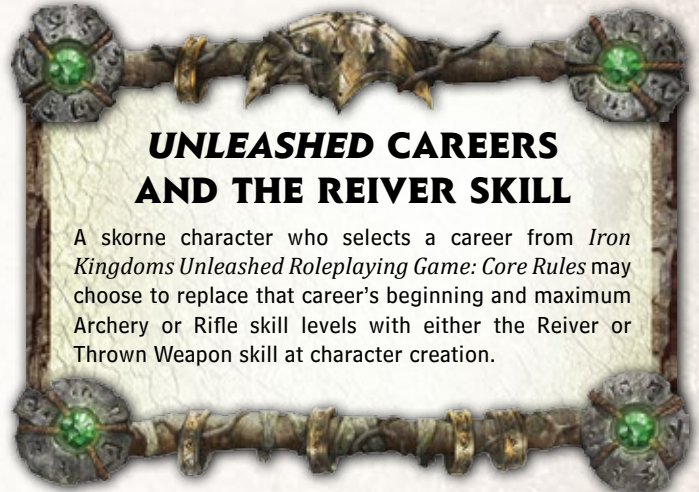
Paingivers: The character has connection to a specific group of paingivers. He can be a member of the caste, or simply have a close contact among their number. Paingivers are diverse and have several specialties; it should be determined if this connection represents a specific group, such as bloodrunners, beast handlers, or tormentors. Members of the paingiver caste can expect their contact to provide them with information related to the paingivers' work and opportunities for employment. Others can call upon their contacts within the paingivers for aid in interrogating prisoners or breaking wild beasts for use as warbeasts. A paingiver connection may require the character to perform certain tasks from time to time, such as conveying information to other caste members or aiding in the acquisition of required creatures and chymical ingredients.

Skorne House: The character has connection to a significant skorne house. He may be a member of the house or one of its subordinate houses, an enslaved vassal, or an affiliate of the house's leadership. Members of the house can reasonably expect to draw upon the resources of the house, have safe passage in its holdings, and request a meeting with the lord tyrant, dominar, or archdominar of the house. Vassals and affiliates know how to avoid irritating the leadership of the house, but they can expect to communicate with skorne of lesser station within it. Anyone with a connection to the house can expect to be summoned from time to time, either as a guest or a servant.

NEW MILITARY SKILL

REIVER (POISE)

Each rank of this skill adds +1 to the character's POI when making attacks with a reiver or flayer cannon.



NEW OCCUPATIONAL SKILL

CHYMISTRY (INTELLECT)

Though somewhat similar to the alchemy of western Immoren, skorne chymistry represents a unique practice. Chymists manufacture specialized weapons for the warriors of a house, as well as the extensive chymical poisons and drugs used by assassins and beast handlers throughout the empire. (For more detailed information, see "Chymistry" on p. 80.)

Untrained Chymistry: A character cannot use this skill untrained. To a character unskilled in chymistry, its ingredients are nothing more than seemingly random fluids and minerals.

Chymistry Rolls: To attempt a chymical creation, make an INT + Chymistry skill roll against a target number set by the Game Master or the formula the character is trying to concoct.

Substance Identification: Characters with the Chymistry skill can identify chymical and alchemical substances and their traits and sources of ingredients. The target number is variable based on the rarity of the substance and the chymist's knowledge of it.

TARGET NUMBER	CHYMICAL SUBSTANCE BEING IDENTIFIED
10	Substance is common and openly available
11–14	Substance is uncommon and available in select markets
15–19	Substance is rare and difficult to purchase
20+	Substance is unique

Characters with the Chymistry skill gain +2 to identify any substance they have previously created or identified.

Craft Chymical Items: Chymists can create a variety of useful compounds by brewing a complex recipe of ingredients. Chymical items can be found on p. 82, and the formula for creating each item is given in the item's description.

Ingredient Extraction: Characters with the Chymistry skill can gather chymical ingredients from their surroundings and extract them from both living and dead creatures. Whether gleaned by cutting out the frontal lobe of a cyclops or by siphoning mineral acid from deep cave pools, these ingredients can be sold for profit or brewed into useful chymical items. A full list of basic chymical ingredients can be found in the Chymistry rules (p. 81).

Assisted Chymistry Rolls: One additional character trained in Chymistry can assist in a Chymistry skill roll. The character with the higher Chymistry modifier (INT + Chymistry rank) makes the roll and adds 1 to the result of the die roll for each of his assistant's ranks in Chymistry.

Game Master Notes: In the east, most chymical ingredients are readily available in major urban areas. For chymists supporting the Army of the Western Reaches, however, these important ingredients are more rare. Chymists in the west connected to a military unit can expect to have their supplies replenished periodically, but those separated from the main forces of the army quickly find themselves going without.

Chymists with no source for resupply must rely on distilled ingredients when their reserves run out, or adapt to materials available in the west. Some skorne in the Army of the Western Reaches have begun to scrutinize western alchemy and add alchemical techniques to their chymical understanding, though such efforts are still rudimentary.

SKORNE CURRENCY

Unlike the nations of the west, skorne do not use a coin currency for commerce. Instead, goods are valued in the relative cost of slave labor required to produce them, which is most often represented by the exchange of cut gemstones. This cost includes the value of labor needed to harvest and transport items as well as the food required by the slave.

A successful Craft skill roll is worth 1 sl of an item's value. For that reason, skorne often have dozens or hundreds of slaves working at a time to complete complex or larger items.

The worth of items in this section is given in days of slave labor (sl).



NEW ARMS AND EQUIPMENT

The arms and armor of the east represent centuries of struggle and warfare among the skorne. Refined in constant turmoil and warfare, the tools of the warrior caste are strange to westerners. Many blades have compound curves along their edges to increase the trauma of a strike. Iron is less common in the east than the west, and all steel is reserved for the manufacture of weaponry. Bronze sees extensive use in skorne equipment, often adorning the edges of items and used to manufacture clasps, jewelry, and tools.

The skorne have also pioneered a unique form of alchemy called chymistry. Chymical developments have allowed the skorne to produce firearms utterly unlike those manufactured in the western Immoren.

ARMOR

Cataphract armor	115 sl
Leather armor	15 sl
Paingiver armor	25 sl
Praetorian plate	60 sl
Skorne infantry armor	30 sl

MELEE WEAPONS

Barbed whip	3 sl
Fighting claws, pair	15 sl
Katara, pair	10 sl
Kolas club	5 sl
Man catcher	10 sl
Pike	7 sl
Shield, karax	25 sl
Spear, cavalry	7 sl
Spear, war	12 sl
Sword, Praetorian, pair	25 sl
Toboresh	15 sl

RANGED WEAPONS

Arcus	45 sl
Flayer cannon	90 sl
Incindus	80 sl
Reiver	45 sl
Sling	1 sl

AMMUNITION

Flayer ammo cone	14 sl
Flayer gas canister	10 sl
Incindus (one shell)	5 sl
Reiver ammo cone	9 sl
Reiver gas canister	5 sl
Sling: twenty sling bullets	1 sl

EQUIPMENT

Chirurgion's kit	6 sl
Chymistry kit	6 sl
Lightning rod	25 sl
Paingiver mask	—
Reiver ammo bandolier	1 sl
Sling bullet pouch	1 sl
Torture implements	6 sl

MOUNT

Ferox	65 sl
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SKORNE ARMOR

Skorne armor has a style and appearance considerably distinct from all armor traditions of western Immoren. Skorne prefer layered armor, ornately decorated even when worn by lesser members of the warrior caste. Skorne use a wide variety of armor both in terms of the extent of its protection and the types of materials utilized. Since iron is less abundant in eastern Immoren, smiths reserve it for use in weapons, which makes steel elements in armor less common than in the west. Bronze often substitutes, as does a mix of iron and bronze along with hardened leather. The hide of titans sees extensive use in skorne leather armor due to its natural resilience.

Most armor of any material is lacquered for ornamentation and to provide additional durability and resiliency. Due to the degree of ornamentation and overlapping straps and layers, skorne armor is always specifically crafted for an individual. Skorne armorsmiths can make the necessary adjustments to refit armor, which they often do when a suit of importance is passed down to the next generation in a house.

The skorne employ a variety of shields similar to those found in the west, although they make nearly all their shields from metal. Shields are highly ornamented but always functional in battle.

REFITTING ARMOR

A character attempting to refit armor to a new wearer must have access to tools and 10 sl worth of surplus metal. The character spends twelve hours cutting and shaping the armor to fit the new wearer. At the end of this time, he makes a Craft (metalworking) skill roll against a target number of 14. If the roll succeeds, the character has successfully refitted the suit of armor. If the roll fails, he may spend another three hours modifying his work and try again.

Skorne of all types in the warrior caste have a strong preference for heavy armors over medium or lighter armors. The ability to arm properly for battle forms a significant component of the skorne's pride and standing among the warrior caste, and they disdain those who can afford only inferior arms and armor.

Wearing the armor of a different caste is taboo in skorne culture and is punished with torture and death and in extreme situations relegation to the slave caste.

CATAPHRACT ARMOR

Cost: 115 sl

SPD Modifier: -2

DEF Modifier: -3

ARM Modifier: +9

Description: The Cataphracts honor a unique, ancient, and esteemed skorne warrior tradition, training to bear the weight

of the most impervious armor. Wearing this armor requires natural strength and endurance, and not all aspiring skorne have the size or attributes to join this tradition.

Special Rules: Only characters with the Cataphract ability can wear Cataphract armor.

A character wearing Cataphract armor customized to the body of another character suffers an additional -2 DEF penalty.

Cataphract armor is always crafted for skorne anatomy.

Cataphract Armor



Paingiver Armor



PAINGIVER ARMOR

Cost: 15 sl

SPD Modifier: 0

DEF Modifier: 0

ARM Modifier: +5

Description: This is the armor of the paingiver caste. Stressing fluid movement and flexibility over protection, this scant armor consists of arm and leg bracers along with a chest and shoulder plates and a skirt of lacquered scale. It is sometimes worn under the robes favored by paingivers.

Special Rules: Paingiver armor is always crafted for skorne anatomy.

PRAETORIAN PLATE

Cost: 60 sl

SPD Modifier: 0

DEF Modifier: -2

ARM Modifier: +8

Description: Praetorian plate is a well-balanced suit of armor that affords exemplary protection while allowing the wearer a broad range of motion. Among the skorne, wearing this armor is an honor afforded only to Praetorians of the warrior caste. Those of insufficient birth or rank found wearing this armor are punished.

Special Rules: A character wearing Praetorian plate customized to the body of another character suffers an additional -2 DEF penalty.

Praetorian plate is always crafted for skorne anatomy.

SKORNE INFANTRY ARMOR

Cost: 30 sl

SPD Modifier: 0

DEF Modifier: -1

ARM Modifier: +7

Description: The armor worn by lesser members of the warrior caste, such as Venators, is made of skirts of overlapping leather and bronze torso armor, all heavily lacquered to reinforce and strengthen the material.

Special Rules: Skorne infantry armor is always crafted for skorne anatomy.

MELEE WEAPONS

BARBED WHIP

Cost: 3 sl

Skill: Hand Weapon

Attack Modifier: -2

POW: 3

Description: Whips are a common sight in the Skorne Empire, used most often to discipline slaves or train beasts. Paingivers use a whip studded in barbed hooks specifically designed and engineered to maximize the agony caused by each strike.

Special Rules: A barbed whip is a Reach weapon.

A character with Specialization (Barbed Whip) armed with this weapon can perform beast manipulations on a creature in this weapon's melee range. A character armed with a barbed whip gains +1 to Animal Handling skill rolls.

FIGHTING CLAWS, PAIR

Cost: 15 sl

Skill: Unarmed Combat

Attack Modifier: -2

POW: 1

Description: A favored weapon of the paingivers, fighting claws fit over the hand like gloves. Each finger bears a razor-sharp blade that can be wielded by those with great dexterity to inflict debilitating wounds. It is said that the first fighting claws were developed by Morkaash himself.

Special Rules: On a critical hit against a living target, the target must make a PHY roll against a target number equal to the attacker's STR + 9. If the roll succeeds, nothing happens. If the roll fails, the target suffers -2 on attack and skill rolls for one round.

A character with the Two-Weapon Fighting ability armed with a pair of fighting claws does not suffer the -2 penalty on attacks rolls with the second weapon.

A character wearing a pair of fighting claws suffers a -1 penalty to skill rolls that require fine manual dexterity. Certain actions might not be possible while wearing them.

KATARA, PAIR

Cost: 10 sl

Skill: Unarmed Combat

Attack Modifier: -1

POW: 4

Description: Katara are ornate thrusting weapons, designed to function as an extension of the wielder's arm. The handle runs perpendicular to the blade, and a pair of crossguards running down the forearm protects the wielder from incoming strikes.

Special Rules: A character with the Two-Weapon Fighting ability armed with a pair of katara does not suffer the -2 penalty on attacks rolls with the second weapon.

KOLAS CLUB

Cost: 5 sl

Skill: Hand Weapon

Attack Modifier: -1

POW: 3

Description: A primitive weapon that predates the founding of Malphas, the kolas club's edges are set with chipped pieces of obsidian that rend flesh, ripping open agonizing wounds. These obsidian shards occasionally break off, requiring periodic replacement.

Special Rules: On a critical hit, a character can spend 1 feat point to gain an additional die on the damage roll.

A living character disabled by this weapon cannot make a Tough roll.

On a damage roll of all 1s, the weapon loses enough obsidian to render it ineffective. It loses its special rules until the character spends an hour replacing the obsidian and makes a successful Craft (stoneworking) skill roll against a target number of 12.

Replacement obsidian costs 2 sl.

MAN CATCHER

Cost: 10 sl

Skill: Great Weapon

Attack Modifier: -1

POW: 4

Description: Man catchers are long polearms topped with a wickedly barbed claw like a scorpion's talon. In skilled hands, a man catcher can lock on a target's throat or limbs, holding it in place.

Special Rules: Man catchers are Reach weapons.

A character with Specialization (Man Catcher) can spend 1 feat point to make a restraining attack instead of a normal attack with the man catcher. If the restraining attack hits, the target takes no damage. Instead, the character and target make contested STR rolls. If the target succeeds, nothing happens. If the character succeeds, for one round the target suffers -2 DEF and cannot advance except to change facing.

PIKE

Cost: 7 sl

Skill: Great Weapon

Attack Modifier: -1 (one-handed), 0 (two-handed)

POW: 4 (one-handed), 5 (two-handed)

Description: Pikes are light thrusting polearms used by the Praetorian karax, typically in conjunction with a shield. They are commonly ornamented with barbs and spikes on the blade's edge.

Special Rules: Pikes are Reach weapons.

A character gains +2 on his charge attack rolls with this weapon.



Karax Shield

SHIELD, KARAX

Cost: 25 sl

Skill: Shield

Attack Modifier: -2

POW: 0

Description: The karax shield is a broad, ornamented metal shield of sinuous curves, tapering sharply toward the base. It is far larger than the common shields of the west, and the Praetorian karax who carry it are trained in the *xenka* formation to protect them from explosive blasts.

Special Rules: A character armed with a karax shield gains +1 ARM for each level of the Shield skill he has against attacks originating in his front arc. This bonus is not cumulative with additional shields.

A character with Specialization (Karax Shield) who is armed with a karax shield gains Girded. (While armed with a shield, a character with Girded does not suffer blast damage. Friendly characters B2B with this character do not suffer blast damage either.)

SPEAR, CAVALRY

Cost: 7 sl

Skill: Great Weapon

Attack Modifier: -2 (one-handed on foot), (-1 mounted or two-handed)

POW: 4 (one-handed), 5 (mounted or two-handed)

Description: Carried by ferox riders, the skorne cavalry spear has a single cutting edge designed to punch through armor on the charge. Cavalry spears are ornamented with wicked spikes that tear open dreadful wounds.

Special Rules: When its wielder is fighting while mounted or the spear is wielded two-handed, cavalry spears are Reach weapons.

A character wielding a cavalry spear while mounted gains +2 to charge attack damage rolls with this weapon.

SPEAR, WAR

Cost: 12 sl

Skill: Great Weapon

Attack Modifier: -1 (one-handed), 0 (two-handed)

POW: 5 (one-handed), 6 (two-handed)

Description: Carried by the Cataphract cetrati, the skorne war spear is a polearm with a large double-edged blade with decorative cutouts at its center to reduce the weapon's considerable weight. The war spear is both a thrusting and slashing weapon, designed to punch through armor and lop off unprotected limbs.

Special Rules: War spears are Reach weapons.

A character must have at least STR 6 to use this weapon one-handed.

A character wielding this weapon gains +2 on charge attack damage rolls.

SWORD, PRAETORIAN, PAIR

Cost: 25 sl per pair

Skill: Hand Weapon

Attack Modifier: 0

POW: 3

Description: The signature weapons of the warrior class, paired Praetorian swords are as much status symbols as deadly weapons. These painstakingly crafted single-edged blades are true works of art. Each blade is precisely balanced and exactly mated to the other. A skorne who wields these weapons is expected to maintain them carefully throughout his life.

Should a character not of the warrior caste be discovered in the possession of Praetorian blades, his life will certainly be forfeit.

Special Rules: A character with the Two-Weapon Fighting ability armed with a pair of Praetorian swords does not suffer the -2 penalty on attacks rolls with the second weapon.



War Spear



Toboresh

TOBORESH

Cost: 15 sl

Skill: Great Weapon

Attack Modifier: -2

POW: 4

Description: A toboresh is a double-bladed glaive used by the Praetorian keltarii. In skilled hands, the glaive can maneuver to intercept incoming strikes with ease, turning aside enemy strikes as the wielder moves.

Special Rules: Toboresh are Reach weapons.

Toboresh must be used two-handed.

A character with Specialization (Toboresh) who is armed with a toboresh cannot be targeted by free strikes.

RANGED WEAPONS

ARCUS

Cost: 45 sl

Ammo: 1

Effective Range: 48 feet (8")

Extreme Range: —

Skill: Crossbow

Attack Modifier: -2

POW: 12

AOE: —

Description: A unique weapon, the arcus has a long history of use among the skorne, and a specific branch of the Cataphract tradition has adopted it as their weapon of choice. In ancient times it took the form of a finely balanced bladed polearm with an attached length of rope or chain that strong skorne could hurl a considerable distance as a harpoon. The wielder would impale a foe and drag it closer to finish it off. More recently, the arcus received improvement in the form of an extremely high-torque crossbow firing mechanism that can launch the heavy harpoon considerably farther and with greater accuracy than ever before. The arcus serves as both a deadly ranged weapon and a versatile polearm in the hands of a skilled wielder.

Special Rules: An arcus requires two hands and takes a quick action to rearm.

If this weapon damages an enemy with a base equal to or smaller than the attacker's, immediately after the attack is resolved the damaged character can be pushed any distance directly toward the attacker.

After pushing the target, the character can spend 1 feat point to immediately make a melee attack with the weapon.

When used as a melee weapon, this weapon requires STR 6, has an attack modifier of -1, is POW 5, and uses the Great Weapon skill.

**FLAYER CANNON****Cost:** 90 sl**Ammo:** 18 shots per ammo cone**Effective Range:** 84 feet (14')**Extreme Range:** —**Skill:** Reiver**Attack Modifier:** 0**POW:** 12**AOE:** —

Description: The flayer cannon is a massive reiver mounted atop a lightweight tripod. The heavy ammunition cone contains thousands of sharpened reiver needles. When fired, the weapon spits out a withering rain of steel that can tear through infantry and warbeasts in seconds.

Special Rules: Gain +1 to damage rolls with this weapon against characters with medium bases and +2 to damage rolls against characters with large or huge bases.

Once during each of his turns, a gunner firing this weapon can use Burst Fire instead of making a standard ranged attack. When the character uses Burst Fire, he makes d3 attacks but expends six shots of gas and ammo. His attacks that turn must target a primary target and any number of secondary targets within 2" of the primary target. Ignore intervening characters when declaring secondary targets. A secondary target cannot be targeted by more attacks than the primary target.

The weapon can be fired only while supported by its tripod. Setting up or breaking down the tripod takes a quick action. Mounting the cannon on the tripod takes a full action. A character moving the tripod while it is folded suffers -2 SPD and DEF, or -3 SPD and DEF while it is open. A character moving the cannon suffers -2 SPD and DEF. A character attempting to move the cannon while it is mounted on the tripod suffers -4 SPD and DEF. Reduce SPD and DEF penalties by 1 for each character moving the weapon.

Replacing this weapon's ammo cone or gas canister requires a quick action.

An ammo cone holds enough needles for 15 shots. A gas canister holds enough gas for 30 shots.

A loaded ammo cone costs 14 sl. Extra gas canisters cost 10 sl.

INCINDUS

Cost: 80 sl

Ammo: 1

Effective Range: 60 feet (10")

Extreme Range: 300 feet

Skill: Light Artillery

Attack Modifier: -2

POW: 12

AOE: 3

Description: The incindus is a newly developed weapon, designed by skorne chymists to counter the firearms of the west. The incindus fires a metal canister filled with volatile chymical compounds that bathe an area in searing flame. A heavy cleaving blade set beneath the barrel lets the user engage in honorable combat up close once he has delivered his burning payload deep into the enemy ranks.

Special Rules: This weapon requires two hands and requires STR 6 to wield.

Ranged attacks with this weapon causes fire damage. Targets hit suffer the Fire continuous effect.

When used as a melee weapon, this weapon has an attack modifier of -1, is POW 4, and uses the Hand Weapon skill.

One incindus shell costs 5 sl.

REIVER

Cost: 45 sl

Ammo: 6 shots per ammo cone

Effective Range: 72 feet (12")

Extreme Range: —

Skill: Reiver

Attack Modifier: -2

POW: 10

AOE: —

Description: The reiver is a unique skorne weapon that loosely compares to the firearms of western Immoren. It has a similar stock and trigger but operates by quite different mechanisms. Explosive gas stored in a metal orb at the rear of the device provides the force required to hurl its numerous small projectiles at its target. The weapon stores these lengthy iron needles in a rotating cone at the fore of the weapon.

Each pull of the trigger unleashes dozens of needles in a single painful and tissue-rending attack. Although reloading a fresh ammo cone or gas canister to the reiver is an easy and intuitive process, replenishing an ammo cone of its expended needles is not. Only expert skorne craftsmen understand the painstaking and difficult process of refilling a depleted reiver cone, and no one can improvise this task in the field. Similarly, the gas canisters utilized to fire the reivers remain a technology unknown to any but the chymists who make and service these weapons.

Special Rules: This weapon requires two hands to operate and fire.

Gain +1 to damage rolls with this weapon against characters with medium bases and +2 to damage rolls against characters with large or huge bases.

When a character makes an attack with the reiver, he can choose to sustain his fire by expending an additional shot's worth of gas and ammunition, giving him +1 to all attack rolls resulting from the attack.

Replacing this weapon's ammo cone or gas canister requires a quick action.

An ammo cone holds enough needles for 6 shots. A gas canister holds enough gas for 12 shots.

A loaded ammo cone costs 9 sl. Extra gas canisters cost 5 sl.

SLING

Cost: 1 sl

Ammo: 1

Effective Range: 60 feet (10")

Extreme Range: —

Skill: Thrown Weapon

Attack Modifier: -2

POW: 8

AOE: —

Description: The simple sling is a weapon of one of the oldest skorne martial traditions, a primary hunting tool since the race's time as nomads. Due to the development of special chymical shells designed for the sling, Venators still employ the sling in the modern era.

Special Rules: These weapons are typically used to pitch stones, chymical ammunition, or sling bullets.

If the attacker throws sling bullets instead of stones or other ammunition, the attack has no modifier.

Sling bullets cost 1 sl for twenty rounds. Stones can be gathered from the ground free of cost.

EQUIPMENT

CHIRURGEON'S KIT

Cost: 6 sl

Description: The surgeon's kit contains amputation knives, saws, metal gouges, lancets, implements of bloodletting, scarificators, skinning blades, wound closures, and other instruments of the skorne medical arts.

Special Rules: A character with a surgeon's kit gains +1 to his Medicine skill rolls.

CHYMICAL AMMUNITION

The chymists of the skorne have greatly amplified the killing power of the simple sling through the development of specialized chymical concoctions. Contained in specially designed vessels, these compounds include deadly corrosive acid, debilitating gas, and other concoctions. See p. 86 for more details.

CHYMISTRY KIT

Cost: 6 sl

Description: A chymistry kit contains various brass, glass, and porcelain vessels, a portable scale, tools for mixing and agitation made of various materials, sources of fire, stands, and other equipment necessary for a chymist's work.

Special Rules: A character requires a chymistry kit to produce chymical items.

LIGHTNING ROD

Cost: 25 sl

Description: Skorne chymists developed this large and heavy tool after considerable experimentation into a way to facilitate the crossing of the Stormlands by the invasion forces serving Vinter Raelthorne IV. Made from several layers of conductive metals, this very tall rod includes a trailing chain and weight intended to drag along the ground. Since the lightning rod is quite heavy and not completely reliable, an enslaved cyclops, rather than a skorne, usually carries the rod using specially insulated armored gauntlets. During any crossing of the Stormlands, a skorne military column includes a number of these rods spread evenly through the force to provide overlapping protection. Both expensive to produce and only available in limited quantities, lightning rods are immediately returned to the eastern side to accompany the next supply train or troop column.

Special Rules: If a lightning rod is held perpendicular to the earth and elevated into the air and its chain is allowed to trail on the ground, it attracts all naturally occurring lightning strikes within 60 feet of the bearer.

Carrying the lightning rod requires STR 6 or greater.

While completely within 60 feet (10") of a character wielding a lightning rod, characters gain Immunity: Electricity.

PAINGIVER MASK

Cost: These masks are not available for sale.

Description: Although many skorne choose to wear masks, paingivers are recognizable by the distinctive masks they always wear in public. These masks represent their caste and provide the paingiver with anonymity, stripping away individual identity and with it any lingering impetus toward compassion or mercy.

Special Rules: A skorne character wearing a paingiver mask gains +2 to Intimidation rolls against other skorne outside the paingiver caste. If a character not of the paingiver caste is discovered wearing a paingiver mask, he soon meets a gruesome and excruciating end.



Paingiver Mask

REIVER AMMO BANDOLIER

Cost: 1 sl

Description: This leather harness is designed to hold a reserve of up to three reiver ammo cones and a gas canister. These bandoliers are commonly worn by Venators in the field.

A character with a reiver ammo bandolier can draw and reload a reiver ammo cone or gas canister as part of the same quick action.

SLING BULLET POUCH

Cost: 1 sl

Description: A sling bullet pouch contains twenty loops designed to hold ammunition for quick access. Rural skorne hunters wear simple leather bullet pouches.

Special Rules: A character with a sling bullet pouch can draw and reload a sling bullet as part of the same quick action.

TORTURE IMPLEMENTS

Cost: 6 sl

Description: These tools of the paingivers' trade commonly include piercing tools, a variety of precise blades, barbed hooks, flesh-gouging clamps, and toothed saws. A paingiver can work with any sharpened blade, but proper instruments allow the torturer to truly explore his craft.

Special Rules: While employing torture implements on a helpless subject, a character gains +2 to his Interrogation rolls and causes an additional point of PHY reduction per hour when using the Torture ability. These tools inflict d3 damage per Interrogation roll or hour of torture.

In addition, torture implements can be used as improvised melee weapons. Anyone attacking with torture implements uses the Hand Weapon skill for the attack. The instruments are designed to inflict pain rather than kill, so the attack roll suffers a - 2 penalty. When used as weapons, torture implements are POW 3.

MOUNT

FEROX

PHY	12	SPD	8	STR	9
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Cost: 65 sl

Description: Ferox are great predatory cat-like reptiles used by the skorne as battle mounts. A mount designated as a battle mount can make cavalry charges when ridden by a skilled rider.

Special Rules: A ferox has ARM 12 and 12 vitality points. Unmounted, a ferox has DEF 14.

A perturbed ferox without a rider can bite with MAT 6. Anyone hit suffers a damage roll with a POW equal to the ferox's STR + 3.



CHYMISTRY

Chymistry is an art unique to the skorne, blending elements of natural science with the fundamentals of mortitheurgy. Chymistry was refined over many centuries, drawing upon the teachings of Kexorus. Though similar to the alchemy employed in western Immoren, the processes and formulae of chymistry vary subtly from those in the west. Fundamental reactions between substances remain identical, however. Both chymistry and alchemy rely on the consistent interactions of powders, minerals, and liquids.

ORIGINS OF CHYMISTRY

Chymistry's origins reach back to the early days of the Corpusulem in Malphas. Chymistry began as an adjunct to chirurgery, which included the study of anatomy and the systematic development of poultices and salves to treat the injured. A sect of these chirurgeons moved their studies away from research of flesh, blood, and muscle and began investigating the possibilities of mixing various forms of inert matter. The original intent was to provide better refinement for the chirurgical art, but their work quickly expanded to

explore chymical interactions of all sorts. The first chymists were designated as specialized chirurgeons and have therefore always been members of the worker caste.

The systematic methodologies employed by the Corpusulem caused the field of chymistry to expand slowly but steadily. The Corpusulem created a vast library of formulae, producing archives of every reaction discovered. Each new development was shared among them. Over time they began to develop items useful for warfare and drugs to subdue or enrage powerful beasts. Tyrants discovered that much as they required chirurgeons to maintain the strength of their soldier's bodies, they required chymists to maintain the strength of their armies.

Engineer-chymist Korsarat of House Tusokaar cemented the role of chymists within the armies of the skorne. In the early 200s AR, his clever use of the explosive *hokar* to destroy the walls of a rival house and the invention of the first skorne cannons caused a scramble among the major houses. Each house desperately sought chymists capable of creating the explosive to avoid falling behind in warfare development. Now every major skorne house maintains a small army of chymists working within its walls, producing weapons, drugs, and poisons for their dominars.

ALCHEMY VERSUS CHYMISTRY

Though the methodology of chymistry is similar to the alchemy of western Immoren, it draws upon a different philosophy and approach than the western technique. The art of chymistry developed through centuries of careful study and application of eastern techniques, utilizing ingredients dissimilar from those common to the west. A chymist's formulae draw upon the collected wisdom of his centuries-old forebears, and the understanding and conclusions of the chymists hold this knowledge as unimpeachable.

Further, chymistry has benefitted from contact with those studying mortitheurgy just as alchemy has benefitted from arcane advances to the west. Due to differences between the understanding of western alchemy and chymistry, aside from distilling items to reclaim ingredients, a chymist cannot attempt to manufacture alchemical items, nor can an alchemist attempt to create chymical items. Nonetheless, chymists maintain an interest in alchemical substances and seize them for study whenever possible. Though direct translation of methods is impossible, chymists hope to learn new techniques and mixtures through analysis of western methods via mortitheurgical experimentation.

SCIENCE OF CHYMISTRY

Since its origin as an extension of the chirurgical art, chymistry has been defined as the observation of and experimentation with substances interacting with and against one another, transforming between states, and altering the world around them. Chymists are investigators of natural science whose understanding of the world around them takes on many different specialties, from understanding how to create the vital *venhokar* gas to metallurgical reinforcement of blades and armor. Some chymists use their understanding of natural forces and reactions to perform essential engineering work, specializing in the construction and manufacture of weapons and defenses for their master's house.

Chymistry taps into the power of mortitheurgy as a catalyst to assist in chymical reactions. Although chymistry uses inorganic matter, chymical formulae often require a small piece of organic tissue. Using mortitheurgy like the alchemist's stone of western alchemy, chymists stabilize their creations with a few drops of freshly spilled blood, tissues collected by chirurgeons, plant mater, chitin, and a myriad of substances produced by specialized creatures. More potent creations require a greater deal of organic material.

Most chymists are affiliated with the Corpusulem (p. 17) and draw upon the archives for their work. These records contain detailed information on chymical experiments, both successful and otherwise, and they are often the starting point for a chymist looking to replicate a specific result. Few of the order have received exaltation, and the sacral stones of the rare exalted chymists are jealously guarded by the houses that possess them. Chymists must therefore turn to written records in lieu of consulting directly with the greatest minds of their study, trying to puzzle out meaning from ancient and often incomplete tomes.

CREATION

The key components of any chymical creation are its ingredients. A character wishing to create a chymical item must first gather all the ingredients listed in the formula. In a location where the ingredients can be traded for, the character can simply barter for the material costs listed in the item description. If the character is creating the item in the field where ingredients are not available for trade, he must use ingredients from his inventory. Without access to all the proper ingredients, a chymist cannot utilize a chymical formula.

Chymistry is a slow process that cannot be performed outside a controlled environment. There is no eastern equivalent to the field alchemy of the west. Instead, chymists work slowly and deliberately to concoct chymical items.

A mortitheurgical catalyst serves as a critical component in all complex chymistry. Nearly all active chymistry requires a burst of power drawn from living flesh. This takes the form of damage dealt to a living character, either willing or unwilling. In the Skorne Empire this damage usually falls on beasts, lowborn slaves, or captured enemy soldiers, but when required the chymist can mortify his own flesh to the same effect.

When a chymist brews a chymical item, before combining the ingredients he must deal at least 1 damage point to a living

character. If the character is helpless or a volunteer, no attack roll is necessary: the attack automatically hits. Otherwise, the chymist must make an attack and damage roll as normal.

Once a character has gathered the necessary ingredients for a chymical formula, he must spend time brewing the formula by combining, cooking, and stabilizing the ingredients. A character must have the Chymistry skill to brew a chymical formula. Ingredients and chymical formulae are listed in the entry for each item that can be created using chymistry.

Once the character has spent the allotted time brewing the formula, he must make an INT + Alchemy skill roll against the formula's target number. If the roll succeeds, he has successfully created the item. Each formula produces a different result if the roll fails. Each chymical item's entry includes its target numbers, success results, and failure results.

DISTILLATION

Just as a character can brew chymical formulae, he can also distill ingredients from existing alchemical or chymical substances. Distillation of an alchemically or chymically created item requires a character to spend half the time it requires to brew the item, processing the materials with a chymistry kit. At the end of the process, the player makes an INT + Chymistry skill roll against a target number equal to the target number required to brew the formula. If he succeeds, the alchemical or chymical substance is destroyed, but the character can extract one unit of a single ingredient listed to create that substance and one unit of chymical waste (crystal or liquid).

PRIMARY CHYMICAL INGREDIENTS

The exact materials used by chymists vary from those used by alchemists and bone grinders in texture, color, and availability, but these components are drawn from similar matter. Otherwise, chymical ingredients resemble those found under "Bone Grinder Alchemy" in *Iron Kingdoms Unleashed Roleplaying Game: Core Rules*.

Aradus bile	5 sl
Arcane extract	5 sl
Arcane minerals	7 sl
Bioluminescent extract	2 sl
Chymical waste, crystal	1 sl
Chymical waste, liquid	1 sl
Cyclops brain tissue	5 sl
Ectoplasm	10 sl
Heavy metals	2 sl
Jevisha extract	4 sl
Mineral acid	2 sl
Mineral crystals	3 sl
Mutagenic extract	8 sl
Organic acid	2 sl
Organic toxin	5 sl
Sacral shards	7 sl
Vitriol	3 sl



The following ingredients are unique to chymistry.

