

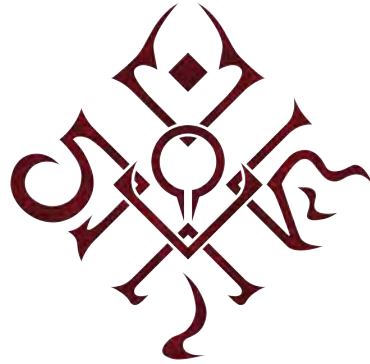
SINS

MANIFEST DESTINY



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SPECIAL THANKS

To all our fans, and to my family, both those I still have with me and those I've lost. – Miquel Tankard
To friends, family, fans and faithful backers of our work all, both past and present and future, thank you.
No matter what, keep hope for tomorrow, and don't give up. – Rusti Meader
And to all our Kickstarter Backers

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A NOTE ON THE TITLE OF THIS BOOK

SINS is a game about humanity's evils, and how we overcome them or reconcile with them to build better futures.

Manifest Destiny, as a historical act, was a sin in every sense of the word. It was the theory that the American continent was the divine right of the colonialist settlers, irrespective of the indigenous first peoples. This destructive ideology led to genocide and oppression on an untold scale that still affects America and Native Americans today. This isn't a game about the event of Manifest

Destiny as a historical event or its modern-day ramifications in the real world, nor does it look to glorify or make light of imperialism, or the ethos of Manifest Destiny itself.

This is a game that takes place in a highly fictitious, post-apocalyptic future America, and the text itself is anti-imperialist when it does approach the wrongs of the America of our real world. Any remnants of the foundations of the real-world, modern America in the world of SINS – such as slave-ownership, colonialism and Republic formations – are, in their presentation within this work of fiction, shambling, barely-functioning institutions that act as antagonistic forces to be addressed in the course of play.

SINS: Manifest Destiny is about a fictional era of various fictional factions and organisations re-encroaching and re-building in a post-apocalyptic America, and the moral and human complications that come from that in post-apocalyptic genre fiction.

We haven't sought to make light of the real-world suffering of the Indigenous people of America, past or present, at the hands of colonialists or their descendants, nor do we aim to cause any upset or distress with the use of the term in this expansion's subtitle.

We chose the working title of Manifest Destiny to reflect, for better or worse, the concept of a reconstruction of a fictional post-apocalyptic America, rather than to suggest a parallel, reflection, or recreation of the atrocious, historical events of the colonisation that operated under the same titular ethos. The title is intended to provide a provocation and reminder to the readers to consider the evils, or 'sins' that occur in the founding or possible re-founding of fundamentally Imperialist and destructive nations.

This book is a work of fiction, and despite its sub-title, it is intended to be a game about cooperation, unity and hope, whoever you are. Yet that should not undermine the real-world acts that have occurred and continue to occur to indigenous populations in the name of American Imperialism.

We encourage anyone who hasn't come across the term 'Manifest Destiny' before to look into it and educate themselves on the atrocious acts and attitudes enacted by the first settlers and their descendants upon the indigenous people of America.

Always keep respect and consideration at the forefront of recreational activities.

— The SINS Team —

CONTENT WARNING

This book is intended for mature audiences and discusses topics and themes which may be uncomfortable for some readers. It's important to keep in mind that this book is a game and that means it's ultimately about having fun; no-one should be forced to deal with topics that they find distressing, nor should a game bring up issues that are likely to cause real-world arguments or distress to one or more participants. To best forewarn readers of the content in our games, we've divided content warnings into two categories. The first of these are Primary Themes. These are topics which are prevalent throughout the book and the game world; as such these topics are unavoidable when reading the book and are almost certainly going to play a part - small or large – in any game using this book. For Sins, these are;

- Graphic Violence
- Existential Horror
- Body Horror
- Psychological Horror

In addition to Primary Themes, this game also has a number of Secondary Themes. "Secondary Themes" should not be taken to mean these issues are less important or "lighter" in subject matter, but rather they are topics and themes that, whilst discussed within this book, are not major core themes, and games using the book can easily be structured to avoid or downplay these topics if any of the participants would prefer to avoid them. Largely by association of its genre and Primary Themes, we identify the secondary themes of Sins as the following:

- Religion
- Slavery
- Warfare
- Supernatural Horror
- References to Sex and Sexuality

This is by no means an exhaustive or definitive list of the topics that may come up during the play of Sins. At its core, Sins is a high-octane, super-powered post-apocalyptic roleplaying game with prevalent themes of choice and morality -but you should take care to read this list and be mindful of the mature themes that can arise in bleak, post-apocalyptic narrative scenarios.

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CHAPTER

I

HEART AND SOUL

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THE GREAT WASTES

*"My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away."*

— *Percy Bysshe Shelley*

Across the East Coast, humanity continues to reassert itself. Step by painful step, it has dragged itself from the darkness. For the first time in generations, people look upon the wastes and the ruins of old America; not with fear or despair, but with precarious hope.

With the America of old destroyed, only spectres of the world that came before remain. A wind of change is stirring, and a new world is beginning to coalesce. Yet as foreign influence spreads across the continent and a civil war fuelled by the outrages of slavery looms, those who remember the America of old ask themselves; Are these times truly a chance for a new beginning, or is America doomed to repeat the sins of its past foundations?

THE TIDES OF CHANGE

The Nemissaries of the East Coast are not immune to the tide of change; for better or worse, their fortunes are bound to humanity. Many share the hope of the humans around them, but there are also those who feel a mounting sense of unease. They note the increasing power of the Harbingers and the ever more frequent appearance of the Hivespaw.

They fear that the reclamation of old lands and the increasing numbers of humanity will awaken some terrible horror once again, that neither they nor the humans around them are equipped to face.

THE OPENING OF THE BARRIER

For more than a generation, the way to the west of America has remained shut to the survivors on the East Coast. Though not utterly impassable to a small, well prepared group, the dangers either from radiation or extreme cold

YOUR WORLD

This section of the book delves into the changing situations in America and it's likely that some of this may conflict with events that have taken place in existing campaigns.

Don't feel that these changes need to be implemented in an existing campaign – it's fine to either ignore some of the events or change them as needed to fit with the story that you are telling.

Ultimately, Sins is not a game driven by a grand overarching plot. Everything which is presented here is there to create new opportunities, not constraints.

meant that attempts to penetrate the continent's interior have largely been abandoned.

Given the harsh conditions, it was assumed that nothing had survived in those vast frozen or irradiated wastes, but all who made this assumption underestimated the tenacity of humanity.

WARRIORS FROM THE NORTH

For decades, one group had managed to eke out an existence throughout the ruins of the frozen north. They were made up of survivors of the US and Canadian Park Rangers which acted to shelter and guide survivors through the worst of The Fall.

Together they endured great storms and the predations of the Broodspawn. Their existence was tenuous and many times the nascent faction came close to destruction.

Their fortunes began to change when the Pyreflame and Dominion began to expand their reach across the East Coast. As they did so, their operations drew vast numbers of Broodspawn from the frozen wastes.

No longer under constant assault, the Rangers and the communities they guarded began to expand. One by one, tiny outposts became settlements, and a new power began to rise in the North.

THE FIRES OF NEW YORK

In New York, the three way war continued to rage; neither the Dominion, Pyreflame nor the Harbingers could claim victory. No-one saw any likely end to the conflict, something which only the Breakers and the Harbingers found to their advantage.

The Pyreflame ultimately would launch a great offensive into the ruins of New York. Unprepared for this assault, the Dominion were pushed back. With their forces over-extended across their territories, they were forced to rely upon the services of the Hammers, a sub-faction of the Breakers.

These professional mercenary troops proved their worth many times over, retaking much of the outer city and once again securing the Dominion a foothold in the embattled city.

With some of the Breaker's best forces committed to the New York front, they were left vulnerable. Though well-prepared against the potential of a Broodspawn assault or local uprisings, they were totally unprepared for the onslaught they were about to face.

The Rangers were not a faction which sought war and for decades had remained largely isolationist, but there had been limited trade and interactions with the East Coast. For the most part, these were with the nomadic Thorns, but they had also come into contact with the Breakers, with disastrous results.

Their losses to the slavers were relatively light, but to the embattled faction, every life taken was a life too many. Worse still, many of the Rangers were descended from servicemen and women, and they were well aware of the Breaker's origins.

To them, what the Breakers had become was a betrayal of the nation and ideals that the Rangers still believed in, and that the Breakers once shared. With their strength growing and the Breakers distracted, the Rangers prepared for war.

BROKEN CHAINS

The Rangers launched their assault in the dead of winter on a number of key Breaker sites. The battles which followed were swift but deadly. In all, three large facilities were targeted – two of the operations were successful, freeing several hundred slaves and capturing a wealth of material, intelligence and resources.

The third assault was more tragic. There, the Breakers were able to respond more quickly than anticipated and the element of surprise was lost. The Rangers were forced to withdraw and in the ensuing chaos, a Broodspawn outbreak occurred. Some survivors managed to flee, but most were consumed. With the Breakers tied up suppressing the Broodspawn, the Rangers retreated back into the frozen wastes.

Shocked and stunned, the Breakers considered their position. Their intel on the Rangers was scant at best, but they had a general idea of their territory, and were certain that the Breaker's own forces were vastly superior in number – certainly capable of annihilating the upstart faction.

The order was given for a general recall of Breaker military units, the consequence of which was a rapid degeneration of the situation in New York. Severed from their Breaker allies, the Dominion were pushed back again and the Pyreflame, sensing its moment, launched a new offensive, finally taking control of the city.

As the Breaker's forces gathered, its senior leadership faced a new and far more dangerous crisis. The hardened military forces loyal to the Hammers refused to deploy to the north, their leaders refusing point-blank to fight and die on behalf of the slave-mongering Chainers.

The arguments which followed grew heated and the Breakers' command found themselves paralysed by the schism. Without the full might of their combined arms at their disposal, no assault into the frozen north could reasonably succeed. The bitter recriminations would be felt throughout the organisation, and the spectre of civil war loomed as a practical reality for the first time.



NEW FRONTIER

The dispersal of the great Northern swarms was only one part of a larger change taking place. Most had failed to take note of the falling levels of radiation across the East Coast. Even the devastation wrought from the Fall could not endure forever, and little by little the poison had faded until a number of regions were becoming, if not safe, at least feasible to traverse.

Deep in the American interior, another power had risen, bound to the will of a now ancient and powerful Nemissary. This individual, known to his followers as The Stormwalker, demonstrated an ability to protect both them and himself from the worst effects of radiation. Able to safely navigate the irradiated wastelands, they reached out to other groups of survivors and Nemissaries.

As this loose coalition grew in strength, the Stormwalker shared his gift with many of the Nemissaries in his service, and came to be regarded by his followers as a living god. In time, both the faith and organisation came to be known as the Empire of Storms, and steadily its power expanded across the American interior.

The price of its expansion was high, and the Empire's resources were stretched thin in a series of crusades aimed at utterly eliminating the Broodspawn in its territories. Desperate for new resources, the Empire redoubled its efforts to open contact with the East Coast factions. As war loomed in the north, the Empire finally succeeded, forging a path through the Appalachian Mountains. Soon after, it succeeded in forging a tentative path to the north – and a more dangerous route through the southern states to the Republic of Florida.

NIGHTMARES RISING

The arrival of the Empire came as a massive shock to the factions of the East Coast. Unlike the Rangers, the Empire appeared to be a massive entity, capable of threatening the power balance of the entire region.

To the surprise of many, the bulk of the interactions with this new nation were peaceful, primarily consisting of exchanges of information and fairly lucrative trade.

A handful of violent incidents occurred, primarily born of local misunderstandings, but these were insignificant in the face of the conflict which would flare up on the borders of the Republic of Florida.



The path opened to the south was made possible because both the Empire and the Republic were in fact pushing towards the same goal – the abandoned military facility of Barkdale Air Force Base in Louisiana.

This area was one of the most heavily infested regions in America. Twice, the Republic of Florida had launched attempts to clear a route through the region. Though they failed, they inflicted heavy tolls upon the Broodspawn and reduced their numbers to a point where the Empire of Storms was able to gain a foothold in the region.

Actually eliminating the Broodspawn and forging a safe corridor would prove an arduous task, and when the Empire finally succeeded, they earned no thanks from the Republic who saw them as opportunistic thieves profiting from their sacrifices.

The Republic, unwilling to enter into a large scale war, was forced to watch the Empire claim Barkdale uncontested, and responded by refusing all trade and closing its western borders to the Empire's envoys.

While the Empire secured its hold, the Republic's scouts noted that the activities of the Empire had opened a potential route further north, through Arkansas and into Missouri, where it might then be possible to access the as-then unclaimed Whiteman Air Force Base.

Over the next few months, the Republic assembled an impressive military expedition; numbering almost two hundred personnel, it was well equipped both in terms of vehicles, equipment and protective gear to deal with the harsh radiation.

As it progressed north, the expedition met resistance from the Empire. A series of skirmishes occurred when the Empire attempted repeatedly to prevent the expedition making headway to the north.

The force easily repelled these attempts and made good progress north, crossing the border into Missouri only slightly behind schedule, but soon after, all contact was abruptly lost with the expeditionary force.

The Republic blamed the Empire, suspecting that The Stormwalker had taken direct action against them. For their part, the Empire sent no envoys nor gave explanations, but simply withdrew in great haste from the area, even abandoning supplies and vehicles in their retreat.

The Republic fell back into its own territory, and now holds closed the southern road, but many more new paths into the interior are open. Across the East Coast, the power balance of the great factions is shifting, and the power of the Brood seems to be weakening.

Most regard this as a time of opportunities, but the observant and the cautious see signs that the shadows of human evil are growing, that the malice of the Harbingers is rising, and that some great horror, long sleeping, is about to wake.

THE RUINS OF AMERICA

The Fall and the desperate struggles of a dying world cast a legacy which has lingered for generations. Vast tracts of the world were left utterly inhospitable, but with the passage of time, the world has slowly begun to heal.

The long winter is ending and the radioactive fallout diminishes year by year. This slow recovery and the persistence of humanity has led to the slow reclamation of many of these abandoned regions.

THE RECLAIMED LANDS

Even in the East Coast where the bulk of America's human population now resides, there are areas which have remained inhospitable and abandoned since the Fall.

WASHINGTON D.C.

To say Washington D.C. is a ruin is an understatement. Of all the devastation wrought by Blacklight, it is by far the most complete. Virtually nothing was left standing; almost every structure in the region was levelled, and not a single living thing survived Blacklight's wrath.

The centre of the Capital itself suffered the most extreme devastation, with the White House and the surrounding area totally obliterated. At a distance, all one can see of the remains is a crater, but as an observer draws closer, they realise this is the lower third of a nearly perfect sphere, in which all matter was seemingly annihilated.

That abyss is nearly a kilometre across, and its edges are sheared with an impossible precision. Even after almost a century, the weather has done little to change the landscape, and all who go there report that the entire area feels unnatural and tainted.

A part of this is no doubt due to the presence of a particularly powerful and malevolent Shard which once lay at the outer edge of the Capital.

Until recently, its presence prevented any practical attempts to explore the surrounding ruins as its presence drove virtually every sentient being in the region into a self-destructive madness.

This changed with the Pyreflame's victory in New York. The Dominion, reeling from its loss, sought a new victory. The Lord Hierarch Soresh came in person to the ruins of D.C., and there did something previously thought impossible – they shattered the Shard with but a wave of a hand, laying low both its physical form and its power.

Though the Dominion has found little of use in the ruins, it still stands as a mark of pride and a reminder of their true power over the other factions.

PENNSYLVANIA

The founding state of Pennsylvania was lost during The Fall, utterly overrun by the Brood. Like most areas, survivors persisted for a time in the larger cities, but one by one

these groups fell either to the Brood or the harsh realities of the nuclear winter following The Fall.

One group did manage to survive in the forested and mountainous areas in the state, and was one of the groups which would join together as part of the larger Rangers faction.

Even though the Rangers remained few in the region, their specialised expertise allowed them to survive the winter—though Pennsylvania was not wholly spared the horrors of nuclear fallout.

Large areas of the state were affected and rendered hunting and gathering extremely hazardous. Combined with the vast number of Broodspawn in the region, this meant that the human population remained tiny and isolated.

The changing fortunes of the East Coast have drawn the bulk of the Broodspawn from the region however, and the Rangers' victory over the Chainers has helped to further increase their already growing numbers.

Consequently, the Rangers have moved to form more permanent settlements in the region, choosing to occupy and reinforce numerous towns throughout the region, though the pragmatic nature of the faction and their lack of interest in propaganda mean that they have not yet made the symbolic move to reclaim the state capital of Harrisburg.

THE CENTRAL STATES

The vast interior of the North American continent lies open once again to exploration. Compared with the East Coast, the region suffered horrendously during The Fall. The devastation wrought upon it was unusual in that it came primarily through attempts to combat the Brood, and in particular the Reaper known as Blacklight.

The nuclear assault unleashed to combat those forces was driven by desperation and though it ultimately succeeded in avenging the fall of the Capital, the radioactive fallout and the ensuing nuclear winter reduced much of the continent to either an irradiated or frozen hell-scape.

In spite of all that devastation, life is tenacious, and across the continent life clings to existence - a series of tiny flames enduring the long night, and awaiting the Spring to come.

THE BARRIER WASTE

The vast region that has come to be known as the Barrier Waste stretches across the remains of West Virginia, Alabama, Kentucky and Tennessee. This region initially weathered the events of The Fall relatively well; the Appalachian Mountains provided a natural barrier against the more dire situation in the East Coast, and also served as a highly effective and defensible area for military operations.

This same defence would prove the region's undoing. The nuclear devastation used to stop Blacklight unleashed vast quantities of irradiated dust and debris into the atmosphere. The prevailing winds at the time pushed the fallout

further east, where it broke on the banks of the mountain range. This saved the East Coast, but rendered the western slopes of the mountains and the surrounding regions incapable of supporting life.

All of this took time, and many of the survivors sheltering in the mountains managed to escape to the East Coast, but not without suffering from varying degrees of radiation sickness. The tales of these people and the horror of their condition has lingered and added to the reputation of this dangerous region.

Hazards: The march of time has lessened the dangers of this region, but it still remains hazardous. The Appalachians themselves are subject to severe storms and become utterly impassable in winter. The Brood also exist in this region, though only in small, scattered bands, most of which are new arrivals to the area.

The real threat still lies in the form of radiation. Large areas are now only lightly irradiated, but significant areas are still seriously radioactive. This makes foraging or farming of any kind extremely dangerous and in general great care needs to be taken not to get irradiated dust into the body in any way.

Resources: Given that the region was largely abandoned due to the nuclear fallout and not completely overwhelmed by the Brood, there is a considerable amount of material which lies unclaimed in the region.

With the radiation levels falling, the ruined cities and towns within the area are an inviting prospect for scavengers and salvage teams.

Survivors: The entire region has been virtually uninhabited until very recently though it's possible that a handful of hardy and resourceful survivors managed to endure. Currently, the Empire of Storms and the Breakers are the factions most likely to be encountered in these areas.

Its northernmost reaches however are largely absent of the Breakers' influence, as they are an area of operation for the Park Rangers, who have no interest in allowing the Breakers to operate with impunity here.

THE SEA OF ICE

Above the Barrier Waste lies an expanse now known as the Sea of Ice. This area surrounds the Great Lakes and once encompassed the states of Minnesota, Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio, along with sections of Southern Canada.

Initially, the area was hard hit by the Broodspawn, but swift and decisive action from both local governments and military forces managed to contain and fight back the Brood.

Centred on the city of Chicago and its nearby military facilities in Illinois, it held strong against Broodspawn assaults for months and was proven a safe haven for thousands of survivors. Ultimately though, the hopes of these people would end in tragedy.

Though they could hold back the Brood, their end would come in the nuclear winter which enveloped the world. As the Great Lakes froze, and the ground became as hard as iron, a sustainable food source became impossible to maintain.

Starvation and malnutrition soon became commonplace, and order broke down. In the horrors which followed, the Broodspawn re-emerged. Trapped by the snow and ice, there was no hope of escape for the survivors. Now the region lies largely empty, the ancient forests slowly reclaiming this land of bitter tragedies.

Hazards: The winters in these regions are extreme and present the primary threat to life. Storms can sometimes last weeks at a time, depositing more than six feet of snow. Temperatures can drop to well below freezing, and the Great Lakes are trapped under metres of ice.

In the summer, the weather is less extreme but the snow and ice don't completely recede and the Great Lakes remain icebound throughout the year. Ironically, at this time, they are at their most dangerous, as the thin ice can easily give way, plunging anybody unfortunate enough to be on it into an icy grave.

The region is largely free of radiation, but still has a significant population of Broodspawn. These are concentrated heavily amidst the larger cities of the region. There, they exist in the thousands, entire hordes that have remained trapped by the extreme weather, and primed to become a deadly threat in the years to come.

Resources: Though a great deal of military assets were deployed here during the original defence of Chicago, the region as a whole was a significant transport hub for the Pre-Fall United States, and also a diverse area with both major industrial and agricultural zones.

Most of the agricultural regions of Illinois are now simply a frozen waste, but the same ice which rendered them unusable also protected them from much of the fallout which blights the central states. As the climate recovers and the ice melts, these areas are likely to become fiercely contested due to their value for food production.

The rail lines through this region were designed for heavy freight and are mostly intact. As such, they might prove instrumental in rebuilding the region. Unfortunately, the industrial production regions of the area did not fare nearly as well. Most were either devastated by the Broodspawn or picked clean of useful materials by the early survivors, and taken to the vast and deadly graveyard of Chicago.

Likewise, many of the military complexes of the region are largely empty of supplies, though the sheer size of the Naval Surface Warfare Centre in Indiana means that there is still significant salvage and potentially advanced Pre-Fall technology located there.

Survivors: Most of the region is largely devoid of human life, but isolated groups of survivors do endure. Across the southern reaches of this area, a number of small communities have managed to survive.

Wisconsin is unusual in that there are a number of surviving communities bound in a loose coalition. These groups are situated primarily in the eastern ridges and lowland areas, and are primarily based around surviving groups from the American Indian reservations in the area, but they also include numerous other groups that for one reason or another were unable to reach the doomed sanctuary of Chicago.

THE STORMLANDS

The homeland and primary stronghold of the Stormland Empire is a vast expanse which stretches across much of Midwestern America and the Southern Plains. This area, which encompasses the former states of Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa, Oklahoma as well as parts of Colorado, Wyoming and New Mexico, was originally thought of as a number of distinct regions, of which the Stormlands was only one.

The growing dominance of the Empire changed this, and the territorial boundaries of its heartland means that the vast area is now thought of simply as The Stormlands. It encompasses a truly vast area with a huge variety of different terrains, and if it were not for the influence of the Empire, the region would most likely be divided into three primary zones.

Its borders to the west are marked by the beginnings of the Rocky Mountains and its centre primarily consists of a vast, cold and storm-wracked desert, born from the decaying remains of the Southern Plains.

In the south, this desert joins with the already arid regions surrounding north and western Texas. Only in the southeast does the land become seemingly hospitable, but soon transitions into disease-plagued bayous and swamps.

Hazards: Radiation remains a constant threat, particularly in the parched wastes and deserts of the interior. With little to no rainfall, very little of the fallout has been washed to sea, and so large areas remain heavily irradiated.

A second major concern is the frequent and violent storms for which the region has come to be named. There is some evidence that these storms are not entirely natural in origin, as the changing climate alone cannot wholly account alone for the intensity or frequency of these phenomena.

Unlike many surrounding regions, the Broodspawn are almost entirely absent, having been almost completely exterminated through the continual sacrifices of the Empire. The same troops which exterminated the Brood are also the most direct threat to outsiders, and though the Empire is not necessarily hostile, groups foolish enough to openly threaten their authority or claim territory in the region will likely meet the same fate as the Broodspawn.

Resources: The Empire's core territory is not resource rich; whatever could be claimed, extracted, salvaged or repaired has long since gone to feed the Empire's expansion. What sustainable resources do remain are either heavily guarded or, in the case of farmland, irradiated to an extent where their produce can only be safely consumed by those

THE NAVAJO COALITION

This faction shares a border and generally cordial relations with the Stormlands Empire. It was founded during The Fall, and centred around the American Indian Reservations spread throughout the regions. There, the local populations worked with elements of the US military and surviving refugees from surrounding regions to forge a tenuous alliance that held an effective defence against the Brood.

The early Coalition's survival was aided in no small part by the semi-autonomous nature of the Reservations and the heavily defensible nature of the terrain, but also by the heroism and sacrifice of its population in its early days.

Though not as powerful as the Empire, the Coalition can boast a surprisingly high population and has managed to put in place a fair degree of infrastructure. The Coalition primarily trades high-quality weaponry and bulk food supplies with the Empire in exchange for salvage, fuel and other raw resources not contained within the region's borders.

The Coalition government is a functioning democracy, albeit one which constantly struggles with the conflicting needs of its military defence and the independent nature of its citizens.

Nemissaries are rare within the Coalition and no single ideology holds sway in regards to them, except that most hold the not-unfounded concerns that the powers and abilities of Nemissaries could serve to disrupt the precarious and valuable democracy the Coalition has succeeded in creating

blesed by the powers of The Stormwalker and his Nemissary acolytes.

Survivors: The overwhelming majority of survivors in the region are part of the Empire. This isn't simply due to conquest, but rather the fact that it is capable of protecting its faithful from the worst effects of radiation.

One notable exception is in the extreme west of the Stormlands where it borders the Rocky Mountains. There, a number of smaller, well-fortified settlements survive, outside of the authority of the Empire.

This is primarily due to an accord reached with the powerful and independent Navajo Coalition, which exists on the far side of the Rockies. The accord was reached to preserve the peace between the two factions, and marks the settlements as neutral ground, reserved for trade where neither faction's armed forces will enter unless requested to do so as mercenaries in the service of the independent communities there.

TAINTED LANDS

The lands encompassing the former states of Texas and Louisiana were devastated during The Fall. The entire region came under heavy assault from the Broodspawn and its military and irregular forces fought valiantly, but a combination of ill-fortune and a poorly managed, highly-inde-

pendent resistance led to a string of disasters which massively swelled the Broodspawn's ranks.

Sustained strategic bombing managed to thin these hordes, but ultimately proved futile, as one by one the military strongholds of the region were overrun.

Several independent civilian groups managed to hold on for a time, appropriating the resources of fallen military units, but the nuclear bombardment unleashed to stop Blacklight further to the northeast spelled doom for most.

Though the prevailing winds blew the bulk of the fallout to the east, the open expanses of the region were not wholly untainted and this proved the final blow to many of the holdout communities.

The arrival of the Empire of Storms brought some hope to the few remaining communities, and its reach is now felt across most of the area, though large regions – particularly in the south – are outside of its direct control.

Hazards: The rapidly changing climate and ecological devastation has also allowed the spread of a vast desert across the central and northern areas of the region. Though the worst effects are abating, the damage is already done and it's unlikely that the region will fully recover in the immediate future.

Its south-eastern expanses have escaped this fate but are also more thoroughly irradiated by material brought south by the Mississippi river, and these areas are heavily overrun by bayou-dwelling Blightspawn.

Resources: Many of the resources of this region, and particularly its oil reserves, have already been claimed by the Empire. Beyond this, this area is a true wasteland; though not battered by the constant storms endemic to the Empire's homelands, the region is still mostly an arid desert with little more than bones for scavengers to pick through.

Of course, this area – particularly the cities and regions surrounding the Texas state capital of Austin – may still hold valuable salvage beneath the ever expanding sands, and although most military bases have either been emptied or reclaimed, there is no doubt some stockpiles could remain.

Survivors: Most of the population of the area are functionally part of the Empire of Storms, and live a semi-nomadic existence in the northern parts of the region.

In the south, a small number of semi-independent communities exist. Their occupants have entered into a Protectorate arrangement with the Empire, but maintain their own traditions and particular ideologies.

The reason the Empire allows this is because most of these communities are heavily armed and militarised, and directly conquering them would be a significant waste of resources for the Empire.

THE BITTER NORTH

Not just frozen, but heavily irradiated, the area known to the Empire of Storms as The Bitter North encompasses North and South Dakota, along with most of Montana and Wyoming.

The devastation wrought upon the region was perhaps the most complete and terrible in all of North America, though no-one would have foreseen this in the early stages of the conflict.

In the beginning, this region proved a sanctuary for refugees from all over the surrounding regions. The US deployed considerable military forces, intending to transform the Rocky Mountain ranges into a veritable fortress.

These defences were also bolstered when the Canadian government decided that attempting to properly defend the vast and scarcely populated expanses of western Canada was impractical, and with the US's consent began an evacuation to the region, deploying a significant portion of its armed forces to assist in the defence.

At first, things went well; the defences were well supplied and well organised, and even as most of America descended



THE GODFALL

into chaos, the area now known as the Northern Defensive Zone remained an area of relative safety.

Made overconfident by their initial successes, the military sought to guard too great an area and in doing so, overextended their forces and supplies. It wasn't a horde from without which would destroy them however; it began from within.

Like so many places, the deaths of a handful of refugees lead to an almost unstoppable cycle of ever growing numbers of more deadly Broodspawn. Distributed as they were, the military couldn't react in time, and soon one of the US's last great hopes became a horde of Broodspawn millions strong.

Even as the strike was prepared against Blacklight, the order was given to launch a second barrage. This was far less focused, and nearly a dozen separate nuclear missiles detonated throughout the northern Rockies.

As the nuclear winter set in, the combination of radiation and bitter cold led to the deaths of the few survivors in these areas. The entire area is now a vast frozen wasteland where almost nothing can survive.

Hazards: There are few more dangerous areas. The western-most expanses of this region still have dangerous levels of radiation, with huge quantities of nuclear fallout trapped beneath the snow and ice.

There is almost nothing to eat, and what little could be found is almost certainly too radioactive to safely consume. Even in summer, the temperatures are dangerous, with night time temperatures easily dropping below freezing, whereas in winter, attempting to traverse the region is little more than a death sentence.

The whole area is also routinely hit by storms from the south, which manifest here as blizzards and snowstorms which can last for days at a time, often dropping enough snow to bury buildings beneath a thick white blanket.

Even with all those hazards to fear, there is perhaps worse, as the region is still home to substantial numbers of strange, twisted Broodspawn that possess a level of intelligence alien to most of their kin.

Resources: It's telling that even the Empire has made little attempt to penetrate or exploit this region. It's certain that vast caches of salvage, munitions and military hardware lie unclaimed beneath the ice and snow, but for most the potential costs are simply far too high to justify the associated risks.

Survivors: This region is nearly completely devoid of human habitation. In the southern most reaches, the Empire maintain a tenuous presence and it's possible that some communities are extant along its eastern borders, but for the most part this region lies silent and barren.

This bleak, deadly expanse is known to the survivors of the surrounding regions as The Godfall. It stretches over what was once Missouri and Arkansas, and is aptly named, for it is here the Reaper known as Blacklight was felled.

The area is dead in the truest sense – a vast wasteland subject not only to radioactive fallout, but to an unnatural malice which taints and twists the land itself.

The place where Blacklight fell was struck by no less than twelve high-yield nuclear warheads. The sprawling crater left behind lies along the border between the two former states, and resembles a horizon of twisted black glass.

For miles in every direction, an expanse of fine jet black sand expands, which is broken only by the occasional spur of Voidglass several meters tall. This jagged, alien landscape is utterly still, rarely troubled by the violent storms of the west. Eventually it gives way to a more conventional desert, albeit one still eerie cold and deathly silent.

This desert encompasses virtually the entire region. Throughout it are dotted the ruins of former settlements, now standing empty and untouched amongst the expanse, and the remnants of devastation wrought by the fallen Reaper's fury.

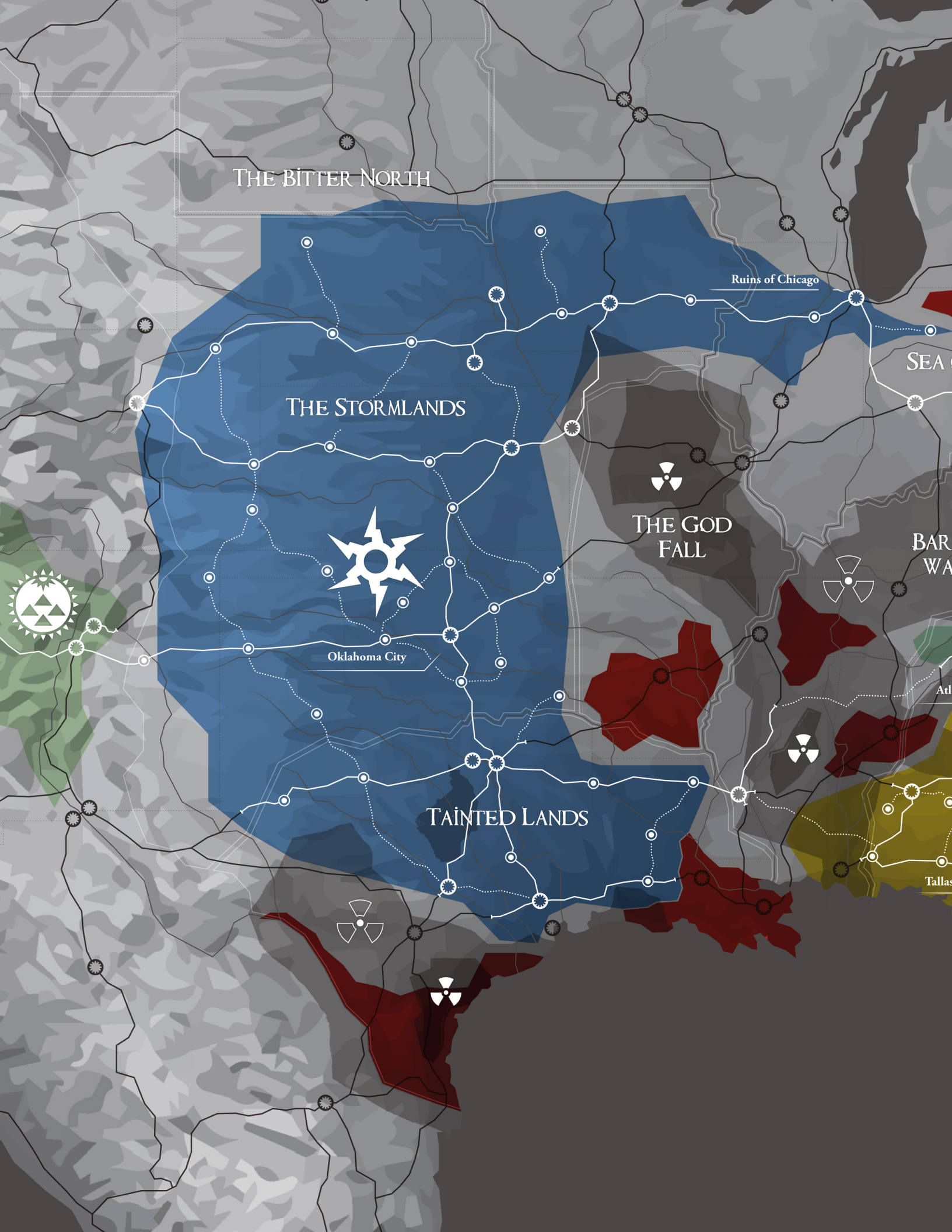
Hazards: If the deadly levels of radiation were not enough, the region supports no life whatsoever. There is no food, very little shelter, and a subtle but ever present dread creeps into the minds of all who are foolish – or desperate – enough to enter.

Still, those dangers pale in comparison to that presented by the Hivespawn drawn to this region. These creatures are broken and insane, and inevitably fall to the effects of the area's radiation, but none of that makes them any less deadly, and sometimes dozens at a time may descend upon intruders in the domain of their God.

Resources: For all the dangers, there are treasures to be found here. Blacklight never finished its assault on the massive military complex of Whiteman Air Force Base, and the unnatural desert has covered – but not destroyed – much of the infrastructure of the region.

There is also a wealth of Voidglass to be found here as it grows spontaneously across the wastes. This Voidglass is natural – as far as that term applies to the substance – and will succumb to the radiation given time, but nothing directly prevents scavengers removing and making use of it.

Survivors: What survivors might have been in this region have long fled, and no-one sane has attempted permanent habitation in the region since. It's possible – though unlikely – that the Republic of Florida's lost expedition is still in the region, but beyond this it has only a single true survivor, clinging to its ruined form at the heart of this devastated region.



THE BITTER NORTH

Ruins of Chicago

SEA

THE STORMLANDS

THE GOD
FALL

BAR
WA

Oklahoma City

Atl

TAINTED LANDS

Tallas



Ruins of Ottawa

Landfall

Boston

New York

Tyman's Watch

Washington

SEA OF ICE

BARRIER WASTE

Atlanta

EAST COAST

Tallassee

Orlando

Miami



500 KM



300 Miles



Safe Haven



Major Settlement



Ruined City



Radiation Zone



Severe Radiation Zone

FACTION TERRITORIES



Artificers



Pyreflame Crusade



Republic of Florida



Hierarch Dominion



Thorns



Navajho Coalition



Rangers



Stormlands Empire



Breakers



Harbingers

THE BREAKERS

*"All men make mistakes, but a good man yields when he knows his course is wrong, and repairs the evil.
The only crime is pride."*

— *Sophocles*

No human thinks of themselves as evil. The people who forged the Breakers meant for the best when they started down a road that led to the atrocities the Breakers have — and continue to — commit.

In the beginning they acted, as they saw it, to protect. All order had collapsed and so they acted to impose the only order they knew. With no order, there was no objection - the Breakers came bringing food, protection and purpose. That purpose was to work the fields and fill the factories that allowed those people to survive, and for that order to continue.

As time went by, the Breakers encountered other groups, other islands of order in the storm. Most they knew with bitter certainty could not survive, and so they acted, as they saw it, to save these people. Many didn't object, but as many refused to submit, and the Breakers, believing they knew best, imposed their authority.



They didn't call these people slaves; they accepted them as part of their communities, but still they took their choices from them, and many refused to meekly accept that authority, and so they were punished. Choice by choice, action by action, the Breakers took a poison into their heart, and these people became no better than slaves. Soon, the Breakers' enemies referred to those living under Breaker jurisdiction as such.

Over time, the Breakers stopped trying to integrate their worker-class, simply setting them aside as second-class citizens by default, and soon enough they fell into using the very word their enemies had levelled against them. As more communities fell, as more enemies were defeated, the Breakers found they had more people under their protection than they needed. They came to the question of what to do with those people.

The Breakers had a moment then, to be something better — and they failed. Thus the Chainers were born. Like many before them, they chose the easier path. They put aside their morality, and made their surplus populous into nothing more than a commodity and property.

SERIOUS TOPICS

This section of the book expands upon the Breakers and is fully intended to help bring them into their own as player options. However, it needs to be said that the Breakers, as part of their identity and role in this post-apocalyptic fiction, involve the topic of slavery. This should never be treated lightly. No player should take an expansion like this or any part of the game as an excuse to play a character for shock value or to make other players uncomfortable.

Roleplaying is a cooperative experience, and the worst thing you can do is to ruin it for anybody else. You may think a character is fine, you might think you've thought through things and justified why you should play a Chainer, but if playing that character would make others uncomfortable, then don't.

It's not about you being denied the opportunity to play something; it's about not spoiling someone else's experience for the sake of your own enjoyment. This goes for the GM as well — if your players are uncomfortable with the themes brought up by the Breakers, then avoid them; after all the world of Sins is a big place, and the point doesn't always have to be the telling a particular story, but rather that everyone has fun.

No faction on the East Coast is as divisive as the Breakers, even amongst their own number. To some, the Breakers are a force for stability and order, but to others they are slavers which prey upon the weak, little more than a parasite prospering from the misery of others.

THE GATHERING STORM

Not all of them did this willingly - even then, when the Breakers were still weak, and the coin the activities brought them was vital, there were some who refused to be party to the atrocity. Mostly, they were from the front-line of the Breakers operations, the "Hammers" the Breakers brought down upon the anvil to do their work.

In the ashes and the screams of families torn apart, they swore that they would make a world where this horror wasn't necessary. They made their arguments but the council was not swayed. The council argued that to build a better world required resources, and that this new slavery was a necessary evil. For a time, the Hammers grudgingly accepted, but year by year it became clear that the momentum of the wider Breaker movement could not be shifted from such a lucrative path.

The Hammers despaired, but their arguments secured a compromise. The Breakers adopted what they called "indentured servitude" within their own communities, rather than forced labourers—a dubious argument that labourers could work towards their own freedom via contracts, supposedly encouraging trust and cooperation. In this way, as new generations were born to "contracted" parents, and the Breakers decreased in invasive operations, the term "slave" managed to hide itself in plain sight.

As a result of this changing pattern, the bulk of the Breakers' civilian population has come to abhor the actions of the Chainers, the sub-faction that still actively captures people for abject slavery and feeds the heinous system. In the past decades there have been protests against the Chainers, and many Breaker settlements will no longer willingly host Chainer regiments. This opposition has grown in strength, and the Hammers have gained a large pool of new recruits as a result. Many such demonstrations and protests have infamously been put down in force.

The council of senior officers which makes up the Breakers command has grown increasingly concerned. Many of the Chainer's officers have been brought before it to answer for what has been seen as dereliction of duty, but of course the Council, split as it is, has generally failed to reach a consensus and simply given light reprimands to the officers in question. As a result, its power has begun to erode.

The Hammers see this as an opportunity to reform the Breakers from within, but the Chainers still represent a significant — and wealthy — power-bloc, and though slow to react to the growing threat, they are not blind to it. The Breakers on the fence know that given enough time, the Hammers will likely succeed, and they worry that the Chainers know that. This conflict that must come is not one brought about by Nemissaries, but the result of a long-ignored human evil.

HARD CHOICES

The truth is that the Breakers cannot escape their crimes forever. No Breaker is guiltless — even the Hammers for all their ideals are still culpable either by inaction or ignorance

for the larger crimes of the faction, but at least these Breakers are attempting to make amends for those wrongs. The Chainers, of all the Breakers, bear the most responsibility, but many do not see themselves as evil. Most are trapped within a comfortable delusion, having long since dehumanised their victims and morally detached themselves from their 'work' and allegiances. In the end, all this may end in a greater tragedy; a brief, but terrible civil war that the Hammers will no doubt win, but that will fatally weaken the Breakers in a time when their strength is most needed.

This is not inevitability however. Sins is a game ultimately about hope, not despair. A new voice might yet emerge, one that can dissuade the Chainers and the Hammers from their bloody path, and make them see that both are culpable in the crimes they've abetted. Should the two divisions turn aside and atone, they may yet use their power to play a part in making a better world, and in some small way, begin atoning for their atrocities.

THE BREAKERS IN AMERICA

The Breakers are a powerful faction and few places on the East Coast are truly outside their influence. Their military might is well known but in practice, it's their vast resources in both material goods and personnel that make them a force to be reckoned with.

BREAKER COMMUNITIES

The Breakers are a varied group when it comes to their Outposts and centres of strength. The stereotypical image is an



SLAVES IN BREAKER COMMUNITIES

Breaker communities often have a substantial number of slaves, which they refer to as “indentured servants.” On the whole, these individuals are a relic of the early days of a settlement’s foundation. Over time, indentured servants fulfil their contract to work in exchange for food and shelter, and are set free. Since the Breakers normally bring in all the surrounding population in a settlement’s area and servitude generally does not pass along generations, most Hammer-operated Breaker settlements are increasingly running out of slaves.