ARADUS BILE

Cost: 5 sl

The thick yellow bile of an adult aradus is a useful binding ingredient in several chymical compounds. It gives off a repellant odor that stings the nose and burns the eyes.

CHYMICAL WASTE, CRYSTAL

Cost: 1 sl

This waste material is a common byproduct of the chymical process, often produced when acidic liquids are used to dissolve heavy metals.

CHYMICAL WASTE, LIQUID

Cost: 1 sl

Liquid chymical waste is often drained off when compounds are distilled. It still retains trace useful elements from the brewing process.

CYCLOPS BRAIN TISSUE

Cost: 5 sl

Tissue harvested from the brains of cyclopes possesses powerful arcane properties. Extracted brain matter is carefully harvested and preserved for use by chymists.

JEVISHA EXTRACT

Cost: 4 sl

Pressed from the *jevisha* root that grows on the shores of Mirketh Lake, this toxic fluid is used in certain surgeries.

SACRAL SHARDS

Cost: 7 sl

These shards are harvested and processed from fragments of lesser sacral stones that temporarily housed ancestor spirits. The spirit invests the material with arcane power that chymists use to empower potent chymical items.

VITRIOL

Cost: 3 sl

Distilling weaker organic acids until they are a volatile blue-green liquid produces this oily, caustic fluid. Vitriol is instrumental in the manufacture of the explosive gas *venhokar*.

CHYMICAL ITEMS

The following chymical items can be made in *Unleashed* games featuring skorne. Note that a character who does not have all the skills listed under Brewing Requirements automatically fails when attempting to brew the item. A character can double or even triple the ingredients described for a single batch to produce two or three doses at the same time without adding any additional manufacturing time.

AMKRASHAAR

Cost: 36 sl per dose

Description: This liquid sedative is manufactured to aid in the live capture of creatures destined to become warbeasts.

Special Rules: This substance must be ingested by a living creature or otherwise introduced into its bloodstream to be effective. When a creature is exposed to the elixir, it must make a PHY roll against a target number of 18. If the roll succeeds, the creature is not affected by the sedative. If the roll fails, large-based creatures are affected by the sedative for d3 hours, medium-based creatures for d3 + 2 hours, and small-based creatures are affected for 9 hours.

While under the effect of amkrashaar, the affected creature has a base DEF of 7, cannot run, charge, or make trample power attacks, and must forfeit its movement or action on its turn. In addition to the above effects, small-based creatures affected by amkrashaar are knocked down and have a base SPD of 2. A warbeast affected by amkrashaar cannot generate fury or frenzy.

Brewing Requirements: Chymistry 1, Medicine 1

Ingredients: This chymical compound requires one unit of aradus bile, one unit of organic acid, and two units of organic oil.

Total Material Cost: 12 sl

GATHERING INGREDIENTS

A chymist can render ingredients from the flora and fauna of Immoren following the rules presented under "Bone Grinder Alchemy" in *Iron Kingdoms Unleashed Roleplaying Game: Core Rules*. A chymist cannot gather any ingredients unique to chymistry in this fashion, however.

Outside eastern Immoren, some ingredients specific to chymistry are extremely rare or cannot be found at all. Skorne chymists in western Immoren have learned to make extensive use of distilling unwanted chymical items to reclaim rare ingredients not often found in the west.

Alchemical Formula: Brewing this item requires a chymistry kit and three hours of labor spent combining, cooking, and stabilizing the ingredients. At the end of this time, the chymist makes an INT + Chymistry roll against a target number of 14. If the roll succeeds, the character creates one dose of amkrashaar. If the roll fails, he creates one unit of liquid chymical waste.

BESHTAL

Cost: 45 sl per dose

Description: This cocktail of chymical ingredients is used by beast handlers to speed the recovery process of creatures subjected to their surgeries and by surgeons to aid the healing of patients. The paste is applied directly to wounded tissues and then sewn into the skin to disperse throughout the system.

Special Rules: A grievously injured character who receives a dose of beshtal is immediately stabilized and recovers and additional d3 vitality points per hour in addition to healing normally for the next four hours. Additionally, the time needed to recover from a Broken Limb injury table result or for a warbeast to recover from anatomical modification (p. 104) is reduced by half.

Brewing Requirements: Chymistry 1, Medicine 1

Ingredients: This chymical compound requires one unit of mutagenic extract, one unit of organic acid, and one unit of organic toxin.

Total Material Cost: 15 sl

Chymical Formula: Brewing this item requires a chymistry kit and three hours of labor spent combining, cooking, and stabilizing the ingredients. At the end of this time, the chymist makes an INT + Chymistry roll against a target number of 14. If the roll succeeds, the character creates one dose of beshtal. If the roll fails, he creates one unit of liquid chymical waste.

DEMXAAT

Cost: 60 sl per dose

Description: When this glutinous red substance is introduced into the bloodstream of a target, the potent toxin causes an immediate and near-total blindness that can last for several hours.

Special Rules: A dose of this poison can be applied to a weapon, a drink, or a dish of food as a quick action. If a living creature is injured by the poisoned weapon or ingests the poisoned item, he must make a PHY roll against a target number of 16. If the roll succeeds, nothing happens. If the roll fails, the character is blinded for d3 turns. A blind character cannot make ranged or magic attacks, suffers -4 MAT and DEF, cannot run or charge, and automatically fails all PER rolls related to sight.

The effects of repeated exposure to blinding poison are not cumulative.

A dose of this poison applied to a weapon must be delivered to a target within one hour or the poison loses its potency.

A skorne character inspecting a character blinded by this poison can make a Medicine or Chymistry skill roll against a target number of 14 to determine its cause. If the character succeeds, he determines the afflicted character is affected by demxaat. If he fails, he does not determine the cause of the malady.

Brewing Requirements: Chymistry

Ingredients: This chymical compound requires one unit of cyclops brain tissue and three units of organic toxin.

Total Material Cost: 20 sl

Alchemical Formula: Brewing this poison requires a chymistry kit and three hours of labor spent combining, cooking, and stabilizing the ingredients. At the end of this time, the chymist makes an INT + Chymistry roll against a target number of 14. If the roll succeeds, the character creates one dose of demxaat. If the roll fails, he creates one unit of liquid chymical waste.

HOKAR

Cost: 21 sl per batch

Description: This greasy grey paste is a volatile explosive used by the skorne in large cannons and as a component of heavy artillery ammunition. Hokar is less effective in smaller quantities and therefore not used in small arms. Skorne sappers sometimes employ hokar-filled vessels to bring down enemy fortifications.

Special Rules: A single batch of hokar is sufficient for ten cannon shots. One batch of hokar is sufficient to produce an explosive with 2 sl of additional materials for the case and fuse.

Planting an explosive and lighting the fuse takes a full action. Hokar explosives are detonated by fuse, so anyone carrying an explosive should be particularly wary of fire damage that might ignite it. The Game Master determines when an explosive has the chance to be accidentally detonated. At such a time, roll a d6. On a roll of 1, the explosive detonates.

When a hokar explosive detonates, anything in direct contact with the explosive, such as a surface it is attached to or a character holding the explosive, suffers a POW 16 damage roll. A single batch of hokar produces a 3" AOE, two batches produce a 4" AOE, and three batches produce a 5" AOE.

Brewing Requirements: Chymistry 2

Ingredients: This chymical compound requires three units of alchemical stone, one unit of chymical waste (crystal), and two units of mineral crystals.

Total Material Cost: 7 sl

Alchemical Formula: Brewing hokar requires a chymistry kit and ten hours of labor spent combining, cooking, and stabilizing the ingredients. At the end of this time, the chymist makes an INT + Chymistry roll against a target number of 14. If the roll succeeds, the character creates one dose of hokar. If the roll fails, he creates one unit of crystal chymical waste.

ISKIIR**Cost:** 63 sl per dose

Description: Iskiir was developed as a tool of assassination. It causes blood pressure to rise and the pulse to quicken, rapidly distributing the poison throughout a victim's system. Although not lethal on its own, the toxin leaves a victim weak and susceptible to other threats, such as disease, starvation, or other poisons.

Special Rules: A dose of this debilitating poison can be applied to a weapon as a quick action. If a living character takes damage from a poisoned weapon or the substance is otherwise introduced into his bloodstream, the character is affected by the poison. For 2d3 days, the affected character rolls one fewer die on PHY rolls.

A dose of this poison applied to a weapon must be delivered to a target within one hour or the poison loses its potency.

Brewing Requirements: Chymistry

Ingredients: This chymical compound requires two units of ground obsidian, three units of heavy metals, and one unit of organic toxin.

Total Material Cost: 21 sl

Alchemical Formula: Brewing this poison requires a chymistry kit and four hours of labor spent combining, cooking, and stabilizing the ingredients. At the end of this time, the chymist makes an INT + Chymistry roll against a target number of 15. If the roll succeeds, the character creates one dose of iskiir. If the roll fails, he creates one unit of liquid chymical waste.

JAKKAMSAR**Cost:** 75 sl per dose

Description: This colorless oil is a potent neurotoxin used chiefly as tool of assassination. Those exposed suffer sudden and excruciating pain, often followed by agonizing death.

Special Rules: A dose of neurotoxin poison can be applied to a weapon as a quick action. If a living character takes damage from a poisoned weapon or the substance is otherwise injected into his bloodstream, the character is affected by the poison. During each of his Maintenance Phases, the affected character must make an INT roll against a target number of 14. Outside combat, the character makes this INT roll after every five minutes.

If the roll succeeds, nothing happens. If it fails, the character immediately suffers a POW 13 damage roll. A character does not gain the benefit of armor against this damage. If the poison incapacitates the character, he cannot make a Tough roll or transfer damage. If a character succeeds on three INT rolls, the poison has run its course and no longer affects the character. If the character is disabled by the poison, he dies.

A dose of this poison applied to a weapon must be delivered to a target within one hour or the poison loses its potency.

Brewing Requirements: Chymistry 2

Ingredients: This chymical compound requires two units of aradus bile, one unit of organic oil, and two units of organic toxin.

Total Material Cost: 25 sl

Alchemical Formula: Brewing neurotoxin requires a chymistry kit and five hours of labor spent combining, cooking, and stabilizing the ingredients. At the end of this time, the chymist makes an INT + Chymistry roll against a target number of 15. If the roll succeeds, the character creates one dose of jakkamsar. If the roll fails, he creates one unit of liquid chymical waste.

JEVISHA**Cost:** 57 sl per dose

Description: Distilled and concentrated jevisha extract allows paingiver beast handlers to implant pain hooks and other implements in a creature's tissues without the body rejecting the foreign materials. Jevisha slows all healing processes, even the regenerative capabilities of pureblooded trolls.

Special Rules: A dose of jevisha can be applied to a weapon as a quick action. If a living character takes damage from a poisoned weapon or the substance is otherwise injected into his bloodstream, the character is affected by the poison. During each of his Maintenance Phases, the affected character must make a PHY roll against a target number of 18. Outside combat, the character makes this PHY roll after every five minutes.

If the roll succeeds, nothing happens. If it fails, the character loses the Hyper Regeneration, Tough, and Regeneration abilities, cannot heal, and cannot transfer damage. A character that is incapacitated while affected by the poison automatically suffers slow recovery in addition to any other effects of being incapacitated. If a character succeeds on three PHY rolls, the poison has run its course and no longer affects the character.

A dose of this poison applied to a weapon must be delivered to a target within one hour or the poison loses its potency.

Brewing Requirements: Chymistry

Ingredients: This chymical compound requires two units of jevisha extract, one unit of mutagenic extract, and unit of vitriol.

Total Material Cost: 19 sl

Alchemical Formula: Brewing jevisha requires a chymistry kit and four hours of labor spent combining, cooking, and stabilizing the ingredients. At the end of this time, the chymist makes an INT + Chymistry roll against a target number of 15. If the roll succeeds, the character creates one dose of jevisha. If the roll fails, he creates one unit of liquid chymical waste.

JIKKAR**Cost:** 69 sl per dose

Description: This insidious poison causes muscular deterioration in its victims, leaving them weak and feeble. If left untreated, it can cause total muscle failure and eventually death. It is used by paingivers to render subjects incapable of resistance.

Special Rules: A dose of jikkar can be applied to a weapon as a quick action. If a living character takes damage from a poisoned weapon or the substance is otherwise introduced into his bloodstream, the character is affected by the poison. During each of his Maintenance Phases, the affected character must make a PHY roll against a target number of 15. Outside combat, the character makes this PHY roll after every five minutes.

If the roll succeeds, nothing happens. If it fails, the character's STR is reduced by 1. If the character's STR is reduced to 0 as a result of this poison, he is incapacitated and suffers the debilitating injuries Injury Table result. If a character succeeds on three PHY rolls, the poison has run its course and no longer affects the character. A character recovers STR lost as a result of jikkar at a rate of 1 point per hour of rest.

A dose of jikkar applied to a weapon must be delivered to a target within one hour or the poison loses its potency.

Brewing Requirements: Chymistry

Ingredients: This chymical compound requires one unit of aradus bile, one unit of heavy metals, and two units of mutagenic extract.

Total Material Cost: 23 sl

Alchemical Formula: Brewing this poison requires a chymistry kit and four hours of labor spent combining, cooking, and stabilizing the ingredients. At the end of this time, the chymist makes an INT + Chymistry roll against a target number of 15. If the roll succeeds, the character creates one dose of jikkar. If the roll fails, he creates one unit of liquid chymical waste.

KAND

Cost: 15 sl

Description: This fast-acting analeptic drug was developed to facilitate the paingivers' work. When the ingredients of kand are mixed, they produce a white vapor. When this aerosol is inhaled, a subject's nervous system becomes hyper-receptive. The shallowest cut is transformed into pure agony. It is most often used to interrogate especially resistant prisoners and in the training of beasts otherwise inured to pain.

Special Rules: The moment the ingredients are combined, select a living character in base contact with the chymist. Other characters gain a +2 bonus on Animal Handling and Interrogation rolls against the affected character. The stimulant is a gas effect. The effect of the stimulant lasts for one round.

Brewing Requirements: Chymistry

Ingredients: 2 units of chymical waste (crystal) and 3 units of chymical waste (liquid)

Total Material Cost: 5 sl

Alchemical Formula: Brewing a dose of kand requires a character to dissolve waste crystals in an open vessel of solvent. A character must spend a quick action to combine the ingredients and then make an INT + Chymistry skill roll

against a target number of 14. If the roll succeeds, the character creates the effect listed in the special rules. If the roll fails, the ingredients are lost.

POISONKEEPER

Cost: 12 sl per application

Description: Poisonkeeper is a thick, viscous black paste used to preserve the effectiveness of toxins.

Special Rules: A poison mixed with this chymical item retains its potency for 24 hours. An application of poisonkeeper can preserve a single dose of poison.

Brewing Requirements: Chymistry

Ingredients: This chymical compound requires two units of chymical waste (liquid) and one unit of organic oil.

Total Material Cost: 4 sl

Alchemical Formula: Brewing poisonkeeper requires a chymistry kit and two hours of labor spent combining, cooking, and stabilizing the ingredients. At the end of this time, the chymist makes an INT + Chymistry roll against a target number of 12. If the roll succeeds, the character creates one application of poisonkeeper. If the roll fails, he creates one unit of liquid chymical waste.

SHAKKARA

Cost: 54 sl per dose

Description: Distilled to cloud the mind of its victims, this poison causes living creatures to fly into a maddened state of wanton slaughter.

Special Rules: A dose of enraging poison can be applied to a weapon as a quick action. If a living character takes damage from a poisoned weapon or the substance is otherwise introduced into his bloodstream, the character is affected by the poison. During each of his Maintenance Phases, the affected character must make a Willpower roll against a target number of 16. Outside combat, the character makes this roll after every three minutes.

If the roll succeeds, nothing happens. If it fails, the character immediately gains the Berserk ability for the duration of the drug's effects and on his turn must charge the closest character in his line of sight. If a character succeeds on three Willpower rolls, the poison has run its course and no longer affects the character.

A dose of enraging poison applied to a weapon must be delivered to a target within one hour or the poison loses its potency.

Brewing Requirements: Chymistry 2

Ingredients: This chymical compound requires two units of mutagenic extract and two units of organic oil.

Total Material Cost: 18 sl

Alchemical Formula: Brewing this poison requires a chymistry kit and three hours of labor spent combining, cooking, and

stabilizing the ingredients. At the end of this time, the chymist makes an INT + Chymistry roll against a target number of 15. If the roll succeeds, the character creates one dose of shakkara. If the roll fails, he creates one unit of liquid chymical waste.

SHIIRASKAR

Cost: 33 sl per dose

Description: Specially concocted by chymists to cloud the thoughts of their victims, this poison is used to subtly impair the judgment of its victims.

Special Rules: A dose of this poison can be applied to a weapon as a quick action. If a living character takes damage from a poisoned weapon or the substance is otherwise introduced into his bloodstream, the character is affected by the poison. During each of his Maintenance Phases, the affected character must make a PHY roll against a target number of 14. Outside combat, the character makes this PHY roll after every five minutes.

If the roll succeeds, nothing happens. If it fails, the character rolls one fewer die on INT, PER, Willpower, and Initiative rolls for d3 + 1 hours as the poison clouds his mind. A character affected by the poison has slurred speech and is prone to sudden outbursts. Once the poison runs its course, the victim has only a vague recollection of his behavior while affected.

A dose of the poison applied to a weapon must be delivered to a target within two hours or the poison loses its potency.

Brewing Requirements: Chymistry

Ingredients: This chymical compound requires one unit of organic oil and two units of organic toxin.

Total Material Cost: 11 sl

Alchemical Formula: Brewing this poison requires a chymistry kit and two hours of labor spent combining, cooking, and stabilizing the ingredients. At the end of this time, the chymist makes an INT + Chymistry roll against a target number of 13. If the roll succeeds, the character creates one dose of shiiraskar. If the roll fails, he creates one unit of crystal chymical waste.

VENHOKAR

Cost: 24 sl per dose (6 shots), 2 sl each containment canister

Description: Venhokar is an explosive gas employed by the skorne in reiver firearms and flayer cannons.

Special Rules: Venhokar is a vital component of skorne ammunition. A chymist must have an appropriate vessel ready to receive the venhokar at the time of manufacture, such as the gas canister of a reiver or flayer cannon. This is delicate work and cannot be performed in the field. Creating a suitable canister requires a character to have access to scrap metal, metalworking tools, and a successful Craft (metalworking) roll against a target number of 12. Slave produced canisters are common and available for 2 sl each.

Brewing Requirements: Chymistry

Ingredients: This chymical compound requires two units of heavy metals and two units of vitriol.

Total Material Cost: 8

Alchemical Formula: Brewing venhokar requires a chymistry kit and one hour of labor spent combining, cooking, and stabilizing the ingredients. At the end of this time, the chymist makes an INT + Chymistry roll against a target number of 12. If the roll succeeds, the character creates one dose of venhokar. If the roll fails, he creates one unit of liquid chymical waste.

CHYMICAL AMMUNITION

Skorne chymists are called upon to produce ammunition for the soldiers of a house. In addition to producing the *venhokar* and *hokar* required for the reivers and cannons of the cohort, chymists also manufacture ammunition for Venators' slings.

CHYMICAL SLING SHELL

Cost: 2 sl + shell contents

Description: These fragile shells are hurled with a sling and designed to burst on impact with a target. They can contain a number of debilitating and deadly compounds but are most often filled with vitriol to create acid-spewing projectiles.

Chymical
Sling Shell



Special Rules: Manufacturing the housing for a sling shell requires metalworking tools, a source of scrap metal, and five hours of labor spent cutting, shaping, and assembling the components. At the end of this time, a character can make a Craft (metalworking) skill roll against a target number of 13. If the roll succeeds, he builds a single shell. If the roll fails, he can try again after another hour spent refining his work.

Once a character has an empty chymical shell, he can manufacture any of the shell types noted below by spending five minutes combining and stabilizing the ingredients specific to the selected shell type and making an INT + Chymistry skill roll against a target of 13. If the roll succeeds, he makes one shell of the chosen type. If the roll fails, the ingredients are lost.

If a sling shell ranged attack directly hits a character, center a 3" AOE on him. Characters in the AOE suffer the effects of the chosen shell type.

A sling shell can be filled with chymical items and ingredients to produce one of the following effects.

Acid Shell – The most common of the chymical shells, the acid shell releases a concentrated form of corrosive vitriol upon impact. Characters affected by this shell suffer the Corrosion continuous effect. This weapon deals an additional die of damage against non-living characters, objects, and structures. Manufacturing an acid shell requires one unit of vitriol and one unit of venhokar.

Concussion Shell – When this shell bursts it releases a compressed vial of venhokar, causing a powerful blast as the gas releases. Characters affected by this shell are knocked down. Manufacturing a concussion shell requires one unit of venhokar.

Fire Oil – This shell contains a volatile natural oil that adheres and burns easily. Characters affected by this shell suffer an additional die of damage if hit with a fire damage weapon. This effect lasts one round. Manufacturing a fire oil shell requires three units of organic oil.

Flash Shell – This shell contains powdered metals and hokar paste. When the shell strikes a surface, the explosion incinerates the metal in a brilliant and blinding flash. Characters affected by this shell suffer –2 on PER and ranged attacks for one round. Manufacturing a flash shell requires one unit of hokar and one unit of heavy metals.

Poison Shell – This shell combines a natural toxin with venhokar to produce a debilitating and potentially deadly poisonous cloud. The AOE of this shell is a gas effect that remains in play for one round. Living characters hit by the AOE or those who enter it must make a PHY roll against a target of 16 or suffer d3 damage points. While in the AOE, a living character suffers –2 on attack rolls. Manufacturing a poison shell requires one unit of venhokar and four units of organic toxin.







SKORNE MAGIC AND WARBEASTS

The magic practiced among the skorne is known as mortitheurgy. It is the study of the power that dwells within flesh, blood, and spirit as well as the practical application of such knowledge. This arcane art combines anatomical mastery with a deep metaphysical understanding of flesh and blood—the powers they hold in life and release in death. For some, mortitheurgy is a tool of control, granting power over life and death; to others, it is a weapon or a path to enlightenment.

All skorne are inherently capable of learning to manipulate mortitheurgical magic, though not all have the opportunity to devote themselves to its pursuit. Those who do—mortitheurges, extollers, and warlocks—are rewarded with great power.

All skorne characters, including those without the Gifted archetype, have the potential to learn magic. Some careers do require the Gifted archetype, such as the Extoller career, which entails a lifetime of study and sacrifice. Gifted skorne begin the game with the appropriate ARC stat as determined by their arcane tradition, and all skorne regardless of archetype can increase their ARC stat through gaining experience.

With experience, a non-Gifted character can select Mortitheurge or Warlock as a third or fourth career but must meet all the requirements of that career.

EXAMPLES: Zach creates a skorne character and selects the Gifted archetype. He is free to choose the Extoller, Mortitheurge, or Skorne Warlock career at character creation. He chooses the Extoller career and begins the game with ARC 4 (3 from the Will Weaver tradition plus 1 from the Extoller caste benefit) and the Will Weaver arcane tradition.

When Darla reaches 30 XP she decides she wants her Skilled skorne character to become a Mortitheurge. To do so, her character must have at least ARC 2. She chooses the career, and her character gains the Will Weaver arcane tradition.

MORTITHEURGY

The importance of mortitheurgy to skorne culture cannot be overstated. Its philosophical principles and ascetic disciplines originate in antiquity and were studied long before the skorne even possessed the written word. One could argue that the core intellectual foundations of skorne society, the two pillars that sustain the Skorne Empire, are the *hoksune* code and mortitheurgy. Mortitheurgy is the root field of arcane study, having given rise to numerous other disciplines. Paingivers, extollers, chymists, warlocks, and modern chirurgeons all rely on mortitheurgy to a greater or lesser degree.

The study of mortitheurgy pervades many strata of skorne society. Tyrants and dominars master its arts to control warbeasts and to empower or dominate the soldiers they lead in battle. Paingivers utilize it to wield pain as a tool and weapon as

they manipulate their subjects, whether beast, slave, or captive. Master mortitheurges can hold death itself at bay, allowing their guardians to fight on despite mortal wounds or agonizing pain. Starvation and exposure to the elements can also be ignored by an army tended by mortitheurges of sufficient power and skill. The sacred arts of the extoller are an extension of mortitheurgy whereby spiritual essence is manipulated and the greatest of skorne are preserved in sacral stones, after which they can stride the battlefield again as immortals or ancestral guardians. This is not to say that all skorne utilize mortitheurgy, as many do not, but the effects of this discipline do reach to every caste. Even the lowest slave might be well acquainted with mortitheurgy if it is employed to force him to work twice as hard and twice as long as he could normally bear.

Regardless of its application, mortitheurgy draws its arcane power from a unique blend of philosophy, anatomical knowledge, and deep insight into the fundamental powers inherent in the processes of life and death. Mortitheurges understand that blood and living tissue contain great power that can be dominated and manipulated. They learn how to enhance their magic by mortifying their own bodies as well as drawing on the life forces of enemies. They can then reallocate this power to their allies, enabling warriors to push past the natural limits of their bodies. All mortitheurges credit their art to the seminal work of the great ancestor Voskune, an ancient mystic and ascetic who recognized and systematically explored the latent powers of flesh and spirit.

EXTOLLERS

Extollers hold a distinct place of privilege at the top of the worker caste, and their unique function affords them an unusual degree of respect and liberty from members of the warrior caste, including house leaders. Their art is the only means by which the great and mighty can gain reward for their accomplishments, the only way to preserve the worthy through exaltation.

Without the extoller caste the wisdom of the skorne's ancestors would be lost, as it is only extollers who can communicate with the exalted, piercing the veils of death to interact with the world of spirits. To an extoller the gossamer threads of spiritual essence are tangible things that can be touched and manipulated. An extoller can bind the threads of a skorne spirit into a sacral stone to save it from the Void. Alternately an extoller can rend the very essence of an enemy through sheer power of will.

Extollers must prove their dedication to their chosen path by ritually plucking out an eye and replacing it with a crystal oculus sensitive to elusive spiritual energies. Only by doing so are they able to perceive and manipulate the spirit world as their station requires. Not all survive this traumatic ritual

sacrifice. Would-be extollers who die as a result of the ritual are not mourned, and their souls fall screaming into the Void.

Even for skilled extollers, communicating with the exalted is far from easy, as the spirit's experience of reality is very different from that of the living. The process of being crystallized into a sacral stone alters a spirit's mind and profoundly affects the exalted's ability to convey thoughts. Extollers engage in considerable training and exhaustive study of history and ancient languages in order to contact exalted spirits and understand them. Some spirits respond only to outmoded forms of address or adhere to ancient protocols. Ancestors locked in sacral stones develop their own sense of time and can stretch out a simple response over many hours. Some are stubbornly resistant to communicating at all, having retreated from the world of the living and slowly calcified within the sacral stone. Patience and restraint are hallmarks of the extoller caste and are essential for them to perform this work.

For more on extollers, the exalted, and sacral stones, see "The Extoller Arts" (p. 93).

SKORNE WARLOCKS

Skorne warlocks gain their unique powers through the study and application of mortitheurgy rather than through an inborn talent. All skorne warlocks are trained in the simple mortitheurgical fundamentals as well as a more specific area of study that deals with the domination and exploitation of powerful enslaved creatures. This training gives a warlock the means to form a powerful bond with beasts. They learn to control not only a beast's flesh and blood but also the vital power of raw rage. Skorne warlocks are masters of tapping into this power and using it to fuel their magic. The warbeasts they command feed the warlocks a renewable supply of power with each adrenaline-fueled attack and each wound suffered in combat. Skorne warlocks can also drive their warbeasts beyond normal physical limitations, inducing them to greater fury to stoke the fires of the warlock's arcane might. In dire situations, an injured warlock can tap into his connection with a beast's vitality to force it to suffer the wound in his stead.

For more on skorne warlocks and warbeasts, see p. 103.

WARBEASTS OF THE SKORNE

The Skorne Empire's warbeasts are drawn from the ferocious and powerful creatures native to eastern Immoren, which are then subjected to surgical alterations and painful conditioning by paingivers to unlock their full capabilities and ready their minds to be controlled by a warlock. Through the conduit of pain, the warlock can apply his specialized form of mortitheurgy to drive the warbeast and tap into its latent animus, siphoning off the fury of the beast to empower his spells and bolster his own speed and strength.

Opening the beast to the warlock's mind involves long and arduous processes of conditioning, surgery, and mind-altering chymicals that forge a chain of agony and suffering the warlock can use to control it. Each type of beast the skorne have learned to exploit has required developing a unique method

of conditioning through extensive trial and experimentation. Some warbeasts require generations of study before paingivers determine the best methods to coax forth their innate qualities, while others are broken to the minds of warlocks in short order. Regardless, adding a new beast to the empire's arsenal is a rare and significant achievement.

All beast handlers study the work of great ancestor Morkaash and particularly his research into the limitations of the flesh and its specific responses to certain forms of trauma. This knowledge of anatomy is instrumental in the conditioning process; the dangerous beasts of the skorne armies could not be mastered without it. Handlers learn how to keep a creature alive despite the wounds it must endure as a part of the conditioning process. The most talented beast handlers delve deeper into the mortitheurgical arts, allowing them to feel the ebb and flow of power as they tap into and harness a beast's suffering.

SPELL LISTS

Spell lists are divided by career and COST.

Spells introduced in this book are described in the "Spell Descriptions" section that follows. Other spells are provided in *Iron Kingdoms Unleashed Roleplaying Game: Core Rules* starting on p. 241.

EXTOLLER SPELLS

Extollers can learn spells from the following list.

COST 1	Dirge of Mists, Grave Whispers, Shadow Sight
COST 2	Banishing Ward, Chiller, Exorcism, Eyes of Truth, Guidance, Hollow, Mage Sight, Soulfire, Sunder Spirit, Vision
COST 3	Curse of Shadows, Enthrall Spirit, Essence Blast, Ghost Shroud, Ghost Walk, Hex Blast, Lamentation
COST 4	Death Field, Hellmouth, Void Curse

MORTITHEURGE SPELLS

Mortitheurges can learn spells from the following list.

COST 1	Blessing of Health, Hardened Flesh, Influence, Parasitic Invigoration
COST 2	Bleed, Bone Shaker, Grip of Death, Inviolable Resolve, Iron Flesh, Medicate, Savagery, Stranglehold, Torment, Triage, Unease, Voodoo Doll
COST 3	Battle Rage, Bestial, Carnage, Carnivore, Entropic Force, Fury, Illusion of Vitality, Mortality, Psychic Vampire, Sacrificial Pawn, Somnambulist, Wave of Vivification
COST 4	Beyond Death, Heal, Overmind

WARLOCK: SKORNE SPELLS

Skorne Warlocks can learn spells from the following list.

COST 1	Arcane Strike, Blessing of Health, Jump Start
COST 2	Abuse, Awakened Spirit, Battle Charged, Forced Evolution, Leash, Medicate, Muzzle, Soulfire, Soul Slave, Sunder Spirit, Transference, Unnatural Aggression
COST 3	Aggravator, Agitation, Batten Down the Hatches, Blood Mark, Eliminator, Gallows, Rampager, Unminding, Wild Aggression
COST 4	Blood Feast, Incite, Obliteration

SPELL DESCRIPTIONS

	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
ABUSE	2	6	—	—	NO	NO
Target friendly warbeast gains +2 SPD and STR for one round but suffers d3 damage points.						
BEYOND DEATH	4	B2B	—	—	YES	NO
Target living character's spirit is locked in his body, and he cannot die. This spell is generally used either to preserve a victim beyond the normal limits of torture or to preserve his spirit for later extraction. If the affected character suffers destruction or would be killed for any reason, instead of being destroyed and dying he enters a death-like state of paralysis. If this spell expires, so does the affected character, generating a corpse and soul token only at this time.						
BLOOD MARK	2	8	—	—	YES	YES
Target enemy character suffers -2 ARM. The spellcaster can transfer damage from an enemy attack to the affected character one time, then Blood Mark expires.						
CARNAGE	3	SELF	CTRL	—	NO	NO
Friendly characters gain +2 to melee attack rolls against enemies in the spellcaster's control range. Carnage lasts for one round.						
DEATH FIELD	4	SELF	*	—	NO	NO
The spellcaster gains Dark Shroud. While within eighteen feet (3") of the spellcaster, friendly characters also gain Dark Shroud. Death Field lasts for one turn. (While in the melee range of a character with Dark Shroud, enemy characters suffer -2 ARM).						



SKORNE MAGIC AND WARBEASTS

	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
ESSENCE BLAST	3	CTRL	*	—	NO	YES
Choose a friendly living character in the spellcaster's control range. The spellcaster makes a contested Willpower roll against the selected character. If the selected character wins, nothing happens. If the spellcaster wins, make a SP 6 magic attack using the selected character as the attack's point of origin. Characters hit suffer a damage roll with a POW equal to 5 + the base STR of the selected character. After the spell is resolved, the selected character is destroyed without generating any tokens.						
FURY	3	6	—	—	NO	NO
Target friendly living character gains +3 to melee damage rolls but suffers -1 DEF.						
GRIP OF DEATH	2	SELF	CTRL	—	YES	NO
While in the spellcaster's control area, friendly living characters automatically pass Willpower rolls to resist Terror.						
GUIDANCE	2	6	—	—	YES	NO
Target friendly character gains Eyeless Sight and his weapons become magical weapons. (A character with Eyeless Sight ignores cloud effects and forests when determining line of sight. The character ignores concealment and stealth when making attacks.)						
HARDENED FLESH	1	6	—	—	NO	NO
Target friendly non-warbeast character gains the Tough Mighty archetype benefit for one round.						
HOLLOW	2	6	—	—	YES	NO
Target friendly living non-warbeast character becomes undead and gains the Tough Mighty archetype benefit. When the affected character is destroyed, the spellcaster gains the destroyed character's soul token.						
ILLUSION OF VITALITY	3	SELF	CTRL	—	YES	NO
While in the spellcaster's control area, friendly living characters do not suffer the effects of lost aspects.						
MAGE SIGHT	2	CTRL	5	—	YES	NO
Place a 5" AOE completely in the spellcaster's control range. While a character is within the AOE, friendly characters ignore forests and cloud effects when drawing LOS to him and ignore stealth when attacking him.						
OVERMIND	4	SELF	CTRL	—	NO	NO
The spellcaster immediately makes a contested Willpower roll against all living enemies in his control area. Roll once for the spellcaster. If the spellcaster beats an enemy's Willpower roll, he can cause that character to advance up to eighteen feet (3") and perform one non-spell, non-feat quick action. If the enemy beats or ties the spellcaster's roll, he is not affected. This spell can be cast only once per round.						

	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
PARASITIC INVIGORATION	1	10	—	—	NO	NO
Target friendly character suffers d3 damage points and immediately removes one degree of exhaustion (see <i>Iron Kingdoms Unleashed Roleplaying Game: Core Rules</i> , p. 225). The spellcaster can choose to suffer the damage roll instead. Decide whether the spellcaster suffers the damage before the roll is made.						
PSYCHIC VAMPIRE	3	SELF	CTRL	—	YES	NO
When an enemy casts a spell or uses an animus while in the spellcaster's control range, the enemy suffers d3 damage points and the spellcaster regains d3 vitality points.						
SACRIFICIAL PAWN	3	SELF	*	—	YES	NO
When the spellcaster is directly hit by an enemy ranged attack, you can choose to have one friendly, living non-incorporeal character within 3" of the spellcaster directly hit instead. That character is automatically hit and suffers all damage and effects.						
SAVAGERY	2	6	—	—	YES	NO
Target friendly character gains +5 SPD when making a full advance but cannot make ranged attacks. The affected character rolls one less die on INT and non-Intimidation Social rolls.						
SHADOW SIGHT	1	6	—	—	YES	NO
Target friendly character can see perfectly in darkness.						
SOMNAMBULIST	3	CTRL	—	—	NO	NO
Choose a friendly living character in the spellcaster's control range. The spellcaster makes a contested Willpower roll against the selected character. If the selected character wins, nothing happens. If the spellcaster wins, his controlling player can advance the selected character up to eighteen feet (3").						
SOULFIRE	2	10	—	12	NO	YES
When a living non-soulless character is destroyed by Soulfire, the spellcaster gains 1 fury point. A character destroyed by Soulfire does not generate a soul token.						
TORMENT	2	10	—	12	NO	YES
When a character is damaged by Torment, he loses Tough, cannot heal or be healed, and cannot transfer damage for one round.						
TRANSFERENCE	2	SELF	CTRL	—	YES	NO
The spellcaster can allow other friendly living characters in his control area to spend fury points on him to boost melee attack or melee damage rolls during their turns at a rate of 1 focus point per boost.						
UNEASE	2	8	—	—	NO	YES
The spellcaster uses his powers of mortitheurgy to subtly cause unease in his target enemy, increasing his heartbeat, causing shortness of breath, restricting blood flow, etc. The affected character suffers -2 to Willpower, fatigue, and non-combat skill rolls. Unease lasts for one round.						

	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
VOID CURSE	4	—	—	—	NO	NO
This spell permanently turns a skorne spirit into a void spirit (p. 148) under the spellcaster's control. The spellcaster must have a soul token that formerly belonged to a skorne character. The spellcaster makes a contested Willpower role against the character who generated the token. If the spellcaster loses, the soul token is lost to the void and nothing else happens. If the spellcaster wins, he creates a void spirit enslaved to his will. Place the void spirit in play B2B with the spellcaster. The void spirit can make attacks only while in the spellcaster's command range. A spellcaster's void spirits take their turns during his activation. A spellcaster can have up to three void spirits at a time.						
WAVE OF VIVIFICATION	3	SELF	CTRL	—	NO	NO
The spellcaster suffers d3 damage points and friendly characters in his control area can choose to suffer 1 damage point to immediately remove one degree of exhaustion (see <i>Iron Kingdoms Unleashed Roleplaying Game: Core Rules</i>, p. 225).						

THE EXTOLLER ARTS

For the Skorne Empire, the extoller’s ability to see into and interact with the spirit world has been a transformative force since its discovery by the first mortitheurge—the philosopher and mystic Vuxoris. Through specialized arcane study, extollers gain the ability not only to prevent a spirit from falling into the Void but also to preserve it like a fly in amber, forever bound to the living world.

COMMUNION WITH THE DEAD

Extollers are able to sense and interact with spiritual energy through the crystal oculus that replaces one of their eyes. Some master mortitheurges know other means to commune with the spirit world, making use of esoteric rituals and chymical substances, but such means are temporary and imperfect. The oculus permanently alters an extoller’s perception and offers effortless insight into the spiritual realm. Extollers are thus able to see the spiritual essence of both the living and the dead and can manipulate this ephemeral substance through the power of their will.

It is through such manipulations that an extoller can prevent spiritual essence from following its natural course after death, which would be to pass into the Void and be lost forever. With skorne this transition normally happens very quickly after death, but if an extoller can seize the spirit in time it can be placed into a specially prepared crystal referred to as a sacral stone. Extollers can also feel a resonance with spirits housed in sacral stones and through this affinity they connect and communicate with their preserved minds. These exalted ancestors are revered, respected, and treated with sacred solemnity. Communication with the exalted allows an extoller to gain the wisdom of past generations, to speak with the greatest warriors and thinkers among the skorne’s great ancestors.

Communion with the ancients is both an immense privilege and a grave responsibility. Much of an extoller’s studies center on

the rituals, practices, and etiquette required to coax an ancestor to reveal its thoughts. Ancestral spirits must be approached delicately; most dislike being disturbed by the living, particularly for petty requests. Extollers study extensively to understand the personalities and behaviors of their house’s preserved ancestors to ensure they do not offend the spirits. Ancestors can also speak through the extollers directly, using the extoller’s body as a means to be heard by the living, but this occurs rarely; only in the most urgent or significant moments do the dead feel it necessary to be heard by masses of the living. When this does happen, the extoller’s oculus glows brightly and his voice becomes resonant with the ancestor’s tones—a clear sign to others that the extoller’s words are not his own.

Extollers are responsible for overseeing the construction and maintenance of sacral stones as well as the stone vessels that can house them (see p. 95). These vessels, each empowered by its own sacral stone, stand guard in a house’s inner sanctum, keeping watch over the shrine containing other sacral stones. Particularly lively ancestral spirits can animate these vessels to move and even to fight. Some go to battle alongside their living descendants, wielding great stone weapons and serving the living skorne as stalwart guardians.

DEATH, THE VOID, AND LIFE AFTER DEATH

When a skorne dies, his spirit is drawn to the Void. Without an extoller nearby to keep him from slipping away, within minutes his spirit is dragged away to the dark and torturous oblivion known among the skorne as the Void. This is the fate of most skorne, barring only those the extollers choose to preserve in sacral stones as paragons of their warrior culture.

The Void or exaltation are the two most common fates for the spirits of skorne dead, but other transitions are possible. Some tortured spirits return from the Void as as hateful and destructive entities called void spirits, anathema to all life. Even the exalted are not immune to damage and destruction. If an ancestral spirit’s sacral stone is ever destroyed, its consciousness is shattered and driven insane, becoming a destructive kovaas spirit (p. 136).

A player character who dies and is exalted can remain a significant character. Though no longer living and unable to gain experience after death, an exalted player character can become a Connection for his former peers or possibly even be given a stone vessel (p. 98) and continue to fight alongside his peers. An adventuring company that includes an extoller can continue to pursue their goals in the company of their once-dead companion.

THE OCULUS: WINDOW TO THE SPIRITUAL WORLD

All extollers have an oculus in place of one eye. An orb of spiritually resonant crystal, the oculus allows extollers to see anything made of spiritual essence, including incorporeal spirits, spiritual energy left behind by dying creatures, and the cohesive and tightly structured spirit that some mystics refer to as a soul. This sight transcends barriers and concealment. As an extoller interacts with the spirit world, the oculus glows with a subtle internal light. The glow becomes brighter and more intense when the extoller communes with an ancestor, reaching peak intensity when an exalted spirit speaks through him, as the crystal sympathetically responds to the power of spirits preserved within sacral stones.

Not all spirits are alike in an extoller's vision. Most skorne spirits that separate from their bodies after death have a wispy gossamer appearance that only sometimes coalesces to show a wan, emaciated face. Spirits of more powerful individuals appear brighter and more solid. The spiritual essence of those who possess the Gifted archetype has a subtly different glow than those without, and the greater the individual's arcane power, the brighter the essence. Some rare few extollers have had the unique experience of witnessing more powerful beings such as dragons, whose imperishable athancs shine with a shifting hypnotic energy so bright it is almost blinding.

Oculus

Cost: These items are carefully crafted by the extoller caste and bestowed to new members in the Ritual of the Oculus. They are not available for sale.

Description: An oculus is a specially prepared smooth crystal orb that replaces an extoller's eye. The oculus is attuned to the elusive energies of the spirit and lets the extoller perceive the world of invisible



spirits and supernatural creatures. Through the oculus an extoller can affect and manipulate spiritual energies, even tearing apart the vital essence of living things.

A character with an oculus can see spirits through physical objects such as walls and does not require line of sight to target friendly characters with spells. A character with an oculus ignores line of sight when making magic attacks. A character with an oculus ignores concealment, cover, and stealth when resolving ranged attacks.

A character with an oculus can use it to make devastating ranged attacks. Oculus attacks are RNG 8, AOE —, magical ranged attacks. When making an oculus ranged attack, the character makes the attack roll using his ARC. If the attack hits, the character hit suffers a POW 6 damage roll. When a living character is hit by this attack, add his current STR to the damage roll.

Because acquiring an oculus requires the removal of one eye, a character with an oculus suffers a permanent -1 penalty on non-oculus ranged attack rolls and on sight-based PER rolls.

THE TRIALS OF EXALTATION

Determining who receives exaltation is one of the foremost purposes of the extoller caste. Extollers exist among all but the weakest houses of the Skorne Empire, and many of these are involved in observing and recording the great deeds of the warriors and leaders of the house. There is no precise rubric by which a skorne earns exaltation, and determining who is worthy is a matter of some debate between specific extollers. Still, all extollers strive to maintain standards for exaltation and to preserve only those who truly deserve it. Skorne are chosen for exaltation primarily due to martial prowess and accomplishments in battle, though a few among the lesser castes have earned the privilege through remarkable contributions to skorne society. Extollers keep extensive records of the actions of those around them, weighing their worthiness day by day.

In theory the extollers inhabit a sacred position and they alone can judge who is worthy of exaltation. In practice, they might be subject to pressure from the nobles and leaders of a house they serve, and not all are equally diligent or discerning. Some of the more powerful and respected extollers are able to ignore these pressures, and the highest extollers are extremely difficult to sway. The senior extoller in a house in particular is expected to adhere to proper practices and is held accountable for his choices by the supreme aptimus, who governs the caste as a whole. An extoller's superiors may mete out harsh punishment if he is determined to have improperly executed his function.

So long as they meet their end in battle, nearly all house rulers are preserved and become exalted, though even they must fulfill the minimum requirements expected of any tyrant or dominar, including fidelity to the *hoksune* code. Only extreme circumstances, such as displays of cowardice or complete neglect of his warrior aspect, would cause a house ruler to be denied exaltation. An unworthy house leader is likely to be ousted by his peers and rivals before death, in which case

the extoller is at liberty to let him pass to the Void with little worry of retaliation. There is always the risk that relatives of the former leader might lash out at an extoller, but doing so is against the codes of skorne society and could bring the wrath of the entire extoller caste—a fate even the mightiest skorne would dread.

SACRAL STONES

Sacral stones are carved from an obsidian-like stone plentiful in the lands of the Skorne Empire. This stone is quarried by many houses and shared among members of the extoller caste to be used to preserve spirits saved from the Void. Quarried stones are cut, polished, and subjected to immersion in certain chymicals to facilitate the process of preservation.

Intended as the final home of a spirit, a sacral stone requires thousands of hours to cut and prepare, and not all spiritually sensitive stones are of equal grade. Stones set aside for full exalted are generally of higher grade and greater permanence than those employed for revered companions. The lowest-grade stones are shaped into temporary vessels used only to transfer spirits to their permanent vessel.

Uninhabited sacral stones naturally attract the spirits of freshly slain skorne souls in close proximity. An extoller can block a spirit's access the stone, allowing it to fall away into the Void. Most uninhabited stones are kept safe in the protected vaults of a skorne house to prevent any spirits not specifically chosen by the extollers from reaching them. Others are set within ancestral guardians (see p. 101) to be available on the battlefield to help save some of the fallen.

Sacral stones are considered house treasures and vital resources. They are protected by the house's warriors, exalted guardians, and members of the extoller caste. The highest-grade stones are maintained against the need to preserve the most worthy of a house's leaders and warriors. Such stones are removed only when needed by the house's senior-most extoller. In most cases this involves an elaborate ceremony in which a fallen hero is transferred from a temporary sacral stone to his final resting place at the house's ancestor shrine.

Once joined with a sacral stone a spirit changes in a fundamental way, but this transformation occurs on a continuum. Lower-grade stones used for temporary storage do not transform a spirit so much as contain it for a time. These lesser stones were originally a byproduct of research done by the first extollers, who spent centuries seeking better methods and materials for permanent preservation. Lesser stones are given to extollers on the eve of battle or set into the body of an ancestral guardian. When a spirit is placed in a temporary or lesser sacral stone, however, it only delays the inevitable. With no intervention, in a matter of days or weeks the spirit will slip free and pass on to the Void to be lost forever. Extollers have learned to make use of these temporary stones to ensure they can bring an exalted spirit to a vessel worthy of its stature. The use of temporary stones became a useful expedient, allowing the extollers to save their ancestors without risking the accidental inhabitation of higher grade stones.

In a temporary stone, the spiritual essence is not fully fixed and crystallized but merely contained. While in a temporary sacral stone a spirit remains largely in flux, only loosely anchored, still in a volatile and unstable condition. The spiritual essence cannot be kept like this forever, and will eventually leave these inferior crystals and pass to the Void. The time fluctuates between stones, but a month is the most an extoller can expect from a lesser stone. Just prior to slipping away, the spirit within a lesser stone becomes agitated, a clear sign that it must soon be transferred or be lost forever.

After being moved into a fully empowered and properly prepared sacral stone, it eventually crystallizes, undergoing a permanent transformation as it fuses with the crystal. Depending on the nature of the stone used to fabricate the sacral stone, its hue will deepen either to an impenetrable black or a deep blood red, while also glowing dimly with an internal light if examined closely even by the uninitiated. To the extoller's oculus, a crystallized sacral stone looks very different from an empty one—filled with light and energy, the essence of the spirit preserved within. The most powerful and significant ancestors shine with greater light that fluctuates with complex patterns amid its crystal lattice. Beholding such stones is a pleasure only extollers can understand.

Only an extoller can transfer a spirit from one stone to another, a process that becomes more difficult after it has crystallized. An extoller must carefully extract such a spirit and quickly replace it to a new stone. If an ancestor is particularly ancient, extollers may be reluctant to conduct such a transfer as it risks changing the spirit's mind and making them unreachable. Otherwise the destruction of its sacral stone invariably drives the spirit within insane (see kovaas, p. 136). Once crystallized, a sacral stone becomes supernaturally durable and is inured to damage from simple shocks and blows. Only powerful strikes or arcane force can damage or shape it, and even then the damage dealt is typically minor.



To transfer a loose spirit into a sacral stone, an extoller must have an uninhabited stone and spend a full action guiding the spirit into the vessel, followed by a successful ARC + Lore (extoller) skill roll against a target number of 14. If the roll succeeds, the spirit inhabits the sacral stone. Each attempt takes precious time, and an extoller may only have one or two chances to succeed before the spirit is lost to the Void.

CREATING SACRAL STONES

True sacral stones require 1,000 days of labor to produce, whereas temporary stones require 250 days. Only higher-grade stones are capable of holding a spirit for any period of time. Lesser stones are carved from lower-grade crystals or the fragments left behind from greater stones.

To make a sacral stone, a character with a raw stone and the appropriate tools and chymical baths must spend a day cutting and polishing the stone and make an INT + Craft (stoneworking) skill roll against a target number of 16. If the roll succeeds, the character is one day closer to completing his work. Due to the length of time needed, skilled slaves work at manufacturing sacral stones around the clock.

REVERED COMPANIONS

Revered companions represent a special form of preservation, very similar to exaltation but held in slightly lower regard. This term is reserved for skorne who fall in battle in the presence of an ancestral guardian (p. 101) and whose spirits are drawn into the lesser sacral stones that stud its towering form. It is believed that the ancestor residing in such a guardian is able to discern who is worthy and will reject those it disdains as cowards or inferior warriors.

Skorne saved from the Void by an ancestral guardian but who have not been evaluated as worthy of exaltation by an extoller become revered companions. The status of a revered companion will vary depending on the circumstances of its preservation. If a great warrior dies in battle and becomes fully exalted, revered companions fallen in the same battle will be linked to that exalted as companions. This most often happens when a house tyrant or dominar achieved exaltation; in the tradition of many houses, all revered companions who served the fallen leader are linked to him. Otherwise, those preserved in this way become companions to the ancestor who saved them from the Void. Many of these revered companions will become immortals and receive their own stone forms and blades so they can fight alongside their ancestral guardian. Over the centuries, an ancestor can build a court of companions plucked from dozens of different battlefields. Together the ancestor and

immortals fight beside the living armies of the skorne, with the ancestral guardian silently communicating with his cohort to direct them in battle and welcoming fallen warriors in an undying chain of fealty.

This status of revered companions is not as distinguished as true exalted, but they are still afforded considerable respect by the living. For most ordinary skorne warriors, becoming a revered companion is their only hope against the Void.

KNOW YOUR ANCESTRAL SPIRITS

A spirit crystallized in a sacral stone is referred to as an "ancestral spirit" or "ancestor." (These terms are used even for those spirits who only recently made the transition from the world of the living and therefore are not technically anyone's ancestors.)

Extollers classify ancestral spirits into four loose categories representing their power, age, and influence:

Revered Companions – These are the spirits of lesser individuals preserved upon death in battle, usually by ancestral guardians, and are not considered fully exalted. Revered companions remain associated with a fully exalted ancestor, often the one who saw fit to preserve them from the Void, and will accompany that ancestor as immortals if it goes to battle.

Exalted Ancestors – These revered spirits receive the honor of full exaltation for great deeds performed in life, particularly on the battlefield.

Ancient Exalted – These are fully exalted spirits that have been crystallized for at least five hundred years. They are more difficult to interact with as their minds have begun to change.

Venerable Exalted – These exalted have been crystallized for a thousand years or more. They perceive time differently and may perceive possible futures.

CONVERSING WITH THE DEAD

The spirit held within a sacral stone does not feel the passage of years, but the years do have an effect on the spirit. The longer a spirit exists within a stone, the more separate from the world of the living it becomes. A spirit isolated inside a sacral stone comes to reckon time differently, think more slowly; it becomes cryptic and often belligerent, increasingly less accustomed to mortal communication. The spiritual essence becomes fixed, as in amber, and this is also when the ancestor's mental state changes more radically.

Exalted ancestors are conscious, but they have a different perspective than when they were alive. Their thoughts and memories are preserved, though somewhat diminished. Their personality is frozen, and their interactions with the physical world are mediated through their new state. The longer an ancestor has been preserved, the more alien it becomes. This state of existence also makes it harder for an ancestor to communicate—words and sentences become cryptic, sometimes symbolic, and require interpretation—though they are at their clearest when communicating direct memories from the past.

Gaining meaningful information from the exalted is difficult at best. Interacting with any ancestor requires an extended conversation, spiritual formalities, and ceremony. Ancestral spirits resent contact with the living and require persuasion to engage in a dialogue. Particularly ancient and revered ancestors require additional time and effort; an extoller must develop a relationship over months or even years. Once a rapport is established, the extoller can ask the ancestor questions or petition it for advice or intercession. Even the greatest ancestors are not truly omniscient nor always cooperative. Their aid is not guaranteed, and interpreting their advice can be its own challenge.

Only a character with the Exalted Dialogue ability can speak directly with an ancestral spirit. To establish a connection, the extoller must spend at least one day preparing to make contact with the ancestor. Then he makes an ARC + Lore (extoller) skill roll against a target number based on the table below to determine if the ancestor chooses to communicate with him. The extoller gains a +1 bonus to the roll for each full week of preparation prior to establishing communication.

TARGET NUMBER	ANCESTOR STATUS AND AGE
14	Ancestor was only recently exalted
16	Ancestor has been dead more than 200 years
18	Ancient Exalted, dead more than 500 years
20	Venerable Exalted, dead more than 1,000 years

The following modifiers also apply to the roll:

TARGET NUMBER MODIFIERS	CONDITION
+1	For every additional 100 years the ancestor has been dead past 1,000
–2	Spirit is a revered companion
–2	Character is a direct descendant of the ancestor
–2	Speaking to the ancestor in its preferred tongue

If the skill roll fails, the spirit refuses to speak with the extoller. The extoller can try again, but suffers a cumulative –1 penalty to the roll per attempt if he does not wait at least one week.

If the roll succeeds, the ancestor chooses to respond to the extoller. The spirit is not bound to speak, however, and might end communication at any time or simply ignore a question the extoller asks. In order to keep an ancestral spirit speaking, the extoller must make a Negotiation or Seduction skill roll against a target number equal to the spirit's Willpower + 4 after each minute. If the roll succeeds, the ancestor continues to speak. If the roll fails, the ancestor immediately breaks off communication. The extoller must re-establish contact with the spirit in order to speak with it again.

The existence of an ancestral spirit is not limited by the same crude senses available to mortal flesh. Exalted ancestors do not experience the flow of time as the living do; they are likely to glimpse the potential future as well as the past and to sense events happening at a great distance. These ancestors can offer sage council, steering the destinies of the living away from disaster or toward glory.

At the Game Master's discretion, contact with an Ancient or Venerable Exalted can provide the same type of insight given by the Haruspex spell (see *Iron Kingdoms Unleashed Roleplaying Game: Core Rules*, p. 162).

ANCIENT WISDOM

An extoller can use an ancestral spirit as a Research archive for relevant topics, such as the history of the ancestor's house, the details of battles the ancestor participated in, alliances and rivalries between the houses of its era, and other similar information. An older ancestral spirit may be disinterested in recounting petty events from its corporeal existence and reluctant to do so. Care should be taken when dealing with ancestral spirits, however; these exalted spirits are venerated elders, not a public library at a player character's beck and call.

VESSELS FOR THE ANCESTORS

Sacral stones are sometimes set into bodies, called vessels, carved from stone that is resonant to the energies of ancestral spirits. The stone used for these vessels is usually similar to that employed to create sacral stones, but of lower grade and containing too many impurities for that role. These forms are given life by the power of the spirit within the sacral stone. Without a sacral stone these bodies are inert statues, but once empowered by an ancestor they become animate. Through them the dead ancestors of a house can still interact with the world of living skorne, protect their descendants from their enemies, and make war.

The greatest of these spiritual vessels are the ancestral guardians that watch over the great skorne houses and join them in battle when called. The vast majority of spiritual vessels, however, are simpler and smaller constructs called immortals, crafted to house revered companions.

The spirits directing these stone vessels do not possess physical senses. Instead they detect the currents and movements of spiritual energy around them. In a manner similar to that by which extollers perceive the spiritual world, ancestors are capable of witnessing their environment as an overlapping of the ephemeral realm of spirits and the tangible world of the living. Often these perceptions of the moment are mixed with memories from a spirit's living existence. An ancestor experiences a jumbled world of past, present, and future at once, populated by both the living and the dead. Recently exalted spirits are not as prone to confusion amid this chaos of memory and sense, and therefore negotiate the world in their stone bodies with greater ease.

MATERIALS AND CREATION

From the earliest times, vessels for skorne ancestors have been carved from a stone that is receptive to sacral energies. This black stone is found only in areas of past volcanic activity, such as the volcano Karrak in Tor-Halaak. The stone is fairly plentiful but can be dangerous to handle. When chipped, it can take on an edge as sharp as any blade. While this is a useful trait for constructing the weapons wielded by ancestral guardians, many quarry workers have been fatally cut by the razor-edged pieces.

To manufacture a stone vessel, a character must have access to stoneworking tools and a quarry of resonant stone. Constructing an ancestral guardian takes one year, whereas constructing an immortal vessel is much less complicated and requires only two months. Once the required time has been spent shaping the vessel, the stonemason makes an INT + Craft (stoneworking) skill roll against a target number of 16 to determine if the work was a success. If the roll succeeds, the vessel is fit to house a sacral stone. If the roll fails, the stonemason can spend another week working on the vessel and roll again. A vessel's weapons are created as a part of the manufacturing process, typically carved from the same block of stone.

SACRAL STONES AND SKORNE MAGIC WEAPONS

Sacral stones hold tremendous spiritual power that can be harnessed to empower weapons and armor. Over the centuries, this property has been employed by great houses to create their most treasured relics. Ancestors chosen for such use are those dissociated from reality and unresponsive to becoming ancestral guardians. Only the ruler of a great house and his most esteemed warriors are allowed to bear such items, given that their use in battle risks the potential destruction of these stones.

Mortitheurges and extollers discovered other methods to empower weapons without risking sacral stones directly. With the proper skill and tools an experienced extoller or mortitheurge can cut smaller shards from a sacral stone without harming the ancestor preserved within; only a few shards can be separated from a sacral stone before its integrity is compromised. A connection persists between the core stone and harvested shards, and while extollers cannot communicate with shards, they can be utilized to empower items.

Details on more powerful relics are beyond the scope of this book, and are best reserved as major plot elements in campaigns. Weapons to which a simple sacral stone shard is attached become magical. (See "Magical Weapons," *Iron Kingdoms Unleashed Roleplaying Game: Core Rules*, p. 218.) It is not uncommon for an extoller to wield such a weapon or to loan one to a skorne warlock or tyrant serving his house's interests.

RULES

There are a number of special rules associated with characters inhabiting these vessels.

All skorne vessels are constructs (see *Iron Kingdoms Unleashed Roleplaying Game: Core Rules*, p. 219) and possess the following traits (unless otherwise noted):

- **Magical Structure** – Attacks made by a vessel are considered to have been made by magical weapons.
- **Sacral Stone** – Each vessel is set with a sacral stone. It is the spirit contained within the sacral stone that provides the vessel's animating force. If the stone is removed for any reason, the vessel becomes inert. Destroying a vessel does not necessarily destroy the sacral stone. Most often a sacral stone can be recovered from a destroyed vessel and set into a new vessel. However, if a sacral stone is destroyed, the ancestor's spirit is rendered insane, creating a kovaas (see p. 136).

- **Silent** – Vessels are unable to speak. The spirits of ancestors are generally unwilling to communicate even through simple gestures. In most circumstances only a character with the Exalted Dialogue ability (p. 63) can communicate with a spirit inhabiting a vessel.

Ancestor Abilities: In addition to the above, ancestral spirits gain unique abilities as they age. For every 100 years following the ancestral spirit's death, it gains one trait selected from the following list:

Awe Inspiring

Friendly living characters within this character's command range gain boosted Willpower rolls.

Foresight

The character can reroll Initiative rolls. An Initiative roll can be rerolled only once due to Foresight.

Impelled Companions

When a revered companion of the ancestor begins its turn in the command range of this character, it gains +2" movement that turn.

Life Drinker

When this character destroys a living character with a melee attack, immediately after the attack is resolved this character heals d3 damage points.

Ossify

An incorporeal character hit by this character loses the Incorporeal ability for one round.

Soul Guard

Enemy characters never gain soul tokens for friendly living characters destroyed in this character's command range.

Spirit Vision

The character can tax one soul to use this ability. For one round, this character ignores dim light, darkness, and cloud effects. The character can see the spiritual essence of other living creatures despite natural or supernatural obfuscation or physical barriers.

TAXING SOULS

An ancestral spirit is able to draw upon the spiritual essence of the revered companions housed in its physical body to achieve feats of speed and strength. When an ancestral spirit draws on this power, the soul is not destroyed but is left weakened and incapable of providing the ancestor with aid for a short time. A soul that is taxed cannot communicate or be drawn upon again for 24 hours, after which time its spiritual power returns to full strength.



STATS

A spirit gains physical stats based on the vessel it inhabits. When a spirit is transferred into a vessel, its base PHY, SPD, STR, AGL, PRW, and POI become the same as the vessel's (see "Vessel Descriptions" below). Its INT, PER, and ARC remain the same as the character had at the time of death.

Despite the fact that it is a character, an ancestral spirit cannot gain experience, and a vessel's stats cannot be increased.

DEFENSE

A very recently deceased spirit still retains a strong connection to the world of the living and can perceive the world of the living normally. After a spirit has been in a sacral stone for a few years, its connection to its previous life and the physical world deteriorates. A character that has been exalted for more than 10 years has -1 PER; a character that has been exalted for more than 200 years has -2 PER.

ARMOR

Vessels cannot wear armor. The character's vessel determines his ARM.

DAMAGE AND DESTRUCTION

Unlike living characters, spirits inhabiting vessels do not have vitality points. Instead, they have a number of damage boxes determined by their vessel. Repairing damage to a vessel requires access to a quarry of resonant stone, raw metals, and a stoneworking kit. Repairing a damaged vessel requires a successful Craft (stoneworking) skill roll against a target number of 14. For each day a craftsman labors over a damaged vessel, he can repair an amount of damage equal to his Craft (stoneworking) skill level. If the character has access to a full workshop and/or a ready supply of stone, he can remove an additional d3 damage points each day. A craftsman who is assisted in his repairs by additional characters with the Craft (stoneworking) skill can remove one additional damage point for each character assisting him.

VESSEL CRITICAL DAMAGE TABLE

When a character's vessel suffers 5 or more damage points as result of a single damage roll, a roll must be made on the following table to determine if any critical component is damaged. If a vessel suffers the same result it suffered on a previous roll and the damage effect has not yet been repaired, it suffers no additional damage.

D6 RESULT	CRITICAL DAMAGE EFFECT
1–2	No additional effect – The vessel suffers no additional effect.
3	Arm Fracture – One of the character's arms has been damaged. Randomize which arm is damaged. Until the critical damage is repaired, the vessel suffers -3 to attack rolls made with the damaged arm.
4	Fissure – The main body of the vessel has been damaged. Until the critical damage is repaired, the vessel suffers -1 STR and ARM.
5	Leg Fracture – One of the character's legs has been damaged. Until the critical damage is repaired, the vessel suffers -1 SPD and DEF and cannot run or charge.
6	Cracked Sacral Stone – The sacral stone containing the spirit of the exalted is cracked, weakening the spirit's power. Until the sacral stone is repaired or the spirit is transferred to a new stone, character suffers -1 PER, INT, and Willpower. If a critically damaged sacral stone suffers this effect a second time, it is destroyed and the ancestral spirit is transformed into a kovaas (see p. 136).

FETCH ME A NEW BODY!

Because of the reverence the skorne have for their exalted ancestors and the relative ease with which sacral stones can be transferred from vessel to vessel, many skorne houses do not go to the effort of repairing damaged vessels, seeing it as a slight against the ancestor. Instead, they simply have a new vessel constructed. The ancestral guardians and immortals fighting alongside the Army of the Western Reaches do not always have the luxury of such replacements, however, requiring skilled stoneworkers to repair the bodies they already inhabit.

Repairing critical damage to a vessel or sacral stone requires twenty hours of labor with the proper tools, access to raw materials, and a successful INT + Craft (stoneworking) skill roll against a target number of 16. If the roll fails, the character can attempt it again after another three hours of labor. A successful repair removes the effects of one critical damage roll.

A sacral stone can be repaired this way only once; if damaged again, it must be replaced. Replacing a sacral stone is a complicated process that must be overseen by an extoller. The stone must first be removed, which requires one day of labor and the proper tools followed by a successful INT + Craft (metalworking) skill roll against a target number of 13 to safely extract the stone from its setting. Once the sacral stone is extracted the extoller can attempt transfer the spirit within to a new stone by making an ARC + Lore (extoller) roll against

a target number of 18. If the roll succeeds, the transfer is successful. If the roll fails, the ancestral spirit is driven mad and transforms into a kovaas (p. 136).

DESTROYING A VESSEL

When a vessel loses its last damage box, it is destroyed. The vessel's sacral stone and the spirit within can be recovered, however, as long as the sacral stone was not also destroyed.

VESSEL DESCRIPTIONS

The following vessels are commonly used to house the sacral stones of ancestral spirits.

ANCESTRAL GUARDIAN

PHYSIQUE	PHY	12
SPEED	SPD	4
STRENGTH	STR	8
AGILITY	AGL	1
PROWESS	PRW	5
POISE	POI	1
ARMOR	ARM	18

Abilities:

Sacral Stones – This character has a number of uninhabited sacral stones set into its body, each of which can house a single skorne spirit. Most ancestral guardians have six or more sacral stones that can be removed and replaced as they collect spirits. Souls in these stones may be destined to become this character's revered companions.

Stone Vessel – This character has the Magical Structure, Sacral Stone, and Silent rules.

Soul Guardian – If this character has an empty sacral stone, it can gain one soul for each living skorne character who dies in its command range. This is voluntary, and the character can choose not to gain a soul. During its activation, this character can draw upon the power of the spirit to gain additional attacks or to boost attack or damage rolls at one soul per attack or boost. Drawing on this energy leaves the spirit taxed, and that soul cannot be used again in this manner for 24 hours. This character can communicate with and gain information from a soul housed in one of its sacral stones at any time.

Spirit Driven – At the beginning of this character's turn, it can draw on a spirit to gain +2" movement this turn. A spirit is taxed after being used in this fashion.

VITALITY: 20

BASE SIZE: MEDIUM

The hulking stone bodies of ancestral guardians are reserved for chosen warriors who died in battle, and the deathless spirits preserved in this way retain a keen awareness of the living world. These tireless sentries often guard over a house's store of sacral stones and the spirits of notable ancestors within them. Some watch over other treasures or lore of the house, such as the occult libraries or significant ancient records. The more warlike may demand to join their house's warriors into battle, refusing to communicate unless allowed to take up their weapons and fight alongside the living.

In addition to the vessel's inhabiting sacral stone, ancestral guardians are usually set with several lesser sacral stones for the purpose of collecting the spirits of skorne who fall in battle. The ancestor determines which spirits deserve preservation, and those warriors gain honor in death and become

revered companions of the exalted. Some may be transferred into the bodies of immortals to join the ancestor in battle; the ancestor communicates which among its collected spirits are worthy of this honor.

An ancestor can tap into the essence of skorne preserved in the lesser stones dotting its frame to empower it in battle for greater speed and strength. Doing so does not consume the spirit but does leave it taxed for a short time.



PLAYING AN ANCESTRAL GUARDIAN

Playing as an ancestral guardian can be limiting, since most interaction with other characters must be done through dialogue with an extoller. Ancestors are often more suitable as NPCs under the Game Master's control. Still, some players are up to the challenge of playing these stalwart unliving stone statues.

If the player of an exalted character chooses to continue as one of these characters, the Game Master may consider granting him access to the Signal Language ability whether or not his character possess the prerequisites. The Game Master might also consider allowing an ongoing communion between a player extoller and the ancestral guardian so they can communicate without the ordinary formalities. Such arrangements are common in circumstances where an extoller is in extended contact with specific ancestral guardians, such as on the battlefield.



Ancestral Guardian Stone Weapon

Cost: This weapon is never available for sale.

Skill: Great Weapon

Attack Modifier: 0

POW: 7

Description: Ancestral guardians are generally armed with heavy stone weapons crafted from a single block of any stone able to channel sacral energy and conduct the power of the spirit. These weapons are manufactured to echo the armaments the ancestor carried in life and can take many different forms, including enormous great swords, halberds, and spears.

Special Rules: A character must have at least STR 8 to use this weapon and can only use this weapon two-handed. Only a character with the proportions of an ancestral guardian can wield this weapon.

Ancestral Guardian stone weapons have reach. At the Game Master's discretion, particularly large or heavy weapons may have +1 or +2 POW.

A character other than an ancestral guardian using this weapon suffers -3 to its attack rolls.