These freed individuals are subject to the same laws, and have access to the same facilities as anybody else. They often have few possessions and little capital to begin with, but they’re not considered in any way lesser.

A contrast to this are those Breaker settlements established by the Chainers, where human misery is marketed in the name of commerce. These places may seem orderly on the surface, but they conceal real horrors that cannot help but have a serious dehumanising effect on the Breakers who run them. For the most part, the Breakers try and put these facilities out of mind, but those who travel the East Coast rarely venture far before coming across them.

The Hammer sub-faction increasingly rails against the existence of such places. They argue that the actions the Breakers took to survive in the past may have been an ugly necessity when humanity was on the brink, but to allow them to continue now is an atrocity. The wider Breakers and their council know that this divide cannot be ignored for much longer, and most feel that ultimately one of those sub-factions will come to represent the Breakers as a whole, and the other will fall into history.

BREAKER OUTPOSTS AND SAFE HAVENS

The Breakers don’t build outposts like other factions, preferring instead to handle smaller-scale trade by arranging to have facilities within the outposts or settlements of other factions.

If, for one reason or another, a site needs to be defended and that would normally necessitate an Outpost, the Breakers don’t like to do things by halves, and so any such installation is going to turn into a full scale settlement sooner or later.

The Breakers never let these settlements grow too large, and their insistence on defencibility and efficiency means that none of their settlements have grown to the extent where they could be considered Safe Havens, and the Breakers have no desire to enter into the complications that maintaining such vast settlements would entail.

armed military camp, but in practice, Breaker settlements are a combination of military and civilian, and increasingly they are peaceful settlements, not armed camps. Still, the military heritage of the Breakers can be seen even where there is little or no need to maintain large garrisons.

Suggested Names: Breakers settlements either use their Pre-Fall names if appropriate, or adopt military-style designations such as Whiskey Outpost, Tango Forward, Fort Cinder, Ironhold, Old Walls or The Big Grey.

Locations: The Breakers make active attempts to reclaim former military facilities whenever they fall within or near their areas of operations. From these start points, the Breakers have traditionally conquered and “broken” nearby small settlements, combining them into larger, well organised communities.

The Breakers are no fools and the presence of a former military settlement doesn’t automatically mean the Breakers will choose it as a site. Indeed, of all the factions, the Breakers are one of the most pragmatic and utilitarian. As a result, their settlements are nearly always well situated with ready access to clean water and farmland, or failing that, other tradable resources.

SETTLEMENTS

Breaker settlements are generally fairly large and well planned. The community is almost invariably walled and separated into districts. Each area is isolated and dedicated to some particular function. One of these zones will always be reserved for Breaker personnel directly and in larger settlements there may be multiple such Breaker-owned areas.

Population: Breaker communities tend to have large populations. Those operating on the frontier generally define their population based on how many military units are operating out of it. Each Unit consists of around forty Breakers.

For each such Unit, there will then be up to a hundred support personnel, though this number can vary greatly. Beyond this, there tends to be a floating population without permanently assigned roles of at least a few hundred civilians. Older, more established Breaker settlements, or those deeper within their territories, have a ratio of around a thousand civilians to each Unit, and may have a migratory population of several thousand.

Of the civilian populations, about 10 to 20% will be made up of indentured servants with only a small fraction ever being “non-contract” slaves, as the Breakers generally dislike keeping large numbers of slaves in their own territories, preferring to sign them into indentures so that the individuals have a vested reason in remaining loyal to the organisation.

Facilities: Breaker settlements usually have extensive facilities with separate areas set aside for crafts, food processing, living areas and the like. In older settlements, there may be living areas set aside for slaves and another for indentures, though over time this has begun to shift and in many of the older Breaker communities these areas have been re-purposed into temporary detention facilities with a separate

zone for use by a dedicated civil order force, which functions in most respects as an efficient – if not brutal – police force.

Travellers and outsiders often find Breaker settlements surprisingly open, if not somewhat oppressive. In practice, outsiders are confined to one or possibly two of the outerlying zones within the settlement. Often a dedicated area is set aside for temporary residence, and the rates and conditions are generally very fair, with the other remaining area of access being the main market zone for the community.

Travellers should be careful as though the Breakers make accommodating hosts, they have no tolerance for disorder or dissent, and troublemakers will quickly themselves ejected for minor offences, or bound into service to pay for more serious crimes.

Defences: If there's one thing that defines Breaker settlements, it's their ability to defend themselves. No settlement that the Breakers operate out of is complete without at least a perimeter fence surrounded by barbed wire and guard towers. Most communities are built with some form of natural defence in mind and many even have extensive minefields on their outward approaches.

The larger settlements will also have extensive fixed emplacements and pre-sighted artillery. Even the smallest will have at least a few squads of Breakers to defend them, and the larger may have many hundreds. In addition, the Breakers make active reconnaissance patrols in a large area surrounding their communities, keeping extensive, exacting records and keeping careful watch on all places where someone might conceal a camp.

Authorities: Each settlement has at its heart a Commander. Below them is a staff of Breaker Officers and promoted civilian officers. Together they operate as something of a civil council, the Commander and military officers seeing to the defence of the community and setting the general agenda, and the civilian officers being in charge of day to day administration and affairs of the settlement.

At any given time, some of the Officers will be given the responsibility of acting as a civil judge and dealing with matters of law within the community. There is also usually a semi-permanent position of “Warden”, whose duty, and that of their unit, is to function as de-facto police. Civilian officials are wide ranging. There is usually at least a chief doctor, coroner, fire marshal and civil officer, all of whom have civilian units to assist them in their duties.

The community will also have various unofficial representatives such as merchants, bartenders, and notable craftsmen, who while not official officers, will usually have a similar degree of respect and authority.

THE BREAKERS AT WAR

The Breakers' military forces are extensive but also widely dispersed. These assets serve numerous roles and most commonly interact with people as mercenaries. The ferocity of these fighting units has often given the Breakers a war-like reputation, which is not entirely deserved.

Fundamentally, the Breakers are a profit-minded organisation and the dispersed nature of their forces means that they prefer to avoid large-scale military deployments where possible. In general, most of their military operations have been against smaller communities and the faction has very rarely fought openly against the other major factions.

Equipment: To put it bluntly, the Breakers are armed to the teeth – with Nemissaries removed from the equation, no faction but the Republic of Florida can come close to matching them. Every Breaker of rank will have at least one well maintained and effective weapon, and communities have extensive emergency arsenals with dedicated anti-Brood caches scattered throughout a settlement.

Civilians, even indentured ones, will be given paramilitary training and are expected to assist in a community's defence. Though not as well armed as the main Breakers on active duty, they can still expect access to small arms, shotguns, and other weapons as deemed appropriate by the settlement Command.



THE HIERARCH DOMINION

*"A court is the most depressing place on earth.
Wherever there is a throne,
one may observe in rich detail every folly and wickedness of which man is capable,
enamelled with manners and gilded with hypocrisy."*

— Gore Vidal

To most of the survivors in North America, the Hierarch Dominion is a contradiction; on the one hand, they've brought order and hope to some of the worst hit regions of the East Coast, but they also represent an invading foreign power, and in this they represent an echo of an almost forgotten chapter in history.

It's common knowledge that the Hierarch Dominion crossed the sea and brought with them vast resources. Indeed, the Dominion makes no secret of their European origins and do present themselves as part of a larger, unifying force with the aim of restoring all that mankind has lost.

The truth, of course, is more complex. The Hierarch Dominion of America are not a conquering army, nor are they truly part of a vast global organisation – rather they are exiles of a sort, the end result of an accord to prevent a civil war that would have torn the true Dominion of Europe apart at its foundations.

THE FIRST CABAL

In the aftermath of The Fall, Nemissaries were rare. Unsure of both themselves and their capabilities, and lacking in guidance, most fell or were consumed, but there were a few who prospered.



WHAT DO PEOPLE KNOW?

The Hierarch Dominion has worked hard to obscure its origins and to give the impression that it represents one vanguard part of a far larger organisation.

The Vassals of the Dominion are generally aware that they won't receive aid from overseas and that the Lord Hierarch Soresh has no master, but still assume he serves as part of a Council. Most of the Nemissaries that have joined know little more than this, and only their superiors amongst the Auctora or Hierarchs are likely to know the full truth.

Of these early survivors, there was a group that claimed to be the true, original Cabal of Nemissaries. Together, they pooled their strength and knowledge and fought long and hard to survive in the wars and devastation of The Fall.

The First Cabal, as they would later become known, explored the mysteries of the Creeds, and as their power and knowledge deepened, they took new names for themselves. Many of these names are lost now, and only a handful of the First Cabal still endure, but amongst them was a name that rings through history – Ah'Kesh.

THE LOSS OF AH'KESH

As the First Cabal struggled, they grew strong and came to understand better than any before their own true natures. In their wisdom – and folly – they journeyed past what the Shards could teach and opened doors to long-sealed knowledge.

What they found there filled them with despair. Some were consumed, but others fought on. Ah'Kesh alone turned their mind back to the darkness and there they found a new truth – a slim and desperate hope.

Ah'Kesh invoked an ancient power and poured their own soul into one of the eldest Shards – through it, the echo of their knowledge would pass across the world.

REFORMATION

The survivors of the First Cabal felt more clearly than any others Ah'Kesh's words and turned their will once again towards the restoration of the world and the elimination of the Broodspawn. The struggle which followed was long but their determination drew many Nemissaries to the banner of this nascent faction. In time, their great struggles bore fruit and piece by piece they forged the Dominion from the ashes of Europe.

Strong as the new Dominion was, it was flawed from its inception; despite an outward show of unity, deep divisions were present even in its first days. The long years of struggle had pushed the Elders down different roads, and each now held a different interpretation of Ah'Kesh's hard-won knowledge.

As the years passed, factions emerged within the Dominion as ideology became dogma, and what were once small differences became irreconcilable schisms. The Dominion turned inwards and the various factions began to martial their forces for an inevitable civil war.

THE ACCORD

When war seemed all but inevitable, a solution would emerge from an unlikely corner. One of the First Cabal members, Soresh, had initially refused to heed Ah'Kesh's warnings and had taken no part in the early formation of the Dominion.

As the civil war loomed, Soresh returned. Gathering followers about himself, he moved to eliminate the remaining survivors of his original Cabal. Soresh and his followers succeeded and it seemed that he might come to rule the Dominion directly, but he was no fool. In the eyes of many he was a murderer, a monster, and so he called a council and proposed a solution.

He would accept exile, on the condition that the Dominion formed a new Council and eliminated those who threatened to tear it apart from within. The Nemissaries which agreed with his own ideologies would follow him, and those Nemissaries which opposed the new Council would either submit and follow him, or be eliminated.

The bargain was sworn and the new Council forged; the Dominion would survive and Soresh would forge his new Hierarch Dominion on the shores of America, and there pursue his own interpretation of the Prophecy of Ah'Kesh.

REALM OF THE DOMINION

The Dominion controls a large, well-connected territory along the East Coast. Within this territory, the Dominion have concentrated the surviving population into a series of individual Domains surrounded by a well patrolled border.

Suggested Names: For the most part, the Dominion discourages vanity in naming, preferring in almost all cases to use Pre-Fall names for a given settlement. Where this isn't clear-cut, or the community has been created from the ground up, the Dominion tends to use the name of the nearest Pre-Fall town or some other reasonably befitting name.

Locations: The Dominion's territory is primarily in coastal regions. In general, the communities are well spaced out, designed in a careful pattern to ensure that large farming zones are as deep within Dominion territory as possible.

Some ad-hoc communities and outposts do exist, mostly where such communities have chosen to join the Dominion or where there is a natural resource that requires a constant presence to protect.



OUTPOSTS

Outposts tend to exist only along the outer fringes of the Dominion's territories, and are generally very small by the standards of the East Coast.

Population: Most Dominion Outposts have only a very small civilian population, generally no more than a hundred. These people are usually skilled workers and their families and tend to be directly in the service of the local authorities.

Facilities: On the whole, Dominion outposts are not particularly welcoming to outsiders. This isn't to say that the Dominion are aggressive or isolationist, but rather that outposts are places of defence, and so lack the facilities to cater to traders or travellers.

Some outposts, of course, are designated for this function, serving as gateways into the Dominion's territories. These tend to have considerable facilities for guests and are very welcoming, usually offering a wide variety of goods at reasonable prices.

In both cases, outsiders will be restricted to a designated area set aside from the main compound, through which the resident population can move about as they wish. For security however, outsiders will be ejected from a community compound if found outside their designated areas.

Defences: The Dominion takes the defence of these outposts very seriously. They are always surrounded by a high, sturdy wall and individual sections of the community are enclosed within sub-walls.

The outer walls will generally be equipped with machine gun emplacements and dedicated heavy weaponry for the elimination of Broodspawn.

Most outposts also have around twenty to thirty members of the Overwatch assigned to them, and an additional ten to twenty members of the Protectorate. These military forces are allowed to interact casually with the residents, and generally speaking can be considered an additional permanent part of an outpost's population.

Authorities: An outpost is usually managed by a junior member of the Auctora. Beneath them is a clear hierarchy of officials from the Legislat.

Outsiders wishing to speak with the authorities will have to first contact the Protectorate who will then put them in touch with a relevant member of the Legislat. This process can be sped up considerably if the outsiders are Nemissaries with business – in such cases, they'll generally be taken directly to see the Auctora in charge.

SETTLEMENTS

Past the outer defences of the Dominion lie the bulk of its communities. These are broadly distributed but generally huge by the standards of most other factions on the East Coast.



Population: Most settlements have a civilian population of at least five hundred people, and the largest can have several thousand. These people cover a wide range of careers and talents, but tend to be specialised towards particular professions; most often farming, but potentially also mining or even engineering.

Facilities: The Dominion's true settlements have a broad range of facilities, many of which would not be out of place before The Fall. In addition to the usual Post-Fall trading areas, bars, brothels and the like, there are also dedicated medical centres, schools and community meeting areas.

Most of these facilities will be built at a centre point from which various housing areas are defined. These accommodations tend to be of a high quality; at least in comparison to communities outside the Dominion.

Individual houses are unlikely to have running water, but housing blocks generally have access to communal showers and well-maintained fresh water pumps.

Defences: The larger Dominion settlements are not generally walled. Those nearer the borders may follow similar layouts to Outposts, but most opt for a system of safe-houses.

These safe-houses are heavily reinforced buildings spread throughout the community; in the event of an emergency, civilians are expected to go to the nearest safe-house to wait out the emergency.

The safe-houses themselves are assigned a small detachment of Overwatch personnel and the community as a whole will be ringed by a series of small, but heavily reinforced operations centres, out of which the main body of the Overwatch troops can deploy.

At the smaller end, there may be five to ten of these safe-houses, each with a five-person Overwatch fireteam, along with an equal number of squads with ten Overwatch members each.

For the largest communities, these numbers can double or even triple. Further, communities will usually try and maintain a balance of roughly one Protectorate member per fifty civilians.

Unlike outposts, the Protectorate concentrate almost exclusively on law enforcement and in the event of an emergency are expected to help man the safe-houses, freeing the Overwatch up to eliminate threats as rapidly as possible.

Beyond all these defences, communities will normally have one or more resident Nemissaries in attendance, and the largest communities may even have an entire Cabal.

Authorities: These large communities will always have a senior member of the Auctora or a newly appointed Hierarchy at their head, assisted by a number of public officials and the relevant bureaucracy of the Legislat.

There may also be a number of junior Nemissaries in the form of the Invested, who may well have senior administrative positions within the settlement.

Human outsiders will have to wade through a great deal of bureaucracy in order to gain the attention of the local Auctora; even Nemissaries, unless they have an extremely convincing reason, will likely be expected to wait for a day or so - though they'll usually be offered free lodgings in the meantime.

SAFE HAVENS

Only a handful of communities large enough to fall into this category exist. Boston is the primary example of this, as the jewel - and capital city - of the Hierarchy Dominion. Beyond Boston, the other Safe Havens generally arose from long established Settlements that were themselves founded in the ruins of old cities.

Population: The number of people residing in these settlements can vary considerably from anywhere as low as five thousand to as high as fifteen thousand. This is a guideline, and populations can rise higher; Boston in particular boasts a huge population of nearly thirty thousand.

Facilities: Each of these Safe Havens is a massive commitment of resources on the Dominion's part, requiring a considerable degree of cooperation between the Hierarchs and Auctora. As such, they require clear justification for their existence.

The reasons can be varied, but tend towards manufacturing rather than strategic interests. This is because the Dominion prefers numerous smaller military facilities; only large communities can sustain the necessary infrastructure for complex manufacturing.

Certainly, these communities have access to all the same amenities of smaller settlements but on a larger scale. They also have limited access to advanced medical care and higher education.

Beyond this, these communities are considered propaganda centrepieces by the Dominion and often have public parks, sports centres and even public baths or swimming pools restored to working order.

Defences: Unlike settlements, the Dominion's largest communities are walled and are actually divided into districts in a manner very similar to smaller Outposts. Despite this, these communities still boast a safe-house system with a single large safe-house at the centre of each district.

Districts generally house no more than two to three hundred people, and have a single permanent, ten-strong Overwatch team assigned to its Safe-house, along with a five-person Protectorate team. As a whole, a city may have as many as five hundred Overwatch personnel, organised as full military units with access to heavy fire support and armoured vehicles.

Additionally, the City will have specialised fire and violent crime units, distributed through a number of precincts, each of which serves the surrounding districts.

Of course, like smaller communities, the Safe Havens are also protected by Nemissaries and each will have – at a minimum – one full Cabal of Nemissaries with considerable combat experience in residence. In addition, those who would greatly antagonise a city at large may well have to deal with the city's rulers directly, each of whom is likely a match for an entire Cabal of Nemissaries in their own rights.

Authorities: The Safe Havens are generally ruled over by one of the Hierarchs, though it's also possible that multiple Hierarchs will split control of a city between them.

Boston itself is ruled over by the Lord Hierarch Soresh directly, but also operates under a Council, and many of the senior Hierarchs actually reside in Boston, directing their affairs via trusted subordinates in the Auctora.

Like other Dominion communities, there is a considerable hierarchy of civil servants, many hundreds of whom are required simply to keep communities of this size functioning. The end result is that getting direct access to the authorities is a difficult and time consuming process, and only the direst of emergencies is likely to get access to the city's rulers at short notice.

MILITARY FORCES

The Dominion has access to a considerable military force; if that force could be deployed against a single point, it's likely no faction on the East Coast could resist the onslaught. Of course, the reality is that the Dominion's structure and goals require it to commit its strength across a broad spread of territory.

This commitment, whilst necessitating a defensive strategy, is often turned to the Dominion's advantage; after all, its defensive nature and proven record in protecting its territory makes the prospect of joining the Dominion a highly attractive one, both to individuals and communities.

PATRIOTISM

In many ways, the greatest barrier to the Dominion's expansion hasn't been the other factions, but instead an understandable resistance to a foreign power.

No matter how many people join, the Dominion cannot escape the shadow of history. This means that no matter how the Hierarch Dominion presents itself, many Americans always end up resisting the allure of infrastructure in the name of independence.

This difficulty has led to growing frustration within the Auctora, and has pushed many of them down troubling paths. Some have begun to actively suppress the teaching of America's history, and others have called for a more militant stance in order to maintain civility.

When the Dominion does go on the offensive, it's generally in response to an external threat and is rarely intended to capture new territory. When such threats present themselves, the Dominion prefers to rely on Nemissaries seeking advancement to the Auctora rather than its standing military forces.

THE PROTECTORATE

The smaller of the two military arms of the Dominion, the Protectorate nevertheless plays a critical role in the survival of the Dominion.

It functions as a combination of law enforcement and a fire department, and is charged with the broad responsibility of maintaining public order.

Organisation: The organisation of the Protectorate is flexible based on the needs of the community in question. In smaller communities, individual members have broader responsibilities and powers. In these cases, the Protectorate operates as a loose group under the authority of a Sheriff.

If the total Protectorate force grows above about ten members, then the group will be split between a number of deputy Sheriffs. In larger communities, the Protectorate will be split into separate divisions, each of which is under the authority of a Sheriff who themselves will now be under the authority of a captain.

The primary division, usually known as Peacekeepers, are responsible for general law and order and tend to make up about sixty percent of the total forces. A further 30%, known as the Firewatch, are responsible for public safety and fire control, and the final 10% act as the Serious Crimes Unit, the concerns of which lie solely with the direct investigation of various crimes.

Equipment: Primarily salvaged from old police departments, all members of the Protectorate are equipped with a light handgun, baton, restraints, and either a radio or a warning siren. For more serious incidents, the members have access to combat shotguns and ballistic vests.

OVERWATCH FORCES

The Overwatch is the backbone of the Hierarch Dominion. It has impressive numbers, training and an abundance of military assets. Despite all that, the Overwatch is not an



army; its primary function is to resist the Broodspawn and to counter any outbreak within Dominion territory.

The Overwatch may be focused on a particular aim, but that shouldn't be taken to mean that it can't be used effectively against other threats; it's simply that its tactics and training necessitate a defensive mindset and this makes the Overwatch a poor fit for large-scale offensives.

Organisation: The Overwatch's organisation is based around twelve member squads led by a sergeant. These squads are then split into three fire-teams, two of which are led by Corporals.

When multiple Squads are needed for the defence of the community, they are formed into a Watch Division led by a Lieutenant. Divisions never contain more than ten squads, but in practice, a Division generally comprises five squads.

For large scale deployments such as those which protect Safe Havens, a Watch Command led by a Captain will be employed, in order to oversee the divisions.

Communities are divided by the Overwatch into Zones, and each Zone will have two squads assigned directly to protect it. The squads operate on a rota, with one team serving during the day and the other at night. One fire-team patrols the designated Zone, while the other two fire-teams remain at the edges of the zone to respond to emergencies.

If an alarm is sounded in a Zone, then the squads in each surrounding zone begin an immediate inspection; if no threat is detected, one of those fire-teams is moved automatically to support the Zone which raised the alarm.

This means that an outbreak or attack can be responded to quickly and efficiently with the minimal risk of infection spreading throughout the community.

In the case of external threats, the system works much the same, but squads defending internal Zones don't wait for the full inspection, and immediately deploy a fire-team to the nearest outer perimeter, before deploying a second fire-team when an inspection of their own Zone is complete. In both cases, if an inspection finds a threat, then an alarm will be issued in that Zone as well.

ELITE SQUADS

Most Auctora, and certainly all of the Hierarchs, have a squad of Overwatch at their personal command. These troops tend to be armed to the teeth and often possess Bone-weave or even Voidglass Armour. They are also more likely to have melee weapons – particularly Voidglass ones – and usually have a broader variety of ranged weapons.

Thanks to a dedicated training regime, the bulk of an Overwatch's forces within a community can be concentrated on any given threat in their zones in fifteen minutes or less. Coupled with the fact that Dominion citizens are well drilled in getting to safe zones, it means that communities are generally extremely resilient to outside offensives.

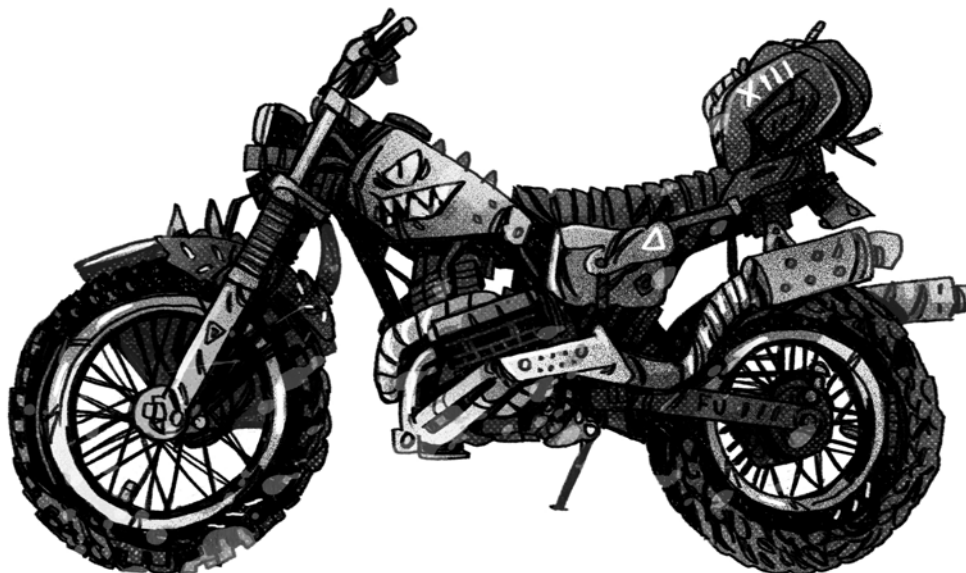
Equipment: The Overwatch are well-supplied in terms of material assets. Their uniforms and general gear is of good quality, with combined combat gear being the most common form of armour.

During normal operations, members also wear a high-visibility overcoat which is colour-coded to the squad and the zone in which it operates. These overcoats are quickly discarded if the Dominion needs to fight a major engagement with human opponents.

Armaments vary, but soldiers are usually equipped with a combat shotgun and revolver. At least one member of each fire-team will have a ballistic spear-gun. In addition to these basic armaments, squads will have in reserve a supply of rifles, flamethrowers and grenade launchers.

The high number of Nemissaries within the Dominion means that the Overwatch have access to a large reserve of Voidglass Shot, and most squads have about a dozen of these rounds split amongst their members.

The Hierarch Dominion also makes fairly heavy use of incendiary rounds, and these, along with the flamethrowers assigned to squads are only used against external threats, unless a situation is growing out of control.



THE PYREFLAME CRUSADE

*"There's nothing quite as frightening
as someone who knows they are right."*

— Michael Faraday

The Pyreflame, for better or worse, is amongst the strongest factions in Post-Fall America. No other group can claim so large a following and its influence stretches well beyond its own borders. It presents itself as a unified crusade, the one true faith, and the one true hope for all mankind.

Across the East Coast, the name Mara Caillow and her ascension are both well known, yet even the devoted of the Pyreflame could tell you almost nothing about her. Even the higher ranking members of the faction know precious little of the truth.

The current human leaders know only what their forebears recorded, and the handful of ancient Nemissaries at the faction's heart refuse to speak on the topic.

TERRIBLE TRUTH

It's true that Mara Caillow was one of the first Nemissaries to emerge into this world. She was both resourceful, powerful, and devout in her faith, but she wasn't alone.

For a time, she was a part of an early Cabal that wandered far and wide across Post Fall America. Those times were dark, and their journey was filled with suffering and loss. Through it all, Mara's faith never seemed to dim, but the endless horrors and the words of her Cabal cast doubt upon her heart.

Their long struggle bore many successes, and without them, dozens of settlements would never have survived to the present day. For all their power they still had limits however, and things would take a dark turn when the Cabal sought to defend a remote settlement in the Appalachian mountains.

There, they encountered one of the first Harbingers, and were totally unprepared for the realities of facing the Brood with a human intellect guiding its actions.

The battle raged for days with the Harbinger refusing to commit to direct battle. Using its Broodspawn, it slowly

wore down the Cabal's resources until defeat seemed inevitable.

With all their strength spent, they prepared for one last stand, but the onslaught never came. Instead, a lone figure emerged from the snow, a youth barely in their teens, yet dragging the ruined form of the Harbinger at their side.

FAITH

The encounter would be a fateful one, and ultimately would lead to the creation of the Pyreflame itself. The Cabal all felt for a time the strength of this child, and yet that power seemed to fade as they calmly sat amongst the ruins and the fire.

The youth gave their name as Faith, though they acknowledged that this was not their real name, but rather a title given to them by a now long-lost friend.

Faith told the Cabal many things; truths that shook them to their core. It told them how it came to this world, more than a hundred years before, in a fiery descent in northern Siberia.

There, it felt a great and terrible power sleeping in the Earth. Its form was broken, and it had no choice but to take a host – for a time it thought it would die there in that lonely forest, but there came a boy – a hunter from a nearby village. Sensing its only chance, it struggled against the power that sought to bind it, and reached out to take the boy as a host.

The boy should have been consumed, his mind and soul hollowed out for the Reaper's presence. Had that happened, our world might well have ended long before any of the Cabal were born; but broken as the interloper was, it could not wholly consume the human mind. It watched for a time, and felt through the boy long-forgotten human emotions, and at last realised that it could finally be free, and thus chose to submit.

CONTENT WARNING

Faith and religion are both topics which need to be handled carefully in a game. The Pyreflame draws its inspiration from a number of real world sects of Christianity, but it isn't intended to be a direct analogue, nor make light of people's sincerely held beliefs.

Some players, as well, may well find the Pyreflame and religious themes in general uncomfortable, and GMs and players shouldn't feel bound to present the Pyreflame in its default interpretation. It's entirely possible to present the Pyreflame as an entirely novel religion with no links to existing faiths.

In terms of the information presented here, we think it's important to warn readers that it casts doubt on the origins of the Pyreflame and gives a potentially negative interpretation of the character of Mara Caillow.

Remember that what is presented in this book doesn't have to be the truth in your world; always side with what's best for your story and your players.

All the strength it still possessed, it gave to the boy, and found after millennia the peace of death. With that power came knowledge, and above all - horror, for the boy that was now Faith knew they were not alone. Two other similar beings had come to Earth, and in time, the remaining four would arrive – and no matter what Faith now wished, our world would be doomed.

HOPE

Mara listened to all of this and her doubts were cast aside. The power that had broken this demon and had ultimately redeemed it was, in her mind, the God she had almost forsaken. Her faith burned again, her mind raced, and she paid little heed to the rest of Faith's story.

Faith went on to tell the Cabal that of the other two, one was like him, and it was her who had given him his name - but now he was alone. More questions and revelations would follow, and the Cabal learned that many Shards had existed long before the Black Rain, and were responsible for Faith's current condition. He and his companion had warned who they could, and worked to wake more of the Shards so that a defence might be mounted against their former kin.

THE FLAME IMPERISHABLE

Whilst her Cabal listened in awe to what Faith told them, Mara regarded them with growing suspicion and horror; the otherworldly revelations of the Shards, the Reapers and the Broodspawn's true nature broke something within her. She could not – or would not – believe, and so she lashed out.

RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

The Pyreflame is both a faction and a religion, and as a consequence of its expansion it controls territory where a large percentage of the population are not necessarily believers in its doctrine. This is seriously problematic because the Pyreflame has no separation of church and state, meaning that its theology inherently informs its law and civic policies.

To try and counteract this problem to an extent, the primary sect of the Pyreflame is written to have a particularly moderate and inclusive outlook. The reality is that this doesn't solve the problem, but it does push it to the background enough that it needn't intrude upon the game.

The practical reality however is that even with this moderate outlook, the Pyreflame will almost inevitably subtly marginalise unbelievers and characters of other faiths. It's important to understand that this isn't necessarily a deliberate act, but without the separation of church and state that most readers enjoy, characters will be expected to behave by what the Pyreflame's Faith says is right, rather than a collective code of ethics.

The kind of issues this raises can be fascinating to explore but they have very serious real world ramifications, and many players may find this type of situation deeply uncomfortable.

In the end, it's important to keep this issue in mind, but unless everyone involved in a game is comfortable with, or actively wants to explore these issues, it may be better to avoid scenarios which highlight these issues.



Faith simply retreated – there was no battle to be had. Her Cabal were horrified; so many answers had been within reach, so many truths now lost. Mara now rebuked them for believing the lies of one touched by a demon, and the argument grew ever more heated, until it erupted in violence, and Mara devoured them one by one.

The deed she committed horrified her, but with their power added to her own, she possessed strength enough to challenge Faith, and so she did.

It took months, but eventually she found Faith again. The scars of their battle still remain hidden amongst the mountains. In the end, no one can know what happened, but it was Mara who emerged, not Faith.

Never once did she speak of what happened in the mountains, nor of what became of her companions. Though she may have bested Faith, the words they had shared would haunt her for the remainder of her existence.

A FINAL PILGRIMAGE

Mara's journey then became the one better known to the Pyreflame, and her steps are well recorded, but only those few who walked the path with her have any idea of her true motives.

Mara's faith had become like a fire which burned her from within, a pain she could no longer bear. The guilt and agony wracked her with every waking moment, and she sought desperately a Shard that would give her the secret of true Death.

Eventually, she found it – at least after a fashion – and so after imparting what wisdom still remained to her closest followers, she consumed her own soul in the fires of her faith – her character ever surviving as a revenant, embodied within the will of her followers. There she could sleep until the end of days, the fire of her soul burning in the faith she founded.

REALM OF THE PYREFLAME

The Pyreflame controls a vast and diverse territory which stretches across huge areas of the east coast. Some of its territory is little more than war-zones where the long and terrible process of truly eliminating the Broodspawn continues, but these are far from the norm within the faction's lands.

The bulk of its population, particularly those deeper within Pyreflame territory, live in large, fairly stable settlements which are prosperous and largely safe from the dangers of Post-Fall America.

Naming Conventions: Most Pyreflame settlements are based around Pre-Fall population centres, and many still retain their original names. However, when the Pyreflame reclaims territory and founds a dedicated settlement, it usually creates a new name for it, often based upon the leaders responsible.

Some settlements that are particularly dedicated to the cause may even rename themselves, and in those cases there is usually some reference to fire or ash, often combined with at least part of the original name.

Some examples are The Last Hearth, Cinderfall, Ashwrought, Hartford and Caillow's Lament.

Locations: Part of the Pyreflame's growth is tied heavily to its campaign to exterminate the Broodspawn. This means that the bulk of the territory now controlled by the faction consists of numerous small settlements or outposts which have joined the Pyreflame simply for the protection it offers.

The chaotic nature of this arrangement means that the Pyreflame often has little choice in regards to the location of its settlements. As time has gone by, the faction's increased population has allowed it to create a number of dedicated settlements which are almost always founded on sites of strategic importance.

OUTPOSTS

Pyreflame outposts are normally temporary facilities, created to serve the needs of a particular campaign. They tend to be small and utilitarian, with the bulk of construction made in such a way that it can be disassembled for reuse at a later point.

That said, the Pyreflame do maintain a fair number of more permanent outposts which primarily serve as part of the defences of larger communities or waystations for trade convoys.

Population: Most outposts have only a small number of permanent residents, the majority of whom have a specific role in the smooth running of the facility. Generally this means that there will be somewhere in the region of 15 to 20 people living at the outpost.

In facilities which are not part of an active campaign, then the occupants will likely have their families with them, which will increase the numbers overall, possibly doubling the number of adults and adding a fair number of children to the site.

Facilities: Outposts in the Pyreflame are generally spartan, with the population enjoying a tolerable but frugal standard of living. All such sites will include a chapel of some kind, which usually serves as a civic centre, and what amenities the outpost does have are usually centred here.

Unless the outpost is part of the Pyreflame's trade network, outsiders will find no dedicated facilities or accommodation. In most cases, travellers won't be turned away and will generally be treated with what limited hospitality can be offered, but the outpost will remain wary and guarded, and guests will not be allowed to overstay their welcome.



NON-BELIEVERS



It's worth noting that the Pyreflame does not require community members to adhere to its faith, and on paper they possess all the same rights and responsibilities as the faithful.

In practice, such individuals are at a disadvantage, because authority within the faction necessarily requires at least the appearance that an individual is a true believer.

In some settlements, the problem has been solved, at least in part, by the Pyreflame's willingness to recognise other religions and philosophical ideologies as legal sects of a sort. This is normally done in cases where the population of a settlement is not predominantly part of the faith, and in these places the priesthood is in effect a local secular government.

This arrangement is one way of avoiding the issues of religious intolerance discussed at the start of this section.

Defences: For the most part, the defences of these facilities are light, with the Pyreflame primarily relying upon its military forces to ensure safety. In most cases, this will include a squad of six to twelve soldiers of the Ember Watch.

Basic defences are still erected and at the very least, an outpost will include walls and at least one watch-tower, but dedicated static defences are rare.

Authorities: The primary authority in an outpost is generally either the highest ranked military officer or local priest, which in some cases may well be the same individual. This person usually carries the title of Watchkeeper, and has broad authority over everything which happens within the settlement.

The Watchkeeper is not an absolute tyrant, and their powers have limits; notably they are unable to issue death sentences and their decisions in terms of law and management are subject to review by the Pyreflame's higher authorities.

SETTLEMENTS

The settlements of the Pyreflame are enormously varied. Most were peacefully integrated into the Pyreflame as a result of successful campaigns, and only a small minority were taken by force.

Very few settlements were custom built and most are quite old and possess a good deal of self-sufficiency. This is accomplished at least in part by the fact that the Pyreflame is vigilant in patrolling its borders. This protection allows its settlements to make more extensive use of the surrounding areas for farming and resource extraction.

Population: Generally, settlements controlled by the Pyreflame have large populations compared to the relative size of the settlement. The bulk of this population is made up of civilians who perform general labour work on behalf of the community.

All settlements include a permanent garrison of the Emberwatch, which forms an active part of the community, and most include a small cloister of priests and their retainers.

Facilities: All Pyreflame settlements include at least a small church, and in most cases this is a substantial facility which serves as the seat of both civilian governance and military defence. Beyond this, it's difficult to generalise as the sheer variety of Pyreflame settlements means that the available facilities vary wildly between them.

In general, Pyreflame settlements tend to have a relatively low standard of living. Its people rarely go hungry due to the availability of safe farmlands, but this advantage is offset somewhat by the large populations.

Settlements generally contain some basic shops and facilities, but most trade – particularly that of manufactured goods – will take place in markets, and most settlements have a dedicated area for this purpose.

Outsiders and travellers are normally quite welcome – especially if they have coin or goods to trade. Most settlements will have some form of dedicated accommodation for outsiders, and if they are members of the faithful or in good standing with the Pyreflame, they may well be offered accommodation within the church grounds.

Defences: By and large, the Pyreflame pursues a policy of aggressive defence which seeks to make safe the largest possible area of territory surrounding any given settlement. As a consequence, the Pyreflame puts less emphasis on static defences than most factions, and primarily relies upon garrisoning Emberwatch units to provide a local defence against bandits or Broodspawn outbreaks.

Physical defences and barriers are left in the hands of individual settlements, and the availability of manpower means that most settlements have fairly robust walls but little in the way of more organised or sophisticated defences.

Authorities: Settlements are organised and run from the central church of the location, the leader of which is generally a Bishop who leads a council of priests. Decisions are made as a council with the Bishop having a vote and the power of veto, but not absolute authority.

Military offices will also be present, and the Emberwatch and its offices are generally responsible for law and order within the city bounds, though the church still serves as the judiciary for this purpose.

The council often includes at least a few members that are not part of the priesthood. Often this will include the heads of any specialised professions, along with the senior ranking officers from the Emberwatch, though such individuals do not normally possess a vote in the council.

SAFE HAVENS

Though rare, the Pyreflame do control a number of settlements with sufficient size, population and facilities to be considered Safe Havens. The largest of these is Tyman's Watch where the Pyreflame Crusade began, and which now serves as the faction's headquarters.

Though originally, all the Orders of the Crusade operated from this one settlement, the expansion of the faction means that each is now based out of a separate settlement closer to its area of operations. Though not all these settlements have grown to the scale of Tyman's Watch, several of them would now qualify as Safe Havens in their own right.



ENCLAVES

It's not uncommon to find Artificer enclaves offering their services within Pyreflame communities and up until relatively recently Breaker enclaves were a common facet of most settlements. Though some Breaker enclaves do remain, the developments in New York have lessened their presence and made them unwelcome in many locations. In either case, these are often the only source of more sophisticated technology or services.

Population: The number of people living in these communities can be staggering, with many thousands of permanent residents, along with potentially hundreds of priests and associated support personnel. Additionally, as most of the Safe Havens serve as the centre of one of the Pyreflame's Orders, there is likely to be a substantial number of garrisoned soldiers.

Unlike the Pyreflame's smaller settlements, the population includes a far greater percentage of specialised professionals, not to mention a massive – if transitory – population of soldiers, traders and other guests.

Facilities: The Cathedral at the heart of a Safe Haven is always an impressive building and includes a massive number of dedicated facilities of its own, the total area of which could easily count as a settlement in its own right.

The Safe Haven overall will have fair access to facilities and amenities. There will be numerous shops, markets and facilities. There are also often at least provisions given for education, and many such communities include public baths, libraries and small communal gardens.

The standard of living in these places will vary tremendously and there is a significant divide between the bulk of the population and the more privileged priest and manufacturing classes. In addition, housing is usually extremely cramped and despite the faction's best efforts, healthcare and sanitation is normally difficult to maintain in such dense, impromptu urban areas.

Defences: Like other Pyreflame settlements, the great Safe Havens rely primarily on aggressive defence, but as each is the operation centre for one of the Orders, it will almost inevitably boast a substantial garrison of troops, with members of that Order generally serving as the Emberwatch.

The static defences of these settlements are generally concentrated around the Cathedral at its heart and the Barracks and support facilities of the military. Beyond this, the Safe Haven's other defences are built primarily around containing outbreaks rather than repelling an external invader. Even then, overcrowding and haphazard construction means that an internal outbreak can be devastating, and is a constant concern for the Emberwatch.

Authorities: With the exception of Tyman's Watch, the Safe Havens of the Pyreflame are each ruled by one of the High Cardinals, and exists to serve as the base of operations for the Order controlling them.

Tyman's Watch is somewhat different, and serves as the seat of power for the faction as a whole, and is ruled on paper by a council comprised of all five High Cardinals – in practice, each of the Cardinals sends a representative to stand in their place for that city, which is ruled in roughly the same manner as other Pyreflame settlements.

In the other Safe Havens, the High Cardinals are in absolute authority. Though they are advised by a council of Cardinals, and can theoretically be stripped of their position by that council, the practical reality is that they control the Templars of their Order, and with them, all true political power.

As would be expected, a substantial bureaucracy exists in any of these Safe Havens, with various tasks being delegated to lesser officials, which form all the necessary branches of government one would expect.

MILITARY FORCES

As befits its origins as a crusading army, the Pyreflame controls a vast military. This force is impressive on paper, and in terms of sheer numbers is only rivalled by the Empire of Storms. The reality though is that the Pyreflame's armies, whilst numerous, are not well equipped, and deep divisions within the faction itself limit its ability to make effective use of the primary advantage of these numbers.

The Pyreflame's military is organised into seven great Orders, five of which are under the direct personal command of a High Cardinal. The remaining two are each led by a Lord Militant, who are appointed to the position by a majority decision of the High Cardinals.

The organisation of these Orders is broadly similar, with a combined rank structure. The bulk of troops within an Order are known as Templars, but Orders also include auxiliary militia and a variety of non-combatant support personnel.

The forces of an Order are divided amongst a number of formations; namely the Ashbringers, the Emberwatch, and the Hearthguard. The number and composition of these formations varies between the Orders, and most include smaller specialised formations to suit the needs of its High Cardinal.

ASHBRINGERS

The Ashbringers are the front-line soldiers of the Pyreflame and the backbone of its campaigns. They make up the vast majority of the armed forces of the five Cardinal Orders, and are well known throughout the East Coast for their courage and resolve.

The Orders of Liberty and Fortitude have virtually no Ashbringers under their command, instead forming an elite core of reserve infantry rather than a front-line unit as is common to the rest of the Faction.



Organisation: The Ashbringers are organised along conventional military lines with strong similarities to the former United States Army. Its most basic unit is a squad with twelve members, which can be split into three fire-teams, though this is not a common practice within the faction.

When going on the offensive, a given Order tends to operate on a large scale, deploying potentially hundreds of Ashbringers to a single engagement.

These forces are divided into three groups; the first group is referred to as the Line, and spreads itself out over a wide front with each soldier positioned a few meters apart.

The second group, the Spine, is primarily composed of seasoned troops and individual Nemissaries. The troops are deployed in full squads of twelve which are spread evenly a little behind the Line, with Nemissaries either attached to individual squads or in place of Squads in the case of particularly powerful individuals.

The third group are the Reserves; these forces serve to guard the command, supplies and logistics staff, and are deployed some distance behind the main Line.

Once battle begins, the Line advances and halts when it meets resistance, at which point that section of the Line falls back and is replaced by the more hardened units from the Spine. Once the enemy has been eliminated, the advance

will continue in a systematic manner until all resistance has been eliminated.

These tactics work well on the Broodspawn, but are obviously less suited to human opponents; in which case, the Ashbringers tend to deploy in teams and spread out across an area using more modern military tactics.

Equipment: The Pyreflame is somewhat inconsistent in how it arms the Ashbringers, with each Order possessing greatly varied resources and capabilities.

At a minimum, Ashbringers will be equipped with a shotgun or rifle and a melee weapon of some description. Veteran units, particularly those reserved for the Spine, will often have access to dedicated Anti-Brood weaponry, particularly gas-operated Spearguns and flamethrowers where appropriate.

Mechanisation of any kind is extremely rare, though most Orders do have at least some access to the Gods' Wrath Artillery Batteries which are often used to support an advance and to break up large swarms of Broodspawn.

EMBERWATCH

The Emberwatch are a constant presence in Pyreflame communities, and serve as both its police and primary means of defence against uprisings from the Brood.



For most of the Orders, the Emberwatch make up a relatively small percentage of its total forces, and are primarily concentrated around that Order's base of operations.

The vast majority of the Emberwatch forces that people encounter on a daily basis are drawn from the Order of Fortitude, which is composed almost entirely of Emberwatch forces, and is widely distributed throughout the Pyreflame's territory.

Organisation: As befits its role, the Emberwatch operates in small four-person units referred to as a Watch. The overall commander of a Watch for a given settlement is known as a Watch Captain, and if multiple Watch units are needed, each will be commanded directly by a Watch Sergeant, who will report in turn to the Captain.

Equipment: The Emberwatch are extremely varied in their equipment. They wear an armband or other marker to identify their status, but otherwise their equipment is a personal matter.

Each Watch does possess an armoury which is particularly well stocked by the standards of the Pyreflame, often including ballistic Spearguns and combat shotguns, but these are only used in the event of a serious crisis and are not part of the standard day-to-day armaments of Watch officers.

HEARTHGUARD

The Hearthguard are charged with the defence of the Pyreflame's borders, and represent the second largest formation in the five Cardinal Orders, and their numbers are supported by the forces of the Order of Liberty, whose members are composed almost entirely of Hearthguard.

The Order of Fortitude assigns only a small percentage of its forces to this position, and for them it operates primarily as an extension of the Emberwatch, focusing on apprehending criminals or scouting the immediate area surrounding the settlement.

THE VIGIL

Rumours persist that the Orders maintain a body of troops known as The Vigil. According to scattered accounts, the Vigil serve as a secret police reporting only to the High Cardinal that they serve.

Organisation: The Hearthguard primarily operate in Lances of up to two dozen individual Hearthguard members. The Lance is commanded by a Lance Captain that is often a Nemissary. Beneath them, the Lance will be split into a number of smaller squads, each led by a Lance Sergeant.

The exact number and disposition of the squads depends upon the availability of transport. If the Hearthguard unit is mechanised, then the Squads will be set to whatever numbers are suitable for the vehicles at hand. If the unit is operating on foot, then it is usually split into three with the bulk of the forces forming the centre, and the remaining troops split into an advance and rear-guard.

When they do detect an enemy, Hearthguard units tend to converge on the target in order to bring their full numbers to bear, but the nature of their task often requires them to be far more flexible than the Ashbringers, leading to a far greater variety in tactics.

Equipment: The Hearthguard are amongst the best equipped of the Pyreflame's forces and include a wide range of specialised equipment for both anti-personnel and anti-Brood engagements.

Most Orders maintain a large corps of mechanised Hearthguard which operate using converted civilian vehicles supported with motorbikes and a handful of custom-built vehicles.

Most Orders also maintain a small mounted corps which utilise horses, often specially bred for their calm and reliable disposition.



THE THORNS

*"Should you shield the canyons from the windstorms
you would never see the true beauty of their carvings."*

— Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

The Thorns are perhaps the most reclusive of all the factions. For most, even the Artificers seem more relatable – after all, they seem to value most of the same things as other people, whereas the Thorns stand ever apart, alien in their beliefs and often their actions.

Virtually no outsider has any concrete knowledge of the Thorns – either their origins or their beliefs. If they did, they would be perhaps surprised that the Thorns aren't more removed from humanity.

Where most have sought to recover or preserve the culture of the world before The Fall, the Thorns eschew it almost entirely, having instead devoted themselves to the dangerous task of retrieving knowledge from within the very Shards which destroyed the civilisation they reject.

MANY VOICES

The knowledge the Thorns have gathered is not a unified whole; its sources are uncertain and mercurial. The Shards after all don't speak, but communicate in ideas, images and memories, all things which must be interpreted by the observer.

Making matters more complicated is the fact that each tribe of the Thorns have their own interpretations of that collected lore. That shouldn't be taken to mean that the Thorns have no shared knowledge or opinions. Some of their lore has emerged independently enough times to be considered true by nearly all the diverse groups within the faction.

Amongst the general population of the Thorns, this "canon" is widely known and understood, and the Thorns have a reasonably stable set of beliefs in regards to their gods and the Broodspawn, but this only scratches the surface of the knowledge the Thorns possess.

THE FIRST STEPS

Like all survivors of The Fall, the groups who would go on to found the Thorns generally had an imprecise understanding of the Shards, but unlike many they didn't look upon them with fear, nor simple reverence – they sought to understand.

Their first steps were difficult and dangerous; with Nemissaries yet to fully emerge, there was no way to determine the nature of a Shard ahead of time. As such there were many false starts before any form of communication could begin.

This early phase was a chaotic affair; information was vague at best, and consisted almost entirely of highly subjective interpretations of dreams. The information that was accumulated was done so by comparing the experiences of separate groups to see where multiple threads held true. Still, this method was heavily subject to bias and the nascent beliefs of the fledgling faction deeply coloured this early research.

This early lore cemented the basic beliefs of the Thorns, but many continued to refine their techniques. This process was further accelerated by the emergence of Nemissaries within the faction, and as a consequence the knowledge retrieved has grown both in clarity and reach.

What their researches have uncovered is not to their liking – the collected efforts of the Thorns have not served to illuminate the understanding of their gods, but rather cast doubt on the wisdom of its founders, confronting them with truths they wish they could now ignore.

BROKEN ARROWS

The most disturbing revelation from the point of view of the Thorns concerns the nature of the Shards themselves. Far from being the fragments of gods or a punishment upon mankind, they are a broken weapon.

The form they now take is not their true shape; they are pieces of a much larger whole, and a series of great relics that were set upon a course to our world. As they approached, some vast and terrible power reached out and shattered them – what fell upon Earth was but a shadow of what could have befallen humanity.

Beyond simple destruction, this force had altered the Shards at their foundation – they were originally created only to serve the Reapers, but even as their masters descended to the planet, many Shards would not answer their call.

The power the Reapers reached out with was twisted and distorted, resulting not in a servile legion to lay humanity low as they intended, but rather ruined, maddened creatures that would come to be known as the Broodspawn.

It became clear to the Thorns that the earlier lore was not wholly wrong, but increasingly came to be seen by the learned as deeply distorted, and they feared that perhaps that everything they had built had been a lie – until a surprising discovery would give them new hope.



THE GUARDIANS

The Thorns' questioning of the Shards eventually showed that a vanishingly small number of the monoliths possessed an understanding of humanity and in particular its history, far beyond the majority. They pieced together a pattern and realised that many of the Shards first accessed by The Thorns possessed this unusual trait.

As they delved deeper, they uncovered convincing evidence both from Pre-Fall records and the Shards themselves that showed that at least some of the Shards predated the Black Rain by not just decades or centuries, but millions of years. Almost without exception, these ancient Shards were well hidden, long forgotten and often buried, but whether by accident or design, the shifting Earth had uncovered these relics.

Here, the Thorns' researches met a barrier – they learned that the Shards could grant access not just to dreams but a kind of shared reality, which a Nemissary might penetrate in their presence. Though their bodies remained in the physical world, their minds entered into a strange series of tunnels and caverns which formed a vast abandoned labyrinth of dark stone.

Amongst the endless tunnels they found doors which blocked all further progress, but there were other treasures – writings, murals and carvings. Though the words meant nothing, the images gave tantalising hints at what might have occurred.

THE DARK MOTHER

The murals discovered in that place seemed to show the rule of the gods and an age of plenty, but they also showed a time of strife and decay – a great war which tore the heavens asunder.

It shared a common theme with many ancient myths – namely the defeat of older gods by their children – but whereas most human tales end with the downfall of the old tyrants, here the antagonists found their revenge.

From the darkest depths the old gods brought forth a weapon, an abomination, which devoured all life in its path, but held from its victims the mercy of death. With such a power, the old gods could not be bested and their defeated offspring were brought before them in chains.

The abomination had never before been set upon them, only loosed upon their worshippers and followers, for the gods would not condemn one of their own to such a fate.



The King offered mercy to the defeated, but they rejected it, and so they cast their own child into the abomination's maw.

That crime would echo across eternity. The abomination had no mind, no desires, no emotion, but as it devoured the defeated god and their hopes, it broke the bindings that controlled it.

As the gods watched, the abomination released the child, whole but not unchanged. None of the Thorns who saw the images which depicted this could fail to note that the figures in the carvings resembled the Reapers in all respects.

THE FALL OF THE GODS

As frightening as these revelations were, worse was to come, for the carvings showed that the gods began to lose the war. In desperation, it appears they wrought devastation in their futile attempts to achieve victory.

With their numbers falling and their power presumably failing, they hid relics across the heavens intended to grant them rebirth, and upon doing so, sought to destroy all that existed. Only with this destructive ploy could they hope to truly defeat the enemy they had created.

The King watched this, and ruminated for an eternity and an instant. He realised with terrible certainty that a people - his people - who would wreak such devastation in their own interests had no right to live, and so he set out to ensure the end of his own kind.

Amongst the King's court, only one - a consort far from his favour - discovered his plans. She came before the King and begged him for mercy - not for herself, but for the worshippers of the gods, for they were guiltless of the Great Crime.

The King did not relent and moved to strike the goddess down, but she was without fear, and before the blow could

be struck, she burned her own soul from within, and with her last breath asked once again that the King change his designs.

The last breath could not be denied, and the King bowed to the brave goddess's will. Though the King would still force a last and final battle with the Abomination, he opened the deepest vaults and retrieved from them the last great relic uncorrupted by the Abomination.

This relic was a forge with which to create new life, and the King cast it in the furthest reaches of the heavens, to a remote and distant world. His task complete, the King turned to his legions, and prepared for the end.

DOUBT

The gathered lore of the Thorns can cast no more light on the tale of the Gods, and it leaves many questions unanswered. Most imagine that the Mother they revere is the goddess of the tale, and that her will is bound within the elder Shards.

If true, then their goddess truly did scatter the Black Rain and prevent the extinction of all life on Earth, but as comforting as that thought is, it leaves the possibility that the Reapers were but the first of many, and that the Abomination is far from destroyed - after all, for the Reapers to arrive, the King must have failed.

At best, this is a comforting twisting of the facts, and the truth is that the Thorns' beliefs likely have no solid foundation. Those which know the truth rightly fear that the truth would tear the Thorns apart, but if they do nothing, the faction they serve and the world at large will remain oblivious to the horrors to come.



REALM OF THE THORNS

Of all the Factions in North America, the Thorns are perhaps the most secretive and least prone to forming large, permanent settlements. The Thorns generally organise themselves into social groups, usually referred to as Tribes, and place this identity above any particular locational place they inhabit. As a result, it's better to talk of Thorns Outposts in terms of a particular Tribe and their territory, rather than a specific fortress or location.

Suggested Names: The Thorns tend to reject traditional names, choosing instead to name their settlements after elements from their mythology, or some evocative name relevant to the area.

Even when the Thorns do occupy pre-Fall locations, they still tend to rename these sites, though outsiders will often still refer to them by their traditional name.

The following are some examples of Thorns naming conventions;

Briar-kin, Frostholm, Long Walkers, Bonekeepers, Hedgekeepers, Stone Wardens, Old Crows, Last River, Salt Takers, Wood Walkers.

Locations: Groups affiliated with The Thorns nearly always claim a large territory, preferably one that is heavily forested and far from other human settlements. The Thorns still need to consider practical necessities and thus their territories always include some form of natural resources.

In reality, the large territories the Thorns claim are often hard to maintain, and the real reason they choose such large areas is due to the fact that any stable Thorns community will have a Shard at its heart, and they will go to great lengths to conceal this, or at least obfuscate the exact location of the Shard.



OUTPOSTS

Far from prying eyes, The Thorns maintain a semi-nomadic lifestyle, in many cases adopting elements of far older civilisations. They prefer to avoid relying on technology and wherever possible utilise hides and other natural materials, keeping scavenged Old World resources for trade. This shouldn't imply that The Thorns have an aversion to technology; rather, they are simply focused on keeping and using technology that can be manufactured or maintained by semi-nomadic groups.

Portable generators are a luxury but not unknown, and outsiders would be surprised to learn that radios are in abundant supply. Simple firearms such as shotguns are also manufactured on-site by the Thorns, and are often impressive and beautiful works of craftsmanship.

This is a by-product of the reality that the Thorns take great joy in crafts and learning of all types. Children are encouraged to make their own toys, a skill which is eventually honed into the crafting of practical equipment, the creation of which is an important rite of passage.

Herd animals are common with The Thorns, and like most nomadic or semi-nomadic groups their animals are a precious resource. Some Thorns communities also make good use of horses, though this is by no means universal.

Population: The number of people in any given Thorns tribe is never that large; their way of life and nature of governance simply renders it impractical. At the small end some tribal groups might be as small as fifty individuals, split amongst six or seven extended families. A more typical number would be about three to five hundred people, though this can be deceptive as the entire tribe will almost never gather in one place, preferring instead to distribute their population into smaller communities, usually of a hundred individuals or less in themselves.

The largest Tribes can reach several thousand individuals, but this is extremely rare and usually only occurs in times of great tumult, when banding together is the only way to achieve safety. Even then, such large Tribes normally split into smaller groups after only a few years. It should be noted that outsiders will almost never be aware of the true population; only a tiny percentage of individuals will be gathered around the Tribe's trading post, and the Thorns work just as hard to obfuscate their numbers as they do most facts about their existence.

Facilities: The Thorns are not generally welcoming to outsiders, but neither do they dismiss the importance of trade – at least where it occurs on their own terms.

To facilitate this, territories normally include at least one obvious or well-marked place in which to trade and meet outsiders. These places are usually situated near Old World landmarks or natural features with good visibility.

These areas generally have few comforts, little in the way of facilities and certainly no shops. Most actual trade will take place in the form of private meetings where the Thorns are surprisingly hospitable. Other visitors will not necessarily be turned away, but the Thorns are a suspicious group and have no wish for outsiders to linger in their territory.

The truly desperate, such as escaped slaves or small children, may well be offered sanctuary and a place in the larger tribe, but other outsiders will generally receive far more suspicion than welcome.

Defences: Given the Thorns' lifestyle, they rarely make the kind of fortifications common to other Factions but that shouldn't imply the Thorns are without defences. First and foremost their territory will have a number of well concealed watch-posts and safe-houses. Only some of these places will be manned at any one time, and then only for a few weeks. This helps further obfuscate the real points of defence at the Thorns' core territory.

A second line of defence lies in the Thorns' hunters. These groups seem small, only one to three individuals, but in practice they are part of a larger patrol group. These groups are made up of numerous small hunting teams and a larger support team with a temporary camp. Each smaller group always carries at least one shotgun, which isn't used for hunting directly.

Instead, if they encounter the enemy, they'll fire and then fall back. Since the Thorns never use the shotguns directly, preferring rifles or bows, the opening shots instead serve to alert the entire hunting cadre to the danger, and provide a rough indication of an enemy's position, at which point the group will gather together for a combined assault.

If they are capable of defeating the enemy they will do so; otherwise they will fall back, hoping to draw that enemy deeper into their territory and allowing forces stationed at watch-posts to close any path of retreat.

If all other options fail, then the Thorns will resort to the use of their bound Shard. This action is one of desperation as it potentially disables the Shard for some time, not to mention it risks revealing secrets the Thorns would rather keep hidden. All said, the final effectiveness of this is proved

by the fact that no other factions are yet truly aware of the extent to which the Thorns are capable of harnessing the Shards.

Authorities: The Thorns divide their communities primarily by trust. They place little stock in the idea of a single leader and prefer to rely on councils or communal decision making.

Not all members are entitled to a say by default but the Thorns are generally quite inclusive. With the exception of outsiders, criminals and small children, all voices will be heard, but only those who have taken their Oaths will usually have a right to vote on important matters.

The Shard Keepers themselves are held in great reverence by their communities but they don't automatically have more votes than anybody else; still, their importance and practical considerations means that communities are reluctant at best to oppose them.

As a result of this, Shard Keepers sometimes take Oaths not to take sides in various issues, and on the whole tend to stay out of the day to day politics and decision making of the community, preferring to stay in the role of lore keeper and advisor.

Outside of the Oaths, the Thorns draw few social distinctions, and try – where practical – to rotate the responsibility for various tasks, such as hunting or domestic tasks. Certainly some members of the Thorns are specialists, particularly in the area of craftsmanship, and the Thorns are pragmatic enough to put aside their ideology when it comes to truly skilled individuals.

SETTLEMENTS AND SAFE-HAVENS

The semi-nomadic and dispersed nature of The Thorns means that they haven't created the kind of larger strongholds common to the other factions.

Some Thorns communities have grown to an extent where their power and influence might be comparable to the larger communities of other factions, but this doesn't change the essential nature of such groups, and so the basic information presented for Outposts applies, just on a larger scale.



Outside of the main community, particularly with hunting or herding groups, the communal system is normally put aside as the practical realities of the task require a leader and a formal chain of command. Certainly amongst the hunters there is a hierarchy of experience and groups will have a leader and those groups a captain each. These limited titles don't transfer out of their specific use, and once hunters return to the community, they may garner more respect but possess no greater right of command than any other.

MILITARY FORCES

The Thorns certainly don't possess armies or even dedicated military formations like the Dominion, but assuming this makes them weak is a mistake few ever survive making more than once.

THE TRIBE

The Thorns may have no army, but nearly every member of a Tribe has at least basic combat training, and their hunters can rival the elite formations of some other factions in terms of skill and ability.

Organisation: The total number of combatants fielded by a tribe can be surprising. A little over a third of the total population are likely to be equipped and ready to fight at short notice, and an additional third could be mustered to fight in a desperate situation.

Leaders will be chosen from amongst the most experienced hunters to create an ad-hoc militia, though on the whole the Thorns rely on these groups having prepared for various situations and operating on their own, rather than any formalised command structure.

Equipment: The Thorns prefer simple, and above all, reliable weapons. They greatly favour bows, of which they are capable of producing fairly sophisticated models that, although unable to match Pre-Fall engineering, are nevertheless of extremely high quality and far from the image of a primitive wooden bow.

In actual combat, besides bows, the Thorns make extensive use of high powered hunting rifles and generally favour them in confrontations with humans. They make a creative but limited use of shotguns as previously mentioned, and generally have relatively few small arms. When dealing with The Brood, the Thorns fall back on their bows and on one of their greatest resources – Thornglass. This material, though brittle and easily broken, is just as deadly as true Voidglass, and its tendency to shatter is of no disadvantage when used this way.

Amongst these common weapons, the Thorns do keep a surprising reserve of military equipment. Though rarely used, they tend to stockpile what explosives they can, trading away most other heavy weaponry. This means that in the event of a large scale conflict, they can put their abilities with field-craft to devastating effect, and are well prepared to fight a guerrilla war when necessary.

NEMISSARIES

Like the Dominion, the Thorns' most deadly asset are the Nemissaries in its service. Though lesser in number than their Dominion counterparts, they tend to be stronger individually, and most importantly, act as the servants, not rulers, of the tribes.

Organisation: These Nemissaries tend to operate as part of Thorns hunting parties and are usually highly skilled at enhancing the capabilities of their companions. The hunters for their part support their Nemissary companions at a distance and have a great deal of experience combining their efforts to deadly effect.

Equipment: Though not rulers, the Nemissaries in service to the Thorns can expect to be in first place when it comes to the distribution of equipment. On a pragmatic level, the larger faction recognises the value of these individuals and equips them accordingly.

Most importantly, the Thorns can produce a form of Voidglass with comparative ease; as a result, its Nemissaries almost always go into battle with a variety of well-made and deadly Voidglass weaponry.



THE PARK RANGERS

*"There are two things I've got a right to, and these are Death or Liberty – one or the other I mean to have.
No one will take me back alive;
I shall fight for my liberty, and when the time has come for me to go,
the Lord will let them kill me".*

— Harriet Tubman

The Park Rangers are an ancient organisation, one founded long before the Fall. Long-departed from their original purpose as custodians of America's wilds, the Park Rangers now act as the embattled guardians of small towns and settlements across the post-fall United States.

In the dark days of the fall, many survivors and refugees found deliverance in an unlikely group of saviours. As cities burned and societies collapsed, members of the northern American National Park Rangers, and their counterparts in the Canadian Park Wardens, worked together to guide survivors into remote wildernesses away from the Brood and Reapers. The skills they had in self-reliance and wilderness survival were no longer used for search-and-rescue operations and conservation efforts, but rather to guide and protect displaced communities.

The radio network that the Rangers and Wardens used for their duties before the Fall became an invaluable tool. Through it, the Rangers could warn each other of dangers and coordinate their movements across massive distances, finding safe places for their charges and leading them away from danger. As the threat of the Brood grew more and more apparent, Rangers began training in weapons, incorporating guerrilla tactics into their operations. When faced with threats like raiders and Broodspawn, the Rangers quickly learned that a few well placed, well-trained operatives could punch well above their weight, and they quickly gained a reputation for being a dangerous group to cross. Those that were under their protection were quick in turn to see the Rangers as heroes.

As time passed, these refugees began founding new settlements, many of them using the skills the Park Rangers

passed onto them. The Rangers worked to protect remote communities and to hunt and study the Brood. Individual radio stations fell silent as Broodspawn overran them, but others survived and began developing strategies to counter Brood expansion. Even as the Americas fell apart, the Rangers held together, becoming hardened, fearsome and self-reliant warriors who fought valiantly to protect communities.

THE RETREAT TO THE NORTH

In the first days of their new role the Rangers began to consolidate around the Great Lakes, building up their forces and gathering refugees who were fleeing away from the Midwest and the coastline. They bolstered their numbers with soldiers and National Guardsmen who had been separated from their units, using their numbers to beat back the encroaching Brood swarms. Rescuing as many souls as they could, the Rangers fled to the last stronghold in the region, Chicago.

The Siege of Chicago bloodied the Park Rangers. As the coldest winter in millennia veiled the city, the Rangers stalked the countryside surrounding the city to hunt the Broodspawn that swarmed around it. Many of their Brood-hunting strategies were perfected in these first frozen battles, as the Rangers grew to understand just what their foe was.

The brutality of winter became apparent as the besieged city shivered its way into a stillborn spring. The snowdrifts grew higher, and as the desperately-hoped for aid never arrived the survivors ate the cats, then the dogs, then the rats. The truly desperate even threw Broodspawn meat on their cooking fires; few survived long enough to repeat that mistake.

With no help coming and no sign of the winter abating, the leadership of the Rangers made the choice to abandon the city. It was an act of savage pragmatism, a brutal arithmetic that concluded the Rangers could either abandon the city and survive, or die with it.

INTO THE WILDERNESS

Pursued by Brood and the painful guilt of their treachery, the Rangers fled east into the mountains and forests of Pennsylvania. Even in the more remote regions of the state Brood still prowled, and in the subarctic conditions of the nuclear winter the Rangers and the scattered client



settlements they protected barely clung to life. They were utterly cut off, with swarms of Brood seething in the southern reaches of the state.

Their proximity to the Brood, and the fact that many members of the Rangers had once studied natural sciences, lead them to study their enemy. With their greater understanding of the Brood; how they fed, where they hunted, how they socialised; the Rangers perfected the tactics they used to hold back the hordes. An entire branch was set up, dedicated to understanding the Brood and advancing the nascent field of Echidnology. In time, these researchers earned the title of "the Unnaturalists".

As decades passed the Rangers consolidated their forces and slowly began to expand their network of protected settlements. Little news filtered in, brought by nomadic Thorn bands who dared brave the wilds of Pennsylvania. As time passed, the Brood swarms in the south thinned, drawn away by the brewing war in New York, and the Rangers made their first tentative steps into the wider world.

When they stumbled upon the slave markets of the Breakers they were shocked. When they discovered that the Breakers, like the Rangers, were remnants of the US government, surprise turned to rage. This was treason, a

violation of the community principles the Rangers had clung to so dearly.

They bided their time, gathering intelligence and slowly moving their forces southwards. As the Breakers were drawn into the ongoing war for New York, they seized their moment and executed Operation Broken Chain, striking three Breaker facilities.

Even though one of the assaults was rebuffed, the appearance of the Rangers sent the Breakers reeling, the shock-waves widening the cracks between the Hammers and Chainers and reverberating across the East Coast. Valorised by the Pyreflame, resented by the Dominion and loathed by the Breakers, the Rangers have already made their mark.

THE LAST HEARTH

The Rangers are united by a code of honour that prizes old-world values of liberty and justice, a code that each Ranger is expected to abide by and embody. The code can vary, often adapted by the personal ethics of each Vigilant, but the broad theme is that Rangers have a responsibility to help those in need and cannot stand by when



help is required. The Rangers feel they are duty-bound to protect those who struggle to protect themselves, and act as stewards for the numerous small towns and villages that have no greater benefactors to protect them.

The faction is founded and held together by a long-term mission; to restore order and peace to America, and to eliminate the Brood wherever they are found. To the Rangers, these two goals are inextricably intertwined, and the Rangers have worked for decades to understand the Brood. The dedicated sect of the Rangers, the Unnaturalists, have observed the Broodspawn for decades now, all the whilst devising means to hunt and fight them.

Modern Rangers still remember their roots, and hold to an idealised vision of what America once was, or at least could have been. To them, the America of old is the shining city upon a hill, an ideal nation that embodied the principles of freedom and justice before the Reapers toppled it. According to many ardent Rangers, it is their duty to try and remake what was lost, to free America from the grip of Brood, the tyranny of the slavers and the lawless, and to try and restore the country's former prosperity.

The Rangers' goal is difficult, an uphill struggle made harder by the Brood and the chaos of America, but their dream of a remade nation is a compelling one that many communities are quick to rally to.

ROVING HEROES

According to folklore, the Park Rangers are figures of unwavering self-reliance and endless gallantry, a band who ride into troubled towns to defeat evil-doers in a blaze of gunfire and win the hearts of the community before moving on to a new cause. In truth, while the Rangers do their utmost to aid those in need, they are spread dangerously thin.



The Rangers are scattered across the East Coast and Midwest in platoon-strength cells that operate under the authority of a Vigilant, a senior Ranger who operates a concealed, mobile radio dispatch station that is used to coordinate Rangers in the area. This disparate nature allows them to cover large territories with a small number of operatives, and it's estimated that there are only a few thousand Rangers across the former United States. Their forces are primarily concentrated in the northeast with the greatest concentration of Rangers in the Reclaimed Lands; while Rangers have a few outposts in the West, their presence beyond the Rockies is minimal.

The only permanent base the Rangers have is the Overlook, an old military base concealed in the heart of Pennsylvania's forests. Heavily fortified and watched over by snipers and prized pre-Fall military equipment, the Overlook is the main hub of Ranger activity, capable of broadcasting radio signals for hundreds of miles, with tentative links to some remnants of the world's pre-Fall weather stations and GPS maps. These are used to survey territory and track Brood movement, and advise Rangers in-field on where they might be needed ahead of time.

Each Ranger cell is further split into small teams, typically of half a dozen Rangers of varying seniority, who are expected to watch over a territory of several hundred square miles, dealing with problems as they arise, or calling for support if needed. Ranger teams operate with a great deal of autonomy, reporting into their commanding Vigilant regularly, but are expected to make their own decisions on how to deal with individual situations.

These Rangers work closely with the communities within the areas they protect, building a base of grassroots support that they can use for their operations. In exchange for weapons training, guidance on how to survive and lessons in self-defence, Rangers can generally rely on their fostered communities to supply them appropriately, and keep them up to date on local affairs. Should a Ranger team need it, they can also rally militias in the communities where they have invested their time.

It is from these small communities that the many tall tales and folk stories about Rangers spring. A local ranger team can be a compelling group; enigmatic, driven, and only stopping in town for a day or two before departing on some drastic mission, it's no surprise that balladists and storytellers enjoy casting Rangers as their heroes. A great many tales are told around campfires on the East Coast of a particular Ranger calling himself Davy Crockett, who has travelled the length and breadth of the continent Post-Fall, dispensing wisdom from the annals of history, and justice from his repeating rifle. The Rangers are canny enough to exploit both theirs and Davey's reputation to its fullest, using it to frighten enemies and inspire would-be allies into helping them.

In times of trouble, a Ranger team can contact their Vigilant and call in reinforcements, harassing their enemies with guerrilla tactics until help arrives. Even when fighting at full strength, Rangers will rarely group up in numbers greater than twenty, using knowledge of local geography and environments to compensate for their lack of numbers. A Ranger cell on full war-footing is a force to be reckoned with, striking at weak points and disrupting supply lines seemingly out of nowhere, and disappearing before a response can be mustered.

RELATIONS

Unaware of how wide the ripples of their attack on the Breakers would spread, the Rangers have already made a strong impression on many of the East Coast's factions. While they do not consider them enemies, many in the Dominion blame the Rangers for costing them New York. Conversely, the Pyreflame is aware that the Rangers' actions were what ultimately won them the day, and the organisation owes them a debt of gratitude.

Those in the Breakers who are aligned with the Chainer subfaction treat the Rangers as mortal enemies, to be shot on sight. Some platoons boast of having enacted some individual retributions on Rangers, but the wider consensus is slaving for all-out war. Despite this, the Rangers have had no qualms antagonising the Chainers further, sabotaging supply lines and outposts whenever they can.

With civil war looming amongst their ranks however, the Breakers' Hammers have sent a few covert envoys to the Rangers, hoping to count on their support. The terms the Rangers put on an alliance are, in the Hammers' eyes, impossibly severe; liberation of all enslaved people, payment of reparations, and the complete disbandment upon the surrender of the Chainers. Even talking to the Hammers has been a controversial subject among the Rangers, many of whom are uneasy negotiating with a group whose power base was built upon the backs of slaves.

The Traders' Union has become a strong ally of the Rangers in recent years. Their similar philosophies and goals have meant the two groups have started working together more and more frequently, with Rangers assisting caravans and providing intelligence in return for valuable supplies. Senior Union members have considered trying to bring the Rangers in as a full wing of the Union, though the fiercely independent Rangers are still resistant to the idea.

The Republic of Florida has a strained relationship with the Rangers. As they are both technically remnants of the US government, the Republic considered them to be under their authority. The Rangers, on the other hand, refuse to recognise their authority, and are scornful of the Republic's isolationist attitude. As a result, the Park

CLIENT COMMUNITIES

While the Rangers do not hold any true strongholds, safe havens or cities, there are a number of independent communities from which they draw supplies and recruits. They are small, but have a fiercely militaristic bent; many are in Pennsylvania, and are used to living a hardscrabble life since the Fall.

They aren't officially recognised as part of the Rangers, but are fiercely loyal to them, acting as supply depots and small-scale arms manufacturers for the Rangers in return for their protection.

Rangers are now considered deserters, and a Republic mandate stated any Rangers who would cross into Florida would be arrested on sight. As a result, there hasn't been a Ranger seen in Florida for decades.

By far, the Ranger's strongest ally is in the Thorns. While the Rangers represent a facet of the old world, this is largely ignored by all but the most hard-line tribes. Rangers have risked their lives helping Thorn communities, and even draw some of their recruits from the clans. To maintain this relationship, the Rangers have taken great care to respect the boundaries that the Thorns erect; a Ranger team can expect a warm welcome around a Thorn campfire, though in turn the Rangers never pry into their activities.

THE LONG PATROLS

The Rangers have few true outposts, their scattered and disparate nature making permanent bases more of a liability than an asset. Instead, the Rangers have their radio stations, temporary encampments which are carefully



hidden to protect their valuable equipment. Though 'outposts' in a classifying sense, in reality they are often fleeting and temporary, able to uproot at a moment's notice, operating in and around the back of several vehicles in order to stay mobile.

Locations: The few more permanent Ranger holdouts are built on locations that emphasise three qualities - how easy it is to hide, how easily supplies can be foraged and how far their radios can broadcast. Often, finding a site that supports all three is difficult, so the majority of Rangers end up living lean in their convoys, operating stations and satellite outposts, rationing food or trading with sympathetic locals while they operate.

These mobile Ranger stations can be set up anywhere needed, and operate in both remote areas and those that are well-populated. A station will typically keep watch on areas that have relatively large unaffiliated populations, or will maintain observations over remote areas that are of interest to the Rangers. These more remote encampments typically observe the movements of Brood, identifying exploitable or defensive locations in the local geography should action ever need be taken against roaming packs of Broodspawn that stray too close to valuable trade routes or static communities.

Station convoys that operate in more populated areas will reach out to communities around them. While they will keep the location of each station concealed, the station will usually establish a meeting point where people can go for help. These stations will rely on locals for intel, allowing the Vigilants running them to deploy the Rangers under their command as effectively as possible.

Ranger stations can vary in size and complexity. Some of them are made up of scavenged pre-Fall surveillance vehicles, adapted for hostile terrain and equipped with a dazzling array of equipment. Others may be small caravans of horse-pulled wagons, used by Vigilants who don't

have the resources to support vehicles. Most stations are halfway between the two, operating out of the back of two or three all-terrain vehicles, such as scavenged APCs or four-wheel drives, which have both the capacity for the equipment needed and the mobility required to move across the land.

MILITARY FORCES

While the bulk of most factions are made up of civilians, the Rangers are unique in that the entire group is essentially a single army of roving soldiers. Like the Cossacks of ancient Europe, they are an army with a nation attached. As they have grown, the Rangers not only have the core of their organisation but have also begun to borrow the strength of local civilian forces.

THE OLD GUARD

The cells that the Rangers operate in are elite units, self-sufficient forces that are rigorously trained. Each Ranger team can rely on their cell for support, but must also be able to hold its own in times of danger.

Organisation: A ranger team is a five-strong group, typically led by a veteran Ranger in charge of Hunters or greener Rangers. A team travels, trains and fights together, keeping a watch on their assigned region and using each member's strengths wherever possible.

A Ranger team is a highly mobile force, scattering across a battlefield and covering each-others movement and positions. Combined with their extensive training and combat experience, a team is a nightmare to fight; a constantly shifting unit that is hard to pin down.

When an entire Vigilant's platoon is pulled together, this is multiplied exponentially, with teams working together to drive or lure enemies into ambushes. A ranger platoon is a highly coordinated and mobile force, made all the more deadly when backed up by specialist weaponry or Nemissary members.

Equipment: While a Vigilant will generally keep the Rangers under their command adequately equipped, their resources as a wider organisation are stretched thin, and dependent on local supplies — most new Rangers will rarely be issued with anything more than simple single-shot firearms. Because of this, most Rangers will extensively customise their weapons, and scavenge or buy new firearms over time. When specialist or heavy-duty weaponry is needed, it must often be taken from a Way Station's armoury, where invaluable and often irreplaceable anti-tank weapons, mortars and improvised explosive devices await utilisation in larger-scale guerrilla operations.



Each Ranger is expected to look after their own personal equipment, and Rangers will equip themselves with whatever weaponry they feel most comfortably. Their guerrilla tactics typically mean they favour rifles and bows, keeping an enemy at arm's length, but it's not uncommon to see Rangers fighting with pistols and shotguns with melee weapons close to hand.

THE IRREGULARS

The greatest strength of the Rangers is the loyalty they can inspire in others. Their dedication to noble causes and willingness to help means that they can rely on the strength of communities for support. In the last few years, they have gained a surge of support from former slaves thanks to their attacks on the Breakers, and they have been the Rangers' most eager recruits.

Increasingly, Vigilants have begun to train civilian militias to aid them in engagements where skill must be supported by numbers. While the Rangers have traditionally always offered training and guidance to the settlements under their protection, this process never occurred formally; as the Rangers have spread out from their northern strongholds they have no choice but to recognise the need for numbers.

Should a town prove itself a reliable ally to the Rangers and lack strong ties to another faction, then a Vigilant will often move in to begin training volunteers, known within the faction as 'Irregulars.' These Irregulars are organised into companies, and run through weapon drills, simulated skirmishes and lessons in guerrilla tactics. They elect their own leaders from the local population, and provide patrols and peacekeeping for Ranger-watched settlements.

While their training will give them an edge over other civilian fighters or common bandits, the Irregulars are no match for professional forces and a platoon of Breakers or a Dominion Overwatch Division would be able to crush an Irregular Company in direct combat. However, the Irregulars do not serve to fight full-scale wars; they are an effective means of local defence, and can often chase off threats through sheer numbers and enthusiasm. In reality, they are commonly protected from anything more dangerous by the local Ranger teams supporting them.

Organisation: An Irregular force's organisation will often depend on factors such as local population, but will generally be organised into an Irregular Company of forty to sixty soldiers. The Company will be led by either a Ranger or a locally-based Captain who in turn reports in and takes orders from a region's Vigilant. A company is usually broken into two or three platoons of twenty, each one led by a sergeant who reports to its captain.

Equipment: Irregular Companies are a motley bunch; the Rangers have little hardware they can lend these forces, so the militias are often armed with whatever firearms they can find - typically hunting rifles and shotguns.

While the Irregulars have no formal uniform, they mark out membership pinning or tying strips of yellow cloth to their jackets and clothes. It's crude, but generally serves as an effective marker of allegiance in the chaos of a skirmish.

THE STORMLAND EMPIRE

*Yesterday I got a call from the outside
world but I said no in thunder.
I was a dog on a short chain
and now there's no chain.*

— Jim Harrison

Birthed from the incandescent emergence of a Nemissary known as "The Stormwalker", the Stormland Empire is a violent, expansionist nation that occupies what was once south Oklahoma.

The Stormland Empire began amidst the irradiated ruins of Oklahoma. There, a Nemissary of the Defiled Shaping was born; a failed Harbinger who rebelled against his chosen purpose. Legend has it that many years ago, a storm of unprecedented intensity ravaged the lands; amidst that storm, nameless and alone, one harbinger slew the Broodmother which spawned him with his own hands, and turned the fury of the storm upon the horde.

From the shadows, the humans watched in awe. The Nemissary turned to them and saw in them a reflection of his own humanity. He gave them a purpose; to destroy the Brood wherever they dwelled. In turn, the people who flocked to his trail of devastation named him "The Stormwalker", and took him as their living god.

With the first of his acolytes, the Stormwalker rallied the beleaguered settlements and nomad groups of the southern Great Plains and launched a series of assaults intended to liberate communities under assault from the Brood. One by one, the communities pledged themselves to the Stormwalker's vision, and formed the core of what would become the Empire of Storms.



CRUSADE

The Stormwalker's power and vision attracted other Nemissaries, many of whom enjoyed the prospect of a simple war against an unambiguously monstrous antagonist. Soon enough, their superior combat prowess and supernatural might had them acting as the Stormwalker's

lieutenants, becoming warlords and rulers of small fiefdoms in the growing Empire of Storms. With their assistance, the Empire was able to slaughter the Broodspawn in ever greater numbers and sustain their conquest, but for all their might, a sickness still plagued the lands.

BLESSINGS OF THE SUN

Swathes of territory were retaken and within a generation the Stormlands were largely free of the malign presence of the Brood, but conquest alone was insufficient alone to sustain the fledgling Empire. Though territory had been taken, the poisoned earth — still ruined by the nuclear fire of the fall — was slowly killing the people of the Empire, and thus the Stormwalker and his closest acolytes began a pilgrimage far from their own lines to seek a solution.

In the depths of the irradiated wastes, they visited one Shard after another, but all had fallen to the corruption and their situation seemed bleak. Though the radiation wore at their bodies, the Stormwalker remained resolute, driving his acolytes forward with the strength of his convictions.

When all hope seemed to have faded, the Stormwalker led his followers to a Shard that stood alone and unlike all others its form was unbroken. Unlike its fellows, this Shard was not dark, but lit by a pale light from within, a reflection of the sun, hidden by the nuclear winter and the storms raging above.

The Stormwalker came before that Shard and drew its power into himself. As its form crumbled, his was made anew; he rose, the corruption in his flesh burned away, and as he assumed the Destroyer Shape, he mirrored within the same radiance of the Shard, bearing now the blessings of the sun.

Through him, his followers would share in this blessing, and the blight of radiation would trouble his followers no longer. Armed with this new power the Empire had unprecedented access to scavenging sites that no others could reach, giving it access to vast reserves of resources.

This gave them impressive material resources in the short term but did little to combat hunger, or build sustainable infrastructure. Without trading partners from which to acquire food supplies, the Empire's future was bleak.

ALONE

Even with bountiful salvage, the Empire's expansion was difficult to sustain, and as the crusades reached The Tainted Lands and the Sea of Ice, its supply lines were stretched thin.

Within the Empire's heartland, the Stormwalker's vassals raced against time to reorganise scattered settlements and tribes into a coherent nation, hoping in doing so to create the infrastructure needed to sustain their god's campaigns.

For all their devotion, the task was impossible. The dispersed nature of the population and the devastation present in the territory were obstacles which could not be overcome before disaster would strike. The solution would come not from the north or south, but the west.

In the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, the Empire encountered a string of surviving settlements. Initially, it moved to integrate these groups, but met staunch resistance. To its relief however, these communities were willing and able to replenish supplies of munitions and food.