IMMORTAL

The revered companions, or immortals, that accompany an exalted ancestor into battle generally inhabit simpler stone vessels. These vessels can be manufactured far faster than those intended to host the truly exalted and are often crude in comparison.

Immortals are commonly equipped with stone great swords.

PHYSIQUE	PHY	11
SPEED	SPD	4
STRENGTH	STR	7
AGILITY	AGL	2
PROWESS	PRW	4
POISE	POI	1
ARMOR	ARM	17

Revered Companion – This character is a revered companion of an ancestor.

Stone Vessel – This character has the Magical Structure, Sacral Stone, and Silent rules.

VITALITY: 18

BASE SIZE: SMALL

Stone Great Sword

Cost: This weapon is never available for sale.

Skill: Great Weapon

Attack Modifier: 0

POW: 6

Description: A stone great sword is the common weapon of immortals. It is crafted from a single block of magically resonant stone that conducts the power of the revered companion inhabiting the immortal.

Special Rules: A character must have at least STR 7 to use this weapon two-handed. A character with at least STR 8 can use this weapon with one hand.

Stone great swords have Reach.

A character other than a stone vessel using this weapon suffers -2 to its attack rolls.

SKORNE WARBEASTS

The Skorne Empire relies upon a wide array of fearsome beasts in battle, drawn primarily from the wastelands of eastern Immoren. These monstrous creatures are extensively conditioned by the paingivers to forge a spiritual link that skorne warlocks can exploit. This conditioning is the most fundamental difference between warbeasts used by the skorne and those used by their western enemies. In many cases skorne warbeasts are formerly wild animals enslaved to the will of their masters through mortitheurgy, transformed by the expertise of beast handlers into living extensions of the warlock's will.

THE MAKING OF A SKORNE WARBEAST

To prepare a beast for obedience to a skorne warlock, the beast handlers must first alter its body and break its spirit. This is done with a combination of pain infliction, stress induction, and surgical modification, facilitated by potent drugs that keep the creature tractable and aware during the conditioning. The beast handlers' knowledge of anatomy is instrumental in this conditioning process; the tremendously dangerous beasts of the skorne armies could not be mastered without it.

Specialists among the beast handlers direct the modification and training of each species, tailoring the conditioning to the creature's anatomy, capabilities, and temperament. For example, the aggressive cyclopes do not require pain-barbs to encourage them to combat, but metal pins are inserted into specific regions of their brains. This and other chirurgical alterations augment the cyclopes' supernatural vision, and they are also trained to bear heavy armor and wield a variety of weapons. Others, such as the basilisk kreas, are more extensively modified to control the destructive powers they can generate and unleash. Female and male basilisks are employed differently in battle and require specific and different procedures.

A prime example of the versatile arts of the beast handlers is their success with the huge beasts known as titans. Reasonably intelligent for a herd animal, titans are docile in the wild yet possessed of physical strength equaled by few living beasts. Girded in thick metal plates and armed with an array of enormous weapons, a titan conditioned for war is a match for anything the skorne might encounter on the battlefield. The proper application of selective pain serves to goad them into unrivaled ferocity and has made them a premier warbeast of the Skorne Empire. The beast handlers have been able to shape titans into a diverse array of useful warbeasts, each employing different techniques and handling.

Yet the most impressive achievements of the beast handlers are evinced in the securing and training of the enormous desert hydras and mammoths. These beasts require a commitment in resources—and lives—only the greatest houses could attempt. The opportunity to mold a hydra or mammoth into a weapon for his tyrant is a lifetime goal of many beast handlers.

Although many warbeasts are taken directly from the wild, the skorne also maintain a number of breeding programs overseen

by experienced beast handlers. Establishing these breeding farms is a high priority in areas like the Bloodstone Marches in the west, where the skorne military does not have access to traditional sources. Warbeasts such as titans and rhinodons are bred for size, stamina, and aggression, and these traits are further enhanced by the paingivers' conditioning regimen. Even where beasts can be bred, periodic infusions of wild specimens are required to maintain the health of breeding stock, and there is always a need for beast handlers to secure them.



ANATOMICAL MODIFICATION

As outlined in each creature's profile, skorne warbeasts require surgical procedures to become open to a warlock's bond. These anatomical modifications are extensive and can be debilitating or deadly. The procedures often require invasive operations that cut deep into a creature's flesh, chymical or surgical alteration of muscles and glands, and even brain surgery.

Upon completion of its physical modifications, a warbeast cannot be conditioned until it has fully recovered from procedures, as outlined in its anatomical modification rules. Once a creature has recovered, the beast handler begins the process of breaking its spirit and readying it for the bond.

CONDITIONING

Unlike western warlocks, the skorne have no natural resonance with the creatures they use as warbeasts. Instead the paingivers must condition creatures for this role. Once a beast is anatomically modified and appropriately conditioned, it gains the Resonance: Skorne ability along with the other abilities granted by its profile. A creature with this resonance can be bonded and functions according to the rules in *Iron Kingdoms Unleashed Roleplaying Game: Core Rules*.

During the entire process of conditioning, including anatomical modification and subsequent recovery, a beast handler uses 10 sl worth of chymical solutions, medical supplies, and similar material for each day spent conditioning the warbeast.

Some warbeasts must be captured in the wild and others may be raised in captivity, as indicated in the conditioning descriptions.

CONDITIONING OTHER BEASTS

The warbeasts presented here represent a selection of creatures for which the skorne beast handlers have developed successful conditioning methods. Many are the product of generations of careful study and experimentation. In theory, skorne beast handlers could develop methods of conditioning all manner of other beasts to serve the will of their warlocks, but such efforts would require the dedication of vast amounts of time and effort.

SKORNE WARBEAST PROFILES

ARADUS (P. 122)

Harvested by slaves while still in the egg, aradus provide the skorne with a terrifying warbeast able to shrug off even heavy fire. Mighty and durable but slow, aradus plod forward goaded by the barbs of paingiver's whips. Their minds are primitive and slow to respond to traditional training, so skorne chymists have developed special chymical agents to increase the creature's responsiveness to pain hooks and the lash.

ARADUS SOLDIER

Description: Aradus soldiers are conditioned from the egg, and their natural predatory instincts serve them well as warbeasts. Once armor is laid atop its thick chitin, few attacks have a chance of seriously wounding this beast.

Anatomical Modification: Preparing an aradus egg requires a dose of jevisha (p. 84), one hour of labor, and a successful INT + Chymistry roll against a target number of 14. If the roll fails, the egg is destroyed. If the roll succeeds, the aradus matures in three months.

Anatomically modifying an aradus prior to conditioning requires the proper tools, thirty hours of labor, and a successful INT + Medicine roll against a target number of 16. If the roll fails, the aradus is incapacitated and suffers a roll on the Injury Table. The roll can be attempted again once the aradus is no longer incapacitated, but the recovery time for the procedure is doubled.

An aradus recovers fully from initial surgery after eight weeks. Once it recovers, the conditioning process can begin.

Conditioning Requirements: To condition a wild or captive aradus soldier, a beast handler must have Animal Handling 2 and Medicine 2.

Conditioning: Conditioning a wild or captive-bred aradus soldier hatchling requires the beast's handler to spend five weeks breaking its spirit. At the end of this time, the beast handler makes an INT + Animal Handling roll against a target number of 15. If the roll fails, the beast handler can spend another two weeks conditioning the beast and then roll again. If the roll succeeds, the creature's warbeast training is complete, and it gains the Armor Trained and Resonance: Skorne abilities:

Armor Trained – The warbeast can wear armor without suffering additional penalties for wearing armor untrained.

Resonance: Skorne – This creature can be bonded only by a warlock with Resonance: Skorne Warbeast.

Bonding: Only a warlock with the Resonance: Skorne Warbeast ability can bond to an aradus soldier. Once bonded for the first time, the aradus soldier gains FURY 4, THR 9, and its animus.

Animus: Upon bonding, an aradus soldier gains the following animus:

	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
HEIGHTENED METABOLISM	2	6	—	—	NO	NO
Target friendly warbeast gains Snacking. Heightened Metabolism lasts for one turn. (When a character with Snacking destroys a living character with a melee attack, the character with Snacking can heal d3 damage points.)						

Gear: Skorne warlocks typically equip their aradus soldiers with medium armor for battle.

BASILISKS (P. 124)

Taming basilisks has always been a costly proposition that results in the gruesome deaths of many beast handlers, but there was never any doubt the skorne would find a way to turn them into weapons. Captured young and properly trained, basilisks are receptive to commands and can be handled with reasonable predictability. Paingivers attach hooks to the mouths of these temperamental creatures in order to control and direct them while outside of a warlock's influence.

Handlers have discovered that basilisk females fight with even greater ferocity in the presence of a drake, so the two are often fielded together on the battlefield to increase their effectiveness. Female and male basilisks are employed differently in battle and require specific procedures to augment and control their powers.

BASILISK DRAKE

Description: The power of the basilisk drake's gaze makes it a potent and desirable weapon. Drakes are conditioned from an early age to harness this power and keep the creature under control. Paingiver beast handlers take great precautions in the early stages of conditioning and are able to limit the number of deadly accidents.

Anatomical Modification: Anatomically modifying a basilisk drake prior to conditioning requires the proper tools, two hours of labor, and a successful INT + Medicine roll against a target number of 13. If the roll fails, the basilisk drake is incapacitated and suffers a roll on the Injury Table. The roll can be attempted again once the basilisk drake is no longer incapacitated, but the recovery time for the procedure is doubled.

A basilisk drake recovers fully from initial surgery after one week. Once it recovers, the conditioning process can begin.

Conditioning Requirements: To condition a basilisk drake, a beast handler must have Animal Handling 1 and Medicine 1.

Conditioning: Conditioning a wild or captive-bred drake requires the beast's handler to spend four weeks breaking the beast's spirit. At the end of this time the beast handler makes an INT + Animal Handling roll against a target number of 14. If the roll fails, the beast handler can spend another two weeks training the beast and then roll again. If the roll succeeds, the creature's conditioning is complete, and it gains the Armor Trained and Resonance: Skorne abilities:

Armor Trained – The warbeast can wear armor without suffering additional penalties for wearing armor untrained.

Resonance: Skorne – This creature can be bonded only by a warlock with Resonance: Skorne Warbeast.

Bonding: Only a warlock with the Resonance: Skorne Warbeast ability can bond to a basilisk drake. Once bonded for the first time, the drake gains FURY 3, THR 8, and its animus.

Animus: Upon bonding, a basilisk drake gains the following animus:

	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
WRAITHBANE	2	6	—	—	NO	NO
Target friendly character's weapons become magical weapons and gain Blessed. Wraithbane lasts for one turn. (When making an attack with a weapon with Blessed, ignore spell effects that add to a target's ARM or DEF.)						

Gear: Skorne warlocks typically equip their basilisk drakes with barbed harnesses and light armor for battle.

BASILISK KREA

Description: Unleashing the full potential of basilisk kreas was a triumph of the beast handlers, for these creatures are capable of mystical feats beyond those of their male counterparts. Skorne chirurgeons sew shut each krea's eyes to focus her power, heightening the ability of her other senses to detect her surroundings. A blinded krea goaded to rage builds to a critical threshold of energy radiating from her body. This aura is different from the blast that once poured from her eyes, sapping the strength of enemies and slowing their movements as if they were trapped in a thick fluid. This aura is also defensive in nature, as the slowing effect halts projectiles.

Anatomical Modification: Anatomically modifying a basilisk krea prior to conditioning requires the proper tools, twelve hours of labor, and a successful INT + Medicine roll against a target number of 15. During this time the krea's eyes are removed and the sockets sewn shut.

If the roll fails, the basilisk krea is incapacitated and suffers a roll on the Injury Table. The roll can be attempted again once the krea is no longer incapacitated, but the recovery time for the procedure is doubled.

A basilisk krea recovers fully from initial surgery after twelve weeks. Once it recovers, the conditioning process can begin.

This procedure is only effective when performed on female basilisks.

Conditioning Requirements: To condition a basilisk krea, a beast handler must have Animal Handling 1 and Medicine 2.

Conditioning: Conditioning a wild or captive-bred krea requires the beast's handler to sew the creature's eyes shut and spend five weeks breaking the beast's spirit. At the end of this time the beast handler makes an INT + Animal Handling roll against a target number of 15. If the roll fails, the beast handler

can spend another two weeks training the beast and then roll again. If the roll succeeds, the creature's warbeast training is complete. It gains the Spiritual Paralysis natural weapon (see callout), and the Armor Trained, Eyeless Sight, Flank [Basilisk Drake], and Resonance: Skorne abilities:

Armor Trained – The warbeast can wear armor without suffering additional penalties for wearing armor untrained.

Eyeless Sight – This creature ignores cloud effects and forests when determining line of sight. This creature ignores concealment and stealth when making attacks.

Flank [Basilisk Drake] – When this creature makes a melee attack against an enemy within the melee range of a friendly creature of the type indicated, this creature gains +2 to attack rolls and gains an additional damage die.

Resonance: Skorne – This creature can be bonded only by a warlock with Resonance: Skorne Warbeast.

Bonding: Only a warlock with the Resonance: Skorne Warbeast ability can bond to a basilisk krea. Once bonded for the first time, the krea gains FURY 3, THR 9, and its animus.

Animus: Upon bonding, a basilisk krea gains the following animus:

	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
PARALYTIC AURA	2	SELF	—	—	NO	NO
This character gains +2 DEF and ARM against ranged attacks. While within 2" of this character, friendly characters gain +2 DEF and ARM against ranged attacks and enemy models suffer –2 DEF. Paralytic Aura lasts for one round.						

Gear: Skorne warlocks typically equip their basilisk kreas with light armor for battle.



SPIRITUAL PARALYSIS

Replace the basilisk krea's Withering Gaze natural weapon with the following natural weapon.



SPIRITUAL PARALYSIS				
RAT	RNG	AOE	POW	
4	8	—	—	

Abilities: Paralysis – A living character hit by this weapon has its DEF reduced to 7 and cannot run, charge, or make slam or trample power attacks. Paralysis lasts for one round.

CYCLOPES (P. 126)

Among the beasts brought to war from eastern Immoren, the skorne rely upon the cyclops in the greatest number and diversity. The savage tribal cyclops can learn to wield diverse weapons to fill critical battlefield roles. A vital part of their conditioning is selective chirurgery that modifies a cyclops' brain, allowing it to better harness its natural abilities. Cyclopes are selected to fill particular roles based on their natural talents and disposition.

CYCLOPS BRUTE

Description: Cyclops brutes are adept at holding the flanks or standing vigil over their tyrant masters. Their crude but undeniable cunning makes them particularly responsive to training, and they become singularly tenacious and difficult to overcome once outfitted with wide shields and encased in skorne-forged armor. Armed with a heavy pole arm and taught to fight with shields interposed, brutes can protect themselves from all but the most fearsome blows and then retaliate in kind.

Anatomical Modification: Anatomically modifying a cyclops prior to conditioning requires the proper tools, twelve hours of labor, and a successful INT + Medicine roll against a target number of 15. If the roll fails, the cyclops becomes INT 0, cannot become a warbeast, and is relegated to service as a beast of burden.

After performing the surgery, a character can harvest d3 units of cyclops brain tissue.

A cyclops recovers fully from initial surgery after 24 weeks. Once it recovers, the conditioning process can begin.

Conditioning Requirements: To condition a cyclops brute, a beast handler must have Animal Handling 1, Great Weapon 1, Medicine 2, halberd, and heavy shield.

Conditioning: Conditioning a wild or captive-bred cyclops brute requires a beast handler to spend eight weeks breaking its spirit. At the end of this time, the beast

handler makes an INT + Animal Handling skill roll against a target number of 15. If the roll fails, the beast handler can spend another four weeks training the beast and then roll again. If the roll succeeds, the creature's warbeast training is complete. It gains the Armor Trained, Intuition, Resonance: Skorne, Shield Guard, and Weapon Trained (melee) abilities:

Armor Trained – The warbeast can wear armor without suffering additional penalties for wearing armor untrained.

Intuition – When an enemy targets this creature with an attack and the attack roll results in a hit, you can immediately force this creature to cause the enemy to reroll the attack roll.

Resonance: Skorne – This creature can be bonded only by a warlock with Resonance: Skorne Warbeast.

Shield Guard – Once per turn, when a friendly character is directly hit by an attack while within 2" of this creature, this creature can choose to be directly hit instead. This creature cannot use Shield Guard if it is incorporeal, knocked down, prone, or stationary.

Weapon Trained (melee) – This creature is trained to use melee weapons.

Along with cyclops savages (p. 108), brutes are among the most common types of cyclops warbeasts. Cyclopes with the potential can be trained as raiders instead (below).

Bonding: Only a warlock with the Resonance: Skorne Warbeast ability can bond to a cyclops. Once bonded for the first time, a cyclops gains FURY 3, THR 9, and its animus.

Animus: Upon bonding, a cyclops brute gains the following animus:

	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
SAFEGUARD	2	6	—	—	NO	NO

Target friendly character cannot be knocked down. When it is slammed, reduce the slam distance rolled by 3. Safeguard lasts for one round.

Gear: Skorne warlocks typically equip their cyclops brutes with light armor, heavy shield, and halberd for battle.

CYCLOPS RAIDER

Description: Raiders are outfitted with heavy reivers as heavy support to skorne cohorts. Most raiders are raised among captive cyclops populations. Their training in the use of their weapons is augmented by surgeries that enhance their natural prescient abilities. These modifications lend the creatures an uncanny capability for anticipating distance and movement, which entirely compensates for their lack of binocular vision. A raider's awareness of the imminent future is so great it can train its weapon on even hidden targets and annihilate them in a burst of fire.

Anatomical Modification: Anatomically modifying a cyclops prior to conditioning requires the proper tools, twelve hours



of labor, and a successful INT + Medicine roll against a target number of 15. If the roll fails, the cyclops becomes INT 0, suffers -2 PER, cannot become a warbeast, and is relegated to service as a beast of burden.

After performing the surgery, a character can harvest d3 units of cyclops brain tissue.

A cyclops recovers fully from initial surgery after 24 weeks. Once it recovers, the conditioning process can begin.

Conditioning Requirements: Animal Handling 1, Medicine 2, Reiver 1, and heavy reiver.

Conditioning: The initial training to determine whether a cyclops is capable of becoming a raider requires the beast's handler to spend two weeks breaking its spirit. At the end of this time, the beast handler makes an INT + Animal Handling skill roll against a target number of 14. If the roll fails, the creature cannot become a raider but can still be trained as a brute. If the roll succeeds, the beast's conditioning as a raider can begin in earnest.

After an additional eight weeks of training, the beast handler makes an INT + Animal Handling skill roll against a target number of 16. If the roll fails, the beast handler can spend another four weeks training the beast and then roll again. If the roll succeeds, the creature's warbeast training is complete. It gains the Arcane Precision, Armor Trained, Resonance: Skorne, and Weapon Trained (ranged) abilities:

Arcane Precision – If this creature forfeits its movement during its activation to gain the aiming bonus, it ignores stealth that activation.

Armor Trained – The warbeast can wear armor without suffering additional penalties for wearing armor untrained.

Resonance: Skorne – This creature can be bonded only by a warlock with Resonance: Skorne Warbeast.

Weapon Trained (ranged) – This creature is trained to use ranged weapons.

Bonding: Only a warlock with the Resonance: Skorne Warbeast ability can bond to a cyclops. Once bonded for the first time, a cyclops gains FURY 3, THR 9, and its animus.

Animus: Upon completing its training, a raider gains the following animus:

	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
FAR STRIKE	2	6	—	—	NO	NO
Target friendly character's ranged weapons gain Snipe. Far Strike lasts for one turn. (An attack with a Snipe weapon gains +4 RNG.)						

Gear: Skorne warlocks typically equip their cyclops raiders with light armor and a heavy reiver for battle.

CYCLOPS SAVAGE

Description: Captured as youths, cyclops savages are trained and conditioned to obey orders without hesitation. Unlike some

beasts, they do not require much encouragement to kill; they are bloodthirsty and welcome any excuse to fight. They are so prone to violence that skorne paingivers sedate them with narcotics between battles. Experienced beast handlers move cautiously among cyclops savages, as the creatures can kill with a single blow.

Anatomical Modification: Anatomically modifying cyclops prior to conditioning requires the proper tools, twelve hours of labor, and a successful INT + Medicine roll against a target number of 15. If the roll fails, the cyclops becomes INT 0, cannot become a warbeast, and is relegated to service as a beast of burden.

After performing the surgery, a character can harvest d3 units of cyclops brain tissue.

A cyclops recovers fully from initial surgery after 24 weeks. Once it recovers, the conditioning process can begin.

Conditioning Requirements: Animal Handling 1, Medicine 2, Great Weapon 1, and falchion.

Conditioning: The initial training to determine whether a cyclops is capable of becoming a savage requires the beast's handler to spend two weeks breaking its spirit. At the end of this time, the beast handler makes an INT + Animal Handling skill roll against a target number of 14. If the roll fails, the warbeast cannot become a savage but can still be trained as a brute. If the roll succeeds, the beast's training as a savage can begin in earnest.

After an additional eight weeks of training, the beast handler makes an INT + Animal Handling skill roll against a target number of 16. If the roll fails, the beast handler can spend another four weeks training the beast and then roll again. If the roll succeeds, the creature's warbeast training is complete. It gains the Armor Trained, Future Sight, Resonance: Skorne, and Weapon Trained (melee) abilities:

Armor Trained – The warbeast can wear armor without suffering additional penalties for wearing armor untrained.

Future Sight – This creature can boost attack and damage rolls after rolling.

Resonance: Skorne – This creature can be bonded only by a warlock with Resonance: Skorne Warbeast.

Weapon Trained (melee) – The creature is trained to use melee weapons.

Bonding: Only a warlock with the Resonance: Skorne Warbeast ability can bond to a cyclops. Once bonded for the first time, a cyclops gains FURY 3, THR 9, and its animus.

Animus: Upon bonding, a savage gains the following animus:

	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
PRESCIENCE	1	6	—	—	NO	NO
Target friendly character gains Future Sight. Prescience lasts for one turn.						

Gear: Skorne warlocks typically equip their cyclops savages with a falchion and light armor for battle.

GARGANTUAN RISK, GARGANTUAN REWARDS

The Desert Hydra and Mammoth are huge-based warbeasts known as gargantuans. Gargantuans are the mightiest and most powerful beasts in the skorne arsenal and are not commonly available. Beast handlers must work in teams day and night to keep these massive beasts under control, and breaking one to the will of a warlock is often the pinnacle of a beast handler's career. Bringing these gigantic creatures from the skorne homelands across the expanse is a challenge. Keeping them under control when supplies are unavailable requires the concerted effort of teams of beast handlers.

These creatures are generally found only in the hands of the most influential, wealthiest houses in the Skorne Empire. If they are included in a campaign, it should be a momentous occasion. Gargantuans represent huge investments of time and resources. They are wielded in battle as living siege engines against the mightiest defenses or enemy armies.

In addition to the normal rules for huge-based characters (p. 119), gargantuans can make two special power attacks in addition to normal power attacks: power strike and sweep.

Power Strike: A gargantuan making a power strike power attack uses the force of its tremendous melee power to send a smaller-based character flying. A gargantuan must have at least one Open Fist to make a power strike power attack. Its target must be in the Open Fist's field of fire and have a smaller base than the gargantuan.

The gargantuan makes a melee attack against the target. If the attack hits, the target is slammed $d6 + 2$ " directly away from the gargantuan. The POW of the slam damage roll and the POW of collateral damage rolls resulting from the slam are equal to the STR of the gargantuan.

Sweep: A gargantuan can use its arms to scythe through characters within its reach. A gargantuan must have at least one melee weapon in its left or right field of fire to make a sweep power attack. The gargantuan makes one melee attack with the weapon against each character in the weapon's field of fire and within its 2" melee range. Characters hit suffer a damage roll with a POW equal to the gargantuan's STR.

DESERT HYDRA (P. 128)

Description: Clad in layers of heavy armor, the many-headed desert hydra is capable of terrifying an army of defenders into submission long before traditional methods would force surrender. One of the greatest predators of the Valley of Kornash, a desert hydra's ability to spray multiple goutts of acid and snap up men whole make it a singularly horrifying and capable warbeast. Keeping a desert hydra in captivity without breaking it to a warlock's will first is nearly unthinkable, so the creatures are captured wild and tamed in the desert, often by a team of the most skilled paingivers available.

Anatomical Modification: Anatomically modifying a desert hydra prior to conditioning requires the proper tools, sixty hours of labor, and a successful INT + Medicine roll against a target number of 18. If the roll fails, the desert hydra is incapacitated and suffers a roll on the Injury Table. The roll can be attempted again once the desert hydra is no longer incapacitated, but the recovery time for the procedure is doubled.

A desert hydra recovers fully from initial surgery after thirty weeks. Once it recovers, the conditioning process can begin.

Conditioning Requirements: To condition a desert hydra, a beast handler must have Animal Handling 3 and Medicine 2.

Conditioning: Conditioning a wild desert hydra requires the beast's handler to spend 24 weeks breaking the beast's spirit. At the end of this time the beast handler makes an INT + Animal Handling roll against a target number of 18. If the roll fails, the beast handler can spend another two weeks training the beast and then roll again. If the roll succeeds, the creature's warbeast training is complete, and it gains the Armor Trained and Resonance: Skorne abilities:

Armor Trained – The warbeast can wear armor without suffering additional penalties for wearing armor untrained.

Resonance: Skorne – This creature can be bonded only by a warlock with Resonance: Skorne Warbeast.

Bonding: Only a warlock with the Resonance: Skorne Warbeast ability can bond to a desert hydra. Once bonded for the first time, the desert hydra gains FURY 4, THR 8, and its animus.

Animus: Upon bonding, a desert hydra gains the following animus:

	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
SAND STORM	2	SELF	*	—	NO	NO

While in this character's command range, enemy characters cannot make ranged attacks. Sand Storm lasts for one round.

Gear: Skorne warlocks typically equip their desert hydras with heavy warbeast armor for battle.

MAMMOTH (P. 138)

Description: Mammoths have been known to the skorne for more than a dozen generations, but the risks and expense of capturing and housing them have kept them out of reach of all but the most powerful houses. Besides the staggering cost of feed, there is the price paid in the structural damage they regularly inflict and in slain handlers. Mammoths are almost impossible to breed in captivity, so they must be seized in the wild and transported across hundreds of miles. In order to restrain them, teams of beast handlers add powerful soporifics to their feed and insert harnesses for pain hooks and controlling blades into the drugged beasts' hides. When even these precautions fail, as they often do, the mammoths may awaken prematurely, erupting into a frenzy to decimate all nearby. Still, the terror a mammoth instills in the enemy makes the efforts worthwhile to those who can afford it. Armed and armored, mammoths are capable of wreaking unparalleled destruction.

Anatomical Modification: Anatomically modifying a mammoth prior to conditioning requires the proper tools, thirty hours of labor, and a successful INT + Medicine roll against a target number of 17. If the roll fails, the mammoth is incapacitated and suffers a roll on the Injury Table. The roll can be attempted again once the mammoth is no longer incapacitated, but the recovery time for the procedure is doubled.

A mammoth recovers fully from initial surgery after twenty weeks. Once it recovers, the conditioning process can begin.

Conditioning Requirements: To condition a mammoth, a beast handler must have Animal Handling 3 and Medicine 2.

Conditioning: Conditioning a wild mammoth requires the beast's handler to spend 36 weeks breaking the beast's spirit. At the end of this time the beast handler makes an INT + Animal Handling roll against a target number of 17. If the roll fails, the beast handler can spend another two weeks training the beast and then roll again. If the roll succeeds, the creature's warbeast training is complete, and it gains the Armor Trained, Assault, Resonance: Skorne, and Weapon Trained (melee and ranged) abilities:

Armor Trained – The warbeast can wear armor without suffering additional penalties for wearing armor untrained.

Assault – As part of a charge, after moving but before making its charge attack, this creature can make one ranged attack targeting the character charged unless they were in melee with each other at the start of this creature's activation. When resolving an Assault ranged attack, the attacker does not suffer the target in melee penalty. If the target is not in melee range after moving, this creature must still make the Assault ranged attack before its activation ends.

Resonance: Skorne – This creature can be bonded only by a warlock with Resonance: Skorne Warbeast.

Weapon Trained (melee and ranged) – The warbeast has been trained to use melee and ranged weapons.

SIEGE BATTERY AND HARNESS

Cost: 400 sl

Type: Ranged

Ammo: 16

Effective Range: 60 feet (10")

Extreme Range: 300 feet

Attack Modifier: 0

POW: 15

AOE: 4

Description: This weapon system—a massive multi-barreled, self-reloading set of cannons powered by explosive hokar charges—was engineered exclusively for use by the mammoths and showcases an unprecedented level of sophistication in skorne armament. A heavy-duty harness affixed directly to the mammoth's armor keeps the siege battery in place even as its bearer engages in fierce melee combat.

Special Rules: This weapon can be used only by a mammoth trained in its operation. Equipping or removing the siege battery and harness outside of combat take an hour and can be accomplished by at least ten characters with STR 6 or higher.

A mammoth can be forced to fire this weapon up to two additional times.

At the rear of the siege battery are four gravity-fed ammo hoppers, one for each barrel, that hold four rounds each. Replenishing an ammo hopper requires five minutes each. This task cannot be performed in combat.

The siege battery fires heavy artillery shells powered by 2 units of hokar explosive. These rounds cost 25 sl each.

Bonding: Only a warlock with the Resonance: Skorne Warbeast ability can bond to mammoth. Once bonded for the first time, the mammoth gains FURY 5, THR 9, and its animus.

Animus: Upon bonding, a mammoth gains the following animus:

	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
COUNTERBLAST	2	SELF	—	—	NO	NO

When an enemy advances and ends his movement in this character's command range, this character can make one normal melee or ranged attack targeting that character, then Counterblast expires. Counterblast lasts for one round.

Gear: Skorne warlocks typically equip their mammoths with war gauntlets, siege batteries, and heavy warbeast armor for battle.

RAZOR WORM (P. 140)

Description: Razor worms must be captured in the wild, an effort that typically costs the lives of the slaves used as bait. Master beast handlers then spend months toughening the flesh of the worms and conditioning them to fear and obey their masters—an unthinkable difficult task given the worms’ small brains and powerful defensive instincts. To train a worm is to break it to its handler’s will. A beast handler who fails will likely pay for his ineptitude in the beast’s gullet.

Anatomical Modification: Anatomically modifying a razor worm prior to conditioning requires the proper tools, four hours of labor, and a successful INT + Medicine roll against a target number of 14. If the roll fails, the razor worm is incapacitated and suffers a roll on the Injury Table. The roll can be attempted again once the razor worm is no longer incapacitated, but the recovery time for the procedure is doubled.

A razor worm recovers fully from initial surgery after three weeks. Once it recovers, the conditioning process can begin.

Conditioning Requirements: To condition a razor worm, a beast handler must have Animal Handling 1, Medicine 1.

Conditioning: Training a wild razor worm requires the beast’s handler to spend eight weeks breaking the beast’s spirit. At the end of this time the beast handler makes an INT + Animal Handling roll against a target number of 15. If the roll fails, the beast handler can spend another two weeks training the beast and then roll again. If the roll succeeds, the creature’s warbeast training is complete, and it gains the Resonance: Skorne ability:

Resonance: Skorne – This creature can be bonded only by a warlock with Resonance: Skorne Warbeast.

Bonding: Only a warlock with the Resonance: Skorne Warbeast ability can bond to a razor worm. Once bonded for the first time, the razor worm gains FURY 3, THR 8, and its animus.

Animus: Upon bonding, a razor worm gains the following animus:

	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
BOMB SHELTER	1	6	—	—	NO	NO
Target friendly character gains Girded. Bomb Shelter lasts for one round. (A character with Girded does not suffer blast damage. Friendly character’s B2B with it do not suffer blast damage.)						

Gear: Razor worms do not use gear.

REPTILE HOUND (P. 142)

Description: The reptile hound’s ferocity makes it popular among skorne rulers, who keep them as pets and for blood sport. Many tyrants serving the Army of the Western Reaches bring along reptile hounds bred by the beast handlers of their houses to serve as both symbols of status and deadly tools of war.

Anatomical Modification: Anatomically modifying a reptile hound prior to conditioning requires the proper tools, four hours of labor, and a successful INT + Medicine roll against a target

number of 12. If the roll fails, the reptile hound is incapacitated and suffers a roll on the Injury Table. The roll can be attempted again once the reptile hound is no longer incapacitated, but the recovery time for the procedure is doubled.

A reptile hound recovers fully from initial surgery after two weeks. Once it recovers, the conditioning process can begin.

Conditioning Requirements: To condition a reptile hound, a beast handler must have Animal Handling 1 and Medicine 1.

Conditioning: Conditioning a wild or captive-bred reptile hound requires the beast’s handler to spend five weeks breaking the beast’s spirit. At the end of this time the beast handler makes an INT + Animal Handling roll against a target number of 14. If the roll fails, the beast handler can spend another two weeks training the beast and then roll again. If the roll succeeds, the creature’s warbeast training is complete. Its FURY is increased to 2, its THR is increased to 8, and it gains the Flank (reptile hound) and Resonance: Skorne abilities:

Flank (reptile hound) – When this creature makes a melee attack against an enemy character within the melee range of a friendly creature of the type indicated, this creature gains +2 to attack rolls and gains an additional damage die.

Resonance: Skorne – This creature can be bonded only by a warlock with Resonance: Skorne Warbeast.

Bonding: Only a warlock with the Resonance: Skorne Warbeast ability can bond to a reptile hound. A warlock can bond with up to two reptile hounds per bond slot. Once bonded for the first time, the reptile hound gains FURY 2, THR 8, and its animus.

Animus: Upon bonding, a reptile hound gains the following animus:

	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
SLAUGHTERHOUSE	1	SELF	—	—	NO	NO
This character gains Take Down. Slaughterhouse lasts for one turn. (Characters disabled by a melee attack made by a character with Take Down cannot make a Tough roll.)						

Gear: Skorne warlocks typically equip their reptile hounds with a specially designed carapace (see callout).



REPTILE HOUND CARAPACE

Cost: 10 sl

Description: Made of overlapping lacquered plates, the carapace provides a reptile hound with substantial protection, shielding the creature’s head and spine.

While wearing a carapace, a reptile hound suffers –1 DEF and gains +2 ARM.

RHINODON (P. 144)

Description: Titans are often favored over rhinodons, because the rhinodon, while durable and useful, does not respond well to the harnesses and pain barbs used on most beasts. They can be managed only by lash and verbal command, which makes training them a slow and expensive endeavor. Still, the crushing sweep of the rhinodon's tail is a desirable weapon, particularly for the Army of the Western Reaches as it faces large enemy forces on open ground.

Anatomical Modification: Anatomically modifying a rhinodon prior to conditioning requires the proper tools, four hours of labor, and a successful INT + Medicine roll against a target number of 14. If the roll fails, the rhinodon is incapacitated and suffers a roll on the Injury Table. The roll can be attempted again once the rhinodon is no longer incapacitated, but the recovery time for the procedure is doubled.