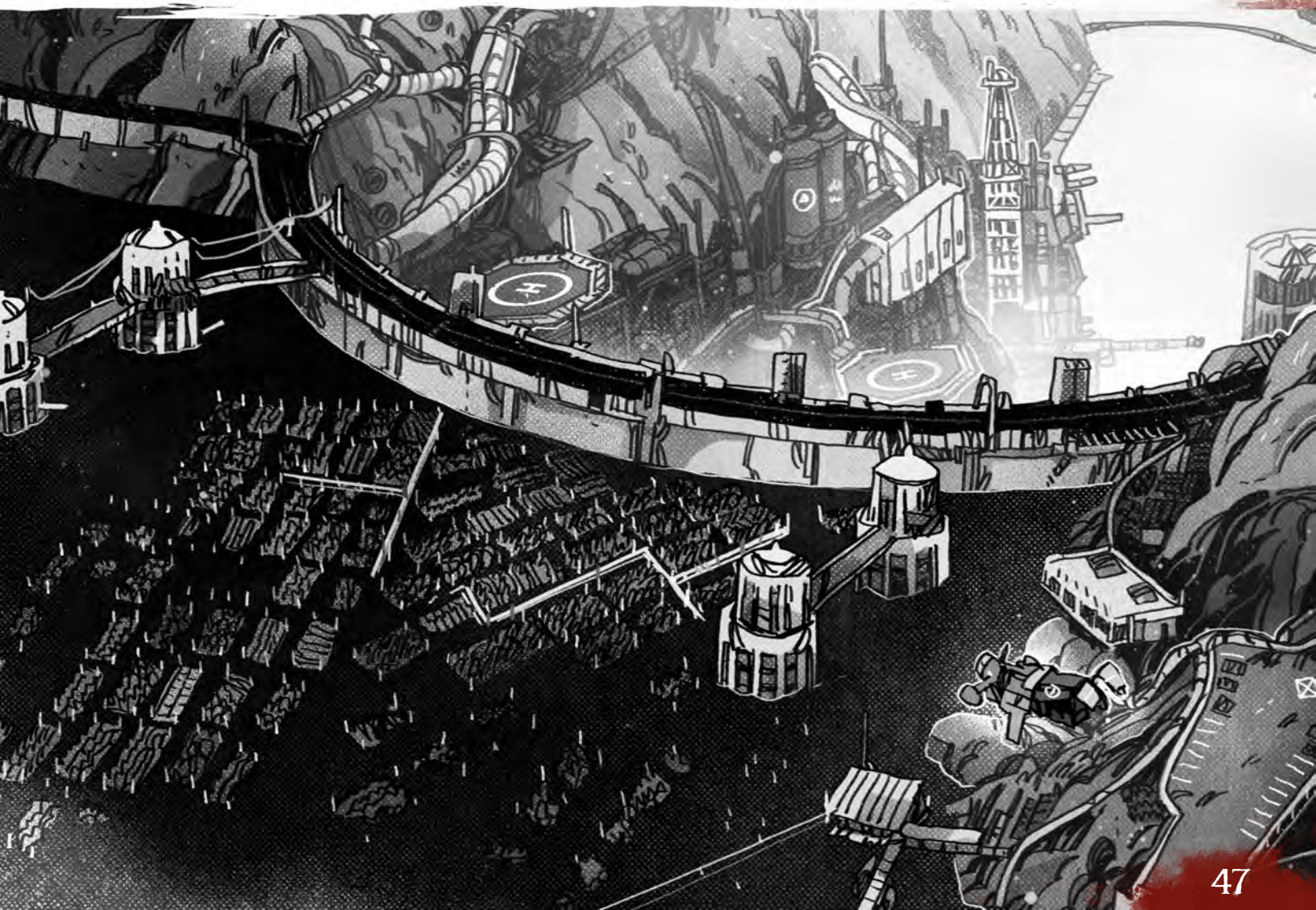
Further investigation revealed that these communities were in a trade agreement with another powerful faction beyond the mountains. Rather than continue attempts to conquer the region, a gathering was called, and scouts and envoys were sent to the west.

THE LIFEBLOOD OF NATIONS

The envoys of the Empire passed through the border regions and the mountains and found the Navajo Coalition. Given the initial aggression in the foothills, these first meetings were tense, but the Empire made its intent clear; it did not desire war with humans, and wished to trade in good faith with its neighbours.

The Coalition was cautious at first, but was won over when as an act of good faith, the Empire agreed that they would send no troops into the border region, and would leave the communities there as a means to facilitate trade. For its part, the Coalition agreed that it too would refrain from sending military forces into the area, and a trade agreement was reached between the two powers.

The trade deal stabilised the Empire's current situation, but the Coalition's trade alone could not sustain all the Empire's needs. In order to provide long term stability, the Empire needed new trade partners. Luckily, through their expansion they had learned of the survival of the



East Coast, and so the crusade forces were reorganised to cut across the continent and to open the trade routes to the east.

THE RULE OF THE GOD-KING

The Stormwalker is a reluctant king, known to be impetuous and disinterested in leadership at best, and volatile at worst. Without the religious devotion of his followers and a common enemy to rally against in the form of the Brood, the Empire would have crumbled in its infancy.

Even now, the situation is not truly certain. Though held in awe by his followers, the Stormwalker has many enemies and only time will tell if the Empire can grow to be more than a cult of personality that will survive the loss of its founder.

DIVINE INSPIRATION

The Empire of Storms is part society and part personality cult, with a crude faith built around the worship of the sun, storms, and of The Stormwalker as their chosen prophet and embodiment. He is a divine figure chosen by fate to lead the Stormland Empire in its defeat of the Brood and the slaughter of the Reapers, or so the Empire's

propagandists say. The world of the average Stormlander is one dominated by an apocalyptic struggle between good and evil, light and darkness; on one side, humanity, Nemissaries and the sun, and on the other the Brood, the Reapers and the void.

The sun is central to Imperial beliefs, with sunlight motifs common on jewellery, religious sculpture and fashioned upon personal heraldry – it is a central godlike figure of the wider cult that reveres the sky and the weather. Tornadoes are seen as holy messengers, and according to the Empire's founding myth, one carried the Stormwalker to safety with the head of the Broodmother in hand. The Empire's heartland at the centre of Tornado Alley has led to the deification of these awesome events, and the intensely cold air of North America's new ice age has led to its tornadoes and storms becoming even more intense.

Fire, too, is seen as sacred – its power against the Brood marking it as the sun-in-miniature, a holy tool gifted from the heavens for mankind to wield. Voidglass and the shards, also, are seen as messengers from the sky itself, and the Empire's Nemissaries are often referred to as "Flares", believed to have been souls chosen by the sun to be reborn. Fire has a counterpart in Imperial Culture with Radiation. Radioactivity is sunlight corrupted, twisted



into a weapon by the past hubris of man. The unique ability of the Stormwalkers' Nemissaries to resist radiation, and to impart that resistance to their human followers, is seen as further proof of their divine heritage.

This worship of the sun is perpetuated by the Church of the Sun Incandescent, the group of priests who preach this creed and provide spiritual enforcement to the violent material power of the Stormland Empire's ruling class. The Church's teachings hold several myths regarding the Brood and the Reapers. According to the priesthood, the decadent civilisations of the old world grew too arrogant and took more of the sun's power than they deserved, using that to make weapons of terrible power. In doing so they weakened the sun, and allowed the Brood and the Reapers to escape the prison it held them in, unleashing them upon the world and toppling civilisation.

Stormwalker's war that founded the Empire has also left its mark on the culture of the Stormland Empire as a whole. Its culture venerates warriors and personal prowess in battle above all else, and virtue is measured by the strength of one's arm. In the eyes of most of the Empire's people, there is nothing immoral about taking what you want from those who are weaker; people only deserve what they are strong enough to keep. In practice, this belief has resulted in a heavy stratification of its society, with a violently oppressed servile underclass ruled over by a dominant caste of warriors and Nemissaries.

STRUCTURE

The Stormland Empire is a feudal society, where an underclass of serfs is ruled over by a trained warrior caste that in turn holds absolute loyalty to Stormwalker. These serfs live in fortified villages across the southern regions of Oklahoma in the lee of the Arbuckle Mountain valley, where farmland is tilled for crops, plains are used for ranching, and oil is extracted from ancient fields.

Personal achievement in combat governs social advancement in the Empire, with those who can win the most glory in battle gaining more privileges. Those who have the good luck or opportunistic sense to impress Stormwalker himself can often be fast-tracked to his personal service, where they can win land, wealth, and yet more glory.

This crude system of advancement means that Nemissaries, with their superhuman strength and unnatural powers, are quick to become the dominant force in any Empire territory. This in turn has led to a double-stratification of the Empire's warrior castes, with human warriors generally unable to reach the heights of power that the Empire's Nemissaries occupy. These Nemissaries in turn often squabble and vie for dominance, and it's not uncommon for small wars to break out between Nemissary lords as they try to oust one another. In turn, the Stormwalker is often forced to intervene in these spat

personally, crushing one antagonist or both in order to restore order.

Stormwalker's natural restlessness, combined with the volatile nature of an Empire that requires increasing levels of personal intervention and micromanagement, means that he has taken to ruling from a mobile court, a convoy of heavily armed and armoured vehicles that act as his escort and the vanguard of any battles he leads. These vehicles are ancient things that bristle with weapons and armour, and the Stormwalker's throne is mounted upon the turret of an ancient pre-Fall tank that can shatter city blocks with its cannon.

Technology in the Empire is generally simple. Individual villages and townships manufacture items to the best of their abilities or trade for that which they can't build themselves. With a lack of know-how, most tools are typically hand tools, with guns being the one exception; while the Empire has next to no rail firearms or advanced armaments, its standard-issue firearms are sturdy and reliable things.

South Oklahoma's stores of oil, and the Empire's belief in the holy nature of fire, means that flame-based weapons are also commonly employed, but most settlements lack the knowledge needed to maintain vehicles; those recovered in salvage expeditions are usually scrapped to make arms and armour. Individuals who know how to build and repair vehicles are highly sought-after, but those warlords who lack their servitude instead make do with horseback riders and chariots armed with flamethrowers and machine guns. In this way, Stormwalker's mobile court is a display not only of military power but also of his wealth; he has the riches needed to import the parts and expertise that his opulent convoy requires.

While the Empire struggles to maintain its scavenged vehicles and lacks any access to advanced warfare items such as drones or satellite links, the faction's violent birth means that its military is otherwise well equipped and well trained. Its soldiers, referred to as Spears, are trained in using both firearms and melee weaponry, and are well-versed in fighting Broodspawn. In typical engagements, they will present a solid phalanx of spear-points and gunfire to charging Ravagers, before scattering into a skirmish line to dodge the devastating impacts of Beta-strains and manoeuvring to fell the giants with a volley of improvised incendiary grenades and pinning Spears from which they take their namesake.

The Empire's skill in fighting Brood translates well into fighting other humans, though their preference for up-close combat can give opponents with firearms an edge. Nonetheless, Imperial soldiers are in high demand as mercenaries, and more than a few warlords have ventured east to earn a fortune leasing out their forces to the factions there.

DIPLOMACY AND TRADE

With the Stormland Empire's belief that it is humankind's duty to defeat the Brood, this warlike nation has had a relatively easy time building alliances.

The Empire tends to approach diplomatic relations with the view that all factions have a natural enemy that they must unite against, and this leads to a degree of tolerance and flexibility in regards to its relationships with other factions.

This sometimes conflicts with the fierce pride and independence of the Empire, and though it doesn't desire war, it is reluctant to negotiate from anything other than a position of strength.

By far, its closest alliance initially was the Trader's Union, but this has shifted over time to the Breakers, as the Empire is all-too happy to trade its excess population in exchange for the weapons and goods it cannot manufacture itself.

The Chainers sub-faction also see the Empire's mercenaries as a potential solution to their rivalry with the Hammers, and is willing to employ them in their own operations to shore up its forces, or clear out particularly stubborn Brood nests, though the Empire has as-of-yet resisted allegiance contracts that would lead it into direct conflict with the Chainers' many enemies.

Even before contact with the East Coast, the Empire had scattered and generally peaceful interactions with The Thorns, something which has continued for the most part in their eastward expansions. For their part, the Thorns are willing to abide by the Empire's ideal of a natural human alliance and are grateful for the work they have done in destroying many Midwestern Brood sites, but remain wary of the Empire's warlike nature. As such, Thorn patrols keep a close eye on the Empire's borders, ever watchful for a build-up of forces that might mark a new wave of expansion.

The Dominion has largely remained aloof and although it has accepted diplomatic envoys, it remains non-committal on any formal agreements or alliances, preferring instead to make many of its agreements using the Breakers as an intermediary.

The Pyreflame has an uncomfortable relationship with the Empire. While the two nations share common ground where the Brood is concerned, the religious doctrine of the Pyreflame and the nature of the Empire's own faith make any formal alliance a near impossibility, though both factions have managed to remain largely cordial and agree to several trade deals out of pragmatism.

Despite these generally positive interactions, not all the factions of the East Coast have been as receptive. The Artificers are reluctant to deal with the Empire, and maintain the same strained relationship with them as they do the Dominion. Still, that relationship is at least largely peaceful; something which cannot be said with the

Empire's interactions with the Park Rangers or the Republic of Florida.

Both the Republic and the Rangers ban the practice of slavery, and see the Empire as little better than slavers, scavengers and thieves. Whereas the Rangers despise the Empire for ideological reasons, the Republic is more concerned with the perceived theft of military assets which it considers to be rightly theirs.

REALM OF THE STORMLANDS

The Stormland Empire is defined by its war against the Brood, and its outposts and settlements are heavily fortified, even in the most secure parts of its territory. Outposts are guarded by walls and watchtowers, and these will be surrounded by farmland and fields where serfs harvest crops and herd livestock, only to retreat behind their walls and earthworks once night falls.

Suggested Names: The Empire of Storms tends to rename reclaimed territories as per the whims of the warlord responsible. These names tend to be grandiose and often end up being shortened from their new titles.

As a rule, these names tend to include references to the storms of the area or the sun, such as Brightbanner, Sunforge, Goldwatch, Valley's Guard or Zenith. In many cases, as warlords fall out of favour, the original names of certain areas have come back into common use.

Locations: Empire outposts are typically founded on a defensive location in an area of land that can be used for agriculture, mining and oil extraction. These locations will be fortified with earthworks and palisade walls and larger, more established settlements will be protected by quarried stone. The walls will be marked with banners sporting the heraldry of the outpost's ruling lord, and watchtowers rise above them to give an overview of the surrounding area, often sporting the most powerful weaponry its people can find.

When building a new settlement, the builders will typically start with a large timber hall that acts as a communal area, one that shelters Spear companies and serfs as well as the ruling lord. This is the heart of an Imperial town, and will be encircled by smaller outbuildings that are then protected by the wall. These outbuildings are workshops, homes for wealthier members of the community and usually a shrine tended to by a junior Sun Priest.

Though rustic, these strongholds often have solar or wind energy, or draw hydroelectric power from sources of running water, and settlements built around oilfields will often have petrol generators. More isolated settlements that can't reliably use solar or wind electricity instead use bio-fuels derived from waste and compost. Complex machinery is beyond the manufacturing capability of most Imperial settlements, but they make use of whatever they can recover.

SAFE HAVENS IN THE EMPIRE

The Empire maintains huge numbers of settlements but none of them truly fall into the category of "Safe Havens". That's not to say that some of the Empire's settlements don't approach the size of small cities, but they lack the distinct organisation and infrastructure to truly qualify as a Safe Haven when compared to a fortress city like Boston.

OUTPOSTS

Though the bulk of the Empire's population resides in larger settlements, its vast territory necessitates and requires a huge number of smaller outposts. Most of these are tiny by the standards of other factions, and are little more than fortified watch towers, though outposts on trade routes do tend to be somewhat larger and comparatively hospitable.

Population: In general, Imperial outposts tend to have a tiny population, made up almost entirely of combat personnel. This rarely numbers more than thirty Spears, or in less violent areas perhaps two or three families. Both these numbers can grow in the case of trade outposts, though the overall numbers will still be relatively small in comparison to the populations of other faction outposts.

Facilities: The facilities in these outposts are sparse, catering to only the basic essentials. They generally have no real facility to house outsiders unless they lie directly upon a trade-route; in which case they generally include a separate compound with dedicated facilities to assist and refresh trade convoys.

Defences: Outposts are not expected to withstand direct assault, but they are provided with reasonable defences, usually including crude, easy to erect walls and barbed wire, but these serve mainly as delaying tactics, and not a primary defence.

Their actual utility is to alert local settlements and keep watch over movement in the Empire's territory. All Outposts do include a radio to call for help and most also possess a reinforced bunker or inner defensive line where the small population can hopefully wait out an attack.

Authorities: Outposts are normally loosely organised affairs where all the people there know their responsibilities and duties. Leadership, if any, is usually given to a senior Banner, most likely one retired from direct combat. These individuals are generally in charge of planning and communicating with superiors, but most practical decisions are made communally and on an ad hoc basis.



SETTLEMENTS

Most Imperial settlements are fortresses in miniature, designed not for comfort but to protect the inhabitants and impress outsiders with the Empire's power.

Banners are often hung from the walls and towers to display who the settlement belongs to, as well as trophies taken in combat; the bones of larger Broodspawn, bodies of traitors and bandits and the destroyed weapons of notable enemies are all commonly displayed.

These settlements generally have a rough and somewhat ramshackle appearance, but outsiders who look more closely will often see a surprising degree of skill and quality in the workmanship. This is at odds with the generally haphazard nature of the Empire's settlement infrastructure, an aspect which frequently causes problems with sanitation and outbreaks of disease.

Population: Most Imperial settlements are somewhat overpopulated; the lack of discipline and the generally good returns from the Empire's conquests have allowed the population to swell to an almost unsustainable level. This allows the Empire to be far more callous with human life than many other factions, and contributes to its heavily martial nature.

Facilities: Though better equipped than their outposts, the Empire's settlements still compare poorly in terms of standard of living and access to available facilities.

Only in terms of trade does the Empire excel, and its settlements usually have large, spacious market spaces which are generally far better maintained than the settlement proper.

Defences: All the Empire's settlements are well defended in terms of both manpower and physical defences. Typically they are guarded by raised earth banks and crude but effective metal barricades. These walls are usually covered in vicious impaling spikes, and include a large number of watchtowers but relatively few strong-points.



A DEADLY MISTAKE

So far, the Empire's military approach has been highly effective against the Broodspawn, allowing them to wipe out hordes with relatively few losses. This has made the Empire overconfident, and its simplistic view of the Broodspawn has blinded it to the changing nature of the Harbingers.

The Heralds which have now emerged are calculating beings, who understand the Empire's tactics and how to exploit them. If the Empire does not recognise this threat soon, a significantly powerful Herald might be able to sweep aside enough settlements to cripple the Empire before it even realises its peril.

Were one to look for weaknesses, it can be noted that there is an overall lack of static defences in the Empire's constructions that would otherwise be common to the fortifications of other factions, with the Empire preferring to rely on its well-constructed walls and abundant manpower to repel attackers.

Authorities: All authority within a Stormland Empire settlement stems from its ruling warlord, and they are a figure of absolute power. They will typically delegate this power to an inner circle of champions, their most trusted lieutenants who will see to the day-to-day minutiae of running the settlement, training new Spears and keeping order. While their authority is absolute, a warlord's power can be precarious, and most lords have seized power by deposing those above them. To be at the top of Stormland Society is to be constantly on guard, watching for rivals and threats all around.

Each settlement is linked into the wider nation of the Stormland Empire by a resident Sun Priest. The Sun Priests are answerable only to the Stormwalker, and will regularly commune with the Imperial court or with the Sun Temple to deliver reports on the settlement's progress, as well as receive 'recommendations' of the tithes that the Warlord should donate to the Stormwalker himself.

The Spears and the serfs are the lowliest members of any Stormland settlement. Spears get a tiny say in a settlement's running, but their opinion is largely ignored by the ruler and any Sun Priests, and the only members they have any real authority over is the settlement's labourer population. Even then, that authority is limited, and a Spear is liable for severe punishment if they ever harm a serf. This isn't due to compassion, but is instead of a more transactional nature; harming a serf is an act of damaging a warlord's property, and unless a Spear has reason for their aggression (often excused by blaming the serf for some imagined infraction) they are liable to be punished for a crime akin to vandalism.

MILITARY FORCES

The Empire maintains a vast army and very little of its population is composed of pure civilian individuals. If it were not for the poor quality of its infrastructure and the largely feudal nature of the Empire, they might well be the dominant military force on the continent.

THE WARLORDS

The organisation of the Empire's military is tied to a system of warlords, each of whom serves as a general, and has broad responsibility for the troops under their command.

The nature of these fighting forces varies considerably, but one common trait is a good degree of mobility and experience in fighting the Broodspawn. The general strategy of the Empire is to lure enemies into an assault on pre-prepared defensive positions. There, they seek to thin the enemy numbers.

The spiked walls of Imperial settlements are designed to trap individual Broodspawn. The mass of a horde will press upon the bodies of their fellows further impaling them, at which point the Empire's troops will begin using impaling weapons to fell the Brood.

When preparing for a major assault from a Broodspawn horde, the Empire also tends to alter the defences so that sections will fall only to open up into enclosed kill-zones, where the troops will eliminate the Broodspawn before resetting the trap and starting again.

Of course, these tactics are well known to the Empire's enemies, and as a result it has been forced to develop specialised long-ranging patrols of Lancers – specially trained Spears who move throughout the Stormlands territory, protecting its road networks and hunting down bandits and other troublemakers.

Equipment: The Stormland Empire's poor infrastructure and general lack of technical expertise typically means that its warriors have to make do with less advanced weapons than most other factions. Stormland weapon smiths work with simpler designs that are easier to produce, such as bolt-action rifles, spear guns and shotguns, and focus on weapons that can impede Broodspawn's regenerative abilities. They also have designed weaponry that assists warriors who fight in melee; combat with Brood frequently ends up as an up-close struggle, and so Empire firearms are generally designed to be quick to draw and stow, allowing wielders to ready melee weapons for when conflict becomes a battle between blades and claws.

The Empire's craftsmen are skilled at creating weaponry to allow those to fight up close, and Imperial blades and melee weaponry are considered second to none. This expertise also extends to armour; while hardened bullet-proof armour is generally beyond most Imperial smiths, they are able to work leather, chain and steel plate into forms that excel at turning Broodspawn fangs. Many smiths also work spikes and blades into the designs of their armour, meaning that armour made by or bought from Stormland Empire armour smiths excels in turning aside even the most brutal of Broodspawn assaults, and may possess the Spiked quality with no penalty to the quality of the armour.

Imperial weapons include the short, quick Boomer Shotgun, lightweight semi-automatic Lancer Carbines and the exotic Spear Hailer, an automatic version of the spear gun designed to cripple the regenerative abilities of even the largest Brood.



OTHER FACTIONS

The factions mentioned so far are far from the only powers or groups of interest operating in the American interior and along the east coast. In addition to the powerful, if remote, Republic of Florida, there are numerous smaller factions that, though lacking in the structure or might of the great factions, still have a meaningful part to play in the world of Sins.

THE REPUBLIC OF FLORIDA

The Republic of Florida stands, at least in its own mind, as the last true bastion of Pre-Fall America, and in terms of power and reach it seems to possess a strength which should count it amongst the great factions.

A SLOW DEATH

The truth is that the Republic is not as strong as it appears. In fact, the Republic is dying; its ambition has driven it to a point where the resources contained within its borders cannot ultimately sustain it in its current form. Various recent actions taken by the Republic have only served to worsen the current crisis.

The unfortunate conflict with the Empire of Storms and the brazen attempt to enter the region of the Godfall cost it nearly a fourth of its current military forces, something which represents a devastating loss, and one the Republic is desperately trying to conceal.

The resources and current losses also serve to distract from a long term problem which has plagued the Republic from its inception; namely, the Republic has never resolved the conflict between its civilian and military government.

In theory, the Republic is a democracy with the Senate controlling domestic affairs and the military only concerning itself with matters of civil defence. The reality however, is that the military decides what the nation's policies are, and the Senate can take no action against them.



Over time, this has led to a series of decisions which have ultimately weakened the Republic. The military has understandably favoured its own interests, and in doing so has diverted resources which would have served to increase the underlying infrastructure of the Republic.

In the short term, this has given the Republic a powerful military and defended them well, but as the population has grown, the amount of food or supplies that can be produced hasn't increased in step, and the military increasingly find themselves with available manpower, but not the means to sustain the mechanisation or logistics needed to properly use large armies.

Worse, territorial ambitions have pushed the Republic to hold and control territory which incurs a high death toll on workers, something which in the supposed democracy leads to considerable discontent – and slowly developing organised resistance to the military rule.

SETTLEMENTS IN THE REPUBLIC

The Republic is unlike most factions, in that it almost completely operates out of existing Pre-Fall civilian and military sites. More importantly, these communities are not islands against a wilderness and lack the kind of defences common to the other factions.

This shouldn't be taken to mean the Republic doesn't take defence against the Brood or other factions seriously, and Settlements maintain dedicated defensive units for this purpose. For the most part the problem is solved by the presence of otherwise long-forgotten amenities like police and fire services, which perform routine checks to make sure no bodies are left unattended.

The facilities available to these settlements are usually impressive compared to those of other factions, with large scale access to running water, sewage works and power infrastructure. On the whole, these settlements are nice places to live, albeit with an authoritarian air in the form of routine inspections of identity papers, military propaganda, and heavy surveillance.

MILITARY FORCES

The Republic still maintains an impressive armed force, albeit one currently recovering from a major disaster. This military's front-line units are better equipped than almost any other faction, save for the Artificers or the elite units of the Breakers, but it also has a serious problem.

The level of material resources in its armed forces cannot be sustained in anything but the short term. The Republic possesses a lot of armoured vehicles and Pre-Fall tech, but has no real capacity to maintain or produce more.

USING THIS SECTION

There are a number of factions that don't fit with the format presented previously or are not ideal fits for player characters. Two such factions mentioned in the Core Book – the Artificers and the Lost Children – are covered in detail in Chapter III.

The remaining factions are covered here. These are not out of bounds for players, hence their inclusion here, but can present a variety of issues when incorporated into a game, which is primarily what this section is intended to address.



Increasingly, the Republic has been building up reserve units that are no better equipped than the forces of the Pyreflame or any other militia – this might not be a problem, except that the military avoids using these forces to avoid exposing its current weaknesses.

As a result, these troops are almost universally not combat-ready and almost certain to be a massive liability were the Republic be forced into engaging in any large scale conflict.

THE REPUBLIC AS PROTAGONISTS

The Republic is an awkward starting point for player characters. Though it certainly presents a great deal of roleplaying opportunities, it mirrors the social structure of a Pre-Fall nation close enough that Tiered Faction Qualities and closely defined benefits would be unworkable and seem forced at best.

One good way to use the Republic is for players wanting characters that have recently become Nemissaries yet want to justify a more modern and idealistic view of the world, and the mistrust the Republic has of Nemissaries makes it perfectly reasonable that such characters would seek their fortunes outside its borders.

Of course, the Republic could also serve as the setting for an entire game of almost any genre, and provides similar narrative opportunities to a modern day setting.

THE REPUBLIC AS ANTAGONISTS

The Republic is primarily defensive in its tactics and mind-set, and so is unlikely to operate as a direct antagonist outside of its own borders. That said, the current desperate situation has already led to at least one aggressive campaign, and humans are not always good at learning lessons from their mistakes.



If a game is set within the Republic, then the military itself is most likely to serve as an antagonist, particularly if a group wants to explore the nascent resistance movement forming within the cities, or seek out The Patriot and join her grassroots movement.

THE TRADER'S UNION

The Trader's Union is a mercurial and rapidly changing faction which has the potential to rise into a major power in its own right, and sweep aside the established politics of the east coast.

TABULA RASA

The Trader's Union is distinct from the other factions in that it lacks a solid identity beyond being a loose coalition of trading groups and independent communities. The reason for this isn't part of the faction's narrative, but rather the faction's narrative is whatever the story unfolding in your group's world needs.

Ultimately, the Trader's Union exists as a starting point for groups wishing to grow a faction of their own, or for GMs wishing to shake up the existing power structure of the other factions.

This doesn't mean that the faction has to be used in this way, and it can simply exist as an extension of what's described in the Sins Core Book, serving as a convenient way of providing a faction which whilst not impotent in



terms of its strength, lacks the kind of raw might available to factions such as the Dominion or the Pyreflame.

THE UNION IN GAMES

As we've discussed, the Trader's Union can be largely whatever you want it to be, but that's also a very open ended thing to say, and so below are some sample ideas for narratives surrounding the Trader's Union.

The Breakers Civil War

The Breakers are at crisis point; like the foundational America before them, the poison of slavery has tainted the establishment at its heart. The Hammers want to end the practice of slavery and reform the Breakers, but they are not themselves wholly innocent of the crimes they seek to end.

Because they fail to recognise, or are wilfully ignoring, their own part in allowing the Breakers' crimes to continue, they paint themselves as better than their fellows, and the deep divides within the Breakers make any true reform of the organisation a daunting prospect at best.

A possible route out of this tangle lies with the Trader's Union. Its rising strength and reach is untainted by the spectre of slavery, and it's possible that the Hammers might consider fully splitting off from the Breakers and forming a new faction with the Trader's Union. This represents an interesting goal for players of either faction, and could serve as the foundation of an entire campaign.

A WORD OF CAUTION

The joining of the Hammers and the Union and the inevitable conflict with the Chainers could as noted form the basis for a fascinating campaign, but it's very important to not oversimplify the issues at hand.

The main issue comes from a game centred around a war to defeat the Chainers. Whilst on the surface that might sound like a straight-forward matter, the reality is much more complex.

Though the Chainers are certainly in the wrong, actually fighting a war against them would involve enormous casualties. There is also the issue of what to do with newly liberated slaves. How will the nascent faction feed or house them? How will communities which rely on the Breaker's services survive?

These are all issues which can be overcome and need to be if a better world is going to rise from the ashes of this conflict. It's not that we are saying you shouldn't do this kind of game, and certainly we're not saying that the Chainers shouldn't be stopped; just that the issues involved deserve more consideration than simply setting up the Chainers as villains to be slaughtered without consequence or pause for thought as to what comes after.

A Rising Power

In this model, a Cabal of Nemissaries form the heart of the Trader's Union and the game would primarily centre around their efforts to see the Union rise and challenge the worst excesses of the existing order. This can involve elements from some of the other ideas presented here, and will have a much larger focus on politics and social interactions than is usual for a game of Sins.

It's also possible to go down this route with groups which don't want to be involved in the more political and social side of the game; in which case it's generally going to be best if the group is not the primary ones in control of the Union, and instead have an older, more powerful Nemissary patron that can serve as a kind of mission generator and dispatcher for the group and the GM.

An individual player might also choose to be part of the Trader's Union and have this goal as a Motivation for their character, but this shouldn't be allowed to intrude upon the game if that type of story isn't what the players' desire.

Loss of Innocence

By default, the Trader's Union is meant to be a generally positive influence upon the setting. Its relatively small size and good intentions, coupled with its recent creation, have so far allowed it to avoid many of the complex moral dilemmas that beset the other factions.

This all adds up to the faction being by default "the good guys", but that's far from the only way they can be portrayed. The reality of life in a setting as harsh as Sins is that sooner or later difficult moral choices will arrive, and people don't, or cannot, always make the correct ones.

Often when trying to do the right thing, events can spiral out of control and the worst human evils generally start with small, seemingly innocuous actions, and the Trader's Union can be used as an excellent example of this.

For instance, you could use a scenario where one of the great factions begins to collapse and the Trader's Union absorbs its territory, only to then become corrupted by the power it now wields. Alternatively, you could combine this theme with the Breakers' Civil War and show how for all its good intentions, the Union simply becomes swallowed up in the tide of change, its ideology lost as it joins with the more numerous and powerful Hammers faction.

A Lost Cause

Another use of the faction is to have it be a dying light around which the players rally, and ultimately fight for the survival of its ideas and identity. In this kind of a scenario, the Union could be a victim of its own success; having risen to power too quickly, it has managed to make an enemy of one of the larger factions.

For instance, the Union might have made a bold move against the Chainers subfaction of the Breakers. Their hope would be to push the Hammers to join them, but this backfires spectacularly as the Hammers use the threat of the Union as a rallying cry to bring the rest of the faction around to their point of view.

Another option would be to have the Union ally formerly with either the Pyreflame or Dominion, only to then become the target of a proxy war between the two factions.

Regardless of the reason in this scenario, the Union should be on the ropes, and any players from it or a game centred around it would be entirely focused on saving it from certain destruction. Doing so is going to be an immense challenge, with defeat a very real possibility – though even defeat doesn't actually have to be the end in this case.

A defeated Trader's Union could also serve as an inspiration for player characters or a Story, with individuals carrying on their ideals of a restored USA, and attempting to resurrect the faction from the ashes.

NO-ONE LIKES TO LOSE

Stories that involve the defeat or corruption of a faction the players are invested in can be fascinating and very engaging, but need to be handled with care. In any story like this, the players should all know well ahead of time what's planned and might befall a faction they're potentially fond of.

There's a great potential for exciting roleplaying and engaging narratives; just remember, never try and push players down roads they don't want to go, or towards moral dilemmas they're not comfortable exploring.

THE BONE DRAGONS REALM

With the attention of the great factions focused on New York and the recent crisis amongst the Breakers, few have noticed the emergence of a new and growing faction that threatens the Dominion's control over Western Massachusetts.

ORIGINS

The exact beginnings of the nascent faction are unclear. What is certain is that the Dominion's arrival in America and their reclamation of Boston drew large numbers of Broodspawn from the surrounding regions. These areas had long been devoid of survivors and for almost a century had been the sole domain of the Broodspawn.

Not all celebrated the arrival of the Dominion, and for all its messages of peace, the migration of Broodspawn had devastated communities throughout the region, and the Dominion had a long, hard fight to earn the trust and acceptance of the native population.

While the Dominion struggled in its own territories, humanity began to slowly reclaim the westernmost reaches of Massachusetts which now lay largely emptied of the Brood, their resources available to those brave enough to claim them.

Amongst these arrivals was a Cabal of Nemissaries led by one Arthur Church. They took the somewhat grandiose title of The Bone Dragon's Fangs, and soon made a name for themselves as mercenaries, hunting down remaining Broodspawn and bandits alike with a particularly brutal fury. Where at first people had regarded the Cabal's name with a hint of derision and amusement, they soon came to be feared and respected by the small coalition of settlements now thriving in the region.

The Fangs built for themselves a stronghold of their own in the deep forests of the region. Here, they displayed the grizzly trophies of their victories and wrought impressive defences in the area which would come to be known as the Forest of Bones.

Things might have remained this way, but a string of disasters struck the area. A particularly bitter winter

weakened various settlements, and a Broodspawn outbreak wiped out several more. Survivors made their way to the Forest of Bones and out of desperation begged the Fangs to help them.

A NEW REALM

The Fangs debated for a time, and then their leader came before the survivors. He declared himself the Bone Dragon, and that this land would be his realm. He offered them a simple bargain – swear fealty to him and offer tribute, and in return they would protect the settlers and slay all who dared to trespass in his lands. In desperation and with little hope, the survivors agreed.

The fury that was unleashed upon the Brood in the days which followed was remarkable. The Fangs fought with everything they had; several of them fell in the battles which followed, only to return from death and almost immediately return to the grinding battle.

Throughout it all, they never once asked the settlers to fight, requiring only that they survive and provide the Bone Dragon's warriors with the Anima they needed to continue the battle.

By the time three months had passed, each of the settlements had been retaken. The bodies of the fallen Broodspawn were brought and piled high in the Forest of Bones, but so too were the bodies of the fallen.

Where the Broodspawn were cast to the floor, the fallen villagers' remains were raised to places of honour, a reminder that they had not died for nothing.

With the battle finally won, the Bone Dragon turned to his vassals and made a surprising announcement. Despite the agreement which was made, no-one would be forced to remain within his realm. They had his leave to leave now and reclaim their possessions, but must then depart his lands. Unsurprisingly, few if any of the survivors chose this offer, and gladly accepted their new king and the protection he offered.



THE REALM TODAY

The Bone Dragon's Realm is small; beyond the fortress at its heart, it has only one relatively large settlement and perhaps a half-dozen smaller communities. The people largely make their living from the forest, and have surprisingly little in the way of armaments or militia.

This is possible because the Fangs of the Bone Dragon are an extremely active presence throughout the area, aggressively pursuing any threats to the villagers. Anything that enters the area with hostile intent has a very low chance of ever leaving again alive, and the Fangs are remarkably persistent in hunting down interlopers, often being willing to travel for days or weeks before dragging the defeated enemies back for judgement before the Dragon himself.

As the faction has grown, a number of other Nemissaries have sought to join the faction; most have been refused and only a handful have been granted the chance to serve. This relationship is very much a two way one; the Bone Dragon is not a tyrant in the traditional sense, and rejects those who simply wish to rule for their own sake.

Only those few Nemissaries which demonstrate a legitimate desire to protect and rule justly and fairly will be accepted, and so far at least, the Bone Dragon's judgement has proved correct on those that have been accepted.

In terms of relations with other factions, the Bone Dragon's Realm remains largely aloof, seemingly having strong connections only with the Dominion. This is surprising, considering that the faction carved itself out of territory which by all rights belongs to the Dominion, but initial fears of conflict proved unfounded, when Lord Hierarch Soresh journeyed in person to his realm and an accord was reached.

The Bone Dragon would hold the western marches of Massachusetts and allow free passage to the Dominion's envoys and traders, and in return the Dominion would not seek to annex the territory, and would recognise the Bone Dragon's authority.

In truth, the Bone Dragon has no liking for the Dominion, and sees them largely as the cause of his people's original sufferings. His true allegiance would lie with The Thorns, and he was for a time a member of that faction, but the growth of his realm has estranged him somewhat, and as he has embraced the role of a King, he can no longer truly call himself one of them, even if he does remain heavily sympathetic to their goals.

ARTHUR CHURCH – THE BONE DRAGON

The Bone Dragon strikes an impressive figure, large and well-built with weathered but pale skin and piercing ice-blue eyes. Combined with a penchant for make-shift suits of armour, Arthur Church strikes the image of a lord of

old. His demeanour is surprisingly jovial, and those meeting him for the first time often wonder how he gained such a fearsome reputation.

Their questions are answered when any threat or insult is directed to his people, and then the Dragon becomes an entirely appropriate moniker.

For the most part, the Bone Dragon is a harsh but fair ruler, taking none against their will, but expecting much of those who willingly swear fealty. He has never given his people cause to regret their choice to serve, and they are fiercely loyal to him.

Like all Nemissaries, he has a darkness inside him, but the Realm itself has given him a way of exorcising the monster he struggles to contain. This is one of the reasons his people are discouraged for taking up arms on their own account, for in battle, the Bone Dragon holds nothing back, becoming a raging beast - slaughtering everything in its path.

BEYOND THE FACTIONS

Not everyone living in the US or the world of Sins is part of any great faction. In fact, there are a great many diverse groups that operate independently throughout the world.

INDEPENDENT COMMUNITIES

All across America, there are hundreds of unaffiliated settlements. Many are tiny, little more than hamlets, but others are well established and potentially influential settlements.

Even within the assumed territorial borders of the great factions, there are still likely to be numerous semi or fully independent communities. Some of these have simply escaped notice, whereas others control unique or intensely valuable resources that they've used to bartered for the protection of the larger faction, without going so far as to become a part of it.

SEMI-AUTONOMOUS GROUPS



Only the most isolated independent communities can wholly escape the influence of the major factions. As a result, there are many nominally independent groups which have deep ties to an existing faction without formally being a part of it.

Often, it's easier for the major factions to accept this loose affiliation than to attempt to force their complete supplication. Additionally, factions such as the Trader's Union and the Breakers control relatively little territory of their own, and often operate out of communities that whilst independent in theory, will generally side with the wishes of their benefactors.

Isolated Settlements

The most common form of independent community is born out of simple isolation; they are either too difficult to reach safely, or exist in areas far from major centres of trade or population. In either case, to survive a settlement like this must have reliable access to food, water and some ability to either scavenge or trade for tools and resources they need to survive.

The character of these settlements varies immensely, anywhere from the destitute domains of petty warlords, to proud and resilient survivors dating all the way back to The Fall.

Any settlement that manages to survive for any reasonable length of time will tend towards a degree of stability in one form or another, and will generally possess relatively impressive defences. Considering that manpower is normally at a premium, static defences are usually an incredibly important part of a given settlement's survival.

Most are not welcoming to outsiders, particularly powerful or armed ones, and even those which engage in trade normally do so infrequently and lack any sort of dedicated trade facilities.

For an example of this kind of settlement, see New Haven on page 28 of the Core Book.

Established Settlements

Some independent groups manage to maintain their status despite – or perhaps because of – their proximity to the territories of the major factions. In order to survive as an independent settlement, there must be some reason beyond simple pride or force of arms.

Any community which holds a valuable resource is normally likely to have been absorbed by one of the great factions, and virtually no independent community could boast the military force necessary to resist if they did.

Despite this, some established settlements with rare or lucrative resources do maintain their independence. Most commonly, such settlements straddle the borders of one or more of the great factions, and function as de-facto neutral ground between them, with neither faction wishing to fight a war over ownership of the settlement.

Another common reason for the existence of prosperous independent settlements is trade. There are a variety of areas which lie outside the territorial borders of the



great factions, but still fall along particular trade routes. Here, these settlements serve as important hubs for trade and make their living primarily through the facilities which support trade convoys.

Like their more isolated counterparts, independent settlements like these tend to be heavily defended with an emphasis on static defences, but are generally far more welcoming of outsiders, and are usually more concerned with defences against roaming Broodspawn than being attacked by human opponents.

Finally, there are communities that have risen more recently under the protection of a powerful Nemissary or Cabal. These settlements are usually built from the ground up on reclaimed land not currently under the control of any faction, but occasionally – in the case of particular brazen or powerful Nemissaries – carved territory from outlying areas of a faction's lands.

An Example of an established settlement is Brightwatch on page 29 of the Core Book.

Nomadic Communities

Though rare outside of the Thorns, there are groups that manage to survive without calling any one place home. These nomadic communities have faced, and always will face, an uphill battle for survival.

No valuable resource within easy reach is ever left unclaimed, and as the years have gone by, scavenging has become both less rewarding and more dangerous. As a result, the only truly independent nomadic groups which have managed to survive either do so far from the other factions, or exist within these territories as small convoys of wandering traders.

Over time, most of these groups have broken apart or settled. Only those groups which have built a powerful sense of community or shared ideology have managed to weather the almost endless hardships their lives entail.

In practice, these groups are likely to be a few families, numbering no more than fifty individuals at best. Only in the most extreme cases will these numbers ever rise much above that, and even then groups larger than about fifty are nearly impossible to sustain in the harsh conditions of Post-Fall America.

Some examples of this kind of group that already exist are the Edwards Family (page 23 of the Core book) and Convoy (page 27).

American Indian Groups

Sins, like any roleplaying game, is fictional – but its world is still based upon our own. A consequence of this is that by necessity, it must often reference real places, people, cultures and groups. One aspect of this which bears discussion is the status of the First Peoples of America; in particular various Native American groups.

The Core Book of Sins and its depiction of the East Coast makes no real reference to the topic. This shouldn't be taken to mean that there are no surviving American Indian groups in the world of Sins – far from it in fact.

The world in the Core Book is painted in great broad strokes, and the Factions are not representations of real groups or people, nor are they particular ethnicities or cultures.

The various nations and tribes of Native Americans are incredibly diverse, and making generalisations of them is problematic on a number of levels. Remember that the number of Reservations has no bearing on the number of cultures.

It's a sobering reality, but it's worth remembering that trying to refer to Native Americans as a single group is very much like trying to refer to the entire continent of Indo-Eurasia as a single, homogeneous culture. Worse, there's an unfortunate trend of roleplaying games and other fantasy mediums in the past and present appropriating and misapplying aspects of Native American culture and mythology.

It's also very easy for subtle bias to slip in – for instance, the first thought of many GMs may be to align the people of a Reservation with The Thorns, but the problem there is that could be seen as feeding into a stereotype, and it's one that many of us could do without realising the implications or even thinking about it.

That's not at all to say that Native American groups can't find a place in the setting; certainly it's possible to play Nemissaries or humans of that descent, and the various cultures could align themselves with almost any one faction or another.