A rhinodon recovers fully from initial surgery after four weeks. Once it recovers, the conditioning process can begin.

Conditioning Requirements: To condition a rhinodon, a beast handler must have Animal Handling 2 and Medicine 1.

Conditioning: Training a rhinodon requires the beast's handler to spend five weeks breaking the beast's spirit. At the end of this time the beast handler makes an INT + Animal Handling roll against a target number of 16. If the roll fails, the beast handler can spend another two weeks training the beast and then roll again. If the roll succeeds, the creature's warbeast training is complete, and it gains the Resonance Skorne and Weapon Trained (melee) abilities:

Resonance: Skorne – This creature can be bonded only by a warlock with Resonance: Skorne Warbeast.

Weapon Trained (melee) – The warbeast has been trained to use melee weapons.

Bonding: Only a warlock with the Resonance: Skorne Warbeast ability can bond to a rhinodon. Once bonded for the first time, the Rhinodon gains FURY 4, THR 9, and its animus.

Animus: Upon bonding, a rhinodon gains the following animus:

	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
AMUCK	1	6	—	—	NO	NO
When target friendly warbeast makes a power attack, its attack rolls are boosted. Amuck lasts for one turn.						

Gear: Skorne warlocks typically equip their rhinodons with medium armor for battle.

TITANS (P. 146)

Titans are solid walls of muscle and flesh. These four-armed bipedal pachyderms have served the skorne for thousands of years as favored beasts of war, for they have the stamina to endure brutal punishment and the strength to rip apart most other creatures. Titan nervous systems are well understood, and beast handlers embed barbed hooks in sensitive locations to goad them into rampaging madness before battle. By the time it is unleashed, a titan is ready to slaughter anything in

its way. Beast handlers have trained titans to wield an array of weapons in order to fulfill a number of critical roles on the battlefield. If they can be captured in the wild, the titan bronzeback can also be turned into a warbeast (see below).

BRONZEBACK TITAN

Description: Breaking bronzeback titans is a dangerous job, for the powerful creatures do not occur in captivity. Beast handlers must venture into the wilds to locate them and their subjugation requires tremendous skill. Any paingivers who cannot rise to the challenge bleed out their lives shattered and broken among the grasses. A single bronzeback commands a tremendous price, for every year at least ten handlers die for every beast captured. In the battles between skorne houses, a single bronzeback can nearly guarantee victory by goading allied titans to renewed ferocity, inciting ancient instincts too powerful to deny.

Anatomical Modification: Anatomically modifying a titan prior to conditioning requires the proper tools, twenty hours of labor, and a successful INT + Medicine roll against a target number of 16. If the roll fails, the titan is incapacitated and suffers a roll on the Injury Table. The roll can be attempted again once the titan is no longer incapacitated, but the recovery time for the procedure is doubled.

A titan recovers fully from initial surgery after ten weeks. Once it recovers, the conditioning process can begin.

Conditioning Requirements: To condition a bronzeback titan, a beast handler must have Animal Handling 3, Medicine 2, and war gauntlets.

Conditioning: Training a bronzeback titan requires the beast's handler to spend 20 weeks breaking the beast's spirit. At the end of this time the handler makes an INT + Animal Handling roll against a target number of 18. If the roll fails, the beast handler can spend another two weeks training the beast and then roll again. If the roll succeeds, the creature's warbeast training is complete. It gains +1 STR and +2 PRW, the Armor Trained, Chain Attack: Grab and Smash, Counter Charge, Leadership [titans], Resonance: Skorne, and Weapon Trained (melee) abilities:

Armor Trained – The warbeast can wear armor without suffering additional penalties for wearing armor untrained.

Chain Attack: Grab & Smash – If this character hits the same target with both its initial attacks, after resolving the attacks it can immediately make a double-hand throw, head-butt, headlock/ weapon lock, push, or throw power attack against that target.

Counter Charge – When an enemy advances and ends its movement within 36 feet (6") of this creature and in its line of sight, this creature can immediately charge the enemy. The creature cannot make a counter charge while engaged.

Leadership [titans] – While in this creature's command range, friendly Titan non-Bronzeback warbeasts automatically pass THR checks.



Resonance: Skorne – This creature can be bonded only by a warlock with Resonance: Skorne Warbeast.

Weapon Trained (melee) – The creature is trained to use melee weapons.

Bonding: Only a warlock with the Resonance: Skorne Warbeast ability can bond to a titan. Once bonded for the first time, a bronzeback gains FURY 5, THR 8, and its animus.

Animus: Upon completing its training, a bronzeback titan gains the following animus:

	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
TRAIN WRECK	1	6	—	—	NO	NO

Target friendly warbeast's melee weapons gain Beat Back. Train Wreck lasts for one turn. (Immediately after a normal attack with a weapon with Beat Back is resolved during this character's combat action, the enemy hit can be pushed 1" directly away from the attacking character. After the enemy is pushed, the attacking character can advance up to 1".)

Gear: Skorne warlocks typically equip their bronzeback titans with war gauntlets and heavy warbeast armor for battle.

TITAN GLADIATOR

Description: Clad in heavy lacquered armor and taught to fight with gauntlets rowed with spikes, a titan gladiator's body itself is a weapon. Gladiators use their tremendous weight to overpower an enemy and smash it to the ground, rushing forward with a surprising burst of speed. The gladiator pierces a downed opponent with a flurry of blows while it pins the hapless creature in place with its lesser pair of arms.

Anatomical Modification: Anatomically modifying a titan prior to conditioning requires the proper tools, twenty hours of labor, and a successful INT + Medicine roll against a target number of 16. If the roll fails, the titan is incapacitated and suffers a roll on the Injury Table. The roll can be attempted again once the titan is no longer incapacitated, but the recovery time for the procedure is doubled.

A titan recovers fully from initial surgery after ten weeks. Once it recovers, the conditioning process can begin.

Conditioning Requirements: To condition a titan gladiator, a beast handler must have Animal Handling 2, Great Weapon 1, Medicine 2, and war gauntlets.

Conditioning: Training a titan gladiator requires the beast's handler to spend eight weeks breaking its spirit. At the end of this time, the warlock makes an INT + Animal Handling skill roll against a target number of 15. If the roll fails, the beast handler can spend another four weeks training the beast and then roll again. If the roll succeeds, the creature's warbeast training is complete. It gains the Armor Trained, Bullheaded, Follow Up, Grand Slam, Resonance: Skorne, and Weapon Trained (melee) abilities:

Armor Trained – The warbeast can wear armor without suffering additional penalties for wearing armor untrained.

Bullheaded – When this creature frenzies, if it would charge a character, it targets that character with a slam power attack instead. If it cannot, it frenzies normally.

Follow Up – When this creature slams an enemy, immediately after the slam is resolved this creature can advance directly toward the slammed character up to the distance the slammed character was moved.

Grand Slam – This creature can make slam power attacks without spending focus or being forced. Characters slammed by this creature are moved an additional 2".

Resonance: Skorne – This creature can be bonded only by a warlock with Resonance: Skorne Warbeast.

Weapon Trained (melee) – The warbeast has been trained to use melee weapons.

Titans with the potential can be trained as cannoneers or sentries instead.

Bonding: Only a warlock with the Resonance: Skorne Warbeast ability can bond to a titan. Once bonded for the first time, a titan gains FURY 4, THR 9, and its animus. Gladiators are among the most common types of titan warbeasts.

Animus: Upon bonding, a titan gladiator gains the following animus:

	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
RUSH	2	6	—	—	NO	NO

Target friendly warbeasts gains +2" movement and Pathfinder. Rush lasts for one turn.

Gear: Skorne warlocks typically equip their gladiators with a pair of bladed gauntlets and heavy warbeast armor for battle.

TITAN CANNONEER

Description: Titan cannoneers wield massive siege guns and are used in siege warfare as living artillery to destroy enemy battlements. This creature's additional arms are crucial to the complex three-armed juggling act required to reload these heavy guns, and it strains what limited intelligence the titans possess. If driven to frenzy, a titan reverts to its instincts—wildly slamming opponents and rending them with their tusks.

Anatomical Modification: Anatomically modifying a titan prior to conditioning requires the proper tools, twenty hours of labor, and a successful INT + Medicine roll against a target number of 16. If the roll fails, the titan is incapacitated and suffers a roll on the Injury Table. The roll can be attempted again once the titan is no longer incapacitated, but the recovery time for the procedure is doubled.

A titan recovers fully from initial surgery after ten weeks. Once it recovers, the conditioning process can begin.

Conditioning Requirements: To condition a titan cannoneer, a beast handler must have Animal Handling 2, Great Weapon 1, Light Artillery 1, Medicine 2, and a siege gun.

Conditioning: The initial training to determine whether a titan is capable of becoming a cannoneer requires the beast's handler to spend two weeks breaking its spirit. At the end of this time, the beast handler makes an INT + Animal Handling skill roll against a target number of 14. If the roll fails, the warbeast lacks what it takes to become a cannoneer but can still be trained as a

gladiator. If the roll succeeds, the beast's training as a cannoneer can begin in earnest.

After an additional eight weeks of training, the beast handler makes an INT + Animal Handling skill roll against a target number of 16. If the roll fails, the beast handler can spend another four weeks training the beast and then roll again. If the roll succeeds, the creature's warbeast training is complete, and it gains the Armor Trained, Bullheaded, Cannon Juggle, Resonance: Skorne, and Weapon Trained (melee and ranged) abilities:

Armor Trained – The warbeast can wear armor without suffering additional penalties for wearing armor untrained.

Bullheaded – When this creature frenzies, if it would charge a character, it targets that character with a slam power attack instead. If it cannot, it frenzies normally.

Cannon Juggle – This creature can reload a siege gun as a quick action.

Resonance: Skorne – This creature can be bonded only by a warlock with Resonance: Skorne Warbeast.

Weapon Trained (melee and ranged) – The creature is trained to use melee and ranged weapons.

Bonding: Only a warlock with the Resonance: Skorne Warbeast ability can bond to a titan. Once bonded for the first time, a titan gains FURY 4, THR 9, and its animus.

Animus: Upon completing its training, a titan cannoneer gains the following animus:

	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
DIMINISH	2	SELF	*	—	NO	NO
While within 2" of this character, enemies suffer -2 STR. Diminish lasts for one round.						

Gear: Skorne warlocks typically equip their titan cannoneers with a siege gun (p. 117), a war mace, and heavy warbeast armor for battle.

TITAN SENTRY

Description: While other titans are sent forward to pulverize an enemy army, titan sentries are the unmovable objects upon which an opponent's charge breaks. Armed with shields and halberds, titan sentries can easily weather a barrage of rifle fire or hail of arrows. When a sentry retaliates with its oversized halberd, it doggedly focuses on its target, all distractions put aside as it sets about the destruction of the unlucky foe.

Anatomical Modification: Anatomically modifying a titan prior to conditioning requires the proper tools, twenty hours of labor, and a successful INT + Medicine roll against a target number of 16. If the roll fails, the titan is incapacitated and suffers a roll on the Injury Table. The roll can be attempted again once the titan is no longer incapacitated, but the recovery time for the procedure is doubled.



A titan recovers fully from initial surgery after ten weeks. Once it recovers, the conditioning process can begin.

Conditioning Requirements: To condition a titan sentry, a beast handler must have Animal Handling 2, Medicine 2, Great Weapon 1, Shield 1, halberd, and a heavy shield.

Conditioning: The initial training to determine whether a titan is capable of becoming a sentry requires the beast's handler to spend two weeks breaking its spirit. At the end of this time, the beast handler makes an INT + Animal Handling skill roll against a target number of 14. If the roll fails, the warbeast lacks what it takes to become a sentry but can still be trained as a gladiator. If the roll succeeds, the beast's training as a sentry can begin in earnest.

After an additional eight weeks of training, the beast handler makes an INT + Animal Handling skill roll against a target number of 16. If the roll fails, the beast handler can spend another four weeks training the beast and then roll again. If the roll succeeds, the creature's warbeast training is complete. It gains the Armor Trained, Brace for Impact, Resonance: Skorne, and Weapon Trained (melee) abilities:

Armor Trained – The warbeast can wear armor without suffering additional penalties for wearing armor untrained.

Brace for Impact – When this creature is slammed, reduce the slam distance rolled by 3. If the total slam distance is 0 or less, this creature is not knocked down. This creature is not knocked down when it suffers collateral damage.

Resonance: Skorne – This creature can be bonded only by a warlock with Resonance: Skorne Warbeast.

Weapon Trained (melee) – The creature is trained to use melee weapons.

Bonding: Only a warlock with the Resonance: Skorne Warbeast ability can bond to a titan. Once bonded for the first time, a titan gains FURY 4, THR 9, and its animus.

Animus: Upon bonding, a titan sentry gains the following animus:

	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
LOCKER	1	SELF	—	—	NO	NO
Enemy warbeasts and warjacks in this character's melee range can only advance directly toward it. Locker lasts for one round.						

Gear: Skorne warlocks typically equip their titan sentries with halberds, heavy shields, and heavy warbeast armor for battle.

SKORNE WARBEAST GEAR

The following price lists apply for weapons and items found in *Iron Kingdoms Unleashed Roleplaying Game: Core Rules*.

WARBEAST ARMOR

Custom Battle Warbeast Armor (light)	80 sl
Custom Battle Warbeast Armor (heavy)	100 sl
Partial Plate Warbeast Armor (light)	115 sl
Partial Plate Warbeast Armor (heavy)	150 sl
Medium Plate Warbeast Armor (light)	160 sl
Medium Plate Warbeast Armor (heavy)	205 sl
Full Plate Warbeast Armor	270 sl

WARBEAST MELEE WEAPONS

Battle Spear (light warbeast)	25 sl
Battle Spear (heavy warbeast)	55 sl
Battle Blade	125 sl
Bladed Gauntlet	45 sl
Halberd (light warbeast)	90 sl
Halberd (heavy warbeast)	135 sl
Hand Weapon (light warbeast)	40 sl
Hand Weapon (heavy warbeast)	60 sl
Heavy Shield	160 sl
Punching Spike	25 sl

WARBEAST GEAR

Beast Restraints	10 sl
Gear Straps	5 sl

MELEE WEAPONS

Falchion

Cost: 90 sl

Type: Melee

Attack Modifier: 0

POW: 5

Description: A falchion has a heavy chopping blade with a pronounced curve. Some falchions have thick steel rings set on the back of the blade to catch an opponent's weapon and turn aside strikes.

Special Rules: A warbeast must have an Open Fist and the Weapon Trained (melee) ability to use this weapon. While armed with this weapon, a warbeast cannot make attacks with the fist that holds the weapon.

A warbeast wielding this weapon gains +1 DEF against attacks originating in its front arc.

War Mace

Cost: 135 sl

Type: Melee

Attack Modifier: 0

POW: 4

Description: This mace has been scaled and reinforced to withstand use by a warbeast.

Special Rules: A warbeast must have an Open Fist and the Weapon Trained (melee) ability to use this weapon. While armed with this weapon, a warbeast cannot make attacks with the fist that holds the weapon.

On a critical hit, a living target hit has a chance to be knocked out by the attack. If the target suffers damage from the attack, he must make a Willpower roll against a target number equal to the attacking character's STR + 9. If the target succeeds, he stays conscious. If he fails, he is knocked out.

RANGED WEAPONS

Heavy Reiver

Cost: 115 sl

Type: Ranged

Ammo: 12

Effective Range: 60 feet (10")

Extreme Range: —

Attack Modifier: 0

POW: 12

AOE: —

Description: The heavy reiver is an oversized version of the weapon carried by venators, similar to the flayer cannon. A modified stock and trigger mechanism allow it to be used by trained cyclopes.

Special Rules: A warbeast must have two Open Fists and the Weapon Trained (ranged) ability to use this weapon. While armed with this weapon, the warbeast cannot make attacks with the fists that hold the weapon.

Gain +1 to damage rolls with this weapon against characters with medium bases and +2 to damage rolls against characters with large or huge bases.

Replacing this weapon's ammo cone or gas canister requires a quick action.

An ammo cone holds enough needles for 12 shots. A gas canister holds enough gas for 24 shots.

A loaded ammo cone costs the equivalent of 20 sl. Extra gas canisters cost 10 sl.

Siege Gun

Cost: 225 sl

Type: Ranged

Ammo: 1 (artillery round)

Effective Range: 72 feet (12")

Extreme Range: 360 feet

Attack Modifier: 0

POW: 15

AOE: 3

Description: These large, smooth-bore cannons use a charge of *hokar* blasting paste to propel a heavy explosive round.

Special Rules: A warbeast must have two Open Fists and the Weapon Trained (ranged) ability to use this weapon. While armed with this weapon, the warbeast cannot make attacks with the fists that hold the weapon. This weapon can be fired only once per turn.

Reloading the siege gun requires a full action.

The siege gun fires standard artillery rounds. Standard artillery rounds and blasting paste cost 5 sl per shot.

SKORNE WARBEAST GEAR

War Spikes

Cost: 15 sl per weapon

Description: Skorne enhance the battle capability of their warbeasts through the addition of steel blades and spikes. These war spikes take many different forms, from the many-tined rings worn on a titan's tusks to short conical spikes on a rhinodon's gauntlets.

Special Rules: When this weapon is purchased, selected one of the creature's natural weapons, such as tusks or fists. While equipped with this item, the creature gains a +1 bonus to damage rolls made while using the selected weapon.

Adding war spikes to a warbeast's natural weapon requires metalworking tools, eight hours of labor, and a successful INT + Craft (metalworking) roll against a target number of 12. If the roll fails, it can be repeated after another hour of labor.

Barbed Harness

Cost: 5 sl

Description: The skorne use these harnesses to control dangerous beasts like basilisks. Cruel barbs placed against sensitive points allow a beast handler to rapidly bring a creature under control.

Special Rules: A character who fails an Animal Handling roll made against a creature wearing a barbed harness can cause the creature to suffer d3 damage points and reroll the roll.

Equipping or removing a barbed harness requires a character to have the creature under his control, such as with beast restraints or sedation. Equipping or removing the harness requires a full action.



CREATURES OF EASTERN IMMOREN

Even before the great cataclysm that threw the east into chaos, it was an untamed place where vicious predators and powerful beasts prowled the land. In the aftermath of the supernatural catastrophe that reshaped the land, the creatures that remained were hardened and honed by the constant struggle to survive amid the unforgiving wastes.

EASTERN BEASTS

The creatures of eastern Immoren can be very different from those in the west. Monster hunters and bone grinders accustomed to creatures from their own half of the continent often find themselves at a loss when dealing with those from the other.

Creatures with the Eastern Beast ability are considered native to the wilds of eastern Immoren. At the Game Master's discretion, a character confronting unfamiliar creatures can receive a reduced bonus (or no bonus at all) on abilities specifically related to a native beast. For example, a trollkin monster hunter or a human explorer would not receive the benefit of Big Game Hunter the first time he confronts a razor worm, as he would not be familiar with how it moves or reacts in combat. Similarly, a skorne monster hunter would not gain a bonus the first time he encounters a dire troll. By studying the corpses of unfamiliar beasts, however, a character can quickly adapt and apply his previous knowledge. Once a monster's weaknesses are identified, talented monster hunters can draw on their long-proven techniques to kill the strange beasts they encounter.

Lore (extraordinary zoology) skill rolls presume a character has had at least some exposure to the creatures in question, which may not be the case in foreign lands. If a character could not possibly have learned anything about a newly encountered creature, the Game Master might rule a Lore skill roll is impossible. Learning about creatures from the other half of the continent requires direct exposure or access to a knowledgeable source, such as conversations with those who have had direct contact or reading their written observations. Those most likely to know such lore are monster hunters, bone grinders, explorers, and scholars of extraordinary zoology. In cases of marginal familiarity, the Game Master can instead apply a -2 penalty to Lore (extraordinary zoology) skill rolls.

HUGE-BASED CREATURES

Huge-based creatures are among the largest in all of Immoren, towering and terrifying creatures whose strength dwarfs that of other beasts.

All huge-based creatures share the following rules:

- Unless it has an ability stating otherwise, a huge-based creature never gains a DEF bonus from cover, concealment, or elevation.
- Cloud effects and forests do not block line of sight to a huge-based creature.
- A ranged or magic attack targeting a huge-based creature does not suffer the target in melee penalty. If a ranged or magic attack misses a huge-based creature in melee, that miss is not rerolled against another character. It misses completely.
- A huge-based creature's front arc is divided into two 90° fields of fire. These fields of fire determine which characters a huge-based creature can target with its weapons, depending on their location. Weapons located on the huge-based creature's left side (L) can target only characters in its left field of fire; weapons on its right side (R) can target only characters in its right field of fire. Weapons with a location of "H" or "—" can target characters in either field of fire. If any part of a character's base is on the line separating the left and right fields of fire, the character is considered to be in both fields of fire.
- **Massive** – A huge-based creature cannot be slammed, pushed, thrown, knocked down, or made stationary.
- **Pathfinder** – Although the ability does not appear in their profiles, all huge-based creatures have the Pathfinder ability (*Iron Kingdoms Unleashed Roleplaying Game: Core Rules*, p. 164).
- **Great Beast** – A huge-based creature can never become incorporeal or benefit from stealth.
- A huge-based creature can make ranged attacks while in melee. A huge-based creature never suffers the firing-while-engaged penalty when targeting a character it is in melee with. A huge-based creature cannot gain the aiming bonus while engaged.
- A huge-based creature's melee weapons and melee attacks have a 2" melee range unless otherwise noted. This includes all power attacks made by a huge-based creature.
- **Slam Power Attacks** – Smaller-based characters hit by a slam power attack made by a huge-based creature are moved an additional 2".

ANIMANTARAX



The animantarax of eastern Immoren is a creature as irascible and stubborn as any I have ever encountered. It is a wonder that these brutes can be tamed and put to use by even the skorne's beast handlers. The skorne view pain as a tool for subjugating beasts, but to an animantarax it is just a reason to strike back with greater ferocity.

—PROFESSOR VIKTOR PENDRAKE, MONSTERNOMICON

PHYSIQUE	PHY	13
SPEED	SPD	5
STRENGTH	STR	13
AGILITY	AGL	3
PROWESS	PRW	5
POISE	POI	1
INTELLECT	INT	2
ARCANE	ARC	—
PERCEPTION	PER	3



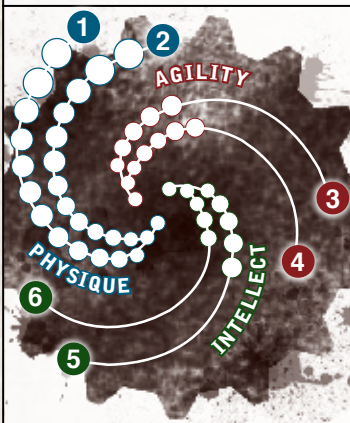
CLUB TAIL

MAT	POW	P+S
7	3	16

Abilities: This weapon has Reach.

Rear Attack – When resolving attacks with this weapon, this creature's front arc extends to 360°.

INITIATIVE	INIT	13
DEFENSE	DEF	10
	(–1 FROM SIZE)	
ARMOR	ARM	16
	(NATURAL ARMOR + 3)	
WILLPOWER	WIL	15



COMMAND RANGE: 2

BASE SIZE: HUGE

ENCOUNTER POINTS: 18

DESCRIPTION

Animantaraxes are huge reptilian quadrupeds native to the inhospitable wastelands where the northern border of the Skorne Empire meets the southern extent of the Shroudwall Mountains. These enormous beasts weigh between six and eight tons when fully grown and measure up to thirty feet long and over ten feet high at the shoulder, with low-slung bodies and stout legs better suited to slow but steady travel over long distances than sudden bursts of speed. Thick, bony plates embedded in the creature's skin protect it from attack by the other great beasts that share its arid home. Its thick tail is capped by a club-like osseous growth, allowing an animantarax to deliver crushing blows powerful enough to shatter the bones of a titan. Though not ordinarily aggressive, the animantarax has a temper and is prone to lashing out against anything that comes too close. It is powerful enough to avoid being easily preyed upon, and even formidable predators give it a wide berth.

The animantarax's small eyes give it relatively poor vision, but it possesses a keen sense of smell. Indeed, an animantarax can scent carrion, its preferred diet, from miles away. Drawn by the scent of spoiling meat, an animantarax will travel great distances to procure a meal. The creature's great bulk typically scares off any scavengers that have laid claim to a carcass, and those who attempt to defend the kill are crushed to death and eaten as well.

Wild animantaraxes are lethargic beasts, spending most of their time sunning on warm stone outcroppings as they wait for the scent of decay to alert them to their next meal. Confrontation with these creatures is easily avoided as long as one maintains a respectful distance and makes no aggressive movements. The skorne, however, are rarely content to leave such potential power untapped. They capture animantaraxes for use as living siege weapons, mounting heavy guns, armored *houdaas* full of soldiers, and great plates of lacquered steel on their broad backs. The torturous ministrations of the skorne beast handlers keep the once-peaceful giants in a constant state of pain-fueled rage, which is only exacerbated by the attacks of those who attempt to slow the advance of these living fortresses.

COMBAT

Although wild animantaraxes prefer prey that does not fight back, they are more than capable of creating their own carrion when necessary. A provoked or hungry animantarax lashes out with its tail to crush its target to death, hunkers down to protect its vulnerable belly, and aligns the thickest of its bony plates to face any potential danger. If the fight goes against the creature, it typically attempts a slow, shuffling retreat that keeps its armored plates forward while continuing to strike out at the nearest threat. Occasionally a wounded animantarax becomes lost in a violent rage, attacking anything around it with a ferocity that one would not expect from such a plodding beast. Starving animantaraxes are often driven by desperation to act in much the same way, advancing recklessly until it fells some sizable creature, or several smaller ones, at which point it seeks to flee with the carcass so that it can eat in peace.

The animantarax's snout is short, blunt, and filled with small, ripping teeth. These teeth are suited to tearing flesh and rending carcasses, particularly those that have been left to decay for a short while, but the creature's jaw lacks the muscle mass to use them as a weapon.

LORE

A character can make an INT + Lore (extraordinary zoology) skill roll to determine what he knows about this creature. He learns all the information up to the result of the roll. The higher the roll, the more he learns.

12: Animantaraxes are massive, four-legged reptilian beasts from the northern wastes of the east. Bulky, lumbering, and lethargic, they prefer to dine upon carrion and rarely attack in pursuit of prey. They dislike the proximity of anything but their own kind, and a blow from their clubbed tails can turn an armored man into jelly.

14: The skorne capture animantaraxes, encase them in thick armor, and mount heavy weapons and small squads of specially trained soldiers on their broad backs. They use the armored behemoths as living siege engines, both to break enemy lines and breach enemy strongpoints.

16: Wounded animantaraxes sometimes enter a blind, pain-fueled rage that grants them greater and greater strength as their injuries mount.

ABILITIES:

Cantankerous – When this creature is damaged by an enemy attack, it gains one rage token. This creature can have up to three rage tokens at a time. For each rage token on this creature when it declares a melee attack, it gains +1 to the damage roll. During its activation, this creature can spend rage tokens to boost club tail melee attack rolls or club tail damage rolls at one token per boost.

Eastern Beast – This creature is considered to be a beast native to the wilds of eastern Immoren.

Fearless – This creature is immune to the effects of fear.

Hyper Aggressive – When this creature suffers damage from an enemy attack anytime except while it is advancing, after the attack is resolved it can immediately make a full advance directly toward the attacking enemy.

CREATURE TEMPLATES:

Juvenile, Protector

SKILLS:

NAME	STAT	RANK	STAT + RANK
Detection	PER	1	4
Survival	PER	2	5



ARADUS



PHYSIQUE	PHY	12
SPEED	SPD	3
STRENGTH	STR	11
AGILITY	AGL	4
PROWESS	PRW	4
POISE	POI	3
INTELLECT	INT	1
ARCANE	ARC	—
PERCEPTION	PER	4

**MANDIBLES**

MAT	POW	P+S
6	7	18

Chomp – This creature can attack with this weapon only during its turn and can target only characters it first hit with a barbed claw attack that turn.

**BARBED CLAW**

MAT	POW	P+S
6	4	15

Abilities: This weapon has Reach.

Pull – If this weapon hits an enemy character with an equal or smaller base, immediately after the attack is resolved the hit character can be pushed any distance directly toward this creature.

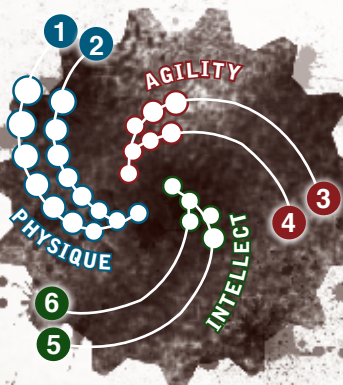
**BARBED CLAW**

MAT	POW	P+S
6	4	15

Abilities: This weapon has Reach.

Pull – See above.

INITIATIVE	INIT	11
DEFENSE	DEF	11
ARMOR	ARM	17
	(NATURAL ARMOR + 5)	
WILLPOWER	WIL	13



COMMAND RANGE: 1

BASE SIZE: LARGE

ENCOUNTER POINTS: 15

Despite their shared physiology with insects, I must confess I am not sure how to classify these strange beasts. They blend hardened chitin and malleable flesh in the same body, defying the anatomical wisdom of the west. Perhaps they are simply an abomination spawned from the arcane forces that wrack the Trembling Waste.

—PROFESSOR VIKTOR PENDRAKE, MONSTERNOMICON

DESCRIPTION

Viciously territorial natives of the eastern fringes of the Skorne Empire, aradus are insect-like beasts that can grow to be several times as long as a man is tall. These multi-limbed creatures are covered in thick chitin plates hard enough to deflect cannon fire. The two front limbs bear wickedly hooked claws capable of scything through a karax in a single swipe, while the head is host to a terrifying mass of grasping, gnashing mandibles.

An aradus hive is home to a number of specialized castes, each adapted to perform its given role. Soldiers, by far the most common type, have elongated and barbed claws perfect for dragging prey into their powerful mandibles. When not hunting or protecting the hive, these aradus are industrious laborers, expanding the colony's tunnel systems and ferrying resources wherever they are needed. The less common sentinels function as living artillery and come to the surface only when the colony is threatened. These creatures can rapidly constrict the heavy venom sacs in their long tails to fire globs of viscous, necrotizing

venom at enemies of the hive. This toxic spray is strong enough to slough the flesh off any living thing caught in its path.

Hewn into the bedrock, immense networks of aradus tunnels wind endlessly beneath the blasted soil of the Trembling Waste. Each tunnel network is home to a single colony that views everything that treads above or below as either a threat to be eliminated or prey to be slaughtered and dragged back to the hive. A brutal war of all-out extermination and expansion will quickly break out if two colonies' territories begin to overlap. Even the splinter colonies formed when a colony grows too large are considered threats and attacked relentlessly, forcing them to move far from home before establishing their own hive.

The skorne prize aradus as warbeasts and place great value on their resilience and natural inclination toward violence, but taming an adult aradus is nearly impossible for even the most talented beast handlers of the Skorne Empire. Instead, the beasts must be raised on the lash from the moment they hatch, which necessitates dangerous expeditions to plunder eggs from wild aradus colonies in the Trembling Waste. Many slaves are lost for each egg recovered, but it is a price the skorne gladly pay to employ these ferocious beasts in war.

COMBAT

Each aradus fights in accordance with its caste's designated role. Soldiers rush forward into enemy lines, smashing apart foes with their claws or shearing them in half with their oversized mandibles. Sentinels hang back and lob gouts of sizzling venom over the front ranks to their targets, reducing whatever they strike to a steaming pile of organic sludge.

The close links between members of the same hive allow wild aradus to coordinate their actions with greater tactical awareness than a lone specimen exhibits. These connections facilitate simple maneuvers as the creatures work together almost seamlessly to best take advantage of the various castes' strengths. When this level of cooperation is unnecessary or unavailable, aradus fall back on their natural inclination toward unthinking, unrelenting aggression. They attack in an almost suicidal manner, more intent on the destruction they wreak than on their own well-being.

The skorne are all too willing to indulge these destructive tendencies in their enslaved aradus, something they normally have to instill in their captured beasts through tedious conditioning and prolonged agony. For the aradus, their skorne masters replace the instinctual connection to the hive as their organizational focus.



LORE

A character can make an INT + Lore (extraordinary zoology) skill roll to determine what he knows about this creature. He learns all the information up to the result of the roll. The higher the roll, the more he learns.

10: Aradus are giant, aggressive, insect-like beasts native to the eastern reaches of the Skorne Empire.

12: The skorne have used aradus as warbeasts for centuries, taking advantage of their naturally violent nature to devastating effect. Wild aradus live in colonies that inhabit extensive tunnel systems they carve beneath the Trembling Waste.

14: Aradus exhibit a number of different forms depending on their role within the colony, but all are extremely dangerous. Some fight with bladed claws and crushing mandibles, while others fire bursts of scathing venom at their foes from afar.

ABILITIES:

Carapace – This creature gains +4 ARM against free strike damage rolls and ranged attack damage rolls.

Eastern Beast – This creature is considered to be a beast native to the wilds of eastern Immoren.

Fearless – This creature is immune to the effects of fear.

Pathfinder – This creature can move over rough terrain without penalty.

Steady – This creature cannot be knocked down.

CREATURE TEMPLATES:

Alert, Large Specimen, Man-eater

SKILLS:

NAME	STAT	RANK	STAT + RANK
Climbing	AGL	1	5
Detection	PER	2	6



BASILISK

PHYSIQUE	PHY	10
SPEED	SPD	6
STRENGTH	STR	8
AGILITY	AGL	3
PROWESS	PRW	3
POISE	POI	3
INTELLECT	INT	2
ARCANE	ARC	—
PERCEPTION	PER	4



WITHERING GAZE			
RAT	RNG	AOE	POW
5	SP 8	—	14

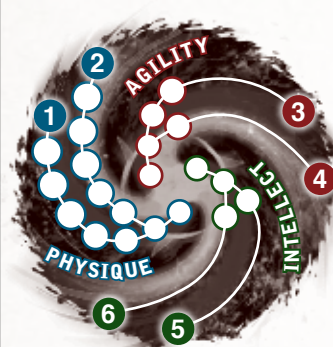
Abilities: This is a magical weapon. When this weapon incapacitates a living character, do not roll on the Injury Table to determine the outcome; instead, roll on the Withering Gaze Injury Table. The effects of the Withering Gaze Injury Table persist until the character completely regains all lost vitality.



BITE			
MAT	POW	P+S	
5	4	12	

Abilities: On a critical hit that deals damage against a living character, after resolving the attack the character damaged must make a PHY roll against a target number of 12. If the roll succeeds, nothing happens. If the roll fails, the target suffers -2 SPD and DEF for one round.

INITIATIVE	INIT	13
DEFENSE	DEF	13
ARMOR	ARM	16
(NATURAL ARMOR +6)		
WILLPOWER	WIL	12



COMMAND RANGE: 2

BASE SIZE: MEDIUM

ENCOUNTER POINTS: 13

Nature develops a breathtaking array of weapons for predator and prey alike: claws and fangs, sprays of deadly acid or poison. All these require some effort on the part of the beast. How much more impressive, then, is the basilisk's ability to obliterate targets with nothing more than a glance?

—PROFESSOR VIKTOR PENDRAKE, MONSTERNOMICON

DESCRIPTION

Thick-bodied reptilian creatures the size of adult trollkin, basilisks are renowned less for their large claws and venomous bite than for their lethal gaze. An enraged basilisk's stare can shatter stone or turn an armored warrior into a pile of bloody flesh and melted scrap, and those who catch its full brunt often leave behind nothing more than a handful of fine dust.

Basilisks are natives of the Trembling Waste and are extremely territorial. Their ability to kill with a mere look ensures they have no natural predators despite sharing the Waste with all manner of fierce beasts, and their territorial claims are rarely contested. Female basilisks, called kreas, are more aggressive than males, and their ferocity only increases if a male basilisk is nearby.

When not hunting or defending their nests, basilisks spend much of their time maintaining their burrows or basking in the desert sun. Basilisks lay their eggs in shadowed, rocky crevices and stay close enough to drive off anything that imperils the nest.

Only the skorne intentionally confront these creatures, regularly pressing them into service as warbeasts. The capture and conditioning of these beasts cost a great deal in terms of time, material, and skorne lives. Even so, properly conditioned basilisks remain in high demand, both for the destructive power of their gaze and for the unique powers they develop under the ruthlessly cruel tutelage of the beast handlers. Blinded and with her eyes sewn shut, the female krea's destructive gaze turns inward, building until set loose in a rippling field of power that seems to thicken the air around her, hindering enemies and robbing even cannon shot of its speed and accuracy.

COMBAT

Basilisks are territorial and unused to opposition, and they attack ferociously once provoked. They rely primarily on the power of their gaze to defeat enemies but will close to finish off a resistant target with their venomous bite. Their claws, although menacing, are reserved for burrowing and are poorly suited to combat. Female kreas are especially prone to violence and are driven to new heights of aggression by the presence of a male.

LORE

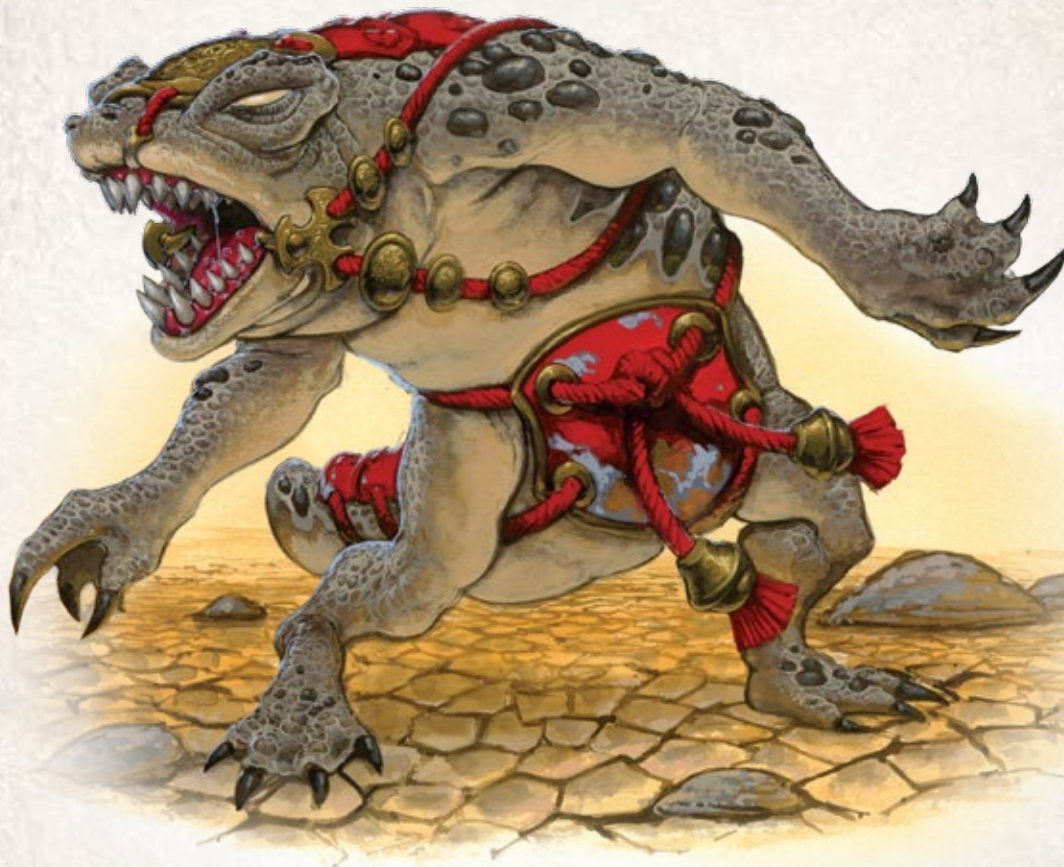
A character can make an INT + Lore (extraordinary zoology) skill roll to determine what he knows about this creature. He learns all the information up to the result of the roll. The higher the roll, the more he learns.

10: Basilisks are large reptilian creatures found in the deserts of the east, particularly the Trembling Waste. They possess a lethal gaze that reduces stones to dust and kills enemies with ease.

12: In addition to their gaze, basilisks have a vicious bite that can deliver mildly paralytic venom, primarily used when hunting.

14: Female basilisks, known as kreas, are even more aggressive than males, especially when in the presence of the opposite sex. Wild basilisks are extremely territorial, and their control of the ranges they claim in the Trembling Waste is virtually unopposed. They have no natural predators, although some bold creatures will raid their eggs if nests are left unattended.

16: Kreas enslaved by the skorne often undergo extensive surgical procedures to unlock a latent power: a paralytic aura that protects nearby allies from ranged attacks while slowing enemies' movements. These basilisks are easily recognizable, as their eyes are sewn shut as part of their conditioning. This mutilation does little to dampen their aggression and seems to have no effect on their ability to perceive their surroundings.



WITHERING GAZE INJURY TABLE

2D6 ROLL RESULT	INJURY
2-3	No Additional Effect – The target suffers a roll on the normal Injury Table.
4-6	Twisted Flesh – The target's flesh is withered by the basilisk's gaze. Roll a d6. On a roll of 1-2, the target suffers -1 PHY. On a roll of 3-4, the target suffers -1 SPD. On a roll of 5-6, the target suffers -1 STR.
7-9	Withered Mind – The target's mind is warped by looking into the basilisk's eyes. Roll a d6. On a roll of 1-3, the target suffers -1 INT. On a roll of 4-6, the target suffers -1 PER.
10-11	Withered Limb – One of the target's limbs is withered by the basilisk's gaze. Roll a d6. On a roll of 1-3, the target suffers -1 PRW. On a roll of 4-6, the target suffers -1 POI. Randomly determine the affected limb.
12	Disintegrated – The target is reduced to a pile of ash, completely obliterated by the basilisk's gaze. The target is dead, and any gear it carried is lost.

ABILITIES:

Close Shot – This creature does not suffer a -4 penalty on ranged attack rolls with its natural ranged weapons while engaged.

Cold Blooded – The creature gains boosted Willpower rolls to resist fear.

Eastern Beast – This creature is considered to be a beast native to the wilds of eastern Immoren.

Night Vision – This creature treats darkness as dim light and dim light as bright light.

CREATURE TEMPLATES:

Alpha, Ill-tempered, Juvenile, Protector

SKILLS:

NAME	STAT	RANK	STAT + RANK
Detection	PER	2	6
Tracking	PER	1	5



CYCLOPS

PHYSIQUE	PHY	8
SPEED	SPD	6
STRENGTH	STR	8
AGILITY	AGL	3
PROWESS	PRW	4
POISE	POI	3
INTELLECT	INT	2
ARCANE	ARC	•
PERCEPTION	PER	4

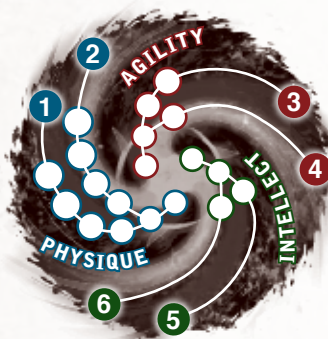


CLUB

MAT	POW	P+S
5	4	12

Abilities: On a critical hit with this weapon, a living target hit has a chance to be knocked out. If the target suffers damage from the attack, he must make a PHY roll against a target number equal to the attacking character's STR + 11. If the roll succeeds, the target remains conscious. If the roll fails, the target is knocked out.

INITIATIVE	INIT	14
DEFENSE	DEF	13
ARMOR	ARM	12
	(NATURAL ARMOR + 4)	
WILLPOWER	WIL	10



COMMAND RANGE: 2

BASE SIZE: MEDIUM

ENCOUNTER POINTS: 12

Brute savages from the eastern wilderness, cyclopes stand between the world of beasts and that of sentient creatures. Perhaps their ability to glimpse the future has kept them from developing, giving them all the benefits of forethought without requiring any true reflection. For them, the immediate and the forthcoming are blended into a single moment.

—PROFESSOR VIKTOR PENDRAKE, MONSTERNOMICON

DESCRIPTION

Common in the east, cyclopes are a brutish race of savage primitives that stand up to nine feet tall, but whose form otherwise closely resembles that of the more civilized races of man, elf, or even skorne. Cyclopes have a single, centrally located eye. This organ is the focus of their unique abilities, for it allows them to perceive brief glimpses of the immediate future.

In the wild, cyclopes form loose, nomadic tribes of related individuals that band together to hunt larger game and to offer protection against the monsters that roam the eastern plains. These tribes have little in the way of culture, craft, or even language, and the most technologically advanced object in a cyclops' possession is likely to be a particularly well-weighted tree limb kept on hand as a favored club. Their almost complete lack of clothing—at best they might wrap themselves in

strongest and cruelest survive to perpetuate the cycle. Cyclopes do not hesitate to engage in cannibalism, and the strongest members of a tribe will eat the bodies of the recently dead.

Cyclopes rely on the power of their prescient eye in hunting as well as in combat, using its gift of foreknowledge to bring down game as dangerous as titans and desert hydras while armed with little more than heavy rocks and bone clubs. With insight into when and where to strike and when to fall back from imminent blows, cyclopes regularly achieve what civilized forces with advanced weapons and armor cannot. This power does not manifest in the same manner in all cyclopes; some have abilities that make them preternaturally gifted trackers, warriors, or even shamans capable of wielding crude but effective magic.

The skorne have enslaved cyclopes for centuries, turning them into finely honed weapons of war. Once properly conditioned and outfitted with arms and armor, cyclopes make exemplary warbeasts. They can carry out surprisingly complex instructions while maintaining their bloodthirsty instincts and prescient edge. Indeed, many in the Skorne Empire feel they have elevated the brutes, granting them the gift of a greater destiny as a tool of their skorne masters.

COMBAT

Wild cyclopes will attack anything they might be able to maim, kill, or eat, whether their aim is to secure food or to eliminate an intruder. Their tactics are rarely more complicated than charging forward and bashing a target to death, but their precognitive abilities make this crude strategy quite effective.

Cyclopes enslaved by the skorne follow orders with surprising discipline, bringing to bear whatever armaments they have been issued with a skill hard to reconcile with the wild abandon of their feral counterparts. Heavily armored cyclopes equipped with halberds and shields stand guard over important personages or anchor lines of skorne troops. Those chosen for their surpassing bloodthirst act as line breakers, armed with falchions the size and weight of a man. Still others are trained to wield oversized reiver cannons, crushing foes no matter where they hide.

an uncured hide against the cold—only serves to enhance their barbaric appearance.

Cyclopes dwell in caverns within the eastern mountains, with larger concentrations in the eastern reaches of the Shroudwall Mountains. Their caves are often carpeted with the gnawed bones of cattle, skorne, and rival cyclopes. Cyclops society, or what passes for it, is unforgiving; these brutes delight in the suffering of others and relish the infliction of pain on the defenseless. Weak or otherwise unfit members of a tribe are culled by their bloodthirsty compatriots, ensuring that only the

ABILITIES:

Foresight – This creature gains an additional die on attack rolls. Discard the lowest die of each roll.

Preternatural Awareness – This creature gains boosted Initiative rolls, and enemies never gain back strike bonuses against this creature.

CREATURE TEMPLATES:

Alert, Hunter, Juvenile, Pack Hunter, Starving

SKILLS:

NAME	STAT	RANK	STAT + RANK
Detection	PER	2	6
Great Weapon	PRW	1	5
Survival	PER	2	6
Tracking	PER	2	6

LORE

A character can make an INT + Lore (extraordinary zoology) skill roll to determine what he knows about this creature. He learns all the information up to the result of the roll. The higher the roll, the more he learns.

10: Cyclopes are towering one-eyed savages commonly found in the east. They have a very limited capacity for even basic craftsmanship and are often armed with tree limbs, bones, or rocks. They wear little more than scraps of hide.

12: The skorne have been enslaving cyclopes for untold generations for use as warbeasts. Those in the service of the Skorne Empire receive finely crafted arms and armor and are surprisingly skilled and disciplined warriors.

14: Cyclopes have the ability to perceive brief flashes of the immediate future, which allows them to correct a strike that would otherwise have missed or to turn aside a blade before it finds purchase in their hide.

16: A cyclops' preternatural senses stem from its single eye. If a cyclops loses its eye or is otherwise blinded, it can no longer see into the future. Cyclopes deemed useless as warbeasts are sometimes lobotomized and used as strong but simple laborers, often set to tasks such as carrying heavy or cumbersome loads.



DESERT HYDRA

A truly remarkable trait of the desert hydra is its ongoing generation of additional heads. Growing like a man's hair or toenails throughout the creature's entire lifetime, these appendages mark the many years of its long life. And what of its limitations? How many heads might the most ancient undiscovered specimens possess?

—PROFESSOR VIKTOR PENDRAKE, MONSTERNOMICON

PHYSIQUE	PHY	16
SPEED	SPD	5
STRENGTH	STR	14
AGILITY	AGL	3
PROWESS	PRW	4
POISE	POI	3
INTELLECT	INT	2
ARCANE	ARC	—
PERCEPTION	PER	3



ACID SPRAY

RAT RNG AOE POW

5 SP10 — 14

Abilities: This weapon causes corrosion damage. Characters hit suffer the Corrosion continuous effect.

Concentrated Blast – Once per turn, instead of making normal acid spray attacks, this creature can perform a Concentrated Blast. This weapon becomes RNG SP 10 and POW 16 for one attack.



BITE

MAT POW P+S

6 4 18

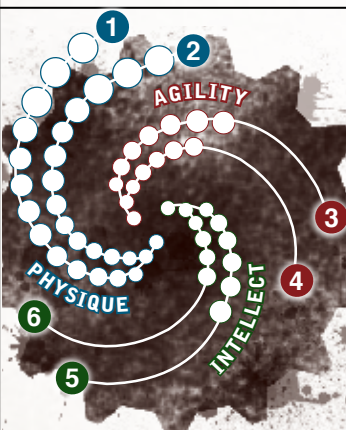
Critical Grievous Wounds – On a critical hit, a character hit by this weapon loses Tough, cannot heal or be healed, and cannot transfer damage for one round.

INITIATIVE INIT 12

DEFENSE DEF 9
(–2 FROM SIZE)

ARMOR ARM 19
(NATURAL ARMOR +3)

WILLPOWER WIL 18



COMMAND RANGE: 2

BASE SIZE: HUGE

ENCOUNTER POINTS: 38

DESCRIPTION

Native to the harsh sands on the western edge of the Valley of Kornash, desert hydras were first discovered by skorne beast handlers sent to retrieve mammoths for use by dominant houses. The skorne encountered a number of mammoths marked by extensive scarring, apparently the result of clashes with multiple attackers possessing enormous jaws. Further investigation revealed the assailant to be not a pack animal but the multi-headed desert hydra.

Desert hydras are large, legless carnivores with a varying number of heads, and their bodies are layered in scales whose colors range from soft beige to deep red. Although a desert hydra begins its life with a single head, masses of cells accumulate and divide upon the torso as the creature ages to form additional heads, all fully functional. On average, a hydra grows one head for each decade of its life. Those of advanced age can have as many as seven heads, though few survive to this stage.

When not engaged in territorial disputes, male hydras often battle one another for the right to mate with a female. Likewise, a female hydra will challenge and fight any males who approach

her, refusing to mate with those who back down. Though a single clutch can contain up to a dozen eggs, competition among newborns is equally fierce, and more than half are killed by their siblings within days of hatching.

Glands inside a hydra's mouths discharge a potent acid capable of eating through chitin and steel, and a heat-sensing structure embedded between its eyes and nostrils facilitates highly accurate strikes against warm-blooded prey. Once its target is dead, the hydra unhinges one of its many jaws to swallow the meal whole, its mandibles guiding the carcass down the creature's gullet. With its multiple heads, a hydra can consume an enemy even as it fends off scavengers and other predators.

Because the creature's vital organs, including its brain, are protected deep within its torso, severing one of its heads during combat will have little effect. Moreover, a hydra's wounds are extremely quick to heal—severed heads regenerate within weeks, and injuries from lesser blows close almost immediately.

The protective plates lining the creature's multiple necks and back also work to retain body heat; alternately, the spines protruding from these plates can disperse excess heat when necessary. Desert hydras spend the daylight hours hunting. At night, when the cold desert air makes them sluggish, they retreat to expansive dens to stay warm. Such dens also serve as nests, and female hydras protect such holdings fiercely. While navigating or constructing these subterranean dens, desert hydras propel themselves through the soil with rows of tiny, horned feet that line their bodies.

Until recently, subjugating these desert terrors for use as warbeasts was not considered to be worth the expense or the inevitable fatalities among the skilled teams sent to secure them, and all attempts to breed them in captivity had failed. When Supreme Archdomina Makeda ordered that hydras be secured to aid in the conquest of the west, the burden of subduing these creatures fell on the beast handlers serving the houses of the Northern Marches.



COMBAT

The desert hydra's numerous heads carry out coordinated attacks against multiple opponents or overwhelm single targets with a barrage of gnashing teeth. Acid secreted from the glands within its mouths help the hydra wear down more resistant prey or fend off other predators or hydras. With its multiple heads and numerous sets of eyes, the creature can deliver and fend off attacks from multiple directions at once, and surprise strikes against it are unlikely to succeed. Its regenerative abilities allow it to fight with abandon and to continue pursuing prey even after suffering wounds that would have toppled other predators its size.

LORE

A character can make an INT + Lore (extraordinary zoology) skill roll to determine what he knows about this creature. He learns all the information up to the result of the roll. The higher the roll, the more he learns.

10: Desert hydras are cold-blooded, multi-headed predators native to the Valley of Kornash. They retreat to subterranean dens in the evening to avoid drops in temperature.

12: Though they are born with only one head, desert hydras grow an additional head roughly every decade. Hydras of advanced age have been sighted with as many as seven heads. Glands inside each of the desert hydra's mouths produce a potent acid the creature expels onto prey.

14: A desert hydra's vital organs, including its brain, are found in its torso, allowing the creature to continue fighting even after one or more heads are severed. Only deep strikes to the torso are likely to prove fatal, though decapitations prior to such strikes may help lead to a kill. Severed heads can grow back within weeks, and lesser wounds heal at a much faster rate.



ABILITIES:

Circular Vision – This creature's front arc extends to 360°.

Close Shot – This creature does not suffer a –4 penalty on ranged attack rolls with its natural ranged weapons while engaged.

Eastern Beast – This creature is considered to be a beast native to the wilds of eastern Immoren.

Fearless – This creature is immune to the effects of fear.

Heightened Regeneration – This creature regains d3 + 3 vitality points per hour in addition to any normal healing.

Multiple Heads [5] – This creature can make five initial attacks each combat action, using any combination of acid spray and bite attacks. This creature loses one initial attack for each aspect it has lost.

Snacking – This creature can spend a quick action to devour any living character destroyed within its melee range to immediately regain d3 vitality points.

Terror [16] – This creature has Terror [16].

CREATURE TEMPLATES:

Man-eater, Predator, Starving

SKILLS:

NAME	STAT	RANK	STAT + RANK
Detection	PER	2	5
Intimidation	SOC	2	•
Tracking	PER	2	5

DRAKE, DEEP



PHYSIQUE	PHY	11
SPEED	SPD	6
STRENGTH	STR	10
AGILITY	AGL	4
PROWESS	PRW	4
POISE	POI	4
INTELLECT	INT	2
ARCANE	ARC	—
PERCEPTION	PER	4



STATIC BREATH			
RAT	RNG	AOE	POW
6	SP 8	—	12

Abilities: This weapon causes electrical damage.

Instead of performing a spray attack, once per turn this creature can place a 5" AOE anywhere in base contact. The AOE is a cloud effect that remains in play for one round. A character that enters or ends its turn in the AOE suffers a POW 10 electrical damage roll.



BITE		
MAT	POW	P+S
6	4	14

Chomp — This creature can attack with this weapon only during its turn and can target only characters it first hit with a claw attack that turn.



CLAW		
MAT	POW	P+S
6	3	13

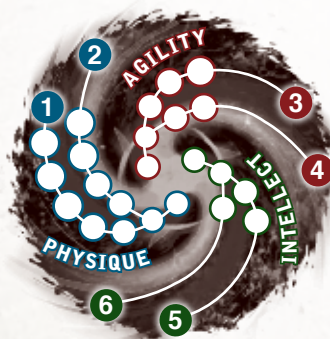
Abilities: Open Fist



CLAW		
MAT	POW	P+S
6	3	13

Abilities: Open Fist

INITIATIVE	INIT	14
DEFENSE	DEF	12
	(-2 FROM SIZE)	
ARMOR	ARM	18
	(NATURAL ARMOR + 7)	
WILLPOWER	WIL	13



COMMAND RANGE:	2
BASE SIZE:	LARGE
ENCOUNTER POINTS:	18

As I crossed the bridges spanning the Abyss, I could not help but look down. A whole ecosystem flourished in the ever-increasing darkness of those stygian depths. Our greatest discovery was this bizarre drake, an apex predator as well adapted to its world as a shark is to the sea.

—PROFESSOR VIKTOR PENDRAKE, MONSTERNOMICON

DESCRIPTION

The deep drake is a rare breed of drake that dwells in underground caverns, lightless crevices, and the winding subterranean tunnels beneath the surface of Caen. A number of deep drakes also call the Abyss home, skulking through the perpetual darkness of its deeper reaches and preying on the strange creatures that lurk in its depths.

The deep drake's bones are as light and flexible as a bird's but as strong as those of a frost drake, and the joints sit loosely in their sockets, allowing the beast to pop them out of place and back in again at will. With this specialized skeletal structure, deep drakes are adept at slipping through tight spaces despite their impressive size. The drake can worm its way through any opening big enough for its head to squeeze through, traversing cracks barely large enough to accommodate a man.

A deep drake's body is sinuous but powerfully muscled, and it is covered in dull grey scales that

seem to absorb more light than they reflect. Although the deep drake's wings are essentially useless, the creature is far from earthbound in its natural habitat. Its grasping claws are as perfectly adapted to scaling the sheerest of rock walls as they are to disemboweling prey. Deep drakes are known to scuttle up cliff faces and across the ceilings of caverns with remarkable agility for such a large creature, and are able to drop from unexpected angles upon startled prey.

Perpetual darkness has rendered the deep drake blind, its eyes little more than milky white spheres. It relies on a combination of other senses to navigate its lightless world. A heightened sense of smell and acute hearing allow the drake to track prey and navigate its surroundings, but its ability to sense the tiniest electrical charge gives it a unique edge. The deep drake can detect even the minute charges flowing through the stones around it, and living creatures are a sparkling bundle of electrical activity—which makes hiding from it almost impossible.

Not only can deep drakes sense electrical energy, but they also generate and store it. In addition to making them immune to electrical attacks, this capacity for manipulating electrical currents gives them the ability to either vomit forth a blast of lightning or discharge their stored power as a galvanic field of dancing bolts that electrocute any who enter it.

COMBAT

Deep drakes are ambush predators that prefer sneaking up on prey from unexpected locations, such as the ceiling of a cavern or a passageway seemingly too small for their bulk. They tend to target isolated individuals, such as those trailing behind or scouting ahead of a group. Once close enough to strike, a deep drake either releases a directed blast of electricity or savages its target with talons and jaws.

If a fight turns against it or an enemy proves resistant to its attacks, a deep drake is not above fleeing to fight another day and will deter pursuit by leaving electrified clouds behind it as it flees. A retreating drake attempts to take a route that will challenge its pursuers, slipping through tight crevices to stymie larger foes or scurrying up sheer cliff faces and across ceilings to confound earthbound adversaries.

LORE

A character can make an INT + Lore (extraordinary zoology) skill roll to determine what he knows about this creature. He learns all the information up to the result of the roll. The higher the roll, the more he learns.

12: Deep drakes are large reptilian predators that lurk in the deep places of the earth. They are ambush predators that prefer to attack unsuspecting or isolated prey and will retreat to try their luck again later if they encounter stiff resistance.

14: Although deep drakes cannot fly, they can scale almost any surface with ease, allowing them to ambush the unwary from cavern ceilings or escape up sheer cliffs. They are incredibly flexible and can worm their way through spaces that seem much too small for such a formidable creature. They use this advantage to bypass resistance and to strike from unexpected angles.

16: Deep drakes are immune to electrical damage and can breathe forth a blast of lightning or a lingering cloud of voltaic energy that electrocutes anyone who enters or remains in it.

18: Deep drakes are completely blind but are hindered little by their lack of vision. They hunt using a combination of smell, acute hearing, and a unique ability to sense the electrical currents that all living things generate. This makes hiding from a deep drake all but impossible and renders many forms of concealment useless.

ABILITIES:

Clutching Claws – This creature can perform headlock/weapon lock power attacks.

Eyeless Sight – This creature ignores cloud effects and forests when determining LOS. This creature ignores concealment and stealth when making attacks.

Fearsome Howl – Once during each of its turns, this creature can spend a quick action to unleash a terrifying howl. For that turn, it has Terror [Willpower +6].

Immunity: Electricity – This creature is immune to electricity.

Slither – This creature can spend a full action to move through spaces as if it were one base size smaller, to a minimum of small-based.

Wall Walker – This creature can climb sheer rock faces as if they were open terrain. While on a wall, this creature cannot be knocked down. If this creature falls while within melee range of a wall, it suffers half damage from falling.

CREATURE TEMPLATES:

Hunter, Juvenile, Nesting Drake

SKILLS:

NAME	STAT	RANK	STAT + RANK
Climbing	AGL	3	7
Detection	PER	2	6
Sneak	AGL	2	6



DUNE PROWLER



PHYSIQUE	PHY	10
SPEED	SPD	5
STRENGTH	STR	9
AGILITY	AGL	3
PROWESS	PRW	4
POISE	POI	1
INTELLECT	INT	2
ARCANE	ARC	—
PERCEPTION	PER	3

**BITE**

MAT	POW	P+S
6	4	13

Chomp – This creature can attack with this weapon only during its turn and can target only characters it first hit with a claw attack that turn.

**CLAW**

MAT	POW	P+S
6	3	12

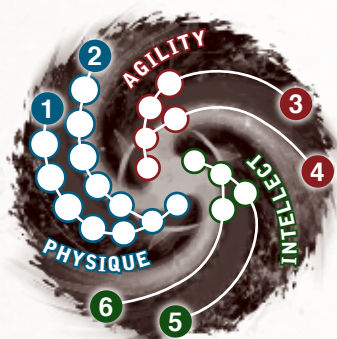
Bleed Out – If this creature hits the same living target with its initial melee attacks with this weapon, after resolving the attacks it can immediately make one additional melee attack against that target. If the additional attack hits, it does not inflict damage, but the target suffers 1 damage point to the first available undamaged point on each branch of its life spiral.

**CLAW**

MAT	POW	P+S
6	3	12

Abilities: Bleed Out – See above.

INITIATIVE	INIT	12
DEFENSE	DEF	11
ARMOR	ARM	14
(NATURAL ARMOR + 4)		
WILLPOWER	WIL	12



COMMAND RANGE: 2

BASE SIZE: MEDIUM

ENCOUNTER POINTS: 12

It seems patience can, in fact, be a virtue. Dune prowlers are able to lurk for days at a time near oases, needing only to wait for their prey to become thirsty. How fortunate for them that they dwell in a desert.

—PROFESSOR VIKTOR PENDRAKE, MONSTERNOMICON

DESCRIPTION

The dune prowler is an efficient ambush predator native to the Bloodstone Desert. Its hunched posture, elongated arms, and pronounced hump give the beast an ungainly silhouette. The dune prowler's thick reddish skin is covered in short, coarse spines and patches of thicker protective hide. Its long claws allow it to dig deep furrows in hard-packed soil in moments, and its long arms provide superior reach and leverage. Its hump is one of the dune prowler's greatest natural advantages: not only can it store a week's worth of water, thereby helping the prowler survive in the arid wastes, but it also holds stores of fat that can nourish the creature for up to three weeks.

During the heat of the day, dune prowlers dig into the cooler sand or soil to rest, leaving only the tops of their heads and snouts above the sand. But this habit is more than just a means of regulating temperature. Even as prowlers lie quietly, their reddish hue blending in with the ruddy sandstone of the Bloodstone Marches, they remain alert and ready to burst out and seize any creature that passes within reach. The long, coarse bristles protruding

from their skin allow them to feel subtle vibrations in the sand that betray a potential meal's movements, no matter how stealthy. Oases and other well-traveled spots are favored places for such ambushes, but dune prowlers are quite capable of burrowing through the desert sand to stake out a new area if game is sparse.

The lair of a dune prowler, hidden away somewhere within its vast territories, is a meticulously crafted network of tunnels and chambers hewn from the sandstone bedrock of the desert. Males construct these lairs to gain the attention and affection of a mate. The grander the scale and the more precise the workmanship, the more likely a female is to respond. A mated pair of dune prowlers will inhabit the same den for decades, producing several generations of young. Because young dune prowlers are blind and vulnerable for the first year of development, one of the adults stays close to the den while the other hunts nearby, dragging carcasses back for its mate and young.

Once the young are capable of hunting, a family of dune prowlers forms a loose pack that can split apart to hunt separately or gang up as needed to take down larger creatures or slaughter groups of smaller ones that might otherwise scatter. Status in the pack is determined by mock combat that rarely spills any blood. These mock combats are common and necessary; in addition to deciding the pack's hierarchy, they determine which creatures have access to the best territories, finest lairs, and largest number of mates.

ABILITIES:

Ambush – During the first round of an encounter, this creature gains boosted attack and damage rolls against enemies that have not yet activated that encounter.

Burrow – This creature can use a quick action to burrow beneath loose earth or sand. Until it moves, is placed, or is engaged, it gains concealment and does not block LOS.

Death from Below – This creature gains boosted Initiative rolls and has Terror [14] during the first round of an encounter.

Eastern Beast – This creature is considered to be a beast native to the wilds of eastern Immoren.

Prowl – This creature gains stealth while within terrain that provides concealment, the AOE of a spell that provides concealment, or the AOE of a cloud effect.

Quake Sense – This creature gains boosted Detection skill rolls made to notice moving characters in contact with the ground within 120 feet (20").

CREATURE TEMPLATES:

Alert, Ill-tempered, Large Specimen, Man-eater

SKILLS:

NAME	STAT	RANK	STAT + RANK
Detection	PER	1	4
Sneak	AGL	2	5

COMBAT

Dune prowlers prefer to ambush potential prey from beneath the dunes, bursting forth in a spray of sand before relentlessly savaging their chosen target with tooth and claw. Packs utilize their superior reach to dominate particularly dangerous prey and bring it down quickly. If the prey proves a match for the dune prowlers or begins to get the upper hand, they will retreat back into the dunes to bide their time until an easier meal comes along.

LORE

A character can make an INT + Lore (extraordinary zoology) skill roll to determine what he knows about this creature. He learns all the information up to the result of the roll. The higher the roll, the more he learns.

11: Dune prowlers are predators native to the Bloodstone Desert. Their elongated arms, hunched stance, pronounced hump, and rough bristles make them seem ungainly at first glance, but they are consummate hunters and vicious combatants.

13: Dune prowlers ambush their prey from beneath the sand, using their sensitive bristles to feel the approach of a target even as they remain well hidden.

15: Dune prowler lairs are extensive underground tunnel networks that can hold up to a dozen individual beasts.





GENZOUL

In my time among the skorne, I encountered very little that frightened those warlike people—which makes the horror they feel regarding the genzoul particularly noteworthy. These degenerate undead cannibals represent the worst possible fate to the skorne mind—immortality without reason or honor.

—PROFESSOR VIKTOR PENDRAKE, MONSTERNOMICON

PHYSIQUE	PHY	7
SPEED	SPD	6
STRENGTH	STR	6
AGILITY	AGL	3
PROWESS	PRW	5
POISE	POI	4
INTELLECT	INT	3
ARCANE	ARC	—
PERCEPTION	PER	4



BITE

MAT	POW	P+S
7	3	9

Gorge – If this weapon damages a living character, this creature immediately regains 1 vitality point.



CLAW

MAT	POW	P+S
7	2	8

INITIATIVE	INIT	15
DEFENSE	DEF	13
ARMOR	ARM	14
(NATURAL ARMOR +7)		
WILLPOWER	WIL	10

VITALITY: 14

COMMAND RANGE: 3

BASE SIZE: SMALL

ENCOUNTER POINTS: 10

DESCRIPTION

The skorne outlook on life and death is grim and fatalistic. Their world is so full of pain and suffering, their afterlife so devoid of hope, that they do not blanch at horrors that would turn the stomach of even the most hardened campaigners of western Immoren. But there is a fate that gives even mortitheurges and paingivers pause: *karovoul*, or the ravening, which causes nearly all skorne thus afflicted to transform into the abominations called *genzoul*.

Apparently unique to the skorne race, *karovoul* is a malady of the mind that can spread quickly among isolated communities of skorne, causing a ravenous hunger in skorne for the flesh of their own kind. Skorne hermits are particularly susceptible,

especially those who practice the mortitheurgical arts or extreme forms of asceticism and self-flagellation. The precise cause is unknown, though some skorne scholars believe meditative self-privation combined with study of the Void can lead to the onset of *karovoul*. Outbreaks have also been documented among small, isolated Praetorian patrols and outposts, typically those in the most far-flung reaches of the wastes.

The ravening can spontaneously manifest in an individual skorne or among small groups, and the bite of those who have succumbed to the disease swiftly carries the infection to others. In rare cases, entire decurion of skorne warriors have been infected, degenerating into *genzoul* and laying waste to whole regions before being put down.

The course of this affliction consists of two phases. The first takes place while a victim is still alive, and the second extends past the death of the body. Within days of infection, an affected skorne will begin to feel an insatiable hunger for meat, preferring raw flesh over cooked. It is possible to stave off the disease at this stage through fasting and considerable will, but few succeed. Eating the meat of ordinary beasts has little impact on the hunger of *karovoul*, and soon the afflicted feel compelled to eat skorne flesh, and the fresher, the better.