What's important is that this isn't something that should be done casually, or without proper research. If you are reading this as a member of one of these groups, you certainly know better than we ever could about how you could fit into this world. For anybody else, you owe it to others and to yourself not to perpetuate stereotypes and to treat other cultures and their beliefs fairly – and with respect – when it comes to the interpretation and representation of their cultures in recreational media.



CHAPTER

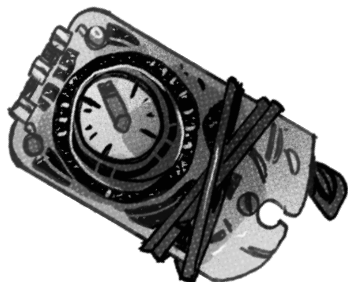
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EXPANDED EQUIPMENT

This book presents a wealth of new equipment options for characters, many of which greatly expand upon the scope and capabilities of those presented in the Core book. This section in particular lays out the framework for these new items, along with providing a selection of new, non-Faction specific equipment.



NEW EQUIPMENT RULES

Many of the items you will find in this book have new abilities outside what is covered in the Core book. In addition to an expanded pool of Item Qualities, this section also offers mechanics for use in pre-prepared traps.

NEW QUALITIES

The following Qualities when combined with those in the Core Book form a new expanded pool to support the new equipment found in this book.

Flash

Not every weapon is intended to be lethal; some are designed to disorientate or incapacitate their targets without necessarily causing physical harm.

Effect: An item with this Quality must also possess the **Blast** Quality. When the item detonates, all targets within the Blast range suffer a -2 Success penalty to all Actions, or if they were within half the radius of the Blast, they take a -3 Success penalty to all Actions. In addition, if the Blast took place in an enclosed space, the penalty is increased in both cases by a further -1 Success.

Targets incapable of hearing or seeing are not immune to the effect, but instead reduce the penalties by 1 for each of these two senses they lack, to a minimum of -1.

AVAILABILITY, NOT RARITY

Readers may notice that in this supplement we're using Availability for items as opposed to Rarity. This is a change which will affect all Item stats going forward, and any reference to Item Rarity in the Core book should simply be treated as if it says Item Availability.

These penalties dissipate over time. Ignoring the Round in which the device detonated, these penalties lower by 1 at the end of each Round.

Guided

Some weapons and munitions are capable of manoeuvring during flight, and when coupled with an appropriate guidance system, they can strike a distant target with frightening accuracy.

Effect: A weapon with this Quality is capable of being paired with a Laser Target Designator.

Rocket

Weapons with this Quality use their own propellant to accelerate themselves to high speed towards their target.

Effect: This Quality may have multiple ranks. When a weapon with this Quality hits a target, the Damage is increased by the rating of this Quality. This Damage increase is ignored for other purposes such as Blast.

Support

Some things were just not meant to be dragged into combat by a single human being. This Quality represents items or weapons that are not easily portable and either need tripods with a team of operators, or a vehicle mount.

Effect: Equipment with this Quality cannot be effectively used by a single character of human stature. Deploying such a piece of equipment requires one Standard Action, and a further Standard Action to set the item up and make it ready to fire. A pair of operators can share the Actions between them to complete this in one Round.

Fully disassembling and storing the weapon requires a further two Standard Actions, though in an emergency the support frame can be abandoned and the weapon be removed on its own in a single Standard Action.

Individuals of larger stature such as Nemissaries in the Destroyer Shape or humans wearing Exo-armour can potentially use these weapons effectively, albeit in two hands.

Powered

Weapons with this Quality require a power source in addition to their ammunition.

Effect: An item may possess this Quality more than once. For each rank, the item requires one Vacuum Battery. This charge will last for the time specified in the item's description or, when not stated, it is assumed to last for the remainder of the current Story.



Powered and the Core Book

Logically, the Railguns from the Core Book should have the Powered Quality. Groups wishing to implement this should give the Gauss Railgun the **Powered 2** Quality and the Linear Railgun should have **Powered 1** Quality.

Spiked

This armour is designed for those who fight Brood up close, with spikes and blades worked into parts of the design to make it a dangerous prospect to grapple or grab them.

Effect: A character wearing armour which possesses this Quality is considered to have 2 Impact when taking aggressive actions against characters that are fighting unarmed or with natural weapons. If a character grapples you, they take 2 Damage at the start of each turn which ignores all Resistance that lacks the **Epic** or **Voidglass** Quality.

Spiked Armour

Any armour can be altered to possess the Spiked Quality. Adding spikes to armour is counted as crafting an item one rarity step lower than the original item, whereas armour purchased with the Spiked Quality will always be one step poorer quality than normal, but will otherwise have the same Availability.

Trap X

Items with this Quality can be used to set up pre-prepared traps. The value given with the Quality represents the Pool Modifier when using the item in this way. If the item possesses this Quality and is not being used as a trap, the value is ignored and it instead takes a -1 Pool penalty.

Unless otherwise stated, all equipment with this Quality is counted as a ranged attack when used as a trap, and must use any optional abilities granted by other Qualities (i.e., **Entangling** must be used if the trap has that Quality). If they would normally count as a melee weapon, treat the user's Body Attribute as if it was equal to 2 + the user's Crafts skill.

TRAP RULES

Traps play an important part in many people's lives, both in hunting and as part of a pre-prepared defence or ambushes against hostile elements. For the purposes of the rules, Traps are treated in most respects as another form of attack that characters can make. The primary difference is that in order to make use of a trap, the character must prepare the weapons beforehand.

The weapon must have the Trap Quality, and the environment must provide at least some reasonable way of disguising the trap and its trigger mechanism. Actually setting up the traps takes a variable amount of time; in general, setting up a single trap shouldn't take any meaningful amount of time, but preparing a lethal kill-zone should always take a full Scene.

Once enemies approach, characters may as a Free Action spend a point of Focus to trigger any individual trap against an enemy, as if it was used in an Aggressive Action against the target. Alternatively the GM may decide that an enemy would trigger a trap on their own, and negate the Focus cost.

The actual attack is considered to Tag the target(s), triggering a Response which is directed at the Trap, not the character. The Trap makes its Aggressive Action roll using the result of the character's Cunning/Survival.

The enemy may react to the attack as normal, or if they were wary or actively looking for traps, they may declare they spotted the trap before it triggered.

In this case, they can take a Defensive Action with Cunning/Perception. If Successful, the trap is spotted, the attack is cancelled, and that specific trap may not be used again. If they Fail, the Trap's Outcome will be increased by 3.

TRAPS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Not everywhere is equally suited to the use of traps. The GM should feel free to veto their use where it would be unreasonable, or to provide bonuses or penalties to their use or detection.

NEW GENERAL EQUIPMENT

The following new equipment is available to all characters, and although in some cases incredibly rare, is not specific to any particular faction.

EXAMPLE TRAPS

The following equipment represents a variety of commonly used traps, both purpose-built and ad-hoc.

Bear Trap

An archaic but still effective tool, the Bear Trap generally sees more use as a countermeasure to the Brood rather than as a hunting tool for survivors.

Damage: 5

Availability: Uncommon

Size: Medium

Qualities: Trap(-1), Impaling, Entangling

Claymore Mine

These deadly pieces of military hardware are vanishingly rare in the wastelands. The small size belies its deadly potential.

Damage: 7

Availability: Very Rare

Size: Small

Qualities: Blast 15, Trap(+2)

Grenade Trap

A common tactic when defending an area is to make improvised traps using a tripwire rigged to an existing grenade or other explosive.

Damage: As grenade used

Availability: As grenade used

Size: Special, see below

Qualities: As grenade used, plus Trap(-1)

Special: The size of the trap is based on the grenade or explosive device used, but is counted as one size greater when deployed as a trap.

Rigged Firearm

Though difficult to set up effectively, a firearm can be rigged in a similar manner to a grenade trap in order to provide a lethal surprise to an opponent.

Damage: As weapon used

Availability: As weapon used

Size: Special, see below

Qualities: As weapon used, plus Trap(Special)

Special: Setting up a weapon to effectively strike a target is extremely difficult in all but the most cramped environments. If set up in a doorway or other similarly restrictive environment, then the Trap Quality is counted as -1. In other circumstances, the Quality will likely count as -3, or possibly not usable at all at the GM's discretion.

River of Knives

A particularly simple yet brutal trap designed to cripple those who step on it, the River of Knives is made up of shards of glass, metal or Voidglass set jutting up from the ground, or through a concealed plank.

Damage: 6

Availability: Very Rare

Size: Small, Very Large when deployed.

Qualities: Impaling, Trap(0), Voidglass, if crafted from voidglass.

Special: This trap can only be set up in an area where there is a concealable pit, and disguising the pit takes considerable time, requiring at least a Scene of effort. If no pit is readily at hand, one will either have to be dug out or created through other means.

PRE-FALL EQUIPMENT

Rare and precious, the military hardware of the Second Renaissance is generally found only in the hands of the more powerful factions, but is not exclusive to them. They can sometimes be found throughout the wastelands in long abandoned bunkers, or in the arsenals of isolated and well defended communities.

Vacuum Battery

These powerful batteries were once ubiquitous in the days preceding The Fall, but the difficulty of their manufacture has made them vanishingly rare.

Their size varies, the most common being similar to D-Cell batteries, though they can power devices for ten to twenty times longer and their high energy output makes them capable of supplying power to more energy-hungry devices for at least several hours.

Availability: Extremely Rare

Reactive Camo Cloak

These devices resemble rain cloaks, and in their unpowered state are a simple glossy grey. Once hooked to an appropriate power-pack, the cloak begins to mirror the surrounding environment such that the user appears to become transparent.

Rarity: Impossibly Rare

Effect: In order to function, the Camo Cloak must be powered. By default this requires a Vacuum Battery which allows for approximately 12 hours of continuous use.

Whilst activated, the Camo Cloak disrupts the user's image. Against targets that rely primarily on visual senses, the user gains 3 Automatic Successes to opposed Stealth rolls. Against targets which have a highly developed sense of smell or are otherwise not heavily reliant on eyesight, the bonus is reduced to 1 Automatic Success.

Carbon Weave Armour

This advanced composite armour incorporates a full self-heating bodysuit with layered armour panels. It has numerous attachment points for other equipment and incorporates an on-board battery supply that can power other equipment such as a Reactive Camo Cloak.

Pool: —

Resilience: 4

Availability: Extremely Rare

Size: Large

Qualities: Hardened, Complex, Flame Resistant.

MN-K8 Helix Rail Rifle

These terrifying weapons were the absolute state of the art during the Second Renaissance and never saw widespread deployment. Each incorporates an array of magnets arranged in a spiral pattern, powered so that they increase in intensity along the length of the barrel.

Specially designed dipolar rounds are then fed into the chamber and are spun as they are accelerated. This guarantees a far more stable flightpath and allows for a monstrous rate of fire, at the expense of raw damage.

Damage: 8

Pool: +1

Range: Very Long

Ammo: 48

Availability: Impossibly Rare

Size: Large

Qualities: Autofire 3, Relic, Powered 2, Two-Handed

Rail Carbine

A relative of the MN-K8, this rail weapon also never saw widespread deployment and uses the same basic technologies. The shorter barrel and stock allow for easier handling at the cost of some range and killing power.

Damage: 6

Pool: +1

Range: Long

Ammo: 22

Availability: Impossibly Rare

Size: Small

Qualities: Autofire +3, Relic, Powered 1

Laser Target Designator

These small devices trigger a launch system and guide a missile to their target. They vary in size and can easily be incorporated into the housing of a weapon but are more commonly an independent device about the size of a flashlight.

Rarity: Very Rare

Effect: Laser Target Designators need to be paired with a weapon with the **Guided** Quality. This link allows the user to fire that weapon remotely and guide the ordinance using the Designator.

The process is treated as a standard Ranged Attack Action using the Target Designator as a weapon with +1 Pool. There is an additional penalty based on the actual range of the ordinance; if the ordinance is within a mile, the penalty is +1 Difficulty. If the ordinance would have to travel further than this, the penalty increases to +2. If the attack Succeeds, resolve Damage and effects based on the ordinance used.

Short Range Laser-Guided Missile

These missiles are just over a metre long and come with a dedicated launch platform. Using these weapons requires a Laser Target Designator. The missiles themselves have a small but high yield conventional warhead and can potentially be launched many kilometres from the actual target, then guided in for a killing strike in a matter of seconds by an operative with the target designator on site.

***Note:** These weapons must be set up and paired to a target designator before being used. They can be used as a conventional explosive but their size makes them awkward in this role.*

Damage: 18

Pool: —

Range: Extreme

Ammo: 1

Availability: Very Rare

Size: Very Large

Qualities: Support, Guided, Rocket 6

Flashbangs

These small grenades have become difficult to manufacture but were once a staple of both police and military forces worldwide.

Damage: 1

Availability: Very Rare

Size: Small

Qualities: Blast 10, Flash

VEHICLE RULES

The Black Rain and The Fall brought an end to an era where vehicles were a part of everyday life. The sheer carnage wrought in those days destroyed the infrastructure needed to maintain and run sophisticated modern vehicles.

Even in parts of the world where less sophisticated technology was dominant, the lack of fuel meant that many older vehicles were stripped for parts or converted into makeshift generators.

Some groups did continue to make use of vehicles, carefully preserving the knowledge and supplies to maintain their operations, but these groups have been few and far between.

Still, humans are tenacious creatures and little by little, order is being restored to the world; those groups once again possess the resources and organisation necessary to restore ageing vehicles, or even make entirely new ones more befitting of the post-apocalyptic age.

SIZE AND SCALE

The original printing of Sins contains an issue regarding size; namely characters and items both use separate and incompatible scales. To solve this issue, characters use **Scale** instead of **Size**. If you have a copy of the second printing of Sins or the updated PDF, this has already been factored in; otherwise simply replace any references in the Core book of Character Size with Character Scale instead.

THE CONTROLLER

To be of any use, a vehicle needs a Controller. In nearly all cases this will be a character physically located in the vehicle and in direct control of it. This doesn't stop a vehicle having co-pilots or passengers, but it's important to keep in mind that only one character can be the Controller at any given moment.

VEHICLES IN GAME

Vehicles are powerful tools but are ultimately props for the characters and narrative. Broadly speaking, there are two ways to use vehicles in game.

The first is simply to treat them as a prop. This approach is most appropriate for games solely focused on Nemissaries, particularly when the Nemissaries in question are powerful or established.

In this case, it's best to treat them literally as scenery. It's certainly appropriate to make use of the specific weaponry Traits which some vehicles have if appropriate, but it's not necessary to track their positions or worry about their health.

You might impose movement penalties on characters attempting to jump from one vehicle to another, and ripping a tank apart definitely should require extreme strength and at least a Standard Action, and a vehicle's movement capabilities and statistics when used like this would simply provide a general guideline for where they can get to in any given Round and what the individual vehicles are capable of.

Of course, this approach has its problems and there are times when vehicles can become a central element which needs less abstract mechanics. This is particularly the case when Nemissaries confront the more dangerous human factions in the setting.

In these cases, vehicles deserve a more in-depth treatment, under which they function as a form of equipment which modifies the capabilities of a character and how they interact with the world.

VEHICLE TRAITS

Vehicles primarily function like a piece of equipment, acting as a modifier to the character in control of them – their Controller. The vehicle itself takes no Actions, but does possess a variety of unique Traits, some of which are shared with other items but many of which are unique.

BASIC TRAITS

As discussed, vehicles are handled as a form of item and possess the following Traits;

Availability: This Trait is shared with other items and functions in the same way as outlined on page 178 of the Core Book.

Scale: This is a general measure of the size of the vehicle, as outlined on page 92 of the Core Book. Generally, most Vehicles fall into the following categories;

- **Medium:** Motorbikes or aerial combat drones.
- **Large:** Cars, APCs, tractors and the like.
- **Huge:** Tanks, hauling trucks and most aeroplanes.
- **Massive:** Extreme earthmovers, a passenger liner aircraft or a light naval vessel.

Mass: This Trait is roughly equivalent to the Body Attribute and is used by the Controller in its place both for general Actions which rely on a vehicle's physical size and calculating how difficult the vehicle is to damage.

Mass operates on a somewhat different scale to Body, and when Body must be compared to Mass, the Mass is considered six ranks higher than its equivalent Body rank.

For example, if a person got into a tug of war with a car with a Mass of 3, it would count as a total of 9 for the purposes of the Opposed Roll.

Structure: Analogous to Conviction, this Trait represents how rugged and reliable the vehicle is, and is a measure of how much punishment the vehicle can take.

SENSES

Vehicles generally modify their Controller's ability to experience the world. This can be almost negligible, such as the restricted field of view when driving a car, or much more serious such as the extremely restrictive view ports of a tank.

Of course, vehicles can also enhance the capabilities of their Controllers, providing access to sensor suites, thermal imaging and night-vision.

Each vehicle will list its available vision modes along with any modifiers these impose on the Controller. In the case of a vehicle with multiple vision modes, the Controller is free to use whichever option they wish unless otherwise stated in the description.

CONTROL

By definition, a vehicle needs to be able to move. This section of a vehicle's Traits tells you what options are open to it. Most ground vehicles will have a single type of movement, but others, particularly VTOL capable aircraft, may have multiple types of movement. Each form of movement will be listed separately and has a number of variables.

First, you have the **Type** of movement the vehicle is using. There are three potential types, which are Ground, Hover and Flight.

The next two values are given together. They are the Vehicle's **Speed** class and its **Control** rating. Speed is primarily a reference point for the rules whereas Control is a general measure of how well the vehicle handles, and applies as a Pool modifier to most Actions the Controller takes using this form of movement.

Finally, there is a rough minimum and maximum speed for that form of movement. This has no direct effect on combat, but is useful as a narrative reference and as a means of working out travel times.

For example, the values for an average car would be shown as;

Control (Ground): Fast/+1, 0 – 120 mph

HULL

Unlike other items, vehicles have their own form of Vitality referred to as their Hull. This is split into Hull Thresholds and Hull Tracks.

Thresholds function in the same manner as Vitality Thresholds as per page 87 of the Core Book, and are calculated as follows;

Light Damage: $7 + (1/2 \text{ Mass})$

Serious Damage: $7 + \text{Mass}$

Critical Damage: $7 + (\text{Mass} \times 2)$

Crippled: $7 + (\text{Mass} \times 3)$

Destroyed: $7 + (\text{Mass} \times 4)$

Hull Tracks likewise are handled in the same manner as Wound Tracks on pages 88-89 of the Core Book, and are calculated as follows;

Light: Equal to Structure

Serious: Structure -1 to a minimum of 1

Critical: Structure -2 to a minimum of 1

Crippled: Structure -3 to a minimum of 1

Destroyed: Structure -4 to a minimum of 1



DAMAGE PENALTIES

As a vehicle suffers damage, its capabilities degrade. When a vehicle suffers one or more points of Hull damage in a given Hull Track, it imposes a cumulative -1 Pool on all Actions taken by its Controller.

In addition, more serious Hull Damage can have additional effects. When a vehicle has damage points in the Serious, Critical or Crippled categories, the GM may apply one of the effects below for each damage category reached.

System Failure: One of the vehicle's systems has failed, removing any of the bonuses granted by that system.

Weapon Failure: One of the vehicle's armaments is disabled.

Hull Breach (Critical only): The vehicle gains the *Open Topped* Quality and loses the *Sealed* Quality if it possesses it.

Fuel Line Rupture (Critical only): The vehicle will be able to remain in operation until the end of the Scene at most. In addition, if the vehicle's Destroyed Threshold is breached then the fuel ignites, which is treated as a Damage 10, Blast 1, Incendiary hit to all occupants, and a Damage 6, Blast 10, Incendiary Attack to all Characters outside the vehicle in the Blast radius.

Engine Damage (Critical Only): The vehicle's Speed drops by one category. If the vehicle's movement type is Flying or Hover, it will be able to stay in the air for the

remainder of the Scene at most and must seek an emergency landing or crash.

REPAIRING VEHICLES

Obviously vehicles don't heal like other characters and repairing damage to a vehicle's Hull requires the Crafts Skill.

To repair a damaged or destroyed vehicle, the character will need to have the appropriate spare parts and then undertake a Sustained Action, with each attempt requiring spare parts with a value no greater than two rarity steps lower than the base vehicle. The Difficulty of this roll is based on the severity of damage current suffered by the vehicle.

Light: 0

Serious: 1

Critical: 2

Crippled: 3

Destroyed: Special (See below)

Each point of Outcome allows 1 Damage to be removed from any Hull Track other than Destroyed.

A vehicle with Damage in its Destroyed Hull Track increases the Difficulties of all Repair rolls by 1. When all Damage has been removed from the Crippled Hull Track, the next available point of Outcome may be spent to remove the Damage from the Destroyed Track.



QUALITIES

Like Characters, vehicles can have Qualities which can further modify their capabilities in various ways. Below is a list of common vehicle Qualities and their effects. Note that vehicles presented later in this book will already have any relevant modifiers applied to their profile. Also bear in mind that this list does not include Qualities unique to specific faction vehicles, the rules for which will be included in their profiles.

Name: Tracked

Effect: The vehicle can ignore terrain penalties and increases its Mass by 2 when determining raw strength, such as its ability to pull or smash down barricades. This bonus does not apply to ramming unless the target is stationary, or being pushed.

Name: VTOL

Effect: A vehicle with this Quality is capable of changing its Speed Class to Basic and remaining in the air and may also land without the need for a runway or airstrip.

Name: Open-Topped

Effect: Opponents may choose to take a Minor Action to aim for the Controller or passengers without the need to spend Outcome.

Name: Enclosed

Effect: This Quality can apply to the vehicle as a whole or just the Controller/a limited number of occupants. Characters specified cannot be targeted separately from the vehicle, unless the vehicle has taken Hull Damage of at least Critical severity; in which case they may be targeted for an additional 1 Outcome. If the vehicle suffers Crippling Damage, this Quality is lost.

Name: Enhanced Acceleration

Effect: This Quality may be taken multiple times, and grants bonus Pool equal to its rank where the vehicle's ability to accelerate would provide a bonus to its Controller.

Name: Sealed

Effect: So long as this vehicle has not taken any Hull Damage of a severity of Serious or greater, this vehicle is completely sealed from the environment and immune to chemical, incendiary or atmospheric hazards.

Once the vehicle takes Serious Damage, this protection begins to lapse, though a passenger may take a Standard Action to temporarily patch up the Hull. This needs to be repeated each time the vehicle takes any more Serious Damage, and the Sealed Quality is lost completely if the vehicle takes any Critical Damage.

Name: Light Construction

Effect: The vehicle's frame has no meaningful armour and does little to shield its Controller or passengers. If an

TERRAIN

Terrain can seriously affect how vehicles will perform. Outside of combat, this is best handled in a narrative sense, requiring appropriate Skill checks.

In combat, it should still be kept as abstract as possible, generally providing a 1 or 2 dice penalty to rolls where the difficult terrain would complicate things for the Controller.

FLICKERING

Not all characters are necessarily locked to the Basic Speed Class. In particular, characters capable of Flickering (as per page 158 of the Core Book) may choose to count their Speed Class as Fast for the purposes of vehicles.

At the GM's discretion, characters with similar abilities or otherwise capable of extreme speeds (such as sprinting Destroyer Shapes) should also be allowed to possess an appropriate Speed Class when applicable.

attack inflicts Damage on the vehicle, roll 1d6. On a result of a 4+, a random occupant is also hit. This attack does not count Outcome scored against the vehicle, and simply applies the base damage of the attack against the unlucky character.

VEHICLES AND ACTIONS

A character in control of a vehicle is somewhat constrained in what Actions they can perform. As the Controller, they can only take Actions which could be logically accomplished with said vehicle.

For instance, they could use a vehicle's Mass in order to tow an obstacle from a road, or make a Skill check to weave through a dense outcrop of trees. Normally, a vehicle gains no specific bonuses to these sorts of Action outside that already provided by its Mass.

Of course, some Qualities can change this and there are certain circumstances where a vehicle will have a distinct advantage – most human beings aren't going to outrun a car at full speed after all. In these cases, it's best to refer to the Movement and Positioning section in the vehicle combat rules below.

Finally, the vehicle's Controller can take an Action without using the vehicle directly, so long as that Action could be reasonably accomplished; for instance, leaning out the vehicle and attempting to grab a passer-by while in motion.

If the Controller wishes to do this, then they must take a -1 Pool penalty to keep control of the vehicle, and lose access to the vehicle's Traits for the duration of this Action as they act as an individual.

COMBAT ZONES

If the Fast vehicle is engaging normal characters, this can be as straightforward as "the combat area" and "outside the combat area". In an engagement between multiple vehicles however, it may be necessary to add more, creating a kind of grid for the various areas that the vehicles will be fighting in.

When the Controller acts, any Actions they take must target characters in their current Combat Zone, and must then Move to an adjacent Combat Zone. If they target another Fast opponent, that opponent Responds as normal but must likewise move to a new Combat Zone. If the attacker wins, they can choose to go to the same Combat Zone as their opponent, effectively creating a chase.

DOGFIGHTING

It's unusual but possible for multiple vehicles of Extreme Speed Class to get into a combat with each other. When this happens, the simplest solution is to resolve the combat as if the vehicles were all in the Fast category, but treat each Round as a full Scene for the purposes of time and narrative description.



VEHICLES IN COMBAT

Vehicles are powerful tools and can have a dramatic influence on combat. As already discussed, they modify the capabilities of an existing character known as the Controller.

That character Acts as normal except where outlined in this section. Likewise, other characters Respond as normal, though they do gain some additional options in how they wish to deal with the Controller.

MOVEMENT AND POSITIONING

The first and most important way in which vehicles affect Combat is with movement. All vehicles require their Controller to use a Minor Action each Round to stay in control of the vehicle, but beyond this their Movement is determined by their **Speed Class**.

Basic Speed

Normal characters have a Speed Class of Basic and if a vehicle also has, or is capable of, moving at Basic Speed, then it moves and interacts in combat like any other character, save for its added bulk and need for a Controller.

Fast Speed

Fast vehicles can move far larger distances than normal characters and their high speeds means that the normal positioning rules break down. Instead, divide the area into a number of Combat Zones.

Extreme Speed

Vehicles in this category are exclusively aircraft of some description, and move at speeds well outside the scope of the normal combat rules. As a result, these vehicles will only have one opportunity to Act in any given Scene and are nearly impossible for slower opponents to engage in conventional combat.

The Controller gets to decide how close they wish to approach their targets, and chooses any Range Step up to Extreme. For the purposes of the Action, both they and their opponent are considered to be at that distance from one another, both for the purposes of an opponent trying to move to Engage, and weapon ranges.

CHANGING SPEED

Some vehicles possess multiple types of movement or have the ability to change their Speed Class due to Qualities. In either case, the Controller may either use a Minor Action to change their Speed Class before beginning their Action, or they may choose to spend 1 Outcome after a Successful Action to change their Speed Class.

If the change happens after an Action, then the vehicle must complete any mandatory movement. In the case of a vehicle of Extreme Speed shifting down to Fast, the vehicle must move into an adjacent Combat Zone as if it had ended its Action in the Fast category.

COMBAT OPTIONS

For the most part, vehicles present characters with some additional options and restrictions in terms of combat.

ATTACKS AGAINST VEHICLES

Attacks against vehicles are resolved like normal against a target of the vehicle's Scale with the exception that Damage from the attack is by default resolved against the vehicle, rather than its Controller or passengers.

An attacker may choose to spend 2 Outcome to target the Controller or a passenger of the target vehicle directly. In the event of Blast weapons, the effects will be applied both to the primary target – be it the vehicle or an occupant – and all other targets within the blast radius as normal.

ATTACKS FROM VEHICLES

Vehicles potentially present a number of ways in which they can be used to attack. The most basic of these is a ram which is resolved as a Prowess/Perception Skill check, with a base Damage equal to 6 + the vehicle's Mass.

Note: *This is not increased further if the vehicle targets a non-vehicle opponent.*

Beyond a ramming attack, occupants can fire out of windows or make use of any mounted weaponry the vehicle possesses. The Controller can also make use of any integrated weaponry using Prowess/Marksmanship.

LOSING CONTROL

If the Controller of the vehicle is unable or unwilling to use a Minor Action to keep control of the vehicle, then its movement will become erratic.

Any Actions performed by its occupants will suffer a -1 Success Penalty. If the vehicle is operating in difficult terrain, and no character is able to take control of it before the end of the Round, the GM may choose to have the vehicle crash, inflicting a damaging hit equal to 2D6 + the vehicle's Mass in Damage to all occupants, after which the vehicle comes to a stop. The GM should also feel free to impose any Damage on the vehicle which seems appropriate.

ENTERING AND EXITING VEHICLES

Characters beginning their Action inside a vehicle can choose to exit it. If the vehicle is in the Basic Speed Class, this simply requires an additional Minor Action to slow to a stop. However if the vehicle being exited is moving in the Fast Class, then this is extremely dangerous, requiring the character to make a Prowess/Athletics (6) check. If they Succeed, then they roll free unharmed, but if they fail, they suffer 1 Critical Wound, +1 for each point they failed by.

Opponents wishing to board a vehicle can do so if they can reach it. Forcing their way in imposes a -1 Success Penalty on their actions, and if the vehicle is in the Fast Speed Class then they must make a Prowess/Athletics (3) check. If they Succeed, their Action continues as normal other than the Success penalty, but if they fail they suffer Critical Wounds in the same manner as a character failing to disembark.



POWERING VEHICLES

Generally speaking, most vehicles from before The Fall operate using Vacuum Batteries, and are capable of covering several two to three hundred miles before needing to recharge. Vehicles constructed through cruder methods may require gasoline or some other combustible fuel, but their range will be comparable and fuel status should be regarded primarily as a narrative tool rather than a game mechanic.

EXAMPLE VEHICLES

The following vehicles represent relatively common surviving vehicles in the world of Sins, and should be generally available in games making use of the vehicle rules.

Civilian Car

This profile represents an average car which provides a good combination of speed and manoeuvrability.

Availability: Rare

Scale: Large

Mass: 3

Structure: 2

Senses: 0 (Windows)

Control (Ground): Fast/+1 (-1 on anything other than well maintained roads), 0 – 120 mph

Qualities: Enclosed, Light Construction

Armaments: None

Off-road Car

This represents an average four-by-four vehicle which sacrifices some speed but gains far better off-road handling. Most vehicles of this type tend to use fossil fuels as opposed to Vacuum Batteries, and many newly constructed vehicles would use this profile.

Availability: Very Rare

Scale: Large

Mass: 4

Structure: 3

Senses: 0 (Windows)

Control (Ground): Fast/0, 0 – 90mph

Qualities: Enclosed, Light Construction

Armaments: None

Armoured Vehicle

This represents a basic military combat vehicle similar in some respects to an off-road car, but offers far greater protection for its occupants.

Availability: Extremely Rare

Scale: Huge

Mass: 4

Structure: 4

Senses: Viewing Slits -2, Cameras -1

Control (Ground): Fast/-1, 0 – 60mph

Qualities: Sealed, Passengers (3)

Armaments: Variable, generally a mounted Heavy Machine gun. Using this means that the gunner may be targeted and other passengers may be affected by environmental effects.

MASS COMBAT

To a starting group of Nemissaries, the lesser Broodspawn are dangerous in their own right, and as swarms, they can pose a serious challenge. As a Cabal's power grows, individual Broodspawn lose much of their threat, but can still pose a challenge as a group.

The unfortunate reality is that the more combatants there are, the slower the combat system becomes. This problem is exaggerated by the regenerative powers of Broodspawn, meaning that large groups of Broodspawn are cumbersome to use in games.

The rules in this section set out to alleviate this problem by treating groups of similar foes – in particular Lesser Broodspawn packs – as a single entity, referred to as a **Mob**.

GENERAL MOB RULES

A Mob must consist of a group of enemies of the same type and with broadly matching stats, equipment and abilities. These characters will be combined together to form a Mob, and treated as a single entity for the purposes of the rules.

MOB ACTIONS

At the GM's discretion, a Mob can get a number of Bonus Pool to its Actions equal to its Size. This bonus should only be applied in circumstances where sheer numbers are relevant and of benefit to the odds of success, such as attempts to search an area or to break down barricades.

This doesn't account for Leaders or other potential Elite combatants; they should not be incorporated into a Mob, but handled as separate characters as normal.

WHEN TO USE MOBS

The rules in this section can significantly speed up combat, but they can also make opponents more dangerous whilst simultaneously diminishing the importance of various strategies and tactics that would mitigate this.

This means that the Mob rules shouldn't be used with opponents that would provide an individual threat to any member of the player group, and where the number of such opponents would unnecessarily slow down the game.

A good example of this situation is where a powerful enemy is leading a horde of Broodspawn. In this case, the rules allow the minions to be resolved as one or more Mobs, allowing for a large battle scene without bringing the game's pace to a crawl.

BUILDING MOBS

The first thing you need to do is to work out how many individual combatants are going to make up the Mob. Next, split that number about half as many separate groups as there are player characters. Each of these will form a Mob, with a **Size** corresponding to how many individual characters are in it.

Size 1: 2 to 3 members

Size 2: 4 to 5 members

Size 3: 6 to 7

Size 4: 8 to 9

Size 5*: 10 to 15

Size 6*: 15+

**: Only characters of Small or lesser Scale can form Mobs of this Size.*

Each Mob has Attributes and Skills based on the average values of said Traits amongst its members. In the case of Features and Qualities, the Mob will only count as possessing these if at least half the characters in the Mob possess them.

VITALITY AND MOBS

A Mob's Vitality is handled slightly differently than single characters. Their Wound Thresholds are treated as normal, but their Wound Limits for Injured, Mauled and Critical are each increased by a number of points equal to their starting Size.

In addition, because a Mob is made up of multiple individuals, they handle Injuries to the Deadly and Overkill Thresholds differently to singular characters.

A Mob may take a maximum number of Deadly Wounds equal to its Size + 1. Each Deadly Wound temporarily reduces the Mob's Size by 1. A Mob is considered defeated when all its Deadly Wounds are filled.

An Overkill Wound will not defeat the Mob outright, but is instead treated as a Baleful Deadly Wound. If the Overkill Wound was already Baleful, there is no additional effect.

Note: *The loss of Size does not affect Vitality calculations as these are based on the starting value of the Mob's Size.*

SONGS AND ANIMA

If a Mob has access to Anima, then use the average values of its members for its Anima Pools. Powers and Abilities are treated as if the Mob was a single entity. If the Mob possesses an ability which would allow it to affect a group, then that Ability may be used for free once per Scene.

MOBS AND COMBAT

For the most part, Mobs handle combat like any individual character and follow the normal combat rules, except where noted as follows.

POSITIONING AND THREAT

Mobs are effectively larger than their individual members. They move as normal but their numbers allow them to more easily Threaten opponents. Mobs of Normal sized individuals increase their Threat by their Size \times 3, whereas in the case of Small or lesser sized characters, it is increased by just their Size.

GENERAL COMBAT RULES

Mobs gain Automatic Successes on Aggressive and Defensive Combat Actions equal to their current Size.

MOBS AND OUTCOME

Mobs cannot use specialised combat options. Instead, they can use their Outcome to multiply their potential damage.

When the attack has been Resolved, spend Outcome up to the Mob's Size. For each point of Outcome spent, a separate damaging attack is landed on the opponent. If the Mob has more Outcome than its Size, then all attacks have their damage increased by 1 per point of Outcome.

For instance, if a Size 3 Mob managed to gain 4 Outcome on an attack, then it would land three separate attacks, each at +1 Damage.

TARGETING MOBS

Characters can attempt to Tag multiple opponents within a Mob. If they do so, they must nominate a number of targets no greater than the Mob's current Size, taking any appropriate penalties as normal.

If they are successful, then the character may spend points of Outcome up to the Mob's Size to inflict multiple strikes on them as per the rules above.

HIGH MOBILITY COMBAT

Characters capable of **Flickering** or otherwise moving at extreme speeds can potentially pick off members of a Mob before it can react. Doing so is tricky, imposing a -1 Success Penalty on the character's Action.

For the duration of this Attack, the Mob loses its Size bonuses but also ignores any penalties for being Forced to Act, and most importantly, if the Mob has not yet taken its Action, it may still do so on its Initiative, though if it chooses to target a character which used this option, the Mob takes a -1 Success Penalty.

RANGED COMBAT AND MOBS

Mobs are far easier to target than normal characters in Ranged Combat. As such they are treated as a Large Target and are never considered Engaged with an opponent for the purposes of firing into combat.

RADIATION

In the dark days of The Fall, humanity resorted to the widespread deployment of nuclear weaponry. Whether or not the now-fallen nations of the old world achieved their ends, the consequences of that decision echo across the centuries.

The many detonations threw millions of tonnes of irradiated material into the upper atmosphere. Though the nuclear winter this triggered is beginning to abate, vast regions of the world still lie irradiated, deadly and uninhabitable.

THE POISONED EARTH

The dangers of radiation are known in the abstract to most of the survivors left on Earth, but few have a detailed understanding of its workings. Even prior to The Fall, media had left the general population with a distorted understanding, imagining glowing metals and immediate death.

During the height of the Second Renaissance, the spectre of nuclear war was largely forgotten; combined with the loss of knowledge during The Fall, this means that few now remain with an accurate understanding of this deadly phenomena.

Its cause is ultimately irradiated materials created by the detonation of nuclear weapons, or the breakdown and collapse of nuclear power stations. This irradiated material slowly breaks down, emitting particles which cause damage to surrounding matter.

In living creatures, this damage can be particularly dangerous and insidious, as it damages the DNA which governs cell reproduction.

Over time, this damage results in a massively increased risk of cancer, but in sufficient amounts can cause direct damage to the body's more sensitive tissues, causing burns, organ failure, and ultimately, death.

RADIOACTIVE MATERIALS

Only in the most extreme cases are radioactive materials immediately deadly. Even in the aftermath of a nuclear strike, the general irradiated material is not particularly dangerous. The true risk lies in the fallout.

This is composed of irradiated particles of dirt and dust unleashed by the detonation. This material is radioactive and can cover a vast area.

The true threat is if this material finds its way inside the body. On the outside, the radiation it emits is diffused, scattered all around, but once inside the body, the radiation effects are concentrated and deadly. This dust finds its way into the ground and water table, and although diffused it essentially poisons vast regions.

Fallout of course isn't the only form of radioactive material. The second most common form is found in the ruins of nuclear power stations; there lay decaying fuel rods once used to superheat steam to power great turbines. The threat here is in two distinct forms:

The first is the fuel rods themselves, each of which is intensely radioactive and represents a direct threat to life, even in very small exposures. The second is the contaminated water used in these facilities. The bulk of this contaminated water has leaked, contaminating the environment around, and only the passage of time will eliminate this particular threat.

NEMISSARIES AND THE BROOD

The Brood, and in turn Nemissaries, are generally immune to most diseases and mundane elements. The nature of their mercurial flesh even renders them immune to cancer in the conventional sense. For all their great resilience however, both the Brood and Nemissaries are vulnerable to radiation, albeit not in the same manner as other living creatures.

For them, the danger lies not in what radiation does to the physical body, but in the fact that it generates a form of Anima of its own. This Anima is bound to the radiation itself and overrides and taints other natural sources of Anima. This tainted Anima is dangerous to hold or use, and its presence weakens regeneration and the direct utilisation of it inflicts damage upon its host.

In the short term, these effects can be mitigated, or at least managed. The Brood are certainly weakened by radiation and generally avoid heavily affected areas, but for Nemissaries, there is a second and more serious threat;

Radiation also breaks down Voidglass. The process is not fast and individual fragments of Voidglass can survive days or weeks in irradiated areas, but eventually all but the strongest and most stable forms of Voidglass will succumb, ultimately crumbling into ash and dust. This process is deadly to Nemissaries, for each of them has a shard of Voidglass in place of their heart – their Aenthir.

This process isn't immediately obvious either, and first begins to manifest as a diminishing of the Nemissary's Anima Pool, combined with weakness and sickness. To Nemissaries otherwise immune to all forms of illness, this can be a truly terrifying situation. If they do not manage to leave the radioactive area, their Aenthir will collapse, along with all the attendant consequences this brings.

THE SHARDS

The Shards, seemingly invincible as they are, are not wholly immune to the effects of radiation. Though it has no power to destroy them, radiation does affect the Shards in a number of ways.

The most obvious is that over time, the Voidglass comprising a Shard becomes steadily more transparent. At first this effect is almost unnoticeable, but over years the Shard's appearance begins to resemble smoked glass more than pure Voidglass.

This change is purely cosmetic, and the Shards remain just as resilient as ever, but it's the more subtle effects which are the more dangerous, as they can take many forms.

The most common of these is that Shards that might otherwise have been benign or even helpful tend to become erratic and malicious in their behaviour, often demonstrating contradictory actions in a way which gives an uncomfortable impression of madness.

Another possible outcome is a Shard, particularly for those bombarded with extreme levels of radiation, may begin to spontaneously emit their own radiation, extending and significantly worsening the overall effect.

The most uncommon phenomena which has been seen to be manifested – though certainly the most desirable – is that some Shards, particularly the more stable ones, may actually absorb ambient radiation, resulting in small oases of safety amidst vast irradiated wastelands.



RADIATION MECHANICS

As discussed, radiation has a variety of effects on all living things, Nemissaries and the Brood included. In the following section you will find the framework for bringing the dangers of radiation into your games.

RADIATION EXPOSURE

The possible effects of radiation are incredibly broad and long-lasting. For the purposes of the rules, sources of radiation fall into three categories; **Mild**, **Severe** and **Deadly**.

Mild Radiation

Considering the time since The Fall, most radioactive areas fall into this category. These areas are not without risk, but can be navigated in relative safety without the need for specialised protection.

The main danger is in the slow build-up of contaminated material. This most often occurs through drinking water or food grown in the environment. This can lead to a false sense of security as there are unlikely to be any immediate consequences, but the long-term life expectancy of anybody living in these regions is significantly shortened.

The dangers can be countered to a degree with filtration of water, and there are medications which can mitigate some of the long term effects, but these are unsurprisingly in short supply and generally come with unpleasant side effects.

For the Brood, these areas pose little challenge and although they show a marked preference for avoiding these regions, they can exist there indefinitely without any obvious consequences.

For Nemissaries, these areas pose at least some minor risk. After each 12 hour period of exposure, a Nemissary gains 1 point of **Tainted Light Anima**.

Severe Radiation

These areas are more heavily irradiated, and consequently significantly more dangerous. For humans, indirect exposure is still not immediately dangerous, though spending more than a few days in such an area will result in at least mild radiation sickness and long-term health complications will be unavoidable after several weeks.

The real danger in these areas is if any severely irradiated material makes its way inside a human body. In this case, a person will rapidly become seriously ill and unless given specialised medication will begin to suffer severe radiation sickness, and should they survive in the short-term, they will almost certainly fall to the long-term complications.

REALITY CHECK

The dangers of radiation exposure are not a trivial matter, and no game is ever going to be able to accurately model the potential effects. The consequences of radiation poisoning can be horrific and in no way do we wish to trivialise the danger of it.

At the end of the day, this is a game, and people are here to have fun. If as a GM you intend to expose a group to the full horrors of radiation, make certain that this is a topic your group is comfortable with.

This is particularly important as radiation poisoning isn't something which can be stopped with Arietta, and in reality if the group lead humans into heavily irradiated areas, many are going to die and there is nothing their Nemissary protectors will be able to do.

That kind of dilemma can make for deep and fascinating stories, but it's only something which can be done if everyone involved is comfortable with delving into such a serious and tragic narrative.