Should a skorne give in to these cravings and feast upon living flesh, the disease progresses. The skorne's appetite grows even as his body wastes away and expires; his life force is consumed as the corpse transforms into an undead state, still wracked with hunger. This process takes time, during which the body appears inert. If the corpse is not dismembered and burned, it will rise as a *genzoul* within a handful of days.

Unlike shambling thralls or other undead of western Immoren, the *genzoul* is a canny hunter, often lurking near watering holes in the desert to await the arrival of caravans or supply trains. They remember much of what they knew in life and are quite adept at ambushing solitary travelers or those who wander too far from an armed camp. *Genzoul* infected at isolated outposts may even linger in their fortifications, waiting for the next group of reinforcements to arrive.

A *genzoul* typically lunges from concealment when its prey is distracted and vulnerable. At the moment of attack, all higher awareness is lost as the creature tears at its victim with abandon. Alarmingly, any wounds a *genzoul* has suffered mend rapidly as it gorges on gobbets of raw flesh, and the creature grows stronger with each bloody mouthful.

The way *genzoul* linger between life and death is terrifying to the skorne. Some surmise that a *genzoul* is the hunger of the Void given physical form—a horrific mockery of the exalted state all skorne warriors aspire to achieve.

COMBAT

Genzoul approach combat with cunning and careful consideration, and they can communicate and cooperate with others of their kind. At the approach of any significant force, a *genzoul* either hides until it passes or attacks stragglers, dragging their bodies to a safe feeding place. Groups of *genzoul* sometimes fall upon outlying villages or small caravans, attacking the most heavily armed before moving on to the more vulnerable.



LORE

A character can make an INT + Lore (undead) skill roll to determine what he knows about this creature. He learns all the information up to the result of the roll. The higher the roll, the more he learns.

12: Genzoul are a kind of predatory, undead skorne found in desolate wilderness regions.

14: Genzoul gain vitality as they eat the flesh of sentient creatures. A few mouthfuls of flesh can heal minor wounds,

and consuming an entire corpse allows them to mend more severe injuries.

16: Genzoul do not begin as undead; instead, they transform after eating the flesh of their own kind. They are afflicted by karouvoul, a ravening hunger that causes a compulsion for cannibalism. Those bitten by genzoul usually succumb to this impulse and eventually become genzoul in turn.

ABILITIES:

Death Rise – A skorne character who dies as a result of the ravening rises as a genzoul in d3 days unless the corpse is decapitated. A newly risen genzoul gains Ravening, Snacking, Terror, Undead, +2 PHY, and +1 STR. It has a number of vitality points equal to twice its new PHY and gains a single POW 3 bite attack with the Gorge ability and two POW 2 claw attacks.

Ravening – A character damaged by a bite attack made by this creature has a chance of being infected with the ravening. Immediately after the attack has been resolved, the damaged character must make a PHY roll against a target number of 14. If the roll succeeds, the character resists the disease. If the roll fails, the character contracts the ravening. The first symptoms manifest after d3 days, at which time the character develops an insatiable appetite for flesh. While infected, once per day the character must make a Willpower roll against a target number of 20. If the roll fails, the character attempts to sate his hunger by feasting on any meat he can acquire, regardless of the source.

Every six hours, an infected character must make an additional PHY roll against a target number of 16. (Reduce this number to 14 if the character consumed one or more pounds of flesh from a living sentient creature in the past six hours.) If the character passes three of these rolls, he fights off the disease. If the character fails three of these rolls, the disease moves on to the advanced stage.

During the ravening's advanced stage, the character cannot regain vitality by any means. Every three hours thereafter, the character must make a PHY roll against a target number of 16. (Reduce this number to 14 if the character consumed one or more pounds of

flesh from a living sentient creature in the past three hours.) For each roll that fails, the character suffers d3 damage points. If the character becomes incapacitated as a result, he dies and rises as a genzoul. If the character passes three of these rolls, he fights off the disease.

Snacking – This creature can spend a quick action to devour any living character destroyed within its melee range to immediately regain d3 vitality points.

Terror – This creature has Terror [Willpower +4].

Undead – This creature is not a living creature and never flees.

CREATURE TEMPLATES:

None.

SKILLS:

NAME	STAT	RANK	STAT + RANK
Detection	PER	2	6
Sneak	AGL	2	5
Survival	PER	1	5
Tracking	PER	2	6

Note: The genzoul retains the skills it had in life. The above skills represent an average selection of skills.



KOVAAS

One of the perils of exaltation, these spirits are the byproduct of a sacral stone's destruction. I suppose I too might become a wrathful specter bent on slaughter if someone brought me out of retirement in such a violent and inconsiderate fashion.

—PROFESSOR VIKTOR PENDRAKE, MONSTERNOMICON

PHYSIQUE	PHY	13
	(WILLPOWER)	
SPEED	SPD	6
	(WILLPOWER ÷ 2)	
STRENGTH	STR	0
AGILITY	AGL	6
	(AS IN LIFE)	
PROWESS	PRW	5
	(AS IN LIFE)	
POISE	POI	4
	(AS IN LIFE)	
INTELLECT	INT	4
	(AS IN LIFE)	
ARCANE	ARC	•
	(AS IN LIFE)	
PERCEPTION	PER	3
	(AS IN LIFE)	



WASTING TOUCH

MAT	POW	P+S
7	13	13

Abilities: This weapon has Reach and is a magical weapon.

Once per round, instead of attacking with both claws separately, this creature can make one melee attack with this weapon against each character in its LOS and this weapon's melee range.

INITIATIVE	INIT	15
DEFENSE	DEF	15
ARMOR	ARM	13
	(WILLPOWER)	
WILLPOWER	WIL	13
	(AS IN LIFE)	

VITALITY: EQUAL TO WILLPOWER

COMMAND RANGE: 4

BASE SIZE: MEDIUM

ENCOUNTER POINTS: 13

DESCRIPTION

Kovaas are rage-filled spirits—incorporeal monsters intertwined with the shattered remains of fallen ancestral guardians. Cracked shards of sacral stones and gilded stonework swirl within a kovaas' ghostly form as it writhes and spasms in unending agony. Constantly screaming their hatred at the world that spawned them, kovaas lash out spitefully at anything in their path.

Sacral stones are incredibly resilient. They can survive even the complete destruction of the stony bodies they are mounted in when called to war, often falling to the sands to be recovered after battle. On rare occasions, however, a stone can shatter, annihilating the personality and sanity of the exalted ancestor preserved within and birthing the hateful wraith known as the kovaas.

Driven to madness by this violent transformation, a kovaas bears a hateful fury toward the living—those who destroyed or failed to protect its sacral stone

endures. This process can take days or even weeks if the pieces of its body are widely scattered or hidden away, but the creature will eventually reclaim enough to rebuild.

Specialized rituals known only to high-ranking extollers can bind a kovaas' spirit within a new sacral stone, but this will not restore its shattered mind. The new stone essentially becomes a prison. This arduous and extremely dangerous process often claims the lives of those attempting it, and if successful merely contains the seething wraith, whose obsidian prison must be sealed away lest it escape to slaughter the living once more.

The skorne view kovaas as an abhorrent corruption, a twisted mockery of everything their culture stands for. Reverence for the great ancestors of a house is the closest analog to religion skorne have, and such figures are venerated and honored. The destruction of an ancestor's mind is deemed one of the greatest losses a house can endure, not to mention the great harm the kovaas can inflict if not contained.

Skorne history contains numerous reports of the destructiveness of these spirits and the devastation they have wrought. One infamous example chronicles the folly of Lord Tyrant Norvaak, supreme aptimus of House Bashek. In a misguided attempt to conquer Halaak in 1400 BR, he shattered three sacral stones captured from houses opposing his own, releasing three kovaas upon the city. But the enraged spirits were beyond his control, and after slaughtering him and his men, they nearly annihilated the capitol before they could be contained. Thousands died, their souls sent screaming into the abyss without hope of exaltation or even preservation.

COMBAT

Utterly insane and caring nothing for their own existence, kovaas hurl themselves at anything foolish enough to approach. In combat they lash out with chunks of their broken stone bodies or reach out to tear the life essence from their victims' bodies directly, snatching the souls of the slain to power their continued slaughter before condemning them to the Void. By calling on their connection to that abyss, kovaas can unleash a withering cloud of baleful energy that saps the moisture from living tissue even as it tugs hungrily at the souls of any who enter, inflicting excruciating injuries in the process. Their madness makes them unpredictable; they may single out and attack a single target, ignoring all others, or they may strike indiscriminately at many different adversaries.

and cursed it to an eternity of agony as well as those whose only crime is living when the kovaas cannot. All are guilty in the kovaas' twisted psyche, and it seeks to cast them into the searing embrace of the Void.

A kovaas is all but impossible to permanently destroy. Its physical form can be disabled, its spiritual essence scattered, and its stony components rendered into lifeless rubble, but its spirit will survive. The kovaas will return and strive to reconstruct itself as long as a single grain of sand from its original body

ABILITIES:

Desiccator – Once per round, this creature can spend a quick action to use this ability. Center a 4" AOE cloud effect on this creature. Living characters entering or ending their activation in the AOE suffer d3 damage points. The AOE remains in play for one round.

Destruction Spawned – This creature does not start the game in play. When an ancestral guardian's sacril stone is destroyed (see p. 100), a kovaas is released. Replace the ancestral guardian with a kovaas. If the ancestral guardian had soul tokens on it at the time it was destroyed, place the same number of soul tokens, up to a maximum of three, on the kovaas replacing it. Effects on the ancestral guardian expire. The kovaas cannot activate the turn it was put into play.

Incorporeal – This creature can move through rough terrain and obstacles without penalty and can move through obstructions and other characters if it has enough movement to move completely past them. Other characters, including slammed, pushed, or thrown characters, can move through this creature without effect if they have enough movement to move completely past it. This creature does not count as intervening. Blessed weapons affect this creature normally. Spells, animi, and magical weapons can damage this creature but roll one fewer die on damage rolls. No other weapons can damage this creature. This creature is immune to continuous effects and cannot be moved by a slam.

Soul Taker – This creature gains one soul token when a living enemy is destroyed within twelve feet (2") of it. This creature can have up to three soul tokens at a time. During its turn, this creature can spend soul tokens to gain additional attacks or to boost attack or damage rolls at one token per attack or boost.

Terror – This creature has Terror [Willpower +4].

Undead – This creature is not a living creature and never flees.

CREATURE TEMPLATES:

None.

SKILLS:

NAME	STAT	RANK	STAT + RANK
Detection	PER	2	5

LORE

A character can make an INT + Lore (extoller or undead) skill roll to determine what he knows about this creature. He learns all the information up to the result of the roll. The higher the roll, the more he learns.

10: Kovaas are hateful and violent spirits that haunt the east, venting their undying fury on all who cross their path.

11: Kovaas are created by the destruction of a sacril stone that contains the soul of an exalted skorne. This warps the once-proud ancestor into a malevolent spirit that desires only slaughter.

14: Kovaas are almost impossible to permanently destroy and will eventually reconstruct themselves unless bound by ancient and specialized rituals known only to the most knowledgeable extollers.





MAMMOTH

PHYSIQUE	PHY	18
SPEED	SPD	5
STRENGTH	STR	15
AGILITY	AGL	2
PROWESS	PRW	4
POISE	POI	1
INTELLECT	INT	2
ARCANE	ARC	—
PERCEPTION	PER	3



TUSKS

MAT	POW	P+S
6	3	18

Critical Pitch – On a critical hit, instead of rolling damage normally, this creature can throw the character hit. Treat the throw as if this creature had hit the target with and passed the STR check of a throw power attack. The thrown character suffers a damage roll with a POW equal to this creature's STR plus the POW of this weapon. The POW of collateral damage is equal to this creature's STR.



FIST

MAT	POW	P+S
6	2	17

Abilities: Open Fist

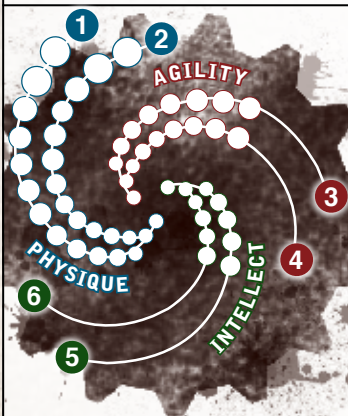


FIST

MAT	POW	P+S
6	2	17

Abilities: Open Fist

INITIATIVE	INIT	12
DEFENSE	DEF	8
	(–2 FROM SIZE)	
ARMOR	ARM	20
	(NATURAL ARMOR + 2)	
WILLPOWER	WIL	12



COMMAND RANGE: 2

BASE SIZE: HUGE

ENCOUNTER POINTS: 35

My journeys in the east gave me the opportunity to witness countless beasts of startling description, but few as breathtaking as the mammoth. I watched it locked in battle with a grand desert hydra, its roaring battle cry echoing across the land. It was as if the land itself had come to life, and I was watching two mountains fight to the death.

—PROFESSOR VIKTOR PENDRAKE, MONSTERNOMICON

DESCRIPTION

Making the earth tremble with every step, the mammoth is one of the largest examples of megafauna found in the Valley of Kornash in the Northern Tor of the Skorne Empire. Standing approximately thirty feet tall despite their hunched posture, mammoths possess strength on a scale to match their impressive size. Only similarly great beasts like the desert hydra give them any cause for alarm, and even a single mammoth can cause deadly wounds to that fearsome predator. Many old desert hydras bear scars from the tusks, teeth, and fists of the mammoth, and the valley is littered with the bones of the titanic beasts still locked in the final throes of combat.

A mammoth shares some anatomical similarities with the far smaller titan, but there are significant differences. Unlike the titan, the mammoth has a broad bone crest growing from the skull with a row of sharp horns along the lower perimeter. Adult mammoths have long, curled tusks they use in combat and in dominance displays. Males grow a smaller secondary set of tusks that protects the primary pair from damage. Covered in dense muscle and a thick grey

hide, full-grown mammoths weigh over a hundred tons. When not in danger or roused to anger, their motions are plodding, but they can move with surprising bursts of speed when willing to invest the energy to do so.

When a mammoth perceives a threat or potential challenger, it emits a low, resonant bellow and charges forward to attack with its tusks. It will then use both of its thick arms to grapple with creatures of similar size, such as a competing male or desert hydra, and to crush smaller creatures or hurl them away. Temperamental beasts, mammoths can fly into a rampage from even minor provocations. Unlike other large creatures that fail to consider smaller entities threats, mammoths are quick to drive off or devour creatures of any size that intrude on their territory or threaten them.

Mammoths move through the valley in small herds. The amount of food required by a single mammoth could quickly strip acres of grassland, so the herds move constantly, keeping sources of fresh water nearby. Mammoths are not strictly herbivores, however. They supplement their diets with the occasional meal of flesh and are especially fond of cattle, though they will also consume carrion when no fresh meat is unavailable.

A herd consists of a dominant female and several younger females and their offspring. Young males remain with a herd until capable of defending themselves, at which time they break off. Adult males are solitary creatures and join herds only for brief periods during the mating season, when rivals use their tusks in long bouts to determine mating rights.

Adult mammoths protect their young fiercely, circling around to shield them from attack while coming out singly or in pairs to trample and gore predators that come too close. Some of the cleverer pack predators of the Valley of Kornash have learned to use this technique against the mammoths, drawing the adults out to create an opening that pack mates can exploit. Attackers that break through the defensive circle may find that, despite their youth, even juvenile mammoths are fierce enough to crush them.

COMBAT

A mammoth's first instinct in combat is to trample ahead and use its overwhelming size and weight to crush the threat underfoot. Utterly fearless, mammoths respond with violence when other beasts would turn and flee. They are not dissuaded by fire or noise, much less direct attack. Anything that withstands the tremendous impact of a charging mammoth is raked with sweeping blows from the creature's tusks or crushed under its powerful fists. The sweep of a mammoth's tusks can hurl away any smaller creature into prime position for another charge. If anything remains of its hapless adversary, the mammoth scoops up the remains and devours them in a fit of anger.

LORE

A character can make an INT + Lore (extraordinary zoology) skill roll to determine what he knows about this creature. He learns all the information up to the result of the roll. The higher the roll, the more he learns.

10: Mammoths are giant creatures native to the Valley of Kornash. They are primarily grazing animals that move in small herds, but they occasionally supplement their diets with meat.

12: Mammoth herds consist of multiple females and their young. Males are solitary and much more aggressive than females, although the latter are violent when protecting their young.

14: If agitated or threatened, a mammoth charges recklessly into combat, attempting to trample smaller creatures in its path and to gore larger threats with its tusks. After charging, a mammoth tries to crush smaller creatures with its giant fists or smash them away with its tusks.



ABILITIES:

Bulldoze – When this creature is B2B with an enemy character during its normal movement, it can push that character up to twelve feet (2") directly away from it. A character can be pushed by Bulldoze only once per activation. Bulldoze has no effect when this creature makes a trample power attack.

Collapse – When this creature is incapacitated, each character B2B with it must make an AGL roll against a target number of 12. If the roll fails, the character suffers a damage roll with a POW equal to this creature's PHY.

Eastern Beast – This creature is considered to be a beast native to the wilds of eastern Immoren.

Fearless – This creature is immune to the effects of fear.

Trample – This creature can make trample power attacks.

CREATURE TEMPLATES:

Alpha, Juvenile, Lone Wolf, Protector

SKILLS:

NAME	STAT	RANK	STAT + RANK
Detection	PER	2	5
Intimidation	SOC	3	*

RAZOR WORM



Razor worms are merely one of the perils of crossing the Blasted Desert. In the east, one must always be on guard against attack, even that which emerges from beneath the ground one treads upon.

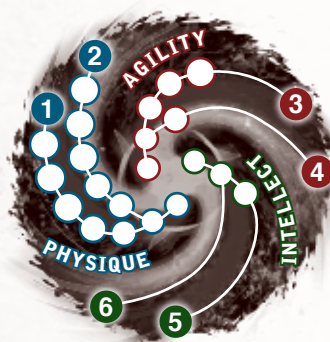
—PROFESSOR VIKTOR PENDRAKE, MONSTERNOMICON

PHYSIQUE	PHY	8
SPEED	SPD	6
STRENGTH	STR	8
AGILITY	AGL	4
PROWESS	PRW	4
POISE	POI	0
INTELLECT	INT	1
ARCANE	ARC	—
PERCEPTION	PER	3



BITE		
MAT	POW	P+S
6	4	12

INITIATIVE	INIT	13
DEFENSE	DEF	13
ARMOR	ARM	16
	(NATURAL ARMOR +8)	
WILLPOWER	WIL	9



COMMAND RANGE: 1

BASE SIZE: MEDIUM

ENCOUNTER POINTS: 6

DESCRIPTION

Razor worms are enormous soft-bodied worms that burrow through loose soil to ambush their prey from below. Dozens of short, pointed appendages run down the sides of their bodies and work in unison to propel a razor worm through the soil with surprising speed. The razor worm's rubbery skin is highly resilient, and its back is covered with thick plates of chitin. This combination provides the worm with surprising resistance to injury for such a seemingly soft and pliant creature.

The razor worm's coloration is a sandy tan tinged with red, giving it excellent camouflage in many of its favored desert habitats. A prominent backward-curved horn extends from the head of the worm, just above its gaping maw. Although razor worms are blind, a hidden lateral line runs just beneath the outer edge of their chitin, and thousands of sensitive cilia grow between their

chitinous plates. These sensory organs render razor worms extremely sensitive to vibrations, allowing them to pinpoint the footfall of prey from well over a hundred feet away.

These burrowing beasts have great strength, but it is their speed that is truly astonishing. When moving through the loosest soil, razor worms can reach and sustain impressive speeds for several hours without tiring. A mild rumbling rises from the ground as they burrow, and a crest of displaced earth marks their passage.

Razor worms can go days or even weeks without eating, living off the fat accumulated in their bulk. Their body shrinks somewhat as a result, but when they find a new source of prey they restore their mass quickly by gorging themselves on as many victims as they can find.

Although razor worms are typically solitary, several can be drawn to the same area to feed when prey is abundant. The creatures generally ignore each other when inhabiting the same region and move on separately when food becomes scarce. Razor worms interact with others of their kind in only one significant way: two or three times in their lives, razor worms will pair up and copulate. A day or so later, the female secretes a large sac containing dozens of embryos, which gestate in the sac for weeks before emerging. The infant worms are left to their own devices, and only two or three typically survive to adulthood.

Because their sizeable appetite forces them to travel constantly to find sufficient sustenance, razor worms do not generally create dens. When they sleep, they typically burrow as deep as the soil allows. Razor worms that have been attacked recently often instinctually find a pocket of deep soil near or within bedrock, which provides a better-protected resting place.

Razor worms' size and ferocity make them prized additions to skorne armies. Only the most talented beast handlers have any chance of trapping and training an adult worm, and training one from infancy is a losing endeavor, as any deviation from a normal growth process inhibits the worm's ferocity and renders it too docile for battle.

The leatherworkers and armorers of the Skorne Empire prize the razor worm's hide. Expert craftsmen can slice the thick skin into multiple layers, creating many suits of tough yet supple leather armor from a single worm carcass. Live razor worms are sometimes sought out by particularly wealthy nobles, who value them as trophies in their menageries or pit them against other creatures or a handful of slaves as entertainment.

COMBAT

Razor worms are stealthy predators that stalk their prey from below the ground. When ready to attack, they burst up through the soil, mandibles splayed to display gaping maws packed with dozens of hooked teeth. Those caught in a razor worm's mouth are dragged beneath the surface and devoured.

LORE

A character can make an INT + Lore (extraordinary zoology) skill roll to determine what he knows about this creature. He learns all the information up to the result of the roll. The higher the roll, the more he learns.

10: A razor worm is a gigantic, leathery-skinned worm that inhabits the deserts of eastern Immoren. Although blind, it is extremely sensitive to vibrations in the ground and capable of sensing footsteps from far away.

12: A razor worm can move very quickly underground, even through dense soil. It attacks from below, erupting from the ground to catch its prey from unexpected angles. Razor worms leave long, shallow ditches in their wake as they burrow through the soil, and these trails can provide an early warning of razor worm activity in an area.

14: Although normally solitary, razor worms can be encountered in pairs when mating or in small groups when prey is abundant in a specific area.



ABILITIES:

Ambush – During the first round of an encounter, this creature gains boosted attack and damage rolls against enemies that have not yet activated that encounter.

Dig In – This creature can dig in as a quick action. Until it moves, is placed, goes prone, or is engaged, this creature gains cover, does not suffer blast damage, and does not block LOS. This creature cannot use Dig In during a turn in which it ran.

Drag Below – During this creature's activation, immediately after resolving an attack in which this creature incapacitates a small-based character, the creature can use Drag Below. The incapacitated character is pulled beneath the earth, and this creature can immediately make a full advance and then Dig In, then its turn ends. The incapacitated character will die in a number of rounds equal to its PHY score unless this creature is killed and the character is pulled free with a quick action.

Eastern Beast – This creature is considered to be a beast native to the wilds of eastern Immoren.

Eyeless Sight – This creature ignores cloud effects and forests when determining LOS. This creature ignores concealment and stealth when making attacks.

Quake Sense – This creature gains boosted Detection skill rolls made to notice moving characters in contact with the ground within 120 feet (20").

Serpentine – This creature cannot make slam or trample power attacks and cannot be knocked down.

CREATURE TEMPLATES:

Large Specimen, Lone Wolf, Predator

SKILLS:

NAME	STAT	RANK	STAT + RANK
Detection	PER	2	5
Sneak	AGL	2	6

REPTILE HOUND



Once we drove the skorne from Corvis, reports of these ugly, walleyed beasts became increasingly common in the Bloodstone Marches. It seems that during their retreat, the invaders saw fit to leave behind a few hounds to breed among the Greybranch Mountains.

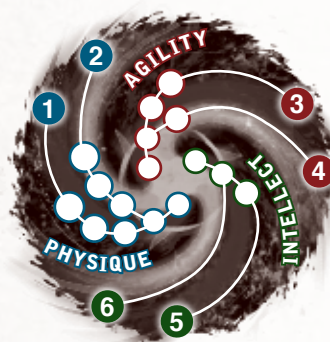
—PROFESSOR VIKTOR PENDRAKE, MONSTERNOMICON

PHYSIQUE	PHY	6
SPEED	SPD	7
STRENGTH	STR	6
AGILITY	AGL	4
PROWESS	PRW	3
POISE	POI	1
INTELLECT	INT	1
ARCANE	ARC	—
PERCEPTION	PER	3



BITE		
MAT	POW	P+S
5	2	8

INITIATIVE	INIT	13
DEFENSE	DEF	14
ARMOR	ARM	11
(NATURAL ARMOR + 5)		
WILLPOWER	WIL	7



COMMAND RANGE: 1

BASE SIZE: SMALL

ENCOUNTER POINTS: 13

DESCRIPTION

The creatures known as reptile hounds were originally brought west by the skorne. Some escaped their handlers and went feral in the desert. They bred quickly, leading to packs of roaming reptile hounds in the Bloodstone Marches and throughout the greater Bloodstone Desert.

The reptile hound is a short, stocky pack hunter. Bands of darker stripes mottling its scales help the creature blend in with desert terrain. Each of a reptile hound's four tightly muscled legs ends in a wide paw with long, curved claws the beast uses to strip the flesh off its prey. Its large, slaving mouth is filled with broad teeth shaped like arrowheads. A reptile hound's eyes are set back from its mouth and have a clear, nictitating membrane to protect them when the beast plunges its head into a carcass to feed. A male reptile hound has three prominent rows of horns growing from

its head: one down each side of its lower jaw, and one straight down the top of its skull.

Although their strength is noteworthy, reptile hounds are also quite fast, particularly over short distances. Those who survive a reptile hound's attack often comment on how quickly the

hound was upon them. The beast's eyesight and hearing are average, but its keen nose makes it an excellent tracker. The scent of blood can send a reptile hound into a frenzy during which it abandons all caution in its urgency to feast.

Over the years, several varieties of reptile hounds have been spotted. The coloration, number, and length of the males' horns differ from one breed to another, though all such breeds are equally vicious and dangerous.

As pack predators, reptile hounds roam the wastes in groups of six to twenty members. Typically, more than half of the pack is female. One alpha leads the females and a handful of subservient males. The alpha is the only hound that mates with the females, which it does once each year. If the alpha is injured or aging, the other males converge upon and kill him. The remaining males then fight for dominance until all but one have been killed or driven off. The remaining male becomes the new alpha, and new subservient males are introduced only from its offspring. Rogue males typically wander alone but occasionally join in smaller, all-male packs for survival.

Lacking true homes, reptile hounds find shelter wherever they can. They sometimes bed down in rocky recesses or even in the carcasses of larger beasts they have killed, but more often they use their powerful forelimbs and claws to dig nests in the loose desert soil.

While hunting, a pack might split into several smaller hunting parties to cover more ground. When faced with a larger foe, however, the entire pack attacks together. If their usual prey is scarce, reptile hounds resort to hunting other packs of their own kind—even turning on their pack mates if pressed far enough by their insatiable hunger.

Skorne armies often employ groups of trained reptile hounds as advance attackers. When sent into battle in numbers, the hounds often cause great carnage and chaos. Many skorne officers keep a pet reptile hound as both a symbol of status and as protection, and often pitting them against one another for sport.

COMBAT

Reptile hounds hunt in packs of six to twenty animals. They use the terrain to their advantage and may stalk prey for many miles before attacking with their powerful jaws at the perfect opportunity. When faced with multiple foes, the pack splits up into several groups as evenly as possible. Against a single larger foe, they attack in unison, attempting to quickly overwhelm their prey. The alpha will keep his distance until his pack mates have softened up the target before entering the fray to deliver the killing blow.

LORE

A character can make an INT + Lore (extraordinary zoology) skill roll to determine what he knows about this creature. He learns all the information up to the result of the roll. The higher the roll, the more he learns.

10: Reptile hounds are vicious pack predators that wander the Bloodstone Desert and the Bloodstone Marches. They are excellent at tracking prey by scent.

12: Reptile hounds were originally brought west by the skorne. Some escaped into the wilds and became feral. They breed quickly and are found throughout the continent's central deserts.

14: Reptile hounds travel in packs of six to twenty and always hunt in groups. The sight of a single hound means more are likely nearby. The pack alpha will often wait in the back for his pack mates to soften up prey.

16: Reptile hounds are prized by skorne leaders as status symbols and for blood sport. They are trained to attack on command and are sometimes used to intimidate or punish subordinates. Large groups of trained hounds often accompany skorne armies.



ABILITIES:

Cold Blooded – This creature gains boosted Willpower rolls to resist fear.

Eastern Beast – This creature is considered to be a beast native to the wilds of eastern Immoren.

Olfaction – This creature gains +2 on PER rolls related to scent.

CREATURE TEMPLATES:

Alert, Backbiter, Ill-tempered, Trained

SKILLS:

NAME	STAT	RANK	STAT + RANK
Detection	PER	1	4
Tracking	PER	2	5

RHINODON

These creatures remind me of a former student of mine: nearsighted, ugly, and with a predilection for violently lashing out at things upon the slightest provocation. These are poor qualities for a university setting but admirable ones for a battlefield.

—PROFESSOR VIKTOR PENDRAKE, MONSTERNOMICON

PHYSIQUE	PHY	12
SPEED	SPD	5
STRENGTH	STR	10
AGILITY	AGL	3
PROWESS	PRW	3
POISE	POI	1
INTELLECT	INT	2
ARCANE	ARC	—
PERCEPTION	PER	3



TAIL		
MAT	POW	P+S
5	4	14

Abilities: This weapon has Reach.

Rear Attack – When declaring and resolving attacks with this weapon, this creature's front arc extends to 360°.



CLAW		
MAT	POW	P+S
5	3	13

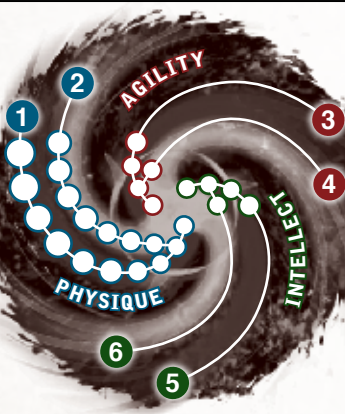
Abilities: Open Fist



CLAW		
MAT	POW	P+S
5	3	13

Abilities: Open Fist

INITIATIVE	INIT	11
DEFENSE	DEF	11
ARMOR	ARM	18
	(NATURAL ARMOR + 6)	
WILLPOWER	WIL	14



COMMAND RANGE: 2

BASE SIZE: LARGE

ENCOUNTER POINTS: 11

DESCRIPTION

Rhinodons are massive, ill-tempered herbivores that wander the deserts of eastern Immoren. Although able to move as a quadruped, they more often walk on their two massive hind legs, their weight counterbalanced by a long, heavy tail that ends in a bony club. Their front legs end in hands with three meaty fingers offset by a large thumb, capable of grasping but incapable of fine manipulation.

A rhinodon's thick, craggy skin is mostly gray but mottled with patches of brown, rust, and black. A double row of upturned bony plates runs down its back from its head to the base of its tail. These plates help protect the creature's spine and allow it to shed excess heat, prolonging the portion of the day it can spend grazing. A pair of long, sharp horns adorns the front of its angled head. Rhinodons are incredibly strong and resilient, though their bulk keeps them from being speedy.

Rhinodons are dull-witted and naturally cantankerous. Though docile and easily avoided most of the time, they respond with violent charges when agitated or when their young are threatened, trampling intruders before finishing them with bone-crushing blows from their clubbed

tails. They fear few creatures and will charge anything other than another rhinodon, even attacking much larger creatures.

All rhinodons have poor hearing and eyesight. Their sense of smell, however, is surprisingly good. In light of their low intelligence, rhinodons utilize a surprisingly complex series of vocalizations to communicate. They produce a variety of nasal blasts, honks, and chuffs to alert other rhinodons of danger and nearby food.

Rhinodon herds, known as "crashes," roam the edge of the eastern deserts in a constant search for food. Rhinodons must eat a great deal of vegetation to maintain their massive size. Their dietary staple is savannah grass, but standing on two legs allows them to reach the boughs of taller trees. Adult rhinodons will even tear higher branches from trees and throw them to the ground for their young that cannot reach them.

Most crashes consist of a single alpha male, several females, and their young. One or two adolescent males might be present, but the alpha bull often drives away the younger males before they grow large enough to challenge for dominance. Rogue bulls often wander alone but sometimes band together for protection when a significant predator threat is present in the area. When the alpha bull of a crash falls ill or gets very old, rogue males in the area converge to fight for dominance of the leaderless group.

These creatures' need for food drives them to procure sustenance wherever they can find it, and they rarely stay in one location for long. Lacking permanent dwellings, a crash will seek out shelter for its young when bad weather looms, often favoring dense vegetation and rocky outcroppings.

COMBAT

When threatened, rhinodons attack with speed and ferocity, rushing forward and crushing anything in their path. Although the charge is their favored initial attack, their tails should not be discounted. Any attacker approaching a rhinodon from the rear is likely to receive a swift, hard slam from the creature's clubbed tail. In battle, they often turn their backs to bring this potentially lethal weapon to bear. If a crash contains young rhinodons, the younger females will protect the calves while the alpha bull and older females attempt to drive off the interlopers.



LORE

A character can make an INT + Lore (extraordinary zoology) skill roll to determine what he knows about this creature. He learns all the information up to the result of the roll. The higher the roll, the more he learns.

10: Rhinodons are massive herbivores that roam the deserts of eastern Immoren. They sport plate-ridged backs and long, clubbed tails, and a formidable pair of horns.

12: Though normally docile, rhinodons react aggressively to any threat by blindly charging their enemies, pummeling them under their massive feet, and smashing whatever remains with their clubbed tails. They are easily startled by other creatures because of their very poor eyesight.

14: Rhinodons travel in groups that many desert wanderers call “crashes.” A single alpha bull leads several females and their young from place to place in search of the vegetation they require to maintain their size.

ABILITIES:

Back Plates – When a character hits this creature with a free strike, immediately after the attack is resolved the attacking character suffers d6 damage points.

Eastern Beast – This creature is considered to be a beast native to the wilds of eastern Immoren.

Nearsighted – This creature treats a character farther than 48 feet (12”) away as if it was in complete darkness.

Stubborn – This creature can reroll failed Willpower rolls.

Thresher – When this creature makes its first tail melee attack during its activation, it makes one melee attack against each character in its LOS that is in its melee range.

CREATURE TEMPLATES:

Ill-tempered, Juvenile, Large Specimen, Protector

SKILLS:

NAME	STAT	RANK	STAT + RANK
Detection	PER	1	4
Intimidation	SOC	2	•



TITAN

These powerful creatures are a testament to the paingiver's cruel skills. Herds in the wild are remarkably calm and peaceable, but titans used by the skorne in battle are reckless, frenzied destroyers—though I suppose anything would be, with enough barbed hooks buried in its flesh.

—PROFESSOR VIKTOR PENDRAKE, MONSTERNOMICON

PHYSIQUE	PHY	13
SPEED	SPD	5
STRENGTH	STR	12
AGILITY	AGL	3
PROWESS	PRW	4
POISE	POI	1
INTELLECT	INT	2
ARCANE	ARC	—
PERCEPTION	PER	3



TUSKS

MAT	POW	P+S
6	3	15

Hard Head – This creature can add this weapon's POW to its head-butt and slam power attack damage rolls.