TAINTED ANIMA

The most common way in which radiation affects Nemissaries is through **Tainted Anima**. This most commonly affects Light Anima and should be noted on the sheet next to the Anima count box by an *, whereas unaffected Anima should be noted as usual.

Tainted Anima is always spent last after all other Anima in that category is exhausted. When spent, each point of Tainted Anima inflicts 1 Light Baleful Wound on the user. If a Nemissary is instructed to gain Tainted Anima of a particular type and that pool is already full, they instead suffer 1 Light Baleful Wound

Note: *Tainted Anima must go to the Pool specified; for instance Light Tainted Anima may not spill over into a Nemissary's Dark or Neutral Pools unless explicitly stated*



For the Brood, these regions are outright dangerous and they will not willingly enter except for extremely short periods of time. If exposed to these regions for more than a few hours, the Brood's regeneration begins to fail, functioning at one category less than normal, and in the case of the Risen, it stops entirely.

For Nemissaries as well, these areas are dangerous. They gain 1 Tainted Light Anima every three hours. In addition, every 24 hours spent exposed, their maximum Anima pool decreases by 1 in each category.

Once a Nemissary is removed from the area and no longer possesses any Tainted Anima, their Anima Pools will begin to recover at the rate of 1 point in each category every 24 hours.

Deadly Radiation

At this level of radiation, safe amounts of exposure – even assuming full protective gear and medication – is measured in minutes; after which, mild radiation poisoning will set in, and so will long term health complications.

Unprotected, these environments will wreak devastation on the human body, causing severe external and internal burns within minutes. Even that small amount of exposure will result in potentially fatal long term consequences, whether or not medication is available.

For the Brood, the effect is like walking into a furnace. Their regeneration is reduced by 2 steps, and they take 1 Light Baleful Wound every Turn. Nemissaries fare little better, gaining 1 Tainted Light Anima every Turn.

RADIATION SICKNESS

As we've discussed, radiation's effects on the body can be horrendous and generally progresses through a series of stages as outlined below.

Mild Radiation Sickness

Duration: Up to 24 hours (4D6 hours)

Effects: The first stage of Acute Radiation Syndrome is often accompanied by nausea, diarrhoea and manifests primarily in a weakening of the body's functions – specifically its ability to properly produce red blood cells – resulting in anaemia and a vulnerability to other diseases.

HEALING WITH ARIETTA

The volatile nature of radiation's interaction with Anima means that the vast majority of Arietta are unable to mitigate or stop its effects.

If you want things to have a slightly lighter tone, then relevant Arietta of rank 5 or 6 may, at the GM's discretion, be used to cure or mitigate the effects of radiation sickness.

Characters afflicted take -1 Pool Penalty to all Actions and lower their Body and Prowess by 2, and all other Attributes by 1 for the duration. If any of these Attributes are reduced to 0, then the Character's condition will continue to worsen over a period of six to eight weeks, ultimately resulting in their death.

Treatment: Proper medication is difficult to find (Availability: Rare). Taking it will remove the Attribute penalties, and halve the remaining duration.

Severe Radiation Sickness

Duration: 24 to 48 hours (4D6 × 2 hours)

Effects: Severe Acute Radiation Syndrome shares the same basic effects as Mild Radiation Sickness, but the effects on the body are far more extreme. This manifests in a variety of ways, most notably skin lesions and burns, fever and cognitive impairment.

The mechanical effects are more severe than those for Mild Radiation Sickness, inflicting a -3 Pool Penalty on all Actions, and reducing Body and Prowess by 3, and all other Attributes by 2. If any of a character's Attributes are reduced to 0 by this, then the penalties and effects will not end, and the character's condition will slowly worsen over the course of two to four weeks, eventually resulting in their death.

Treatment: The same treatments used for Mild Radiation Sickness can help, and if taken within the duration of the severe sickness, will reduce the mechanical effects to the same as those of untreated Mild Radiation Sickness, though the remaining duration remains the same.

More specialised medications with an Availability of at least Very Rare can be used. In which case, Body and Prowess are only reduced by 1, other Attributes are unmodified and the duration is halved.

Deadly Radiation Sickness

Duration: N/A

Effects: At this level of exposure, death is all but certain. An afflicted character will suffer a variety of horrific and debilitating conditions. The general effect of this is that the character will be completely incapacitated within less than an hour. Their condition will continue to degrade and will result in death within two days to two weeks.

Treatment: No medication can stop this level of damage, and Arietta can only delay the inevitable. The best that can be done is to ease the suffering of the patient with painkillers, but ultimately the chances of survival are less than 1%.

REFINEMENTS

The Songs are not the only powers known to Nemissaries; certainly they are the most direct manipulation of Anima, but some Nemissaries – most belonging to the Dominion – have learned to turn their mastery inwards instead, changing aspects of their fundamental nature via the alteration of their own Aenthir.

MECHANICS

Refinements are a permanent modification to a character. The effects they generate can be both positive and negative, and each individual Refinement functions as an additional Nemissary Trait.

Unlike Arietta, Refinements do stack with each other, and their effects are cumulative. In the event that two or more Refinements would double a Trait, instead increase the multiplier once for each instance.

Example: *If two Refinements each doubled the amount of Anima gained from a source, the Nemissary would instead gain three times the amount of Anima from that source.*

MAXIMUM REFINEMENTS

There is a limit to how much alteration a Nemissary's Aenthir can sustain. In game terms, this means that a character may possess a maximum number of Refinements equal to their Permanent Creed - 1.

Note: *This means that starting Nemissaries cannot gain Refinements until they are at least Permanent Creed 2.*

KNOWLEDGE FROM THE SHARDS

Gaining knowledge of a new Refinement from a Shard should be a rare and significant event, except where a Refinement has another Refinement as a prerequisite. In this case, the character automatically has knowledge of it, so long as they already meet the requirements.

If a Nemissary's Permanent Creed is lowered for any reason and that Nemissary would now possess more Refinements than they can sustain, the Nemissary is considered to possess 1 additional Permanent Spite for each Refinement they should no longer be able to bear.

If the Nemissary's Creed is later restored or the limit on Refinements is raised through some other means, this Permanent Spite gain is removed.

GAINING REFINEMENTS

To acquire a Refinement, a character must have knowledge of the specific Refinement they wish to gain, either through a Shard at the GM's approval or a suitable tutor. The Refinement itself may also have specific prerequisites that must be met in order to purchase it.

Purchasing the actual Refinement costs the character 3 CP plus 1 CP for each Refinement they already possess. Assuming they have the requisite CP and knowledge, and have met the prerequisites, they may then begin the process of reforging their Aenthir.



REFORGING THE AENTHIR

The simplest way to reforge the Aenthir is through the use of specialised Arietta, such as those detailed here. Additionally, certain other Arietta can also be made fit for purpose.

The “Void Weaving” Arietta (Core book, page 237) allows a character to create a Refinement in another Nemissary, with a Difficulty equal to the target Nemissary’s Permanent Creed.

The Arietta “Refine Flesh” (Core book, page 250) can also be used. In this case, treat the desired Refinement as if it were a total number of Enhancements equal to the Nemissary’s own Creed.

If none of these methods are available, the Nemissary can expose their own Aenthir before a Shard and enter Communion with it. This requires a Conviction/Keening roll against a Difficulty of the Nemissary’s own Creed. If the roll Succeeds, they may purchase the Refinement.

If the roll fails, the Nemissary takes 1 Temporary Spite for each point by which the roll failed, but in either case the Refinement will be acquired over a number of hours equal to the Nemissary’s Permanent Creed.

NEW ARIETTA

The following Arietta are specialised in regards to Refinements, and are acquired in the same manner as other Arietta from the Core Book.

WILL RANK 4

Lens of Refinement

With this power, the Nemissary turns their mind inwards, meditating upon their own nature and through a great act of will, transmutes it into a new form.

Sustained Action, 1 Hour

Innate, Echo

Cost: 3 Anima per roll.

Use: Self

Pool: Conviction/Keening (0)

Threshold: Permanent Creed + 3 per Refinement the Nemissary already possesses.

Effect: The Nemissary gains access to a Refinement for which they meet the prerequisites. This Refinement does not cost CP and is not counted towards the total number of Refinements the Nemissary possesses.

This Refinement persists until the Nemissary uses this Arietta again, and whilst in effect, the Nemissary’s maximum Light and Dark Anima pools are each lowered by 3.

When this Arietta is used again, it may be used successfully either to remove the Refinement or to replace it.

BONE RANK 1

The Void Within

Ultimately, Bone and Voidglass are one, and a Nemissary knows no Voidglass better than the fragment in place of their own heart. Through this Arietta, the Nemissary can extend their control over bone such that they can alter their own Aenthir or refine that of another.

Permanent Effect

Effect: The Nemissary gains the ability to enter into a meditation for a number of hours equal to their Permanent Creed, after which they may acquire a Refinement for which they meet the prerequisites and by paying the required CP.

A Nemissary with this power and the “Shape Bone” Arietta may meditate together with another Nemissary, to allow said Nemissary to acquire a Refinement as outlined above.

GENERAL REFINEMENTS

The following Refinements are available to all Nemissaries regardless of Faction.

The True Form Awakens

For most Nemissaries the Destroyer Shape is used only as a last resort, but with this Refinement, the Nemissary learns to sustain this form more easily at the cost of lessening their strength when assuming their lesser human shape.

Requirements: None



Effects: When activating the Destroyer Shape the Nemissary needn't pay Spite or Creed. Instead, they may pay 3 Light Anima to assume the Creed variation form, otherwise they enter the Spite variation form.

The Nemissary may ignore the upkeep cost of the form for a number of Rounds equal to their Permanent Creed + Conviction.

When not in the Destroyer Shape, all the Nemissary's Dice Pools have a -1 Pool penalty, and their Body is considered 1 lower for all purposes.

Bearer of the Dark

Some Nemissaries find themselves called to the Dark. For most, this manifests as a simple preference for Dark Anima, but a few seek more. Through this Refinement, they reject the Light entirely, binding themselves forever to the Darkness.

Requirements: The Nemissary's Dark Anima pool must be greater than their Light Anima pool.

Effects: The Nemissary's Light and Dark Anima pools are recalculated as follows;

- **Neutral Anima:** 4
- **Dark Anima:** Creed \times 6 + the average of the Nemissary's Passion and Conviction
- **Light Anima:** 0

A Nemissary with this Refinement that would receive Light Anima instead loses 1 Dark Anima for every 2 Light Anima they would otherwise gain (minimum of 1).

Keeper of the Light

Nemissaries pass through the Darkness beyond and for most, it will always be a part of them. Some are not content with this reality however, and thus through this Refinement they abandon the Darkness in them entirely, binding themselves forever to the Light.

Requirements: The Nemissary's Light Anima pool must be greater than their Dark Anima pool.

Effects: The Nemissary's Light and Dark Anima pools are recalculated as follows;

- **Neutral Anima:** 4
- **Light Anima:** Creed \times 6 + the average of the Nemissary's Passion and Conviction
- **Dark Anima:** 0

A Nemissary with this Refinement may pay Light Anima to sustain the Destroyer Shape but the initial cost to assume this form is increased by 2 Light Anima.

Furthermore, when the Nemissary would receive Dark Anima, they instead lose 1 Light Anima for every 2 Dark Anima they would otherwise gain (minimum of 1).

The Beast Contained

Every Nemissary has a Hollow; it gnaws at the foundations of their will. A few, unable to make peace with this fact, seek at all costs to contain the Hollow. Through this Refinement, the Nemissary chains the Hollow deep within, and so strips the beast of much of its power; but for such reprieves there is always a cost.

Requirements: Conviction 4. In addition the user's Permanent Spite must be lower than their Permanent Creed.

Effects: Nemissaries with this Refinement gain the benefits listed below;

- The Nemissary's Hollow may not wrestle for control (Core book, page 203)
- Increase maximum Neutral Anima by the Nemissary's Permanent Creed
- For all purposes save Final Victory and Crisis Events, the Nemissary's Permanent Spite is counted as 1.

In addition to these positive effects, the Refinement comes with the following detrimental effects;

- The Nemissary cannot willingly pay a Spite cost to power any of their abilities and as a result can never use Arietta with the Spite keyword.
- If the Nemissary gains Spite through the use of a Trait or Feature, they gain an additional point of Temporary Spite.
- If the Nemissary gains Spite due to their moral conduct, they gain an additional two points of Temporary Spite.
- If for any reason a Nemissary with this power is consumed by their Hollow, then this Refinement is removed and the Hollow's Permanent Spite is increased by 1.

THE BREAKERS

The Breakers may not have access to Anima or exotic lore, but their material assets are second to none and present a wealth of opportunity for hardy and ambitious human characters.

FACTION RANKS

The Breakers are a harsh organisation with a strict hierarchy, and climbing their ranks is no easy feat.

TIER 1: BOOTS ON THE GROUND

Faction Quality: Breaker

Your character has set themselves on the path to being a full member of the Breakers. Though not yet trusted with right of command or full access to the armoury, the character has nonetheless demonstrated bravery and discipline, and now enjoys the trust and respect of their peers.

Requirements: Your character must be human and have been accepted to serve as part of a Breaker company or in a Breaker compound as a servant, known as a Runner, for at least one to three months. During this time they will have likely suffered varying degrees of mistreatment, having to deal with every demeaning or tiresome task the senior mem-



BROKEN TO BREAKER

The Breakers are not fools. At their heart, they try to make use of every asset available to them. This means that they are not averse to giving a chance at membership to promising slaves. This is particularly true of strong-willed or hardy individuals that might otherwise have to be broken by the Breaker's callous systems to such an extent that they would be of little use to anyone. Such people, if not indentured, are as a rule given their freedom before the training begins. Even if they do not pass training, they are still allowed to go free.

In the more common case of indentured Runners, the Breakers simply count the wages against the contract until it is fully paid off.



DROP-OUTS

Life as a Breaker is hard, and as a result they need hard people. The rigours they put initiates through are meant to put people under pressure and see how they react. Likewise, though the combat patrols have a high casualty rate, the Breakers aren't trying to get their initiates killed. In fact, they generally take care to avoid serious risks; they're not looking to put the initiates through a Trial by Fire, but rather they want to know how they respond to life and death, and look for those who either look to leadership and obey orders, or those who use their own initiative to help keep others alive.

bers wanted. Assuming your character stoically bore this situation, they'll have then been taken on active patrols for at least six months. Though not a frontline combat position nor intended to be lethal for its own sake, this harsh "On-The-Job" training sees its fair share of fatalities.

If the character survives and learns to adapt to the harsh command structure that the Breakers require, they are granted the formal position of a Breaker.

Obligations: The Breakers function similar to a military unit. As such, there is a rigid chain of command and daily rosters of tasks and responsibilities. Most Breakers find themselves spending a lot more time patrolling and cleaning than they first expect, not to mention considerable time spent doing training drills and practice exercises. Their existence is a highly structured and disciplined one with few personal freedoms.

Some Breakers are assigned to duties outside Companies and Commands, sometimes serving as merchants, security, bodyguards and de-facto law enforcement. In such cases, these Breakers are expected to maintain their training and discipline; they are given appropriate latitude to resolve situations as they see fit, but are still required to obey the chain of command absolutely, and would be expected to turn on their clients without hesitation if ordered to do so. Loyalty to the Breakers is absolute.

Benefits: Your character will never go hungry. All their basic wants and needs will be covered by the organisation. They have access to an extensive armoury and will be given reasonable access to any weapons or armour with an availability of Rare or lower. These items are not considered personal possessions of the character, and would have to be paid for if lost or damaged.

In the pursuit of their duties, Breakers will also be given access to an essentially limitless amount of ammunition, for which they are not expected to pay. They can also expect basic medical care and treatment.

The Breakers are paid a fair wage for their work, and will be given access to most goods or services the Breakers have available, at significant discount. Finally, if a Breaker is crippled in service or makes it to old age, they will continue to receive the basic necessities of life and a small pension; the Breakers look after their own.

Faction Quality: Associate

The Breakers have a troubled relationship with Nemissaries. Your character is one of the few that has managed to earn their trust. Though they'll never be a formal member of the Breakers, they've managed to carve out for themselves a position as a kind of permanent mercenary.

Requirements: Your character must be a Nemissary and must have demonstrated over many years of service a significant loyalty to the Breakers and a general disinterest in command. The Nemissary must also at no point have attempted to gain any control over the Breakers' hierarchy.

Any suspicion that a Nemissary has attempted to infiltrate or gain control over other members of the Breakers will be met with absolute lethal force, to the extent that multiple companies of Breakers will drop everything they are doing to hunt and destroy the Nemissary as many times as is necessary until they either cease being reborn or get the message.

Obligations: Your character needs to maintain a good relationship with the Breakers and be willing to offer assistance whenever required. They don't expect the character to do this for free, but they do expect them to respond to requests promptly. The character will also be expected to maintain a general level of professionalism in their dealings and the Breakers will end the association if they feel that a character is dragging them into disrepute.

Benefits: The character can generally count on the support of the Breakers – certainly they'll find safe haven in any Breaker compound or community, where they'll be given free food and lodging in a similar manner to rank and file Breakers. They can also call on the support of a Breaker patrol, or in extreme cases a company, though such a commitment of resources would require an extremely good reason, or an extremely good justification of profit. The character is also offered a discount on services and equipment, allowing things purchased from the Breakers to be counted as one rarity lower for this purpose.

TIER 2: THE ELITE

Faction Quality: Officer

Your character, through hardship and long service, has gained enough support from their peers to rise to the rank of a Commanding Officer, now leading those they once served beside.

Requirements: Your character must be human and possess the Faction Quality Breaker. They must also possess the following skills:

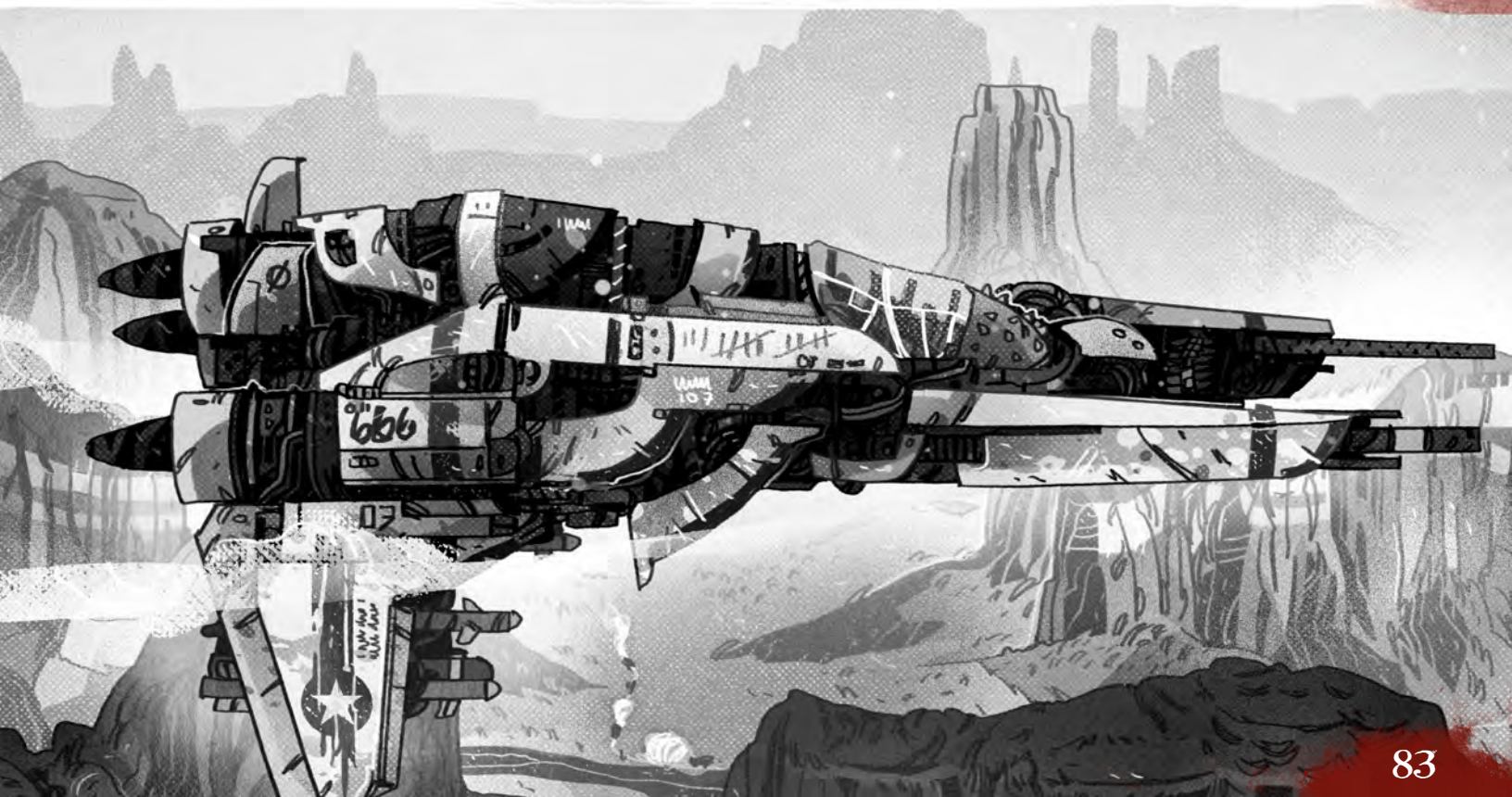
- Authority 3, Logic 2, Knowledge 2.

In addition, the potential Officer must also have served the Breakers for several years and gain the support of at least two other Officers and four of their current peers.

Obligations: Your character will need to spend the majority of their time dealing with the Breakers' affairs. They'll need to maintain discipline within both the unit assigned to them and the civilian members in their area of jurisdiction. Whilst they have enormous latitude for giving orders to the unit under their command, they are still required to put the Breakers' interests above any personal ones.

The actions of their unit reflect upon them, and excessive casualties or breaches of discipline will swiftly draw the attention of the leadership of the organisation, and the Officer will soon find themselves needing to justify their actions. Failure to do so may result in demotion or a more final settlement of the matter if the conduct is particularly egregious.

Benefits: Your character has command of a unit, which under normal circumstances will contain three Squads, each of which has thirteen Breakers, broken up into one squad leader, and three fireteams of four men each. They will either operate out of a base or a settlement, in which case they will have access to the full resources of that facility, or be part of a council of officers in the case of larger communities. Alternatively, they will be part of a nomadic company, in which case they will be given support vehicles and personnel, and a designated resupply point. In either case, not every Breaker under the Officer's command will necessarily be a frontline combatant. In fact, one of the three



Squads will normally be designated as a Utility detachment, being made up of members with specialised skills such as merchants, mechanics or craftsmen.

In terms of military hardware, the Officer's resources will be extensive. In personal terms, they will freely have access to any weaponry or equipment with an Availability of Rare or less. They can also call on specialised assets, such as a Javelin team, armoured fighting vehicles or artillery, though requesting these will require justification to Command and such requests will usually only be granted if there is a clear advantage to the organisation as a whole.

Faction Quality: Javelin

Your character has managed to make it into the Breakers' elite Javelin unit, the oldest and most revered fighting force within the Breakers.

Requirements: Your character must have the Faction Quality **Breaker**, and must also possess at minimum the following Traits:

- **Attributes:** Body 4, Prowess 3, Reason 3 and Cunning 3.
- **Skills:** Athletics 3, Authority 1, Logic 2, Perception 2, Resolve 2, Medicine 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2, Any one combat skill at 3, and any other one combat skill at 2.

The Javelins are reserved for those Breakers of exceptional character and skill that are not themselves well suited to positions of command. They serve as an elite brotherhood, utilising each member's unique skills and well-honed coordination to great effect. Gaining access to such a group



requires a fair bit of luck and immense perseverance and skill. At a minimum, a Breaker will have to get their attention through exceptional combat performance, and then pass a gruelling series of trials to ensure that they meet the exacting standards of that group.

Obligations: Your character will be expected to live, eat and sleep within their unit. They will have little or no time for their private lives and will be required to go wherever and do whatever Command orders. All that said, the Javelins are highly independent once in-field, and are expected and trusted to rely on their own initiative. As such, they are not part of the general command structure of the Breakers. When asked by the High Command to deal with a problem, they must do so, but normal officers have no actual ability to command them further, and they are free to conduct their operations as they see fit.

Benefits: As mentioned above, your character has a great deal of leeway within the command structure of the Breakers. Though they have little spare time, the rewards the Breakers give them access to are lavish. In essence, they pay for nothing, and almost any material items, goods or services that they might wish will be provided for them.

The Javelins can expect to be equipped to the highest possible standards, having access to any mundane equipment of any rarity that they could feasibly need for a mission. Furthermore, as a badge of station of their rank, they will be given access to the Breakers' Deep Arsenal, and allowed the use of a single Pre-Fall weapon, most commonly in the form of the Lancer light rail-carbine. Items loaned from the Deep Arsenal are expected to be protected at all costs and well maintained, and the Javelin is fully expected to kill or die in the item's defence.

Beyond the one item due as a mark of rank, Javelins can also expect access to other equipment deemed mission critical, including armoured vehicles, artillery strikes, and in extreme cases aircraft and/or long range ballistic missiles. Still, these resources won't be deployed without the appropriate clearance given and there had better be a good reason for their request.

TIER 3: CENTRAL COMMAND

Faction Quality: Commander

Through a lifetime of decorated service, your character has risen to the upper echelons of the Breakers' command structure. Though part of a decentralised military force, such individuals wield enormous power, being the independent manifestation of the Breakers' military might.

Requirements: Your character must have the Faction Qualities **Officer** or **Javelin**. In addition, they must have somewhere in the region of ten years of experience, the support of two other Commanders and four of their Officer peers.

Considering that adding new members to the Central Command somewhat dilutes the authority of each existing

member, gaining their favour is no small feat. Usually new Commanders are promoted only when the Breakers need to expand their area of operations, or there is a need for a Commander to take on some new logistical role within the Breakers.

Responsibilities: The character's entire life will be tied up with the Breakers. Work and Private lives will cease to have any meaningful distinction. The character will be expected to preside over a region or area of operations in which numerous officers' work. It falls to them to allocate the resources and personnel to effectively deal with various problems within the region. This entails an enormous amount of political manoeuvring both within and outside of the Breakers.

Part of this will mean that any character of this rank will be pulled into long running ideological divides within the Breakers. For the moment, most of the High Command avoids tying themselves to either the Chainers or the newly ascendant Hammer sub-factions, but they all know that sooner or later choices will have to be made and lines drawn, and it may not be possible to avert a civil war.

Benefits: The character has near absolute authority within their domain. They certainly have a large residence and all the comforts expected of that. In terms of their command, they will potentially have up to a dozen units under their direct authority, though logistical limits means that only one or two of these Units can be active in the field at any given time. In addition, they have access to a massive civilian bureaucracy and generally at least one squad of Javelins to deploy as necessary.

In terms of physical armaments, a Commander has access to almost anything they might desire, though their positions precluding field work means that in practice they have little need for weaponry beyond that desired for personal defence. All of this combined means that the character has the ability to significantly affect the region they operate in. Though they are expected to advance the Breakers' goals, the rest of the High Command have little issue with Commanders pursuing their own agendas, so long as the organisation as a whole benefits.

FACTION EQUIPMENT

The following new equipment is available to faction members of the Breakers, though are only made available where mandated by the Breaker's rank or the permission of high command.

Lancer Light Rail-Carbine

This fearsome weapon is a type of railgun that employs an array of magnetic rails arranged in a spiral pattern. Rather than activating in a pulse, the rails are kept under constant power when the weapon is brought online, with the magnets designed to grow in intensity as they approach the end of the barrel. This allows special dipole rounds to accelerate

gently and be spun in a manner mimicking the rifling of conventional bullets. This continuous effect also allows a fearsome rate of fire without compromising the effectiveness of the weapon.

Though the Breakers are able to manufacture this weapon in limited quantities, the specialised nature of their munitions means that they remain the special preserve of the elite Javelin units of the Breakers.

Damage: 8

Range: Long

Ammo: 48

Availability: Unique

Size: Large

Qualities: Autofire 3, Relic, Two-handed

Stormspear Light Combat Drone

A device all but lost in the rest of the world, the Breakers have managed to hold onto a diminishing cache of around thirty of these highly efficient hunter-killer drones. Each is designed to be operated from a command centre remotely. Originally they could have operated all over the world, but the lack of easy access to the old satellite network means the Breakers can only use these within fifty miles or so of their active facilities.

These devices tend to be deployed as rapid strike units to eliminate high value targets. Their original purpose was primarily skirmishing and reconnaissance, but their extreme value to the Breakers means that they are rarely used in their original intended role.

Availability: Unique

Scale: Large (Body approximately 4m long by 1.4m wide. Total wingspan of 8m)

Mass: 1

Structure: 2

Senses: +2 (Low light, magnification, thermal)

Control (Powered Flight): Fast/+1, 60mph - 180 mph

Control (VTOL/Hover): Fast/-2, 0 - 60 mph

Qualities: Fast Acceleration, Onboard AI (Reason 2), Internal Power Supply (6 hours), Onboard Radio (Approx. 50 mile range), EM Hardened, Relic

Armaments:

2 RPG launchers, capable of autoloading from an internal capacity of 24 rounds. The weapon can load any given round, meaning that it can access different ammunition types as necessary.

1 Advanced Assault Rifle

THE HIERARCH DOMINION

The Hierarchy Dominion is a vast entity and provides a wide variety of benefits both to its mortal and Nemissary followers. Below you will find new Faction Qualities, along with profiles and stats for a variety of Dominion NPCs.

It should be noted that Nemissaries allied to the Dominion gain access to specialised Refinements above and beyond those available to other characters. The rules for Refinements, along with a number of General Refinements are presented on page 80.

FACTION RANK QUALITIES

The Dominion provides many opportunities and resources to its loyal and dedicated supporters, whether human or Nemissary, and has perhaps the most rigid and well-defined hierarchy of all the factions of the East Coast.

TIER 1: THE WORTHY

Faction Quality: Vassal

Your character is a formal human member of the Dominion, entitled to its protection but also bound to its laws and the will of the Hierarchs.

Requirements: Your character must be human and have chosen of their own free will to accept their place as a Vassal of the Dominion. This acceptance must be confirmed as part of a ritual involving a Nemissary that possesses the Oathbound Refinement at Tier 2.

Obligations: Your character is expected to obey the laws of the Dominion and the will of the Nemissaries in its service. Characters will also be expected to provide the equivalent of at least two days free labour each week to the Dominion's civic projects.

This labour needn't be physical and individuals with special talents or skills can simply provide their services as and when able to the Dominion's civil service.

Benefits: Vassals of the Hierarchy Dominion are well protected. They can generally live their lives without fear of the Broodspawn or even violence in general. In addition, the Dominion gives basic social assistance in the form of food and housing.

Vassals undertaking dangerous work as part of their duties will be supported in the event of injury, and should they die in service, their families will not only be exempted from mandatory work, but also receive some fair compensation to make sure they're adequately provided for.

Vassals who serve the Dominion government directly will receive a generous wage and are not required to offer up free labour. In addition, they gain benefits based on which of the three branches of the Hierarchy Dominion's government they serve.

Protectorate: Your character has the right to freely bear arms and make arrests under Dominion Laws. They will also be given basic arms by the Hierarchy Dominion (see page 24 for details).

Overwatch: Members of the Overwatch are well-armed and equipped, and receive additional pay allowing them and their families to live a life of relative ease and comfort. For specific equipment, see Overwatch Forces on page 24.

Legislat: These individuals are part of the administrative branch. They and their families live comfortable lives and are always assigned dwellings well within safe zones, and can expect to live comfortable, if very uneventful, lives.



Faction Quality: Invested

Your character is a Nemissary that has chosen to become a part of the Hierarchy Dominion. Most who take this path do so for the great power they might ultimately wield, but they soon find that in order to rule, they must first serve.

Requirements: Your character must be a Nemissary and have the sponsorship of a Nemissary of at least Rank 2 in the Hierarchy Dominion. This sponsorship is a serious matter and will only be given if a Nemissary can demonstrate responsible behaviour; in particular, they must be seen as reliable and unlikely to fall to their Hollow or otherwise bring the Dominion into disrepute.

Assuming the Nemissary secures this sponsorship, they must be brought before one of the Hierarchs and swear an oath to abide by the laws of the Hierarchy Dominion and to take no action against the Dominion or its assets.

Obligations: The Nemissary must adhere to the oath they have taken. This means that they must obey the orders of the Hierarchs and reasonable requests of members of the Auctora.

Nemissaries of this rank must also respond to any local emergencies and protect the Vassals within the Dominion, and importantly to not abuse or otherwise mistreat them.



REASONABLE REQUESTS

It's important to note that conquest is never considered a reasonable request. Nemissaries may be encouraged to increase the territory of the Hierarchy Dominion, but it's expected that they should do this by convincing communities to join of their own free will, rather than conquering them.

Requests for military force to attack bandits or the Broodspawn on the other hand are generally considered reasonable; so long as the Nemissary is also willing to put themselves in harm's way – after all, these kinds of activities greatly increase the Dominion's public image.

Ultimately, actions taken on the Dominion's behalf primarily come down to the wishes of the Auctora or the Hierarchs, and Nemissaries need to be careful when entering into the deadly world of Dominion politics.

Any violation of these rules will be investigated thoroughly. Minor transgressions will require a formal apology and some form of community service on the Nemissary's part. Repeat offences or more serious transgressions will be met with permanent exile, or in extreme cases, the Nemissary's destruction.

Benefits: The character will be given access to other Nemissaries capable of granting them a Refinement, or in the knowledge to teach them the necessary Arietta to grant it to themselves. Through this teaching, they also gain access to the Faction specific Refinements (See page 89 for further details).

In addition, the Nemissary will receive free room and board. They will also enjoy considerable social standing and can apply to have Vassals of the Hierarchy Dominion work for them during their mandatory working days. This labour can serve the Nemissary's personal goals so long as it doesn't put the Vassals at risk or bring disrepute or harm to the Hierarchy Dominion.

Further support can be acquired in the form of fire-teams from the Overwatch, but this requires authorisation from a member of the Auctora.

TIER 2: THE HAND

Faction Quality: Lord Auctora

Your character has been recognised by the Hierarchs and begun their ascension through the ranks. In accordance with this new status, your character has been given a Domain to govern in the name of the Hierarchs.

Requirements: The character must be a Nemissary with the **Invested** Faction Quality, and **The Lord's Oath** Refinement. They must have also served the Dominion faithfully and gained the favour of at least one of the Hierarchs.

Obligations: Your character is still bound to obey the laws of the Dominion and is expected to spend most of their time actively pursuing the faction's interests, governing their assigned Domain.

Managing this domain is likely to take up much of the Nemissary's free time and can be tedious. This can be avoided to an extent through careful delegation, but this can be a dangerous approach as any administrative problems are considered to be the character's responsibility regardless of any potential excuses given.

Benefits: The character's Domain binds them but it also gives them great power and authority. The area in which they rule is variable but will generally be rooted in a single settlement and its surrounding environments.

The character has, in practice, access to all the resources and personnel of their governed settlement, and they should possess a strong incentive to further its growth or found new associate settlements, as these will automatically be considered to be under their Domain as well.

Furthermore, the character will have access to appropriate Overwatch and Protectorate forces as described on page 24.

Faction Quality: Blade Auctora

Your character has risen in favour within the Dominion, but lacks the temperament or desire to possess a Domain of their own, instead serving as a mobile agent of the Hierarchs' will.

Requirements: The character must be a Nemissary with the **Knight's Oath** Refinement and have served the Dominion faithfully, gaining the favour of at least one of the Hierarchs.

Obligations: Your character is expected to uphold the laws of the Dominion and to obey the direct orders of the Hierarchs. They are also expected to devote a considerable amount of their time to the Dominion's affairs, but are given considerable freedom in how they choose to do so.

Benefits: Your character can request free lodging and supplies in any Dominion territory. When appointed to this rank, they will also be presented with a Fine Quality Voidglass melee weapon of the type most suited to the character.

A character with this Quality may request military forces directly from the Hierarchs. If approved, they can lead an Overwatch Strike Team (Page 25) into battle.

They also have the authority to investigate other members of the Auctora. For this reason, they are allowed to interview staff and view any documents they wish, but this authority should be used carefully as it can generate powerful enemies, and its misuse for personal reasons constitutes a violation of the Oath.

TIER 3: THE WILL

Faction Quality: Hierarch

Your character now stands amongst the few and the mighty, second only to Lord Hierarch Soresh.

Requirements: The character must be a Nemissary with the **King's Oath** Refinement. They must also be in control of a Domain with at least three major settlements and have gained the favour of Lord Soresh, as to be lifted by him to this new rank.

Obligations: The character will be expected to rule over their Domain from its largest settlement and to delegate authority over their other settlements to suitable Auctora of their choosing.

Benefits: The character is one of the Hierarchs. Their will is all but absolute, and at their command they have at least two Auctora directly raised by them, as well as the capability to call upon massive resources in the Dominion's name. Few things are outside this character's grasp and virtually any item or service they could desire is within reach.

Furthermore, the effects of the King's Oath mean that they have little need to fear their Hollow or to actively pursue Anima, the combination of which gives them the closest thing to a peaceful existence most Nemissaries will ever experience.

FACTION REFINEMENTS

The following Refinements are only available to members of the Hierarchy Dominion, or members of the True Dominion.

THE KNIGHT'S OATH

The Knight serves their Lord, as a Vassal serves them. Through this Refinement, the Nemissary binds their Oath to the Dominion on their very Aenthir, and in so doing binding both their own actions – and those of their Hollow – to its service.

Requirements: The character must swear an oath to a member of the Dominion who possesses either the **Lord's Oath** or **King's Oath** Refinements.

Effects: A Nemissary with the Knight's Oath Refinement gains the following effects;

Reduce the Nemissary's Maximum Light and Dark Anima pools by 3, and increase their Maximum Neutral Anima Pool by 4 points.

Whilst in Dominion territory, Anima gained through Respiration (Core Book, page 209) is doubled.

If the Nemissary takes an Action that would directly harm the Dominion or otherwise abuse Vassals of the Dominion, they gain 1 Temporary Spite in addition to any other consequences.

The Nemissary's Hollow may not take any action that would directly bring the Dominion into disrepute or otherwise abuse its Vassals.

THE LORD'S OATH

As the Knight ascends to a Lord's throne, their Oath grows with them, its power binding them ever more surely to their path.

Requirements: The Nemissary must have a Domain and possess the **Knight's Oath** Refinement.

Effects: A Nemissary with the Lord's Oath Refinement gains the following effects;

Reduce the Nemissary's maximum Dark and Light Anima Pools each by 3 and increase their maximum Neutral Anima Pool by 4.

Anima gained through methods other than Respiration or Ambient Feeding is halved.

When the Nemissary is within their own Domain, they also gain the following effects;

The Nemissary gains 1 Automatic Success when using Arietta. They also gain 1 Automatic Success on any attempt to resist Arietta or other supernatural effects which target them.

The Respiration Anima bonus from the Knight's Oath is increased to triple the Anima received.

Once per Scene, the Nemissary may issue an order to Vassals of the Dominion, including Nemissaries with only the Knight's Oath. Targets must spend 1 Focus in order to refuse the order.

When outside their own Domain, the Nemissary loses 1 Success on rolls to use or activate Arietta.

THE KING'S OATH

Even a Lord can rise still, and through the Oath draw greater strength, commanding the wills of those who still walk the Path.

Requirements: The Nemissary must have a Domain and the **Lord's Oath** Refinement.

Effects: This Refinement has the following effects;

Reduce the Nemissary's maximum Dark and Light Anima Pools each by 3 and increase their maximum Neutral Anima Pool by 4.

The halved Anima gain from the Lord's Oath now applies to all sources of feeding except for Respiration.

Whilst within their own Domain, the Nemissary gains the following effects;

The Nemissary may assume the Creed variant of the Destroyer Shape by paying an additional Focus point instead of 1 Temporary Creed. The Destroyer Shape's upkeep cost is changed to per Scene instead of per Round.

Reduce the cost of Arietta by 1 to a minimum of 0. This does **not** stack with the effects of the Destroyer Shape.

THE PYREFLAME CRUSADE

The Pyreflame Crusade is a vast faction with huge numbers of followers, and in their faith and devotion, it finds its greatest strength. Below, you will find new Faction Qualities to better represent the ranks and structure of the Pyreflame.

In addition, you'll also find a variety of new character options for Pyreflame characters, whether they are human or Nemissary.

FACTION RANK QUALITIES

The Pyreflame offers much to its members, and holds its Nemissary and human adherents with a degree of equality often absent amongst other factions.

TIER 1: THE FLOCK

Faction Quality: Templar

The character has been sworn to one of the Great Orders of the Pyreflame and serves now as a Templar, either as a free agent in the service of the Pyreflame as a whole, or in one of the three primary formations of the Orders.

NEMISSARIES AND THE PYREFLAME

The Requirements and Obligations for Faction Rank Qualities in this section are written without a distinction between human or Nemissary characters. This is because, in theory at least, Nemissaries do not occupy a privileged position within the Pyreflame.

The practical reality is that due to the vastly superior capabilities of Nemissaries, more is expected of them than the faction's human members, and as a result Nemissaries are given far greater autonomy in return.

THE COMMUNION OF FIRE

All formal members of the Pyreflame must take part in a religious ceremony known as the Communion of Fire. This rite is a part of all the Faction Ranks discussed, but it is also undertaken by virtually all members of the Pyreflame as part of a coming of age ceremony.

This means that all Pyreflame Faction Members, whether they possess one of the Qualities in this section or not, will potentially also have the **Soul of Embers** Quality. It's worth noting that the rite requires willing consent of all parties, but not necessarily sincere faith – only a willingness to accept a given individual's place within the larger faction.

Notably, there is no external way to tell whether a character actually has this Quality or not, meaning that simply undergoing the Communion of Fire does not require one to actually gain the Soul of Embers Quality.

Requirements: The character must have declared their loyalty to the Pyreflame Crusade, and demonstrated their proficiency in combat to the satisfaction of at least three senior Templars. If they meet these conditions, they must also willingly take part in a ceremonial mass which formally inducts them into the Faction.

Obligations: If your character is an independent operative, they must give a report to a Bishop at least once a year, and are expected to uphold the good name of the Pyreflame in all that they do. They are also expected to assist in engaging the Brood wherever possible, and preferably to do what they can to spread the Pyreflame's faith.

If instead the character is part of a Formation, they will be expected to serve in a unit and perform the duties as outlined for that Formation in the previous section.

Benefits: The character may choose to purchase the **Soul of Embers** Quality. In addition, any Templar will have free room and board in any Pyreflame settlement, and is entitled to a modest income sufficient to keep them in a basic standard of living.

The character will also be armed and equipped as appropriate for a member of their Formation. If they have no formation, then the character will be given appropriate equipment with one weapon or other item up to Rare Availability, and an additional number of items of no higher than Uncommon Availability.

Faction Quality: Anointed

The character has joined the ranks of the Pyreflame clergy. Though not yet a position of formal authority, the Anointed nevertheless possess considerable influence in the day to day affairs of the Pyreflame.

Requirements: A character wishing to become an Anointed must have shown considerable devotion to the Pyreflame's cause, coupled with a broad knowledge of the faction's doctrine and canon.

The process of becoming one of the Anointed requires the adherent to complete the Communion of Fire and be regarded as a devout believer in the Pyreflame's faith.

Obligations: The Anointed generally have few formal obligations. The only fixed requirement is that they must take no action to bring the Pyreflame or the faith into disrepute and must serve as a counsellor or mediator to other members of the faction when requested.

Many Anointed may also take a formal place within a church or Cathedral; in which case their duties will very much bind them to that area and the general upkeep and running of the local parish.

Benefits: The Anointed are treated with considerable respect and deference by other members of the Pyreflame. They will not have to pay for goods or services of up to Uncommon Availability within Pyreflame settlements. The general deference shown to the clergy should lower the Difficulty of Social interactions with other members of the Pyreflame by 1.

Faction Quality: Knight of the Pyre

The character has risen high in the service of an Order and risen to a position of command and authority, serving now as a Knight of the Pyre.

Requirements: The character must possess the **Templar** Faction Rank Quality, and demonstrated continual loyalty and bravery in the service of their Order, sufficient to draw the notice and approval of one of that Order's Cardinals. They must also possess at least a basic proficiency with melee weapons and have some experience wielding a sword.

Obligations: The character serves as either a commander or an elite combatant within their chosen Order and Formation. The character's behaviour is expected to remain above reproach and it is generally considered inappropriate for them to be overly familiar with civilians.

The additional specific duties are defined by the character's Formation. If they are not part of a Formation, then their role will be defined by the specific Cardinal they serve, potentially giving them a unique position or role within the Order.

STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOUR

Individual sects of the Pyreflame vary in terms of what exactly constitutes as "bringing the faith into disrepute". Regardless, there are certain standards that are near universally accepted amongst the sects.

At a bare minimum, characters are expected not to abuse their station nor commit any actions that might be considered a crime. They are also expected not to feud or make public disagreements or arguments with other Pyreflame members, particularly those amongst the priesthood.

The clergy in particular are expected to keep their personal life and their work very much separate. There is no specific prohibition against marriage in most of the sects, but favouritism is considered extremely serious, and a priest will have to react harshly to any family members accused of a crime.

Nemissaries in particular are held to a particularly high standard, and it is considered absolutely unacceptable for them to use Arietta or feed upon faction members without consent. This standard is also usually applied to outsiders, particularly if the Nemissary is operating as a missionary.

Of course, this is only a general guideline and particular sects may impose additional restrictions upon their members.



Benefits: The character gains access to the **Will of Fire** and **Burning Soul** Faction Meta Qualities. Additionally the character will be granted a **Pyreblade** upon rising to this position which serves both as a personal weapon and a symbol of their station.

Their patron will also give them additional equipment that befits their role and station, and may select for themselves any personal items or weapons with an Availability no greater than Rare.

If the character is in a position of command, then they will control a unit of troops appropriate to their Formation as outlined in the previous section.

Faction Quality: Enkindled

The character has risen to the status of a true Priest and is one of the true leaders amongst the faithful of the Pyreflame.

Requirements: The character must possess the **Anointed** Faction Rank Quality, and possess the Knowledge Skill at 3 or higher. In addition, the character must have served with distinction as one of the Anointed, gaining the favour and recommendation of one of the Cardinals, who will then vouch for the character and preside over their ascension.

Obligations: The duties of one of the Enkindled will place a great strain on the character's time; either they will be given responsibility over a specific settlement, or will be required to remain mobile, moving from settlement to settlement. In either case, they will be expected to assist in the governance and day to day organisation and running of the Pyreflame.

As representatives of both the faith and governance of the Pyreflame, the character's behaviour must be beyond

SEEKER OF THE MYSTERIES

Not all of the Enkindled are priests in the traditional sense; there exists within the Pyreflame an occult tradition known as the Seekers of the Mysteries.

Any Enkindled character that is either a Nemissary or a human with the Awakened Meta Quality may choose to become one of the Seekers. If they do so, they should change the title of their Tier 2 Faction Rank from Enkindled to Seeker of the Mysteries.

The Obligations and Benefits remain broadly the same, except that the Seekers do not generally preach, instead devoting themselves to research and theology. This allows them to purchase the Acolyte of the Mysteries Meta Quality.

The Seekers' focus on esoteric lore distances them from their Enkindled, and draws a degree of suspicion. This removes the Social benefits granted by their Rank and also increases the Difficulty of social interactions with the Enkindled by 1.

reproach, and their actions will be subject to continual scrutiny and review by other Enkindled and the Cardinals themselves.

Benefits: The character gains access to the **Will of Fire** and **Burning Soul** Faction Meta Qualities. As a member of the priesthood, your character has enormous social standing, gaining 1 Automatic Success on Social interactions with Faction members of lower rank.

The character's position also will normally entail command over a settlement and although they do not possess absolute control, for all normal purposes, they will be able to call upon all the resources and military personnel of that settlement.

If not assigned to a particular settlement, the character will be assigned a retinue of at least six Templars along with up to a dozen support personnel. All reasonable expenses on their part will be paid for by the Pyreflame, and other faction members will generally be expected to come to their aid.

TIER 3: THE PURE

Faction Quality: Cardinal

The character has risen to the rank of Cardinal; they stand now in the highest circles of authority within the Pyreflame.

Requirements: The character must possess either the Enkindled or Knight of the Pyre Faction Rank Qualities. They must also be nominated for the position by one of the five High Cardinals, and then affirmed in that position by majority vote of all five High Cardinals.

Obligations: The character stands near the peak of power within the Pyreflame and the bulk of their time will be dedicated to the day to day running of their Order and their personal domains.

They must also occasionally attend councils with their High Cardinal and if they have military experience, they may be required to take to the field, leading armies from their Order and potentially overseeing entire military campaigns.

Benefits: A Cardinal may learn the **Inheritor of the Will** Meta Quality, so long as they meet the requirements. Beyond this, the benefits of their station are diverse.

Practically speaking the character will have access to near limitless personal resources, and hundreds of retainers. Even in a short period, a Cardinal could raise several hundred Ashbringers; with time and the approval of their peers, they could raise an army in the thousands.

A Cardinal's personal freedoms are also far greater than that of lesser members of the clergy, and although in theory they are required to do nothing that would bring the Pyreflame into disrepute, the reality is that their positions are almost unassailable, and their word can bring life or death to any within the faction of lesser rank.

FACTION GEAR

The Pyreflame Crusade are not known for their material resources, but do possess some rare and precious items that may be gifted to the most senior or trusted of their members.

Pyreblade

These weapons are deadly practical tools as well symbols of status for the Knights who bear them. Each Pyreblade is a unique work of art, but collectively they all share the same basic form and function.

They resemble a European longsword but are forged from composite alloys rather than simple steel, and incorporate a mechanism which allows a flame to be ignited via a reservoir of fuel along the fuller of the blade.

Most of these weapons have been passed down for decades from one fallen Knight to their successor, but the expansion of the Pyreflame means that a small but steady number of these weapons are produced each year.

Damage: 2

Pool: +1

Range: Melee

Availability: Unique

Size: Large

Qualities: Impaling, Reach +1, Variable

Special: This weapon's blade may be ignited using a Minor Action. For the remainder of the Scene, the weapon gains +1 Damage, and both the Incendiary and Dangerous Qualities.

Once this effect is used, the fuel must be replenished, which takes a Standard Action. The effect may also be ended before the end of the Scene by the character using another Minor Action.

Note: At the GM's discretion, the need to refuel the blade may be waived if the character only ignited it briefly, such as for one or two Rounds of a combat.

Mara's Tears

Supposedly fragments of the Shard brought forth, and subsequently shattered, by the messianic Nemissary Mara Caillow, these unique fragments of Voidglass have a sun-kissed, red tint pearlescent under their surface. Few pieces are longer than a finger, and most measure between 3 and 5 inches in length. Passed down through generations of the Church, and kept under lock and key at the Pyreflame stronghold at Tyman's Watch, Mara's Tears are unique and highly-prized pieces of Voidglass that hold great significance in the eyes of the faithful.

High Cardinals of the Pyreflame wear fragmentary pieces on their person at all times, and it is not unheard of for certain Ordained, Ashbringers or Missionaries to be given hon-

POLITICS

The balance of power within the Pyreflame is already precarious, and the High Cardinals are cautious of elevating candidates who might conceivably shift this balance, or threaten their own positions. The High Cardinals also distrust the Seekers and as yet have never been willing to raise a Seeker to that of even a Cardinal.

All of this adds up to the process of approval to become a Cardinal usually requiring years or even decades of political manoeuvring, something which can be circumvented only in the most exceptional circumstances.

NO NEW POWERS?

You'll likely have noticed that compared to most factions, the Tier 3 Faction Rank Quality of Cardinal doesn't actually give access to any new abilities in comparison to Tier 1 or 2. This is intentional and not an oversight.

Ultimately, the title of Cardinal is purely a matter of politics. In theory at least, anybody could achieve that rank, regardless of personal power or ability, and in fact more than a few of the existing Cardinals are simply sycophants to the reigning High Cardinal of their Order.

orary fragments for their service to the Church. The fragments act as any regular piece of Voidglass would, but when woven into jewellery or clothing, the Voidglass adopts curious properties. Securely bound in place upon an individual, it said that the bearer of a tear can turn aside even the greatest of blows if their faith is strong enough.

Should a character come into possession of tear, it is treated as a simple Voidglass accessory that can be worn with any other piece of armour. If the bearer of the tear is a faithful member of the Pyreflame Church however, the tear provides the wearer with a resilience equal to the wearer's Conviction, but only against attacks made with the **Epic**, **Incendiary**, **Spite** or **Void** Keywords. Opponents using such attacks against the bearer of the tear will find that their attacks bounce off the bearer, as shadows, dancing like flames, envelop the tear-bearer's body in the vague shape of a shroud.

FACTION META QUALITIES

The Pyreflame's true strength lies within its followers, and the fire they bear. This manifests in a number of unique Meta Qualities which are available only to the Pyreflame faithful.

Soul of Embers

The followers of the Pyreflame are bound by more than faith; they hold within them an echo of power born by Mara Caillow's sacrifice.

Requirements: The character must have willingly undertaken the **Communion of Fire** rite, and sincerely believe in some variant of the Pyreflame faith.

Effect: Blood Synergy to characters without this Quality decays at triple the normal rate. This Quality has additional effects depending upon whether the character is a Human or a Nemissary.

Effect (Human): The character increases their Focus Pool by 1 and gains 1 Automatic Success on any rolls to resist Arietta from the **Song of Will** or **Brood**. This effect also applies to powers which mimic those Songs, whether Arietta or not.

Effect (Nemissary): The character's Temporary Spite is considered 1 less for all purposes. This has the practical effect of increasing their maximum Temporary Spite to 7.

If a Nemissary possessing this Quality gains a rank of Permanent Spite, then the next time their Hollow manages to gain control, it will manifest as an entirely new and distinct personality, the **Lord of Embers**.



THE FAITHFUL

Generally speaking, the Meta Qualities in this section are only available to Pyreflame faction members. However, the word **faithful** is very deliberate in this context. A character does **not** necessarily have to be a member of the Pyreflame.

Generally this is something which falls outside the scope of the rules, but it is possible that a character might sincerely believe in the Pyreflame's ideology, but reject the faction and its politics. In this case, a GM may allow the character to take the Meta Qualities from this section, and waive the Faction Rank requirements.



THE LORD OF EMBERS

The Pyreflame's burning faith casts a shadow. The Nemissaries of the Faction whisper of it and they name it the Lord of Embers. This entity manifests within those Nemissaries which are overcome by their Spite, and its existence is the primary reason that the faction's Nemissaries are held to such a high standard of behaviour.

When this entity manifests, the character's Permanent Spite and Creed will both be considered 1 higher for the duration. Its behaviour is also very different to a conventional Hollow. Its demeanour is cold and calculating, and it will often take actions designed to improve the character's station within the faction, but is equally likely to eliminate individuals that it judges unworthy.

There seems to be no rhyme or reason to its actions, and it is equally as likely to save frightened civilians as to pick some random individual and then inflict terrible suffering upon them, before displaying the charred remains of their corpse in the nearest sacred site.

After this point, the character's Hollow will revert to normal, but will become obsessed with getting its host to leave the Pyreflame, or at least abandon their beliefs. Unusually, after the manifestation of the Lord of Embers, the character's own Hollow will begin actively avoiding actions that would cause the character to gain Temporary Spite, and will only reluctantly attempt to take control of the character, its Actions to do so suffering a -1 Success Penalty.

If the Hollow does gain control again, roll 1D6 and add the character's Conviction. If the total of this roll is higher than the Nemissary's Permanent Creed + Spite, then the Hollow manifests as normal; otherwise the Lord of Embers manifests.

Will of Fire

The leaders of the Pyreflame are known to have an immense resistance to supernatural influences, and can share that blessing with the followers of the Pyreflame around them.

Requirements: The character must have the **Soul of Embers** Meta Quality, and must either possess a Tier 2 Faction Rank Quality or the **Caillow's Zeal** Meta Quality.

If they meet the requirements, then this Meta Quality is acquired automatically, without cost.

Effect: A character with this Meta Quality who does not possess **Caillow's Zeal** may, as a Reaction against a power with the Echo or Overt keywords, spend 1 Focus to gain Caillow's Zeal's effects until their next Action.

Alternatively, they may perform a short rite with their companions, to allow both themselves and their companions to benefit from the effects of **Caillow's Zeal**.

To begin the rite, the character must spend 1 or more Focus. Each point spent allows them to affect a number of individuals equal to their Passion Attribute. If at least half of these individuals to be affected possess the **Soul of Embers** Meta Quality, then the character doubles their Passion for this purpose.

This rite requires concentration and so cannot be accomplished in combat, and all the targets gain the resistance to supernatural effects this Meta Quality grants, for a number of hours equal to the user's Conviction.

Caillow's Zeal

In the most devoted of the Pyreflame their faith burns like a literal fire, turning aside supernatural powers directed against them.

Requirements: The character must possess the **Devout Faith** Quality and the **Soul of Embers** Meta Quality.

Effect: When the character is targeted by a supernatural power or its effects, they may choose to spend 1 Focus to increase their resistance to the effect.

This may either increase the Difficulty of the power, or grant bonus Successes to the character's attempt to resist. In either case, it does so by a number of points equal to the character's Fate or Creed.

If neither benefit is applicable, then the power's user must spend 1 Focus in addition to any other costs in order to activate the power.

Note: *The Caillow's Zeal Meta Quality is unique in that it is **not** strictly necessary to be an active member of the Pyreflame; in fact, **any character who meets the requirements automatically gains the Quality.***

Burning Soul

The fire which burns within the faction can be drawn upon to strengthen the will and resolve of its members.

Requirements: Any Tier 2 Pyreflame Faction Rank Quality

Effect: The character gains a number of additional points of Focus equal to their Fate Trait per Session.

Acolyte of the Mysteries

Your character has delved deep into the nature of the Pyreflame's faith, and has found that some echo of Mara Caillow's power lingers within the faithful. Through that knowledge, the character has gained new insight into the nature of Anima, and new strength along with it.

Note: *The effects of this Quality differ between Humans and Nemissaries, with a different effect block for each.*

Requirements: Character must have a Fate or Creed of at least 2, and the **Seeker of the Mysteries** Faction Rank Quality. They must also either be a Nemissary or possess the **Awakened** Meta Quality.

Effect (Human): A character with this Quality may purchase Rank 1 Arietta from the **Song of Will** as Meta Qualities. Each Arietta must be purchased individually as a separate Meta Quality.

No Arietta with the **Spite** Keyword may be learned in this manner, and the Difficulty of any roll tied to the Arietta in question is increased by 1.

Characters with this Meta Quality may also learn Arietta from the **Song of Brood** in the same manner, but doing so is considered blasphemous by the Pyreflame and the character will be excommunicated and likely killed if they are discovered to have done so.

Effect (Nemissary): A Nemissary with this Meta Quality gains additional benefits when using the **Song of Will**. Each time they use an Arietta from this Song, they may choose from the following effects, up to a limit of their Permanent Creed -1.

- **1 Point:** Reduce the Dark Anima cost of an Arietta by 1, to increase its cost in Neutral Anima by 1.

- **1 Point:** Reduce the Light Anima cost of an Arietta by 1, to increase its cost in Neutral Anima by 1.
- **1 Point:** Add or remove the Echo keyword from an Arietta.
- **2 Points:** Reduce the Spite gain of an Arietta by 1 and increase its Dark Anima cost by 1.

Note: *Individual effects may be taken more than once.*

The effects of this Meta Quality may also be extended to the **Song of the Brood**, but doing so is considered blasphemous by the Pyreflame and the character will be excommunicated and likely killed if they are discovered to have done so.

Inheritor of the Will

Reserved for the mightiest of the Pyreflame's servants, those with this Meta Quality can tap directly into the Anima burning within the hearts of the faithful.

Requirements: This Meta Quality is normally only taught to Cardinals, and they must possess either the **Will of Fire** or **Burning Soul** Meta Qualities.

Alternatively, a character which possesses both the **Will of Fire** and **Burning Soul** Meta Qualities, or possesses the **Acolyte of the Mysteries** Meta Quality, may also purchase this Quality.

Effect: Each Scene, the character may attempt to access a pool of Anima derived from the will of other followers of the Pyreflame within Fate or Creed \times 10 in meters.

Each faction member which is willing can provide 1 point of Neutral Anima, or two points of Neutral Anima if they possess the **Devout Faith** Quality.

This effect has the Echo keyword and all Pyreflame characters affected will be subconsciously aware of the character's rough intentions and purpose in this effect.

Call of Embers

For Nemissaries, there is a whisper – a darkness within the Fire. It connects and binds all of Caillow's followers, and a Nemissary with this Quality can exploit that to their advantage.

Requirements: The character is a Nemissary with a Permanent Spite of at least 2, and possesses the Caillow's Zeal Meta Quality.

Effect: The character may spend 1 Focus to establish two-way Blood Synergy with all willing faction members within Creed \times 10 meters.

This effect has the **Echo** keyword and all Pyreflame characters within the radius will be subconsciously aware of the character's rough intentions and purpose in utilising this effect.

THE THORNS

The Thorns are unique in many ways. Quite beyond the mundane benefits and privileges of rank, their human followers have an ability to access Anima greater than any other faction on the east coast.

Though the Thorn's Nemissaries do not rule, they gain access to powers and secrets unique to the Thorns, granting them strange and unique abilities.

FACTION RANK QUALITIES

Though the Thorns may not have the structured hierarchy common to many of the larger factions, they still possess a number of distinct ranks and positions of authority.

TIER 1: THE TRIBE

Faction Quality: Bearer of the Thorn

Your character is part of a larger community within The Thorns. Though not yet allowed to bear the marks of the Wardens or to Commune directly with the Shards, you have been inducted into the outer secrets of this group. You've seen the Shards, now bound by the ancient power of the earth, and tasted the Ambrosia wrought by the ancient covenant.

Requirements: Your character must have done some great service for The Thorns or spent several years trading with them and helping them as an outsider. The Thorns are extremely slow to trust and will never accept someone until they are certain that no deceit is intended.

Nemissaries in particular will find trust hard to earn. Though it's true they can more easily aid the tribe, the Thorns are more aware than most of the dangers of Nemissaries. They are particularly cautious of allowing Nemissaries to dominate their groups and will only accept those that can prove they're willing to see humans as equals, not tools.

Obligations: As expected, a member of the Thorns should never work against their community, but more importantly they must never share its secrets. If it becomes known at any point that a Faction member has spoken to an outsider of any of the inner workings of the Faction, they will almost certainly be exiled. The Thorns are not interested in second chances, but neither are they usually willing to risk violence to silence a member of this rank.

Benefits: The character will have been brought at some stage before a Shard that the Thorns have "tamed". There they will find that some form of local flora (most usually a vine or tree) has grown into and around the Shard.

Around it grow eerie crystalline flowers, from which senior members of The Thorns produce a liquid they call **Ambrosia**. Drinking it silences the influence of that Shard, unless they make direct physical contact with it — something Nemissaries may have need or reason to do.

In humans, there is an additional effect, in that it prevents their resurrection as Broodspawn, and even in death their bodies are of little use to the Brood, providing only a third of whatever twisted benefit the Brood could derive from them. Over time, these effects will fade and the Shard's influence will return, so a character will need to partake in another draft of Ambrosia at least once a year.

In addition to the subtle effects of the Ambrosia, and perhaps more importantly, members of this Faction will also be granted access to an unusual form of Voidglass, usually referred to as **Thornglass**. This form of Voidglass will be provided in limited quantities, either in the defence of the community or if the character can prove that they are working towards the benefits of the Tribe as a whole.

TIER 2: THOSE WHO KNOW

Faction Quality: OathBound

Your character is amongst the most faithful and trusted, and bears always a manifest proof of that allegiance in the form of a brand or tattoo woven throughout their body. To the eyes of outsiders, this is nothing more than ink or scars, but in truth it binds the character, for good or ill, by their very soul.



Requirements: The character must be human and possess the Faction Quality **Bearer of the Thorns**. They must also partake in the **Ritual of Binding**. This involves the use of Ambrosia in the application of a tattoo or scarification. The pattern usually resembles vines with thorns and may seem random to an outsider. In reality, the character must voluntarily make a series of **Oaths** and the particular pattern is a physical representation of those vows.

Individual groups within The Thorns vary in exactly what vows are required, but they are no light matter. Only someone both useful and trusted will be offered the position. Part of this is because breaking of these oaths is fatal and the Thorns would rather keep useful individuals at arm's length than allow them to make an oath they can't keep that would result in their destruction, and thus a waste of both resources and talent.

Obligations: Once someone accepts the Binding, they must attempt in good faith to honour their oaths at all times. With that said, communities usually include an Oath which requires the character to keep the secrets of the community, and after that to work always for its benefit. Additional Oaths are nearly always placed subordinate to these two; that way the individual can "twist" the lesser rules somewhat if it's necessary to protect the Tribe.

Benefits: Faction members of this Rank have gained the trust of their community and as a result they will be given access to Thornglass whilst pursuing their own personal agendas and will likely be given access to true Voidglass weapons in pressing need. They also take part in the Ritual of Binding. This renders the effects of the Ambrosia permanent, and grants them a free Permanent point of Conviction.

In addition, the character cannot be compelled by supernatural means to break their Oaths. Any power which would attempt this automatically fails and non-supernatural attempts to influence the character to break their Oaths have their Difficulty raised by 3.

***Note:** This applies only to attempts to manipulate, deceive or otherwise persuade a character to break their Oaths.*

Drawbacks: The Oaths should be treated with grave seriousness because the consequences of actually breaking an Oath for a human is an unavoidable and painful death as their body twists and writhes, breaking down into ash and leaving only a tiny fragment of Voidglass in place of the heart.

Faction Quality: Oath Keeper

Your character, though a Nemissary, has earned the respect and trust of a Thorns community, and been given the opportunity to bind themselves with the Oaths. For humans, this can be a chain, but for many Nemissaries it is often liberating; for the Hollow has no power to compel them to break their Oaths, and in this rare case they can truly trust in others and be trusted in return.

Requirements: The character must be a Nemissary with a Permanent Spite of 3 or less. They must also pos-

sess the Faction Quality **Bearer of the Thorns**. Finally, they must also have earned the trust and respect of the community, having lived there without serious incident for at least a year. Assuming they meet these criteria, they may then undergo the Ritual of Binding.

For Nemissaries the process is similar to that used for humans, but requires the Nemissary's Aenthir to be exposed whilst the marks are being made. At the culmination of the ritual, the Nemissary must enter the Destroyer Shape, and then speak their Oaths before the community's Shard.

This process will leave the Nemissary with tattoos or scars exactly like a human member of the Thorns and no power can permanently remove them, though they can be temporarily suppressed. The subtlety of these markings ends if the Nemissary enters the Destroyer Shape. There the marks will manifest as a physical indent into the Nemissary's armour, from which glows a pale green light with an intensity corresponding to the Nemissary's Creed.

The Oaths placed upon Nemissaries are similar to the ones for humans as before, but tend to focus on preventing the Nemissary's Hollow from harming the community. Other than this the Oaths are broadly similar.

Obligations: Just as with a human, a Nemissary must honour their Oaths. An interesting side effect of the Ritual is that their Hollow is also bound to do so, though it should be noted that the Hollow will often take a perverse glee in "misinterpreting" certain commands - though notably they are seemingly incapable of misinterpreting an Oath to do no harm to the community.

Benefits: Like humans, Nemissaries gain an increased access to Thornglass and the Ritual of Binding itself provides various benefits to the Nemissary. While ever they are within their Tribe's territory or with at least a dozen other Tribe members, their Permanent Spite is considered 1 Rank lower, to a minimum of 0. Furthermore, a Nemissary recovers 1 Light and 1 Dark Anima each night they spend in the company of their Tribe. Finally, they may purchase Thorns Faction Arietta.

Drawbacks: For a Nemissary, the consequences of breaking an Oath are no less serious than those which apply to humans, but usually less final. Like with a human, the Nemissary's body begins to break down, resulting in their death exactly as if their Aenthir had been shattered. Assuming that they manage to endure their death, they lose any Faction Qualities for The Thorns, though this does not remove any Arietta they have purchased; instead these powers now have an additional cost of 1 Spite added to them.

Finally, what were subtle marks will be replaced with unnatural-looking jagged black scars. The grooves and cracks in the Destroyer Shape will no longer emit a pale green light and are simply left as jagged black recesses. In both cases, these effects are no less permanent than the original subtle markings and mark them forever as an **Oathbreaker**.

Faction Quality: Shard Keeper

At the heart of every community of The Thorns is an inner circle; a group that are bound by a secret - a power given to them by Nemissaries yet one that can only be wielded by a mortal. In these individuals lay the knowledge and truth they must not live and rely wholly upon the Shards, but to reject them to an extent - to bind them into the Earth that they so wounded, as the first Shards were bound by the living Earth long ago.

Each community has a handful of such individuals, and they are guides as much as leaders. Their knowledge is too precious to risk, and so they rarely, if ever, leave the company of their communities, bound in a sense to the very Shards which they have tamed.

A TRAGIC CONSEQUENCE

For all the benefits it provides, joining the Thorns can be a double edged sword for a Nemissary. The Bindings the Oaths place on their Hollow sometimes lull Nemissaries into a false sense of security. They forget that whilst the Hollow must obey, it does not forgive and whilst it cannot harm their community directly, they tend to become far more systematic and malevolent in their attitude towards everyone else.

Finally, the Nemissary's Spite reduction only applies within their own community, as for some the outside world becomes a bitter, painful place. They begin to lose their empathy for outsiders, sometimes becoming unnecessarily cruel and free with the use of Spite based powers - a situation the Hollow is only too happy to push for.

Eventually such Nemissaries can become a danger to the very communities they swore to protect, simply because they draw the ire of other factions, and tragically they can find their Oaths broken and the one good thing that they had turned to a poisonous and hateful memory.

OATH KEEPERS AND CABALS

Nemissaries that take the rank of an Oath Keeper can be problematic in mixed-faction games. The requirements of their Oaths can greatly limit their freedom of movement and the Thorns in general are unlikely to put their faith in a Nemissary that spends the majority of their time away from the community. This problem can be fixed by a purely Thorns centred game. In any event, the GM and the players should be aware of these problems, and plan their campaigns accordingly.

Requirements: The character must be one of the **Oathbound** with a Permanent Conviction of 6 or higher. They also must possess both the **Awakened** and **Ward** Qualities. Aside from this, they can only gain this rank with the approval of at least two other Shard Keepers, something which implies a degree of trust and responsibility that only decades of loyal service can achieve.

Assuming all this is true, they will be brought before their community's Shard and, in a ritual conducted in the presence of the Shard Keepers alone, the vines and thorns which bind the Shard will entangle the character, weaving themselves into their flesh.

Whilst it does so, the Oaths the character has formerly made will be stripped from them and the Shard Keepers will ask new Oaths of the character. If they refuse or falter, the vines retract, leaving the original Oath marks intact and unchanged.

If they accept, the new Oaths are forged into their flesh, and the character is left for seven days in a death-like sleep still bound to the Shard. When they emerge - if they emerge - they will find themselves whole and in the prime of life.

Obligations: The character is bound to their new Oaths, and will be expected to serve the community for the rest of their life. Furthermore, they will be expected to push their Tribe to pursue the Thorns' overall agenda, and will almost certainly serve as a pillar of the community. As a consequence of this, they will find it difficult to have any life outside of The Thorns, even if their Oaths would allow them to do so.

Benefits: The character's body is reformed, granting them a permanent +1 to Body and Prowess. Physically they also take on the character's idealised self-image. They also increase their Anima pool by the lower of their Passion or Conviction. In addition, the character may purchase any of the Faction Meta Qualities on page 103.

Drawbacks: Like the Oathbound, Shard Keepers are tied to their Oaths, but unlike them their wills are set. Even if they come to regret their Oaths, a part of what made them human is lost forever, and with it, the ability to truly choose any other path.

Faction Quality: Shard Bearer

Few Nemissaries are ever trusted enough by The Thorns for them to be considered for a place of leadership. Each Shard Keeper knows in their heart that the Nemissaries were not meant to be a part of this world; no friendship or service can change that, and yet there are those whose service and sacrifice should elevate them beyond that of an Oath Keeper.

For these rare few, the Shard Keepers can give a true and precious gift; at the price of one of their own lives, they

can give the Nemissary the gift of Death, to die one day as mortals do, freed from the Hollow and the threat of the Abyss. For the Nemissary too, this is not without cost. Few have the will and wisdom to set aside immortality, and fewer still will bind themselves to the Oaths that the Shard Keepers demand, but after all such is the price for bearing a Shard as a weapon.

Requirements: The character must be an **Oath Keeper** of Creed 3 or higher. They must also have served the tribe to the point where one of the Shard Keepers is willing to lay down their life to grant the Nemissary this boon.

The Ritual that follows is hardly set in stone; so far it has been performed a handful of times in the world, and each time has been unique. The critical step is that the Shard Keeper must remove the crystal at their heart and with it, break the Nemissary's Aenthir.

If this is done, the Shard Keeper's body begins to crumble, though they will show no sign of pain - rather the passing will be marked with a silence that can be broken by no sound.

After a few moments, the Bound Shard will crack and wither. The Nemissary must take what remains of their Aenthir and plunge it into the Shard. The two become one. Whatever will remained in the Shard is broken, its power sustained now by the Nemissary's existence.

Obligations: The Oaths demanded will be dire and like the Shard Keepers, the Nemissary will be unable to willingly break the Oaths once made. At the very least, the Oaths will require the Nemissary to devote their remaining years to the service of their tribe as a leader and as a warrior.

Benefits: First and most importantly, the Nemissary gains the ability to die; that is, if destroyed and facing Judgement, the consequences of failure are simply to end; to meet the answer to the mystery all humans must someday face. Because of this, the Nemissary's Hollow is also silenced permanently. It can no longer attempt to take control of the character and is effectively dead.

The Nemissary also begins to age. The process of ageing is slow, proceeding at about a third the normal human rate, but from the moment of their Rebirth as a Shard Bearer, their days are numbered. They will live on for as many years as the sacrificed Shard Keeper could have reasonably expected to do so. Given that the Shard Keeper would have been in the prime of their life, this is likely to be somewhere between fifty to sixty years.

Beyond this, the Nemissary is bound forever to the Shard used in the ritual. Its will is broken and the Nemissary has access to any powers that it possessed. Its remains serve as the focal point for these powers and whilst they remain, the Nemissary has a powerful access to all those it has touched.

In practical terms, the Nemissary can gain 1 Neutral Anima for every member of the Tribe each night when

they sleep (In practice, this means the Nemissary's Anima should fully refill for free every 12 hours).

The Nemissary is also considered to have Blood Synergy with every member of their Tribe who has partaken of Ambrosia derived from that Shard, or who has gone through the Ritual of Binding. Whilst in physical contact with the Shard, they gain a number of Automatic Successes on rolls to invoke Arietta equal to the Shard's former rank.

Finally, the Nemissary can temporarily reshape the Shard's remains, either forming it into a Voidglass blade, or use it to sustain the Destroyer Shape. If the Nemissary uses it to forge a blade, it can count as any melee weapon of the Nemissary's choice. It gains the Voidglass trait and when it strikes a target, its Damage is increased by that target's Permanent Spite or Synergy. In addition, if the attack inflicts any Damage, the Nemissary gains 1 Neutral Anima, or 3 Neutral Anima if the attack slays the target.

If they use it to sustain the Destroyer Shape, the normal costs for assuming that form are waived and the Nemissary gains an additional point of both Damage and Resilience. In either case, this effect can be sustained for a number of hours equal to the Nemissary's Conviction.



At any point up to and including the limit, the Nemissary can end the effect and re-centre the Shard on a new location, so long as that location is not within the sphere of influence of an existing Shard. If they do not choose a new location by the time the effect wears off, the Nemissary's body will break down and they will re-form at the Shard's original position, losing any Anima they possess, but otherwise taking no ill effects.

In the event of the Nemissary's permanent death, the Shard they bear follows them to the grave; its physical form and that of the Nemissary break down into fragments of true Voidglass.

Drawbacks: Though the Hollow is dead, Spite remains. If the character's Permanent Spite exceeds the Nemissary's Creed, the effects are catastrophic. The Nemissary's consciousness is devoured. In a moment of horror, the fate which they thought they had escaped will claim them with a vengeance and they will begin their fall into endless darkness; worse still, this is only the beginning of the pain they will leave behind.

The Nemissary's body remains, and it weaves a cocoon of Voidglass around itself. Its Anima, bound in all of its Tribe, becomes a poison; all those that the Shard has touched begin to sicken and die.

Those who have merely partaken of the Ambrosia, who are young and strong, have a slim chance of survival. Those who are weak or are old will soon fall, twisting into nightmarish contortions. Those poor souls Oathbound to the Shard will likewise begin to decay, but from them something far worse emerges. From within their forms will emerge tendrils of white flesh, and Voidglass will follow.

Soon enough a brood of **Hivespawn** will tear their way from their flesh, but unlike others that Nemissaries have yet seen, these Hivespawn will begin to act with a coherent purpose; to protect the sleeping nightmare - the Reaper yet unborn, slumbering in its cocoon.

“OUR SHARD DIED”

Obviously in the event of a Shard's complete destruction, a Thorns community is in a tricky spot. The Ambrosia and the Oaths that bind them will begin to fail. The community will have a number of weeks equal to the Shard's rank to find and bind a new Shard, a process which will restore both the ability to use Ambrosia and the power of the Oaths.

In the event that they fail to Bind a Shard, those who bear Oaths will suffer effects exactly as if they broke their Oaths. This possibility can lead to truly desperate actions on the part of the Thorns, and is one of the reasons that so few Nemissaries have ever been elevated to the rank of a Shard Bearer.

FACTION GEAR

The following items – particularly Thornglass – are only ever willingly given to faction members, and the Thorns will tend to react violently to any outsiders possessing them, and will be generally wary of gifting such items to characters that routinely spend time with non-Faction members.

THORNGLASS

This precious substance is one of the keys to the Thorns' existence. Its shape usually resembles a small leaf-blade. Indeed, it's harvested from the plants that grow around the bound Shard at the heart of a Tribe's territory.

The material itself physically resembles Voidglass and is still almost black, but it is very slightly translucent with thin cracks running throughout. When light catches these edges, it emits a faint green light that shifts almost like shafts of light through a forest canopy.

The material seems strong enough, and indeed despite its cracked appearance, it seems quite as resilient as Voidglass. However, when the material is subjected to any violent or sustained use, it will fragment, quickly breaking down into nothing more than a fine dust.

This makes the material unsuitable for most bladed weapons, and prevents its use in the creation of shotgun shells as the gunpowder triggers the reaction. For an arrowhead however, the material is excellent; it is both light and incredibly deadly, and better still, it quickly degrades unlike true Voidglass, and cannot be then used against you.

Effect: Items made from Thornglass are considered to possess the Voidglass Keyword but will shatter and be destroyed after any substantial impact, such as their use in combat. Bullets and other gunpowder weaponry will fail if made from Thornglass, as the initial explosive force of the gunpowder will render the Thornglass inert.

Melee weapons made from Thornglass also possess both the **Voidglass** and **Rending** Qualities, but they will shatter the first time they are successfully used in an attack, or the first time the user suffers Damage in a Combat with the weapon drawn.

ELEMENTAL ARIETTA

The Songs known to the Nemissaries are not the true limits of their capabilities; rather they represent the raw substance of their being in its current form. Very few Nemissaries have yet realised this – from time to time, a few have realised that the Shards hold answers and stand as guardians of this knowledge.

The truth is that there are other sources of power, and that if a Nemissary could pass the guardians, they could gain the means to control the building blocks of reality.

The Thorns' relationship with the Shards has given them access to a wealth of knowledge regarding Nemissaries, far beyond that of the other Factions, and though they cannot force access to the secrets the Shards contain, they have found the means to access a fragment of that hidden strength.

A DOOR HALF OPENED

Not all Arietta derive from a Nemissary's innate being. Some can alter and control the world around the Nemissary. These are known as Elemental Arietta, as opposed to the common, or **Corporeal**, Arietta that Nemissaries wield. Normally, such powers are linked to a unique series of Songs, but the Thorns, through their Oaths, are able to wield a limited selection of Elemental Arietta as if they were traditional Corporeal Arietta.

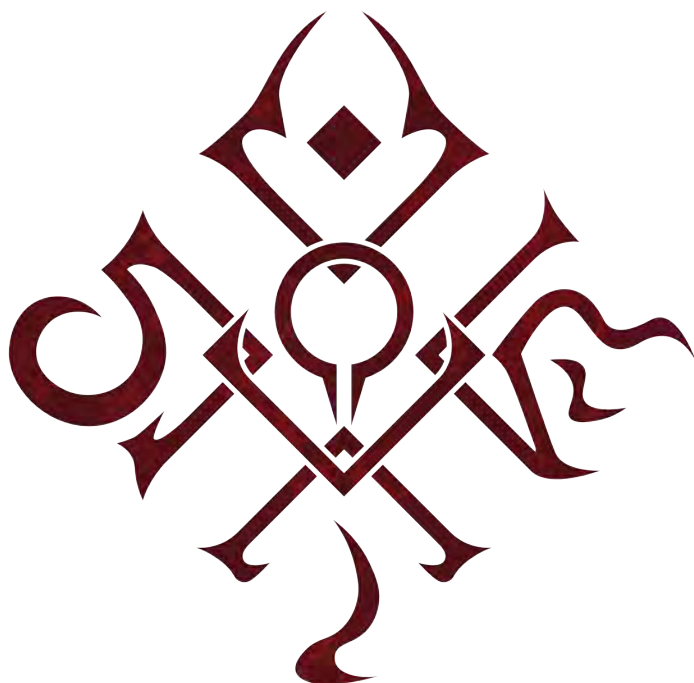
Thorns characters may purchase the Arietta in this section as a Corporeal Arietta. If they do this, it's treated for all rule purposes as a Corporeal Arietta, and any Keywords noted in red are ignored.

NEW KEYWORDS

The following new Keywords are introduced with these Songs.

Elemental: This power is an Elemental Arietta. Learning it independently requires the **Shattered Seal** Nemissary Feature.

Transient: This Arietta can be purchased either as a Corporeal or Elemental Arietta. This key word only applies to Nemissaries that would seek to acquire these Songs without being part of The Thorns.



KINRIFLES

These handcrafted rifles are often given to those who bear Oaths as a mark of their status. Each is a unique work of art, designed to be rugged and reliable and capable of being folded in the centre for ease of transport. It functions as a rifle with +1 Damage and **Compact** and **Slow-Firing** Qualities.

THE SEAL

As noted in the text, other Nemissaries can learn Elemental powers, and the five Arietta listed in this supplement are far from the only such abilities. As it stands, Nemissaries from the Core book lack access to such abilities, but a Nemissary that has managed to break their Seal and gain access to Elemental Songs can learn the Arietta in this supplement like any other Elemental Arietta. What exactly the Seal is and how to unlock it will be covered in future releases.

FACTION ARIETTA

WAKE THE RIVER

Blood (Water) Rank 1

They say blood is thicker than water, and yet the two are truly akin. A Nemissary with this Arietta makes this far more than words, and can establish Blood Synergy through water and those in contact with it.

Standard Action

Shaping, Echo, Elemental, Transient

Cost: Anima based on the body of water. See under Effect.

Use: A body of water.

Effect: The Nemissary must touch a body of water and may spend up to their Permanent Creed in Anima. Each point spent allows this power to affect an area of approximately a 50 metre radius in a body of water such as a lake or a pool, or 100 metres downstream in flowing water, such as a river or stream.

The Nemissary is then considered to have Blood Synergy with the water affected and everything within it. This also counts if a target drinks the water or gets it on their skin. Vaporising the water and turning it to steam will disrupt the power but will affect anybody touched by the steam exactly as if they had come into contact with the water.

This Synergy will persist after a target has touched the water for a number of minutes equal to the Nemissary's Creed. The power itself lasts as long as the Nemissary maintains contact with the water. Once they break contact, the effect will linger for a number of hours equal to their Permanent Creed.

BONES OF THE EARTH

Bone (Earth) Rank 1

The whispered lore of the Shards calls the forests and jungles of our world “The Bones of the Earth”. With this Arietta, the Nemissary learns how to shape them as they would living bone.

Permanent Effect

Effect: The Nemissary can count living wood and recently dead wood that has not yet begun to rot as if it were bone for the purposes of all other Arietta in the Song of Bone. If they use wood as a substitute in this way, the power gains the Elemental and Echo keywords.

In addition, if the Nemissary is using this power on an adult tree, they may generate 1 Dark Anima to help offset that power’s cost by drawing out the life force of the tree. This requires the Nemissary to take a Standard Action before the use of the power and kills the tree, reducing it to a withered husk over the following hour.

KINSONG

Brood (Ether) Rank 1

The Oath binds those who take it through more than a simple consideration of consequence; its power is deeper, and a Nemissary with this Arietta can call upon that connection, both to find their kindred and to communicate wordlessly with them over great distance.

Permanent Effect

Requirements: The character must possess the **Oath Keeper** Faction Quality.

Effect: The Nemissary has a strong bond with all individuals who have shared their Tribe’s Ambrosia or taken an Oath with that Tribe. This bond gives them a deep understanding of such individuals. As a result, they gain +1 Automatic Success on all Social Rolls. The Nemissary may also spend 1 Anima to allow them to communicate non-verbally through this connection for the duration of 1 Scene.

The Nemissary also knows the general location of all such individuals within a number of miles equal to their Permanent Creed. They can also, as a Minor Action, spend 1 Anima to convey a short message to everyone within the area of effect. If the Nemissary wishes, they can convey their general location along with the message.

FURY LIKE FIRE

Flesh (Fire) Rank 1

Fire is a transient thing; it consumes and it devours until no fuel remains. With this Arietta, a Nemissary can echo this ancient lesson, drawing forth a terrible fury but leaving themselves utterly spent.

Whilst this power is in effect, the Nemissary’s skin becomes cracked and broken, an intense red light shining from within. It grants them immense physical strength and speed but enacts an awful toll upon their bodies. Once started, this power cannot be stopped. The Nemissary must use every resource they have to grant them this deadly but dangerous power.

Minor Action

Elemental, Echo, Visceral

Cost: See below

Use: Self

Effect: To activate this power, the Nemissary must spend 1 Dark Anima. They then take 1 Light Baleful Wound. The power is then considered in effect, and the Nemissary gains a Bonus of +1 to both Body and Prowess. At the start of each subsequent Activation, the Nemissary must pay 1 Dark Anima. The bonus for this power then increases by 1, and at the end of that Activation, the Nemissary suffers a further 1 Light Baleful Wound.