FIST

MAT	POW	P+S
6	2	14

Abilities: Open Fist

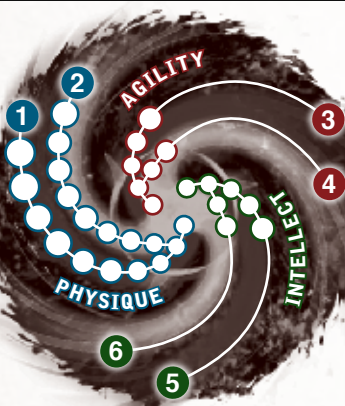


FIST

MAT	POW	P+S
6	2	14

Abilities: Open Fist

INITIATIVE	INIT	12
DEFENSE	DEF	11
ARMOR	ARM	16
	(NATURAL ARMOR + 3)	
WILLPOWER	WIL	15



COMMAND RANGE: 2

BASE SIZE: LARGE

ENCOUNTER POINTS: 14

DESCRIPTION

Mighty beasts known as titans inhabit the deserts and grasslands of eastern Immoren. Up to eighteen feet tall, these hulking specimens stand on two massive legs the size of tree trunks, each of which ends in a broad, flat foot. Four arms jut from their bulky, gray torsos, each ending in three meaty fingers. The upper pair of arms are bigger than the lower, but the hands on the lower are capable of finer manipulations. Each bull has two giant, curved tusks that grow throughout the beast's life, arcing further upward and backward as it ages. In some bulls, a smaller set of secondary tusks grows later in life.

Left unmolested, titan herds live docile lives on the vast plains, grazing upon their preferred grasses and raising their young in peace. Years of abductions by the skorne, however, have left the mighty titans all too wary of those not of their ilk. The slightest provocation—most notably, any threat to their young—sends titans into a brutal frenzy.

They rely on their thick hides, massive tusks, and great size to fight off predators. Titan hide is sought by many for use in crafting armor and even building shelters.

Titans travel the grasslands and along the desert's edge in search of sustenance. Their slow metabolism requires less food than most herbivores of eastern Immoren do, but a single titan can still consume hundreds of pounds of grass and foliage each day.

The size of a titan herd varies but can include up to a hundred creatures, mostly females and young. Each herd is led by a dominant alpha bull. Several younger adult males provide additional protection to the herd and will vie for dominance if the alpha shows signs of age or disease. Titan young are known to remain close to their parents until the latter's deaths.

Many herds are led by a particularly impressive bull called a bronzeback. These titans are even larger than their peers, with an additional pair of tusks and a band of coarse bronze hair running down their backs. A bronzeback drives away all competing males, keeping the entire harem for himself. The beast handlers do not know why some titan males transform into bronzebaks while others do not, though it may be related to the size of the herd and the ferocity of competition for alpha status. Bronzebaks seem to develop primarily where these contests are fiercest, as one male emerges victorious over his peers. Once a bronzeback develops, other titans instinctively acquiesce to its dominance.

Notably, bronzebaks occur only in the wild. The skorne have not managed to breed a single bronzeback from their titans in all the time they have enslaved the beasts.

ABILITIES:

Eastern Beast – This creature is considered to be a beast native to the wilds of eastern Immoren.

Follow Up – When this creature slams an enemy, immediately after the slam is resolved this creature can advance directly toward the slammed character up to the distance the slammed character was moved.

Grand Slam – This creature can make slam power attacks without spending focus or being forced. Characters slammed by this creature are moved an additional twelve feet (2").

Head-Butt – This creature can make head-butt power attacks.

Powerhouse – This creature gains boosted STR rolls.

CREATURE TEMPLATES:

Alpha, Ill-tempered, Juvenile, Large Specimen, Protector

SKILLS:

NAME	STAT	RANK	STAT + RANK
Detection	PER	1	4
Intimidation	SOC	2	*

COMBAT

Titans are normally peaceful creatures but will fly into a fury at the slightest provocation, stomping the earth and bellowing loudly. All but the youngest members of the herd attack as a group, punishing their enemies with massive tusks and meaty arms. A foe struck by a titan is often hurtled several feet away only to find the titan still bearing down on it. Though fierce combatants, titans rarely pursue their enemies if an initial show of force causes them to flee.

LORE

A character can make an INT + Lore (extraordinary zoology) skill roll to determine what he knows about this creature. He learns all the information up to the result of the roll. The higher the roll, the more he learns.

10: Titans are huge, lumbering, four-armed bipeds that travel the eastern plains in herds. Titans have a thick, knurled hide, and the bulls sport a pair of massive tusks that jut up and backward over their heads.

12: Though seemingly gentle, titans are prone to violence at the slightest provocation. Approaching them unseen or threatening their young will cause the herd to become enraged and attack. Their tusks and fists fling foes about the field of battle with ease.

14: Some herds are led by a larger bull titan called a bronzeback, which has an additional pair of tusks and a line of thick bronze hair running down its back. Bronzebacks are more formidable than other bulls, and their dominance is never challenged among the herd. Rarely, a bronzeback that has lost its herd might seek another. If an intruding bronzeback sets its eye on another bronzeback's herd, a battle to the death is inevitable.





VOID SPIRIT

The human spirits that haunt Caen are unable to pass into Urcaen, but the void spirits of the skorne have somehow clawed their way back from the torments of the Void. The one is unable to move on from its former life, and the other is driven to wanton destruction and violence by the horror it has experienced. I wonder which of the two fates is worse.

—PROFESSOR VIKTOR PENDRAKE, MONSTERNOMICON

PHYSIQUE **PHY** 10
(WILLPOWER)

SPEED **SPD** 6

STRENGTH **STR** 5
(WILLPOWER ÷ 2)

AGILITY **AGL** 5
(WILLPOWER ÷ 2)

PROWESS **PRW** 5
(WILLPOWER ÷ 2)

POISE **POI** 5
(WILLPOWER ÷ 2)

INTELLECT **INT** 0

ARCANE **ARC** —

PERCEPTION **PER** 5



TALONS

MAT 7 **POW** 7 **P+S** 12

Abilities: This is a magical weapon.

Eruption of Ash – If a character is destroyed by an attack made with this weapon, center a 3" AOE cloud effect on the destroyed character and remove the character from play. The AOE remains in play for one round. Enemy characters in the AOE when it was put in play are hit and suffer a POW 12 fire damage roll. Enemy characters entering or ending their activation in the AOE suffer a POW 12 fire damage roll.

INITIATIVE **INIT** 16

DEFENSE **DEF** 16

ARMOR **ARM** 12
(WILLPOWER + 2)

WILLPOWER **WIL** 10
(AS IN LIFE)

VITALITY: EQUAL TO WILLPOWER

COMMAND RANGE: 1

BASE SIZE: SMALL

ENCOUNTER POINTS: 5

DESCRIPTION

The horrors of the Void quickly tears apart all sanity, and the passage beyond death inevitably and permanently twists a skorne's spiritual essence. Those rare few who somehow manage to escape the Void and return to the land of the living are known as void spirits. Having no memory of their former lives, these loathsome creatures are a plague on the living. They exist only to hunt, kill, and destroy, lashing out against all around them.

Void spirits have no physical form. What one sees when facing a void spirit is the barest vestige of the creature's memory of what it once looked like. The specter appears as an emaciated and enraged skorne, its ghostly body adorned in scraps of armor, its hollow eyes burning with hate. The void spirit's form is incredibly resilient and can withstand a great deal of punishment. Never truly at ease on Caen, void spirits constantly flicker from one place to another.

The minds of void spirits are the stuff of nightmares. The torments of the Void leave behind nothing but a raging hatred and a compulsion to destroy. Mortitheurges believe even a single moment in the Void renders the mind insane, though it is impossible to determine how long any void spirit has spent on the other side—hours, decades, or even centuries. The mechanism whereby these spirits return to Caen is also poorly understood. Some eastern occultists have hypothesized that scenes of continuing carnage keep portals to the Void open as the dead tumble to their fate, and spirits on the other side sometimes seize the chance to cross the other way.

The skorne fear void spirits and consider them utterly unnatural and malevolent. Certain skorne mortitheurges, however, are fascinated by these spirits and have managed to enslave some specimens. This is an incredibly risky endeavor, as a void spirit thus enthralled is always ready to betray its master and wreak havoc upon all around it.

Void spirits are unpredictable and voracious. They move quickly, rending enemies with their wicked talons. Anything killed by these vicious claws erupts in a ball of hot ash, leaving behind only a dry husk. Void spirits never flee combat, as their driving need to spread pain prevents them from even considering their own well-being.

Void spirits siphon the life essence out of those near them, thereby preventing them from healing. Magic is unreliable against void spirits, although blessed weapons function normally. On the prowl, void spirits emit a groan like a low, growling wind, and when agitated or attacked they scream out in constant pain. As they deal blows to enemies, these screams are joined by cackling, maniacal laughter.

Void spirits were once rare, but their numbers have increased dramatically in recent years. This is attributable to a single remarkable skorne: Void Seer Mordikaar. The methods and goals of this mystic are not well understood. He was once a powerful mortitheurge before allegedly perishing in some dark experiment. Rumors insist he somehow evaded the Void and returned to Caen with his mind and body intact, and that his very presence now draws void spirits to him. It is true that void spirits manifest frequently in his proximity, not only enduring his presence but often seeming to obey his will.

COMBAT

Void spirits are unpredictable in combat, flitting from foe to foe to tear at them with their razor-edged talons and easily moving through obstacles. These vile specters rarely cooperate with each other; their madness itself precludes logical tactics. Instead, they simply tear apart anything and everything they see.

LORE

A character can make an INT + Lore (undead) skill roll to determine what he knows about this creature. He learns all the information up to the result of the roll. The higher the roll, the more he learns.

11: Void spirits are the souls of skorne who have returned to Caen after experiencing the maddening torments of the Void. They were once rare, but their numbers are growing.

13: Void spirits are incorporeal and move quickly from place to place during combat. The bodies of those killed by void spirits erupt in a ball of hot ash, leaving behind only an empty husk.

15: Void spirits are completely fearless, never flee from a fight, and seek to inflict as much pain as possible. They drain the life energy from all living beings in the vicinity, rendering healing impossible in their presence. The recent rise in the number of void spirits is attributed to Void Seer Mordikaar, a mortitheurge said to have returned from the Void with his psyche and life intact.

ABILITIES:

Annihilator – This creature gains an additional die on melee damage rolls against living characters. When a living character is destroyed within eighteen feet (3") of this creature, it does not generate a soul token.

Aura of Death – Living characters in this creature's command range cannot heal or be healed.

Incorporeal – This creature can move through rough terrain and obstacles without penalty and can move through obstructions and other characters if it has enough movement to move completely past them. Other characters, including slammed, pushed, or thrown characters, can move through this creature without effect if they have enough movement to move completely past it. This creature does not count as intervening. Blessed weapons affect this creature normally. Spells, animi, and magical weapons can damage this creature but roll one fewer die on damage rolls. No other weapons can damage this creature. This creature is immune to continuous effects and cannot be moved by a slam.

Poltergeist – When an enemy character misses this creature with an attack, immediately after the attack is resolved you can choose to push the enemy character d3" directly away from this creature.

Terror [15] – This creature has Terror [15].

Undead – This creature is not a living creature and never flees.

CREATURE TEMPLATES:

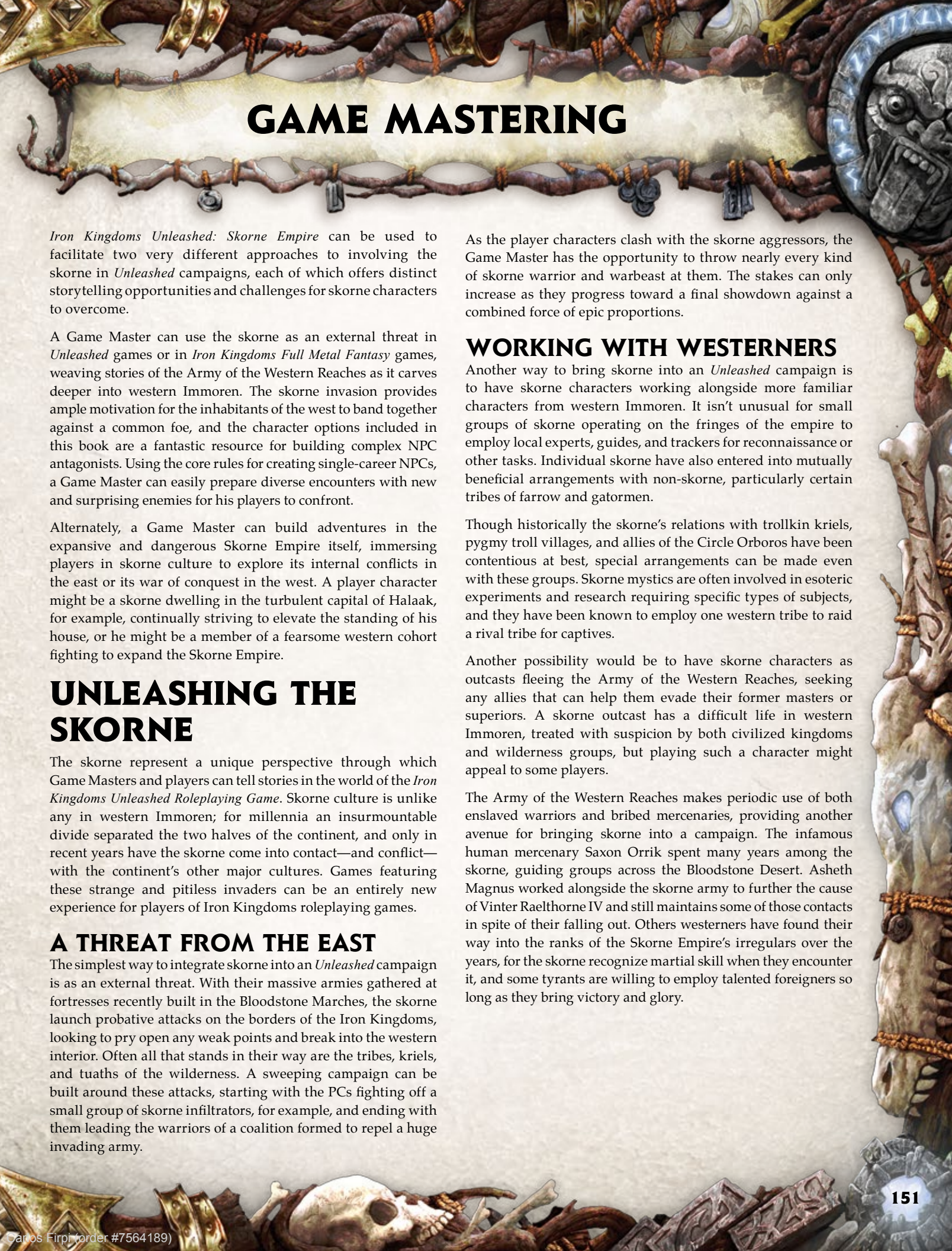
None.

SKILLS:

NAME	STAT	RANK	STAT + RANK
Detection	PER	2	7







GAME MASTERING

Iron Kingdoms Unleashed: Skorne Empire can be used to facilitate two very different approaches to involving the skorne in *Unleashed* campaigns, each of which offers distinct storytelling opportunities and challenges for skorne characters to overcome.

A Game Master can use the skorne as an external threat in *Unleashed* games or in *Iron Kingdoms Full Metal Fantasy* games, weaving stories of the Army of the Western Reaches as it carves deeper into western Immoren. The skorne invasion provides ample motivation for the inhabitants of the west to band together against a common foe, and the character options included in this book are a fantastic resource for building complex NPC antagonists. Using the core rules for creating single-career NPCs, a Game Master can easily prepare diverse encounters with new and surprising enemies for his players to confront.

Alternately, a Game Master can build adventures in the expansive and dangerous Skorne Empire itself, immersing players in skorne culture to explore its internal conflicts in the east or its war of conquest in the west. A player character might be a skorne dwelling in the turbulent capital of Halaak, for example, continually striving to elevate the standing of his house, or he might be a member of a fearsome western cohort fighting to expand the Skorne Empire.

UNLEASHING THE SKORNE

The skorne represent a unique perspective through which Game Masters and players can tell stories in the world of the *Iron Kingdoms Unleashed Roleplaying Game*. Skorne culture is unlike any in western Immoren; for millennia an insurmountable divide separated the two halves of the continent, and only in recent years have the skorne come into contact—and conflict—with the continent's other major cultures. Games featuring these strange and pitiless invaders can be an entirely new experience for players of *Iron Kingdoms* roleplaying games.

A THREAT FROM THE EAST

The simplest way to integrate skorne into an *Unleashed* campaign is as an external threat. With their massive armies gathered at fortresses recently built in the Bloodstone Marches, the skorne launch probative attacks on the borders of the *Iron Kingdoms*, looking to pry open any weak points and break into the western interior. Often all that stands in their way are the tribes, krielis, and tuaths of the wilderness. A sweeping campaign can be built around these attacks, starting with the PCs fighting off a small group of skorne infiltrators, for example, and ending with them leading the warriors of a coalition formed to repel a huge invading army.

As the player characters clash with the skorne aggressors, the Game Master has the opportunity to throw nearly every kind of skorne warrior and warbeast at them. The stakes can only increase as they progress toward a final showdown against a combined force of epic proportions.

WORKING WITH WESTERNERS

Another way to bring skorne into an *Unleashed* campaign is to have skorne characters working alongside more familiar characters from western Immoren. It isn't unusual for small groups of skorne operating on the fringes of the empire to employ local experts, guides, and trackers for reconnaissance or other tasks. Individual skorne have also entered into mutually beneficial arrangements with non-skorne, particularly certain tribes of farrow and gartormen.

Though historically the skorne's relations with trollkin krielis, pygmy troll villages, and allies of the Circle Orboros have been contentious at best, special arrangements can be made even with these groups. Skorne mystics are often involved in esoteric experiments and research requiring specific types of subjects, and they have been known to employ one western tribe to raid a rival tribe for captives.

Another possibility would be to have skorne characters as outcasts fleeing the Army of the Western Reaches, seeking any allies that can help them evade their former masters or superiors. A skorne outcast has a difficult life in western Immoren, treated with suspicion by both civilized kingdoms and wilderness groups, but playing such a character might appeal to some players.

The Army of the Western Reaches makes periodic use of both enslaved warriors and bribed mercenaries, providing another avenue for bringing skorne into a campaign. The infamous human mercenary Saxon Orrik spent many years among the skorne, guiding groups across the Bloodstone Desert. Asheth Magnus worked alongside the skorne army to further the cause of Vinter Raelthorne IV and still maintains some of those contacts in spite of their falling out. Others westerners have found their way into the ranks of the Skorne Empire's irregulars over the years, for the skorne recognize martial skill when they encounter it, and some tyrants are willing to employ talented foreigners so long as they bring victory and glory.

PLAYING A SKORNE CAMPAIGN

Skorne campaigns are rife with possibilities for compelling stories—nomadic tribesmen facing hardship in the deserts of the far east, mystics in incense-fogged caverns seeking insight through perfect infliction of pain, power-hungry tyrants looking to dominate all rivals—and permeating any such campaign is the drama inherent in the story of the great Army of the Western Reaches. Thousands of miles from home, these skorne have marched to a new and unfamiliar world, crossing the Abyss and the Bloodstone Desert to face down the might of the Iron Kingdoms. To the western world they are foreign invaders, but these skorne see themselves as conquerors fighting to earn a place among their most revered ancestors.

A CULTURE OF PAIN

In a campaign involving skorne, a Game Master must keep one important fact about their culture in mind: the skorne do not perceive their actions as evil. Though their practices may seem cruel and even repugnant to outsiders, in their view what they do is simply part of an age-old cultural norm. Despite the pervasiveness of physical torment, violence, and slavery in their culture, the skorne see the world in a dramatically different light than the inhabitants of western Immoren do. Understanding their perspective requires the ability to embrace, at least in the context of the game, a different way of thinking about life, death, and suffering.

Skorne paingivers do not inflict suffering for its own sake or merely because they enjoy cruelty; rather, they use pain as a practical tool to achieve specific ends, such as the compliance of a captive or the submission of a powerful creature. Facilitating an interrogation with the skilled application of agony is an acceptable and even expected practice, considered a high art among the paingivers. Skorne mortitheurges draw power from the torment of the flesh, exploiting the tenuous connection between life and death. Keen insight into anatomy, combined with a callous disregard for misery, is a requirement for practicing their craft. Skorne respect those who can stoically endure pain and injury beyond normal physical and mental limits. Conversely, skorne disdain those who fear or flinch from discomfort. Suffering is an obstacle to be overcome and a gauge whereby the weak are separated from the strong.

This attitude toward pain is intimately tied to skorne veneration and elevation of the warrior caste—those who daily face injury and death as an essential aspect of their profession. Warriors are seen as inherently superior, and it is only right and just for them to rule over those who cannot fight. Even among the warriors there is a complex hierarchy based on mastery of the arts of war.

The culture and traditions of the skorne are an extension of their harsh homeland and the struggles their society has endured. These people place no inherent value on life; they weigh the usefulness of other living things purely in terms of whether they can be subjugated, trained, and used to achieve specific

goals. A life is significant only insofar as that life has purpose and honor. Death is preferred to mere empty existence. It is the lot of the lower castes to serve the higher and the duty of the higher castes to perform glorious deeds to elevate their house and be remembered. Those who fail in this duty are quickly forgotten by all.

LIFE, DEATH, AND THE VOID

At the end of life most skorne expect to suffer an eternity of torment in the Void. For the lower castes, this is simply an accepted fact of existence. Only house leaders and esteemed warriors can escape this fate by proving worthy of exaltation through feats of prowess on the battlefield. Truly outstanding warriors are recognized by the extollers and are chosen to have their spiritual essence preserved in sacral stones after death, to be stored alongside ancient ancestors of the house as a precious resource. Some who chance to die in battle near an ancestral guardian can also be saved from the Void as revered companions to the exalted. All others are consigned to ultimate nothingness and forgotten.

It is an intentional paradox of the *hoksune* warrior code that those most likely to achieve exaltation must be courageous enough to accept death and the possibility of oblivion. Glory on the battlefield is to be sought for its own sake, bringing greatness to one's house through victory. Many warriors secretly desire to be exalted and fear the Void, but none would ever admit to such weakness. Stoic resolve in the face of death is core to the *hoksune* code.

Those who live simpler lives among the non-warrior castes seek to give their lives meaning in other ways. Pride in one's house permeates all castes, from the highest leader to the lowest laborer. A warrior cannot seize exaltation without the efforts of the craftsmen who made his weapons and armor, the builder who fortified his battlements, or the scholars who informed the decisions of the ruling tyrants. Each caste plays its part in the greatness of a house, and together they revere and admire the honored few chosen by the extollers to become exalted and immortal. It is accepted that only the very best of a house will endure. Each skorne feels invested in the eventual glory of his tyrant rather than his own eventual fate. Even a lowly scholar is inspired by the great victories of the house's leader, which bring respect to all who bear the house's sigil.

Though these motivations are sometimes difficult for western Immorese to understand, they are no less valid than a gatorman bokor's desire for personal power or a Tharn chieftain's drive to prove his devotion to the Devourer Wurm. For the right kind of players a skorne campaign can be a rewarding experience, whether their characters are struggling in the eastern empire or fighting far from home against the west.

THE BEST BAD GUYS YOU'LL EVER MEET

In addition to providing fresh options for gameplay, this book can also be used to create intriguing and challenging antagonists for a group of traditional Iron Kingdoms roleplaying game characters. The Army of the Western Reaches occupies lands directly adjacent to the Iron Kingdoms and constantly probes the border territories, sending forces west into Cygnar, north into Llael, and south into the Protectorate of Menoth. Inhabiting the wilderness between cities and standing directly in the path of the skorne incursions are trollkin, Tharn, farrow, gatormen, and bog trogs as well as various wild human tribes.

The skorne view everyone within reach of their armies as potential slaves to send back to toil in the east, and every territory is another prize to bring under the dominion of Supreme Archdomina Makeda. Those who cannot repel the skorne are doomed to be subjugated by them. Enslaved trollkin or farrow are just as useful as any human slaves, and the skorne are eager to exploit the rich wilderness environments for resources. Fascinating campaigns can center on the efforts of wild peoples to drive off the intruders, uniting tribes and cultures that would normally be rivals to face a common foe.

caste system permeates all of skorne society; lower-caste skorne will likely treat all warriors with respect and deference, even those belonging to a rival house. With adventuring companies of mixed-caste characters, NPC skorne gravitate to those of their own caste while generally deferring to the wishes of the upper castes. Skorne warriors can and should expect members of the lower castes to serve their needs and follow their orders.

GAMES SHOULD BE FUN

At the center of skorne society are unpleasant concepts like suffering, servitude, and torture. Some players might not want such concepts expressed openly or in great detail, if at all. It is important everyone at the table is comfortable and having fun, and this might require a Game Master to let some elements of skorne culture take a back seat or be glossed over—or even to omit them entirely. Every group is different, so it is up to a Game Master to respect the players' tolerances and preferences before showcasing such elements in a game. One group might not have any problem with playing a skorne campaign replete with dark themes, while another group might strongly prefer to omit careers like the Tormentor and the practices they represent. Overall, skorne society is more focused on earning honor and glory than on simply inflicting pain, and a campaign could easily be steered to focus players on achieving greatness for their houses without exploring the darker aspects of skorne culture and philosophy.

SKORNE CASTES

When preparing a skorne campaign, be mindful of the various castes to which the player characters belong. Skorne society is highly stratified, and player characters and NPCs will respond to a particular character differently based on their caste. Characters of a higher caste are likely to be brusque, dismissive, or worse, mistreating their inferiors with impunity, while lower-caste NPCs go out of their way to avoid offending a character of higher station, as their very lives can hang in the balance.

Characters of other races encountered within skorne society are most likely members of the slave caste. In rare cases, useful outsiders who have proven their worth might be accepted as mercenaries and treated almost as if they belonged to the caste their abilities would merit if they were skorne. For example, a skilled non-skorne fighter would be considered akin to a skorne of the warrior caste and would garner greater respect than a skorne scholar, who is merely a member of the educated worker caste. Outsiders are always treated with comparative disdain, and a non-skorne warrior is automatically presumed inferior to a skorne warrior.

Time spent working together can erode such barriers, but it is likely a group of skorne player characters will begin with a rigid hierarchy dominated by the warriors in the group. The

SKORNE CAMPAIGN CONCEPTS

The following campaign concepts are for Game Masters interested in crafting stories that involve companies of skorne player characters. Some of these ideas focus on the world of eastern Immoren and the challenges characters might face there, while others center on the efforts of the Skorne Empire to conquer and subjugate western Immoren.

PLAYING IN THE PAST

The skorne are a people with a long and storied history of warfare and bloodshed, and games set in the past offer an abundance of interesting options. Throughout the millennia the skorne have undergone many dramatic conflicts, building to the establishment of the empire itself and its first attacks on the Iron Kingdoms. Each generation has endured its own wars, disasters, and reversals of fortune, which can be woven into powerful campaigns. Even when the ultimate outcome of historical events is known, players will not know if their characters will survive these events or how they may be shaped by them.

Setting a game in the distant past can affect which careers a Game Master allows and which abilities and equipment are made available. Prior to the invention of the reiver, for instance, venators primarily used javelins, slings, and other simple ranged weapons. Before the first use of *hokar* in siege warfare, the skorne had no explosives at their disposal, and titan cannons did not yet exist. When setting up a game, carefully consider the specific point in history and what changes to careers and equipment might be needed. A Game Master can adapt careers from *Iron Kingdoms Unleashed Roleplaying Game: Core Rules* to create skorne equivalents to replace anachronistic careers. For instance, the Praetorian career did not exist before the establishment of martial traditions, but a Game Master could rule that a skorne of the Warrior career begins with the First to Fight ability.

THE STORM YEARS

The fall of the Lyossan Empire plunged the world into chaos. Supernatural storms and earthquakes wracked the landscape, reshaping the continent and throwing all of Immoren into disarray. Untold numbers of Lyossans died, and the skorne, already inured to hardship, fell upon the survivors like ravening wolves. Snatching up everything of value left behind by the old empire helped the skorne to survive, but life was far from easy. The arcane cataclysm eventually drove them to the shelter of the Shroudwall Mountains, where the tribes coalesced into the original houses that dominated the first city, Malphas.

A campaign set in this tumultuous time will be about survival and endurance but should also showcase how the skorne's trials ultimately made them stronger. Amid the Shroudwall Mountains the houses warred against one another to secure the safest territory and control of meager resources. Powerful leaders built Malphas into a mighty civilization, one that would be emulated elsewhere in time. The strong overpowered the weak to create dynasties that lasted for centuries, laying out the shape of skorne society. Player characters can play pivotal roles in these conflicts, striving to conquer their enemies as deadly supernatural forces rage all around them.

HOUSE WARFARE

Prior to the First Unification of Vinter Raelthorne, skorne houses often waged war against one another. The victors absorbed the strength of the defeated house, claiming its resources and holdings as their own and taking captives as slaves. A historical campaign set prior to the Unification could see the players taking sides in these conflicts, sometimes as aggressors and at other times struggling to defend against a superior foe. A campaign could also take place during one of the larger conflicts involving coalitions of houses and armies of thousands in a bid for conquest that reshapes the east and its cities, with the player characters taking a central role.

THE WARS OF UNIFICATION

The Wars of Unification are another fertile ground for compelling campaigns. As Vinter Raelthorne's influence grew, some of the greatest houses came out to oppose him, led by warriors like Makeda of House Balaash. Pitting the houses

against skorne loyal to Vinter, the First Unification War can have players taking on the role of warriors on either side of the battle, either fighting to resist the Conqueror or struggling in the name of the Reborn.

The Second War of Unification offers even more options for storytelling. Vinter caused a rift between traditionalists and houses that had benefited from his reforms. The Second War of Unification was sparked by revolt and rebellion in the east that began while the Conqueror and his armies were away in the west. When Vinter returned he employed his favored paingivers to punish and execute many rebels, terrifying the remainder to bring them back in line. Depending on which side of the schism the player characters fall on, they could find themselves caught up in the middle of these events. They might be tasked by Vinter himself to root out his enemies, or they might be targets of attacks by deadly bloodrunners sent to make examples of them.

THE ASSAULT ON CORVIS

When the skorne first came to the Iron Kingdoms in 603 AR they were led by Vinter Raelthorne IV, the deposed king of Cygnar. A force ten thousand strong marched on the city of Corvis, which had fallen under the control of inquisitors loyal to the former king. When the skorne entered the city, they faced unexpected opposition in the form of the Legion of Lost Souls, an army of undead warriors raised in Corvis' defense by the young sorceress Alexia Ciannor. Players who participate in this battle could find themselves in the thick of the fighting, crossing blades alongside the Reborn himself, or they could be sent off to pursue secondary objectives in the city.

The skorne were ultimately driven out of Corvis, but this conflict is still a great opportunity for adventure. The characters could be stragglers cut off from the main skorne forces and trapped within the unfamiliar city, scrambling to find a means of escape as their enemies search the streets for them. Alternately, the story could follow Vinter's army as it retreats from Corvis to rally deeper in the Bloodstone Marches. It was during this assault that Vinter lost control of the skorne capital of Halaak, precipitating the Second Unification War. Participants in such a campaign could transition from one perilous conflict to the other.

CRUSHING THE WEST FOR FUN AND PROFIT

Games set in the modern era can take any number of different trajectories, but no matter the theme or location, player characters will feel the pull of the Western Reaches. The Skorne Empire is engaged in an ongoing war of conquest, sending supplies, warbeasts, and soldiers across the desert to join strength with the skorne forces already there. Even if the player characters remain in a skorne city far from the front lines, news of the war will reach them, and its successes or setbacks will affect them.

A game set at the western edge of the empire offers limitless opportunities for epic stories of conquest and battle. Even the journey westward can be an adventure as the characters

cross the vast deserts and wastelands, home to strange and deadly creatures like the archidon, the deep drake, vicious storm trolls, and hateful void spirits. The weather is hostile and unpredictable, and becoming separated from a convoy or lost in a raging sandstorm can prove even deadlier than an enemy's blade.

The reach of the skorne in the west stretches from the foot of the Rotterhorn and the borders of the Protectorate of Menoth in the south to the fringes of Ios and Cygnar in the north. A campaign that takes place on this frontier is likely to see frequent clashes with the inhabitants of western Immoren. As members of the Army of the Western Reaches, player characters can receive assignments that send them to the battlefield to reconnoiter or to strike at enemy forces. The Skorne Empire must capture and hold territory to cement its footholds in the west; its military leaders are eager to establish supply routes and to extract valuable information from enemy soldiers. A Game Master can assign any of these as tasks for the player characters to fulfill.

Campaigns in the west also have the intriguing element of exploration and discovery. The skorne are constantly looking for new weapons and beasts to add to their arsenal, forcing them to move into unfamiliar territory with new and unexpected hazards very different from the lands they are used to. Further, interactions with diverse cultures that have evolved in ways utterly unlike their own can fundamentally challenge the way the skorne see the world.

Occultists among the skorne will use this contact with new species and peoples to continue their exploration of the nature of spiritual essence. Direct observation of how non-skorne spirits transition after death provides new insights and could eventually alter how skorne seek to evade the Void. Beyond these studies, exposure to new arcane traditions and powerful artifacts and resources—the bones of fallen dragons, the unique spawn of Everblight, ancient relics of fallen empires—provides esoteric-minded skorne with continuing opportunities for discovery.

In the skorne homelands, rival houses seek to capitalize on events of the ongoing war to gain favor with the supreme archdomina and enhance their reputations and family legacies. The current age has seen tremendous upheavals in the fortunes of both individual skorne and certain houses, creating unprecedented social mobility in a historically rigid society.

STRUGGLES IN THE EAST

Though countless skorne have marched to join the Army of the Western Reaches, many more remain in the *tors* of eastern Immoren. Among them are warriors defending their houses, ascetics and mystics seeking enlightenment in the Shroudwall Mountains, and beast handlers striking out into the Trembling Waste and the Valley of Kornash to find deadly creatures to meet the empire's ever-growing need for warbeasts. The lives of members of the noble houses are just as rigidly structured as those of fighters in the west. They are expected to heed their tyrants' orders without question, and tyrants are expected to lead their houses to greatness.

A scenario set against the backdrop of a skorne city might involve devious plots kept secret to avoid drawing the supreme archdomina's wrath. Player characters might need to conduct trade and negotiate alliances with other houses to secure valuable resources like steel, chymical ingredients, and the raw materials required to create sacral stones. They might be house warriors ordered into the wilderness to recover a stolen sacral stone or perhaps escaped slaves or members of forbidden cults attempting to evade bloodrunners who would bring them back to endure the torments of master paingivers. All manner of games can take place in the east, and Game Masters are encouraged to adapt the scenario threads presented in *Iron Kingdoms Unleashed Roleplaying Game: Core Rules*.



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