The bonus from this power can raise to a maximum of 3, or the Nemissary’s Permanent Creed, whichever is higher. Regardless of the limit, the Nemissary must still spend the Anima and take the damage at each Activation. If at the start of any Activation the Nemissary is unable to pay 1 Dark Anima, they instead suffer 1 Light Baleful Wound. They may use the bonuses for the remainder of their Activation, at the end of which, the power comes to an end without inflicting any further damage.

WINTERS GIFT

Will (Air) Rank 1

Winter is a harsh time, and it’s not without reason that people fear it. The bitter cold and the scarcity of food pushes people to their limits. To a Nemissary, Winter is a reprieve and a defence.

Freed from the limits of human bodies, they can often move unopposed and use all the weaknesses of flesh against their enemies. With this Arietta, a Nemissary can shield their human allies from the worst of Winter’s effects, enabling them to shrug off the cold, to go without food, and make long marches heedless of the freezing conditions.

Sustained Action, 10 Minutes*Elemental, Echo, Transient*

Requirements: The character must possess the Oath Keeper Faction Quality

Cost: 1 Anima per Roll

Use: A gathering of human individuals of the Nemissary's chosen Tribe, up to a maximum of the Nemissary's Permanent Creed \times 100

Pool: Passion/Keening (1 per 100 Individuals affected)

Threshold: 5 per 100 Individuals affected

Effect: The Nemissary using this power must lower their maximum Light Anima pool by 1 for every 100 Individuals affected. Their maximum Anima Pool returns to normal when the Nemissary chooses to end this power's effects. There is no maximum duration or time limit and the power may be maintained as long as the Nemissary is willing to keep their Light Anima pool at its reduced level.

All affected individuals double their Body for the purposes of resisting cold, endurance and general survival in a cold or freezing environment. They can go without food and water three times longer than normal. Injuries suffered as a result of cold such as Frostbite may still take effect in extreme cases but will never result in the loss of limbs or appendages if suffered whilst under this power's effects. In addition, those affected that are within a number of miles equal to the user's Permanent Creed gain a general +1 Resilience and +1 Pool to all Actions.

NEW FACTION META QUALITIES

The following new Qualities are unique to The Thorns faction. All of them are available to characters of that faction who meet the prerequisites.

Bind Shard

Requirements: Conviction of 6 or higher, and the **Awakened, Ward** Meta Qualities and the **Shard Keeper** Faction Quality.

Effect: Your character is capable of Binding a Shard and bringing it under your Tribe's control. This requires a ritual performed in the presence of the Shard that the character intends to bind. The character may do this alone or work with a group of other individuals who also possess this Quality.

To begin the Ritual, they must transfer a total amount of Anima equal to the Shard's Fate \times 10. This Anima must be provided by the Ritual's participants and no-one else, though it need not all be provided at once. Once this is done, an Extended Action will begin. The character who initiated the Ritual must make a Conviction/Keening roll

against a Difficulty equal to 3 + the Shard's Fate. Each additional participant in the Ritual reduces this Difficulty by 1.

If any roll fails, the Shard lashes out with a psychic attack, twisting and distorting the flesh of the participants. Roll the Shard's Conviction as described on page 218 of the Core Book. For each Success the Shard gains, 1 Light Baleful Wound is inflicted. This damage may be split amongst the participants in the Ritual. Once the Ritual has begun, the Shard is prevented from using its other powers. If this Ritual is attempted on a Dormant Shard, that Shard Awakens immediately.

If the group succeeds, the Shard is successfully bound and the characters involved in the Ritual can then use the Shard's abilities, directing them as they see fit.

Ritual of Binding

Requirements: The character must possess the **Bind Shard** Meta Quality

Effect: This Ritual allows the character to perform the Ritual of Binding and confirm a character's Oaths, thus inducting them into the Thorns as Oathbound. Performing this Ritual simply requires 1 Anima and both participants must speak and fully understand the Oaths being taken. In the event that one participant cannot speak, the Ritual can still be successful, so long as there is some way both parties comprehend the Oaths fully.

Gift of Thorns

Requirements: The character must possess the **Bind Shard** Meta Quality

Effect: A character with this Quality is capable of prompting the growth of Thornglass or creating the Ambrosia used in the Thorns' rituals. To create Thornglass, the character must spend a number of points of Anima.

Each point will, over the course of a week, generate 5 to 7 fragments of Thornglass, or a single larger fragment that can be used as a weapon. Alternatively, the character can spend an additional 3 Anima to have this process completed in a day, or an additional 6 Anima for the process to take only minutes.

Creating the Ambrosia simply requires a liquid to be brought into the presence of the Shard and 1 Anima be spent and infused for every 10 individuals to be affected. As with the ritual which binds the Shard itself, Anima costs for this ritual can be spread amongst other individuals which also possess this Quality.

THE PARK RANGERS

The Rangers are often forced to rely on a small number to accomplish a great many deeds. While they cannot provide many material benefits, they have more than a century's worth of experience and skill that they share with their members.

FACTION RANK QUALITIES

Joining the Rangers will never grant an individual wealth or power. However, its loose hierarchy allows characters a great deal of freedom within its ranks, as well as chances to prove their name and earn glories that may just get them into the annals of a new, post-Fall history that remains to be written.

While the Rangers have Nemissaries in their ranks, there are no special dispensations made for them. Regardless of their power, a Nemissary who joins the Rangers must earn their place just like everyone else.

TIER 1: THE LOCALS

Faction Quality: Hunter

Hunters are the most junior agents of the Rangers, trained in the age-old art of wilderness survival, as well as the more esoteric craft of tracking and trapping Brood. They are expected to defend those in need and answer the call of any who seek their help.

Requirements: There are many ways to become a Hunter, but ultimately the character must do something to gain the attention of a more senior member of the Park Rangers, either a Ranger or a Vigilant.

If the individual proves trustworthy, they will be trained in the craft of hunting and tracking, as well as how to survive in even the harshest of environments. Typically they will train as part of a team for up to a year before becoming a fully-fledged member, but this span of time is ultimately down to the decision of the Rangers training them.

Obligations: As a Hunter, the character is expected to follow the code of the Rangers as if they are a full member, standing up for those who need protection. As well as this, they are expected to support their team when necessary, often by scouting but also through combat and intelligence gathering in local communities.

New Hunters are expected to familiarise themselves with the communities their team protects, and to report news or intelligence to more senior Rangers as necessary.

Benefits: The character gains the **First Duty** Quality (see page 108). In addition, all Hunters are provided with suitable equipment for their role. This includes survival

gear, a Heavy Rifle and a Handgun, along with a steady supply of munitions. They are also provided with a hand-held radio, as well as the requisite frequencies for the Ranger's communications network.

Faction Quality: Militia

The character has volunteered as a member of their local militia company. After going through some basic training, they can proudly wear the yellow that marks them as part of the Rangers' communal defence force.

Requirements: To join as a member of the militia, the character needs to approach the captain of the local force and ask to volunteer. Usually, Ranger militias hold signing days at local gathering spots for this purpose.

Obligations: The character must attend the basic training that will be run by a local Ranger. Once graduated, they are required to attend the regular sessions of drills that the local captain has instituted; while missing some due to extenuating circumstances is generally acceptable, repeatedly failing to muster when required will lead to the character being booted.

In times of trouble, the character is expected to answer the call from their captain and rally to support their home and other local towns and villages, putting their normal duties aside to help protect the community.

Benefits: A Militia character may purchase Faction Qualities for which they meet the requirements and can rely on the support of their local company, both for defence and as a means of furthering their training.

The company can also be relied upon to provide the character with backup in dangerous situations, though they should be careful to not grow overly-reliant on their support.

TIER 2: THE STORIED

Faction Quality: Militia Captain

This character has been chosen by local decision to lead an Irregular Company. While they have little absolute authority, and can be voted out again at a moment's notice, it is considered a privilege to lead.

Requirements: There is no formal path to becoming the leader of an Irregular Company. At a minimum, the character must possess the **First Duty** Quality, and must also have either the **Hunter** or **Militia** Faction Qualities. Obviously, they must also be in good standing with their local community and the Rangers in general.

Finally, a Militia Captain needs to either be given the position by popular vote of their local community, or assigned to the position by one or more of the Vigilant.

Obligations: If the character takes up the role of a Militia Captain, then they are expected to answer any calls sent out by Vigilants and Rangers for aid, as well as to answer requests for help from nearby settlements. Additionally, the character must organise weekly training for the troops under their command, as well as maintaining morale and order in their ranks.

While an Irregular Company can expect a little leeway as a non-professional volunteer force, failure to answer calls sent out, or to keep up to the standards of the local Vigilant and their Rangers, can result in a Militia Captain being stripped of their rank. In addition, if a character can't keep the loyalty of the militia they command, they may find themselves quickly voted out of command and demoted.

Benefits: The character gains command of a small Company of militia attached to a specific settlement. As part of their training, they also gain the **Shepherd's Duty** Quality (see page 108). As befits their station, they will have reasonable access to any weapons and equipment within their community, and are likely to enjoy considerable status.



Faction Quality: Ranger

A Ranger is part of a team of around 6 to 12 individuals responsible for monitoring a large swathe of territory, reporting directly to their Vigilant and training new Hunters. Once they are a Ranger, the character's reputation often grows, becoming something they can use to their advantage as more and more people know their name and what they are capable of.

Requirements: The character must possess the **Hunter** and/or **Militia Captain** quality, and possess at least 2 ranks in Survival. Rising from Tier One is a largely informal process, but the rank must be bestowed by a Vigilant. Becoming a true Ranger is an arduous process, and a character must demonstrate true commitment to the Rangers' cause. As well as this, the character must complete a deed worthy of a Ranger; this can be something like defending a settlement, hunting down a dangerous Broodspawn, or surviving in the wilderness over the winter with just a knife. Often, such a task is what will define the character's initial reputation.

Obligations: As a fully-fledged Ranger, the character is given more responsibilities in both their community and their team. They will take an active part in recruiting and training new Hunters, and they are eligible to be appointed as their team's leader, should they demonstrate a worthiness for the role during their service.

Benefit: The character gains the **Long Watch** Quality (see page 108) and access to the armouries of the Rangers. In practice, this means the character can reliably gain any equipment they need with an Availability of Rare or lower.

Faction Quality: Unnaturalist

Unnaturalists are members of the Rangers who work to further humankind's understanding of the Brood and other secrets. Both scientists and mystics, the Unnaturalists have been instrumental in advancing the common American people's knowledge of the Brood, the nature of Nemissaries, and they work tirelessly in their attempts to build a better understanding of a changed world.

Requirements: In order to take the **Unnaturalist** Quality, a character must have at least 2 ranks in both Lore and Knowledge skills. They must also possess either the **Hunter** or **Militia** Faction Qualities.

In order to become a true Unnaturalist recognised by the Park Rangers, the character must spend a reasonable amount of time observing and studying Brood and submit their observations to a senior body of Unnaturalist Vigilants. Provided that a character's observations are deemed to be of sufficient quality (generally, they are supposed to show rigour and the ability to communicate

understanding, and don't necessarily have to be something previously unknown), the character is inducted into the ranks of the Unnaturalists. Once inducted, they are trained in specific techniques used to give some ability to subvert the Broodsong in subtle ways.

Obligations: Unnaturalists work with Vigilants in Brood-populated areas, acting as resident experts, advising them on how best to deal with emerging threats. An Unnaturalist character can attune to and monitor local ambient synergy, helping them predict the movement of Brood and allowing the Rangers to strike at the weakest points of local packs.

Unnaturalists are also expected to keep a thorough log of local Brood activity and dispatch any notable observations back to the central Ranger library at the Overlook. In turn, the character can rely on intelligence from other Rangers to help them in their missions and broaden their academic understanding of the Brood.

Benefits: The character gains the **Deadly Insight** Quality, and may freely purchase further Unnaturalist Qualities during gameplay.

They also gain access to the considerable assembled knowledge of the Unnaturalists. Given time to study, the character is likely to be able to find almost any knowledge they need on the Brood.

In game terms, when studying for information or lore on the Brood or its more specialised Strains, they gain 3 Automatic Successes. This bonus is reduced 1 Automatic Success if they need to make the roll in the field. These bonuses are lost if the character leaves the Faction.

TIER 3: THE VIGIL

Faction Quality: Vigilant

The Vigilants are the commanding council of the Park Rangers, their authority extending across America through their scattered agents. If a character joins the Vigilants, it is their job to coordinate the Rangers under their command using the radio infrastructure of the Park Rangers, and to protect as many civilian lives as possible.

Requirements: The character must possess the Ranger, Militia Captain or Unnaturalist Faction Quality, and they must have at least 2 ranks in the Authority skill.

As well as this, the character must have also proven their absolute loyalty to the Rangers, and proven they have the determination, skill and leadership to act as a Vigilant. They may only become a Vigilant through promotion by the Council of the Vigil, the body of senior Rangers who coordinate the organisation as a whole, should they decide a character can live up to the responsibility of the rank.

Typically, promotion to the rank of Vigilant is given only after years of service, to those who have demonstrated their commitment to the cause time and time again.

Obligations: As a Vigilant, it is a character's duty to oversee a radio dispatch station for a region, coordinating the movements of Rangers across the area with a full cell of Rangers and Hunters under their command.

With a larger overview of the area, the character must filter through intelligence reports and make the calls on who to protect and who has to fend for themselves. They are the one who decides where their Rangers act, and they must do much with limited resources. The calls this character makes must be made quickly and decisively, and they must be prepared to live the consequences.

Benefits: The character gains a free Vigilant Quality that corresponds to their former rank;

- **Ranger:** Vigil of the Wastes
- **Unnaturalist:** Vigil of the Dark
- **Militia Captain:** Vigil of the Hearth

The character may purchase the remaining Vigilant Qualities during gameplay.

Further, the character is responsible for running a semi-permanent radio dispatching station, typically staffed by Rangers to help monitor the airwaves and communicate with those on patrol.

With this station they can track and direct the movements of around twenty to thirty Rangers and forty to fifty Hunters operating under their direct command, as well as any Irregular Militias in the area who answer to the region's Militia Captains. Using this manpower, the Vigilant must protect their assigned region as they see fit. While the responsibility is a heavy one, the Vigilant has at their command a small force of elite wandering warriors who are able to face foes many times their number.

FACTION ARMOURY

The Rangers are well-known for adapting traditional hunting traps into ones designed to hunt Brood, altering designs to account for larger prey that can regenerate its injuries. These innovative and brutal designs will impale, burn or scar with Voidglass, and are made to either inflict debilitating injury, slowing their target to make it easier to hunt, or to kill outright.

The Rangers also wield their infamous Borealis Repeater, a hardy and reliable rifle that has accompanied them on their long vigils in the post-fall world.

Redbrew Poison

Made from distilled Broodspawn blood and powdered Voidglass, Redbrew Poison is specially designed to nullify the regeneration of Broodspawn and Nemissaries before sickening and killing them. It is even more destructive in ordinary humans, Voidglass cutting through flesh and liquefying blood vessels for a messy end.

Due to the difficulty of making Redbrew Poison, it is only made at the Overlook and distributed to Vigilants.

Vector: Injection or pill ingestion

Virulence: 8/4+

Interval: 5 minutes

Effects: If the target has Regeneration, Redbrew Poison lowers it by 1 Rank, cancelling it if the target's Regeneration is Rank 1 at the time of poisoning.

Redbrew Poison inflicts 1 Baleful Mauled Wound each Interval.

While a character is affected by this poison, they cannot spend Anima to remove the Baleful Condition from any Wounds.

Persistence: 3

Borealis Repeater

Designed for extended use in the freezing nuclear winter of the Ranger homeland and perfected for that role by Ranger gunsmiths, this repeater fires faster than a bolt action rifle but is more reliable than a semi auto, with a hefty box magazine giving it a plentiful supply of bullets.

Damage: 7

Pool: +1

Range: Very Long

Ammo: 15

Availability: Rare

Size: Large

Qualities: Autofire 1, Compact



Broodsnare

A deceptively simple looking bundle of wires and cables, the Broodsnare is actually an extremely lethal trap designed specifically to eliminate Broodspawn.

When deployed, its steel cables are stretched at tension over a small area, and when an unfortunate victim triggers the trap, the cables snap shut, coiling around the target. The wires dig into the flesh and for most, this is simply painful and dangerous, but the Broodsnare was never meant to kill humans.

Those targets capable of regeneration find that as their wounds close, the cables sink into their flesh, closing in an ever tighter fatal embrace.

Damage: 4

Availability: Uncommon

Size: Small (Extra Large when deployed)

Qualities: Impaling, Trap 1, Entangling

Special: If a character Regenerates damage whilst entangled by this trap, they suffer 1 Injured Wound.

NEW QUALITIES

The Rangers are a diverse and dedicated group who concentrate heavily on the training of their members. The following new Qualities represent the fruits of that dedicated training and collected knowledge.



“HERALDS, HARBINGERS AND REAPERS; OH MY!”

The Nemissary focus for the Deadly Insight Quality does apply to Harbingers, but does not fully apply to Heralds. In their case, the Unnaturalist may still spend Focus to gain the Damage increase, but the behaviour and psychology of the Heralds is sufficiently alien that the Bonus Pool does not apply.

The Hivespawn focus doesn't apply to Heralds directly either, but if an Unnaturalist possesses both the Hivespawn and Nemissary foci, then they can gain the full benefits against them.

Reapers on the other hand fall well outside the knowledge of the Unnaturalists, and as a result are unaffected by the **Deadly Insight** Quality entirely.

GENERAL FACTION QUALITIES

These Qualities are available to all Faction members who meet their requirements.

The First Duty

Requirements: Faction Quality Hunter, or any Ranger Faction Rank Quality and a Conviction of 4 or higher.

Special: This Quality can be lost if a Ranger betrays the ideals of their Faction as outlined below. If this happens, the Character does **not** receive a free Quality or Milestone.

Effect: This Quality effectively grants the character an additional Motivation, specifically dedicated to following the Ranger's code. This bonus Motivation does not track Advancement Points and cannot grant Milestones, but in all other respects functions as a Motivation, allowing an additional source of Focus and resisting mental and social influences.

Nemissaries with this Quality gain Spite when they betray the Ranger's ideals, but the Hollow increases all Difficulties to deceive or control the character by 1.

In either case, if the character chooses to betray the Ranger's ideals, this Quality is lost and cannot be regained under normal circumstances.

Shepherd's Duty

Requirements: Faction Quality **Militia Captain**.

Effect: Your character gains an additional pool of Focus points equal to their Passion and Authority. This pool cannot be used by the Character themselves, but they may take a Minor Action to grant a number of these points up to a limit of their Authority to another Faction member.

This pool of Focus points replenishes by 1 each day, or fully at the beginning of a new Story.

The Long Watch

Requirements: **The First Duty** Faction Quality

Effect: So long as the character possesses the Faction Quality **The First Duty**, they increase their effective Conviction by 1 for all in-game purposes. **This is not counted as a temporary modifier, and as such does adjust Derived Traits.**

If for any reason the character would lose the First Duty Quality, the effects of this Quality are altered to instead permanently lower the Character's Conviction by 1.

UNNATURALIST QUALITIES

The following Qualities are generally available only to Unnaturalists, though other Faction members that routinely interact with the Unnaturalists and meet the requirements may purchase these Qualities at the GM's discretion.

Deadly Insight (*)

Requirements: Unnaturalist Faction Quality, or any other Rangers Faction Quality and both Knowledge 3 and Lore 2.

* **Special:** This Quality applies to a specific type of enemy. When first purchased, it applies to Broodspawn and is written as **Deadly Insight (Broodspawn)**. A character may purchase this Quality again, choosing one of the following types of opponents;

- Blightspawn
- Hivespawn
- Nemissaries

Effect: When the character faces an opponent specified by this Quality, they gain 1 Bonus Pool to all Opposed Actions against that opponent, and may spend 1 Focus to increase their Damage against their opponent by a number of points equal to the lower of their Knowledge or Perception Skills.

Shared Wisdom

Requirements: Panache or Authority 2. In addition, the character must also possess the **Deadly Insight (Broodspawn)** Quality.

Effect: The character may extend the benefits of **Deadly Insight** to others. To do this, they must spend at least 10 minutes in conversation with a small group of individuals. They must then make a **Reason/Knowledge (0)** Roll. Each Outcome extends the benefits of the **Deadly Insight** Quality to one individual.

The affected individuals gain the benefits of the Quality for the remainder of the Story, or 1 Week, whichever comes first.

***Note:** This can apply the benefits of multiple versions of the **Deadly Insight** Quality.*

Gaze Into the Abyss

Requirements: Keening 3 and **Deadly Insight (Nemissaries)** Faction Quality

Effect: Characters with this Quality gain 3 Automatic Successes on any attempt to detect if a Nemissary is under the control of their Hollow. If they are able to spend at least a full Scene engaging a Nemissary in conversation, they can make a **Cunning/Keening** roll with a Difficulty equal to the target's Creed.

If they succeed, they can find out whether the Nemissary's Permanent Spite is lower or higher than their Creed. One additional Outcome allows them to know the exact Permanent Spite Rank, and a further point of Outcome may be spent to reveal the Temporary Spite rank as well.

Characters with access to an Anima Pool may also spend 1 Focus to become automatically aware of the use of any ability with the **Spite** keyword for the remainder of the Scene.

VIGILANT QUALITIES

The following Qualities are found exclusively in the hands of the Vigilants, each of whom possesses at least one of these Qualities based on their area of expertise within the Faction.

Vigil of the Wastes

Requirements: Faction Quality Ranger

Effect: The benefits and potential drawbacks of **The Long Watch** Quality now apply to the Character's Body and Cunning Attributes in addition to Conviction.

Vigil of the Dark

Requirements: Faction Quality Unnaturalist

Effect: Any instance of **Deadly Insight** provides an additional bonus Success, in addition to its other benefits. This effect is also shared if the character uses the **Shared Wisdom** Quality.

Vigil of the Hearth

Requirements: Faction Quality Militia Captain

Effect: In any Round in which the character grants bonus Focus to another, they gain 1 Automatic Success on all other Actions taken that Round.

THE STORMLAND EMPIRE

The Empire is powerful and an attractive proposition for Nemissaries and ambitious humans. In addition to the Faction Ranks, the Empire is similar to the Dominion in granting access to its own unique Refinements, which serve as one of the primary defining characteristics of its Nemissary elite.

FACTION RANK QUALITIES

Though more fluid than some factions, the Empire still maintains a definable hierarchy with a number of separate ranks and positions for its members.

TIER 1: THE TIP OF THE SPEAR

Faction Quality: Spear

The Spears are the foot-soldiers of the Empire, those who are expected to fight and die on the frontlines of The Stormwalker's many conquests.

While your position is lowly with the expectation that you put your life on the line without hesitation or question, you have a chance to win power and prestige through your duty, and climb higher in the Empire's echelons.

Requirements: To become one of the Spears, a character must present themselves at an outpost controlled by a Warlord and prove their prowess by fighting an existing member of the Spears.

The purpose of this combat is not to win, but instead to demonstrate one's fighting spirit and prowess in battle, and a well-fought defeat can be enough to win entry into the Spears.

The new Spear must then go before a Sun Priest and swear a blood oath to The Stormwalker, slicing open their palm and mingling their blood with that of the priest.

SERFS

Not every member of the Empire of Storms is on equal footing. Unlike the other major factions, the Tier 1 Faction Qualities are not intended for all members of the faction. The Serfdom and general non-military personnel are considered faction members from a societal point of view, but gain no specific benefits other than the general protection of the faction.

Higher station individuals such as craftsmen or priests should have the Sworn Brothers Background Quality, and should be assumed to have the same standard of living benefits as a Stormkissed.

Obligations: A Spear is expected to display complete loyalty to the Empire and their ruling warlord. They are duty-bound to follow their superiors into battle and obey their orders, to throw themselves into combat and to never flee in the face of danger.

Insubordination is punished by exile, being reduced to serfdom, or execution, depending on the severity of the infraction. Fleeing from battle is a guaranteed execution, and if a deserter is caught they will face the Wind's Judgement - collared and chained down in the open to die of exposure, starvation, or the hunger of The Brood - whichever comes first.

As a Spear, your duties will include fighting for your warlord, maintaining order in their lands, collecting tithes and patrolling their territory to keep a watch for threats. Even a society as warlike as the Empire is not in constant conflict however, so Spears are expected to make themselves useful elsewhere.

When not fighting or training, you may hunt, work as craftsmen, or act in a more specialised role such as a healer, merchant or engineer, effectively forming the middle class of the Empire. You are expected to drop these duties and be ready for war at a moment's notice.

Benefits: Your character has direct Blood Synergy with the Stormwalker, and thus gains substantial resistance to Radiation. In addition, your warlord provides you with weapons, armour and equipment whilst on campaign. You also are entitled to the spoils of victory and enjoy a higher standard of living than the average citizen of the Empire.

In practice, this means that the character and their family will at least not go hungry, and will be given access to, at the very least, a spear, light armour and some form of ranged weapon - most commonly a rifle, shotgun or spear gun.

Faction Quality: Stormkissed

Your character is a lesser Nemissary in the service of the Empire, one who has not yet risen to a position of command.

Requirements: Your character must be a Nemissary and have chosen to enter the service of a Warlord under the authority of The Stormwalker.

Obligations: You serve under the authority of a Warlord and are expected to come to their aid in an emergency and generally take no actions which would bring them into disrepute.

The actual demands on the Nemissary's time are fairly limited and the Nemissary will only need to really commit to their obligations if they wish to advance higher in the faction's hierarchy.

Benefits: Upon gaining this Quality, the character will be taught the **Gift of the Sun** Refinement as a bonus Refinement (see page 113 for details).

The character also has higher standing within the faction as a whole, gaining a larger portion of the spoils of victory and will be given access to a home, a handful of servants, and a typically high standard of living in comparison to the human masses.

TIER 2: THE CHAMPIONS

Faction Quality: Banner

As a Banner of the Stormland Empire, you are a Nemisary who has drawn the attention of one of the Warlords of the Empire, and has been raised to serve as part of their council, acting as an agent of their rule, and as an example of what all true warriors should strive for.

Requirements: You must possess the **Stormkissed** Faction Quality. In addition, you must demonstrate not only loyalty to the Warlord you serve, but also your prowess in battle.

Obligations: You are expected to serve as a herald and agent of the Warlord whose service you are sworn to. You will often be given command of troops in the field or

asked to perform important missions. As a Banner, it is also your duty to watch for any dissent in your warlord's ranks and crush it before it can spread.

Benefits: You gain access to the **Mantle of the Storm** Refinement and as part of your duties you are given command of a personal bodyguard, consisting of either a detachment of Spears around twenty strong, or a small unit of the more mobile Lancers, numbering about five strong.

Faction Quality: Lancer

Your character is one of the outriders of the Stormland Empire, an elite fighting unit which specialises in mounted combat, either from horseback or a vehicle.

Requirements: You must possess the **Spear** Faction Quality as well as the **Drive** or **Ride** Qualities. In addition you must have served successfully in a campaign under a Warlord with sufficient resources to support a regiment of Lancers.

Obligations: As a Lancer, you are to act as a mobile vanguard of Imperial forces, to scout and range out on long-term patrols through the Empire. Lancers are typically called upon as bodyguards of travelling Sun Priests, and to carry out missions beyond the Empire's boundaries.

In battle, Lancers form the vanguard of Imperial forces, using their speed and power to smash enemies to pieces and withdraw before an effective response can be marshalled. Your role is the riskiest, but carries with it a great chance of winning glory and taking trophies in combat.

Benefits: Your character will always be kept in Blood Synergy with either a Warlord or one of his Banners in addition to that with the Stormwalker.

As part of your duties, you will be well armed and equipped by your Warlord, having access to at least one weapon and suitable armour of up to Rare Availability. Additionally, you will be supplied either with a good quality horse or a motorbike. Alternatively, you may share responsibility for a vehicle such as a buggy or an SUV with two to three other Lancers.

TIER 3: SUN LORDS

Faction Quality: Sun Priest

You are one of the Sun Priests of the Empire, acting as the mouthpiece for the Stormwalker and the envoy of his court. You have such authority that most of the Empire will obey you out of superstitious fear, and even the most powerful warlord will listen to and defer to you, for the Sun Priests are the eyes and ears of the Empire.





THE HERMIT'S PATH

Normally only Nemissaries are considered for the rank of Sun Priest, but the truly devout or the iron-willed can undertake a great ordeal in order to gain the favour of the Stormwalker.

This ordeal is often reserved as a final appeal for those convicted of a capital crime, and is known as **The Wind's Judgement**.

The character must spend three days in full exposure to the elements, meditating on its glory; should they faint or collapse, they are considered too weak to withstand the glory of the sun, and will never become a Sun Priest.

Actually surviving this ordeal is largely in the hands of the GM, but as long as a character meets the necessary requirements for becoming a Sun Priest, it should be a matter of roleplaying whether they survive or not.

Assuming that the character does succeed, they will be allowed some time to recover before undertaking a final ceremony, upon which they are invited to drink of The Stormwalker's blood, gaining direct Blood Synergy with their liege.

Requirements: You must have either the **Lancer** or **Banner** Faction Qualities, or alternatively the **Devout Faith** and **Sworn Brothers** Qualities. In addition to the Qualities above, your character must have gained recognition as a skilled orator with at least three of the following Skills at rank 3 or above;

- **Authority**
- **Panache**
- **Knowledge**
- **Keening**

Finally, if the would-be Sun Priest is a Nemissary, they will need to be nominated by one of the Warlords and confirmed in that role by the Stormwalker. Human characters will have to take **The Hermit's Path** and survive the rite of **The Wind's Judgement**.

Obligations: As a Sun Priest, you are expected to attend to the spiritual needs of the Empire's citizens, administer the laws laid down by the Warlords and the Stormwalker, and monitor events wherever you go.

Not only are you a priest, but you are something like an inquisitor, expected to report disloyalty and dissent back to the Sun Temple, the centre of your faith in the old site of Oklahoma City.

If the Sun Priest is a Nemissary, their primary duty is to keep the Warlords in line, and they have broad authority to depose a Warlord or raise one of the Banners to that exalted position, though the rites associated must be enacted by a human Sun Priest, or the Stormwalker himself.

If the Sun Priest is a human, then they preside over ceremonies of allegiance as noted above and uniquely, their blood is a bridge to the Stormwalker, establishing direct Blood Synergy with him.

One important law which affects both human and Nemissary Sun Priests is that they may not own property, nor command troops. They may have a limited number of personal servants, but hold no real property or wealth; something which is rarely an issue considering that their host, whoever that may be, will generally provide them with anything they might desire.

Benefits: Characters of this rank have enormous social standing within the Empire, equal only to one another, and subservient to the Stormwalker alone. They can enact laws and pronounce judgement upon the Warlords, though at least there they must be careful and account for their actions, as the warlords will often have the favour of other Sun Priests, or possibly even the Stormwalker himself.

Nemissaries of this rank will be allowed to learn the Mantle of the Sun Refinement, with either another Priest or the Stormwalker serving as the tutor. Humans that rise to this rank will gain the unique Meta Quality, **Herald of the Sun**.

For both humans and Nemissaries, Sun Priests will enjoy an impressive standard of living and will automatically have access to any items they might desire up to Very Rare Availability.

Faction Quality: Warlord

You are one of the Stormwalker's inner circle of nobility, acting as the ruler of a slice of territory within the Empire. While you have considerable power and influence as well as soldiers and serfs at your command, you are under constant threat from the ambitions of other Warlords and must jostle to maintain your position.

Requirements: You must have either the **Banner** or **Lancer** Faction Qualities, and must be elevated to the status of Warlord by one of the Sun Priests. Generally this requires you to gain the notice of either one of the Nemissary Sun Priests or the Stormwalker themselves, or alternatively challenge and defeat an existing Warlord, and then hope that a Sun Priest confirms you in the position before the Warlord's supporters or allies avenge them.

Obligations: As a Warlord you will be given authority over a territory. The size will vary, with human Warlords generally controlling only a single settlement, whereas Nemissaries may be expected to begin with as many as three.

The Warlord must use the resources of these territories to raise a personal army and pay a tithe to the Empire. The size of this tithe is related to the Warlord's army – the more troops they possess, the smaller this tithe becomes as the troops themselves are counted against the material requirements. This means that not all Warlords command armies of equal size, and some contribute to the Empire primarily through material goods.

In addition to the tithe or the raising of forces, the Warlord will of course be required to fight on the Empire's behalf when commanded to do so by the Stormwalker or the Sun Priests.

Benefits: The material benefits available to a Warlord are immense; they will generally have access to virtually any personal equipment they desire and have access to the full military might that their position entails.

Those of more martial dispositions can expect to raise somewhere between twenty-five and fifty Spears per settlement they control, and if they control at least three settlements they will usually have access to a regiment of Lancers with five members per settlement.

Warlords less martially inclined will enjoy a far higher standard of living but slightly less military force, generally counting themselves as having two less settlements for this purpose.

Regardless of the Warlord's disposition, they will have at least one Stormkissed in their service per settlement, and at least one Banner to serve as their chief enforcer. Finally, Nemissaries of this rank are allowed to learn the **Mantle of the Sun** Refinement, but do not gain this Refinement automatically and must purchase it as normal.

FACTION REFINEMENTS

Without the secret of its Refinements, the Empire of Storms could never have been forged, and its lands would have remained an irradiated waste devoid of life.

The following Refinements are only normally available to members of the Empire of Storms.

GIFT OF THE SUN

The first of the many blessings bestowed by The Stormwalker upon his faithful, this Refinement serves as the backbone and foundation of the Empire of Storms.

Requirements: Your character must have Blood Synergy with a character that possesses the Mantle of the Sun Refinement, and who willingly bestows this Refinement upon you.

Effects: All sources of radiation are counted as two steps less severe in regards to you and any possessions you carry with you. If this would reduce it below Mild Radiation, the effects are nullified entirely.

MORTAL WARLORDS

Humans of the Warlord rank find themselves in the unusual position of being in direct command of Nemissaries that are perfectly capable of killing them or subverting their wills. The Sun Priests are well aware of this fact, and make it plainly known that any Warlord, human or not, was raised to that position by the authority of The Stormwalker, and any Nemissary attempting to subvert that order, will face the harshest possible punishments.

In practice, this means that Nemissaries are barred from directly challenging a human Warlord they serve. Also, the unique gifts of the human Sun Priests mean that they are capable of detecting the use of Arietta targeting individuals with whom they share Blood Synergy – as a result, any attempts to use Arietta on a human Warlord will draw swift attention and deadly retribution.

The character's Destroyer Shape changes noticeably in appearance, becoming paler and more translucent. A character with this Refinement may pay Light Anima to sustain the Destroyer Shape, though the changes wrought by this Refinement require them to recalculate their base Dark Anima pool as $\text{Creed} \times 2$, instead of $\text{Creed} \times 3$.

Note: Points are still assigned to Anima pools as normal and a character may choose to assign points to their Dark Anima pool – they simply have a reduced base value for it.

In addition to the effects above, humans who share Blood Synergy with you gain the benefits of this refinement with regards to radiation severity which affects them. However, this does not apply to any equipment these human characters are carrying.

MANTLE OF THE STORM

The Stormwalker gave many gifts and from them his followers devised new strengths of their own. The first of the twin paths, the Mantle of the Storm, casts away subtlety, greatly enhancing the effects of those Arietta in which the power and majesty of the Nemissary is plain to all.

Requirements: The character must possess the **Gift of the Sun** Refinement, and either be taught this Refinement by a character which already possesses it, or possesses a Creed of 3 or higher.

Additionally, a character may only possess either this Refinement, or **Rage of the Tempest** – not both.

Effects: Characters with this Refinement recalculate their base Dark Anima Pool as $\text{Creed} \times 1$ (this overrides the recalculation for Gift of the Sun).

Any time a character with this Refinement spends Light Anima, any associated Action or Arietta will gain the **Echo** and **Overt** keywords. If an Arietta already possessed the **Echo** keyword, the Nemissary may apply one of the following effects:

- Reduce the Light Anima cost of a power by 1 to minimum of 0
- Increase the Nemissary's effective Creed by 1 for resolving the effects of the Arietta
- Gain 1 Automatic Success on the Action associated with the Arietta.

If the Nemissary also possesses the **Mantle of the Sun** Refinement and is in sunlight, then all Arietta used gain 1 additional effect from those listed, but only Automatic Successes may be taken more than once.

Any Arietta with the **Overt** keyword will manifest either as a sudden increase in local wind speed or a sound like thunder. If the power naturally possessed the **Overt** keyword, the appearance becomes impossible to hide, manifesting as both an increase in wind speed and visible arcs of electricity across the Nemissary's body.

***Note:** These effects are cosmetic and have no mechanical effect other than being very obvious to observers.*

RAGE OF THE TEMPEST

The second of the twin paths of the Banners, the Rage of the Tempest takes the power of the poisoned land and turns it from a blight into a source of strength.

Requirements: The character must possess the **Gift of the Sun** Refinement, and either be taught this Refinement by a character which already possesses it, or possesses a Creed of 3 or higher.

Additionally, a character may only possess either this Refinement, or **Mantle of the Storm** – not both.

Effects: A character with this Refinement may choose to voluntarily spend all remaining Light Anima to suspend the effects of **Gift of the Sun**. This effect lasts until the Nemissary gains Untainted Light Anima.

While this effect persists, Tainted Anima may be spent without suffering Wounds upon the character, but any effects powered with it gain the **Spite** keyword. Additionally, the character may spend 3 Tainted Anima in place of Spite in order to assume the Destroyer Shape.

Characters with this Refinement have a noticeably decayed and weathered appearance in their Destroyer Shape, and recalculate their base Dark Anima Pool as Creed × 1 (this overrides the recalculation for **Gift of the Sun**).

“For many aeons, the sun held the Reapers and the Brood in check. They raged against their bonds, cursing and seething, but one of their number remained patient, calculating and probing the bars of his cage for weakness. This Reaper we would name Blacklight, the false judge who presumed to test us when that is the place of the sun, plotted against us.

Blacklight's cunning let him unravel the secrets of the sun, and though he was constrained he was able to reach out to a human on earth and whisper unto him the secrets of siphoning the sun's power, in order to twist and subvert its nurturing light into a foul weapon. Blacklight dubbed his false prophet He Who Would Be Death, and granted him the secrets of the atomic bomb, to scar and befoul the earth and allow the Reapers to break down the bars of their prison.

Most pernicious of Blacklight's creations is radiation. It was first wrought at his hand, this sunlight that is twisted from a nurturing light into a sickening one. That we are protected from it is proof of our righteousness, for the sun will not harm its favoured children, even subverted.”

— Extract from the Book of the Sun, authored by Matthew Curtis.



MANTLE OF THE SUN

The nuclear weapons unleashed during The Fall harnessed the might of the Sun, but were feeble imitations of its true glory. A Nemissary with this Refinement draws upon that broken power and reforges within themselves a tiny fraction of the majesty and glory of the Sun.

Requirements: Your character must possess the **Gift of the Sun** Refinement and either possess a Creed of 4 or higher, or be taught this Refinement by a character who already possesses it.

Effects: A character with this Refinement draws strength directly from the Sun. Whilst ever they remain in sunlight, they gain 1 Light Anima per Round, and if they enter the Destroyer Shape they are assumed to enter the Creed variant of that form, which will appear pale white and mostly translucent, with a distinct crystalline appearance.

If the Nemissary also possesses the **Rage of the Tempest** Refinement, then they may treat a source of radiation as if it were sunlight for the purposes of activating this Refinement. If they do so, then Light Anima gained is counted as Tainted Anima and other characters that do not possess either Refinement will treat the Radiation sources as 1 step more severe if they remain within Creed $\times 10m$ of the Nemissary.

Additionally, your character's base Light Anima pool is calculated as Creed $\times 4$, whereas their base Dark Anima Pool is now 0.

Bonus Effect: Creed 5+: A Nemissary with this Refinement that also possesses an exceptionally high Creed may choose to activate an additional effect when establishing Blood Synergy with a human character.

NEW META QUALITY: HERALD OF THE SUN

The character has been blessed by The Stormwalker and has become a living vessel for his will.

Effect: This Meta Quality must be gifted by a character with both Creed 5+ and the **Mantle of the Sun** Refinement. For the purposes of this Quality, the recipient is referred to as **The Vessel**, and the Nemissary which bestowed the Quality is referred to as **The Lord**.

Upon gaining this quality the Vessel's ageing slows by half, and if they ever meet the requirements for the **Awakened** Meta Quality, they may gain it for free. Furthermore, they are always considered to have permanent Blood Synergy with the Lord.

Whenever the Vessel establishes Two-way Blood Synergy, the Lord gains a One-way Blood Synergy connection to the other parties. In addition, all Blood Synergy established by the Vessel will persist for their Conviction $\times 5$ Years instead of days.

Only the Lord or a character with equal or greater Creed or other applicable Fate Trait may use the Blood Synergy connection with the Vessel. Attempts from any other characters will operate as if no Blood Synergy exists.

The Nemissary may pay 1 Temporary Creed or gain 1 Spite to gift a willing human character the **Herald of the Sun** Meta Quality. This Quality is gained immediately upon the activation of this effect, and is permanent to that character.





CHAPTER

III

FEAR AND DOUBT

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NIGHTMARES OF THE WASTES

The spark of hope and renewal ignited across America is a fragile thing and the path forward is far from certain. Humanity's growth and expansion is a two edged sword; for after all, all lights cast a shadow, and there lie nightmares perhaps best left undisturbed.

The Broodspawn are relentless and adaptable, but even they cannot indefinitely endure the withering effects of radiation and given the choice, the Broodspawn will flee before decay overwhelms them. Rarely, Broodspawn become trapped in such areas. There, most – but not all – will succumb; a tiny fraction endure their rotting forms and slowly adapt to the tainted Anima burning through their flesh.

A NEW BREED

The Brood which survive are forever altered, their very nature warped into the creatures known as the **Blightspawn**. In most ways they resemble their kin, but differ subtly in both appearance and behaviour.

Their most obvious physical difference lies in a series of marks and lesions on the skin of the Blightspawn. This can take many forms from burnt and broken flesh, to large expanses entirely devoid of skin. Though the effects can appear horrific, the Blightspawn are untroubled by their wounds.

The forms of these creatures tend to remain closer to the human norm, generally retaining facial features and a conventional arrangement of limbs. That said, the Blightspawn tend to have misshapen and irregular limbs, and as they grow into the more advanced forms they rarely gain the predatory grace of the more evolved Broodspawn.

Instead, their skin becomes increasingly warped and their limbs elongate, whereas their bodies tend to become either emaciated or grossly obese.

These changes to the body are, in truth, nothing compared to what happens to the Blightspawn's minds. Unlike their kin, they retain a vestige of their human minds. At times, these creatures are even capable of limited conversation, and some of them have even been observed to use weaponry and tools.

The tragedy and horror of it is that sometimes, perhaps for a moment, the Blightspawn seem genuinely human. At a distance, a gathering of them may appear little less than that of a group of ragged wasteland scavengers. This awareness never lasts long however, and soon enough the predatory hunger of the Brood will return, albeit one filtered through the cunning predation of an all-too human intellect.

MECHANICS

The Blightspawn are generally similar to the Broodspawn, but tend to be physically less capable than their kin, though their increased intellect and potential tool-use more than makes up for this disadvantage.

Except where noted below, Blightspawn follow the mechanics for the Brood, and are considered Broodspawn for the purposes of Arietta or other abilities.

Radiation

The Blightspawn are largely immune to the damaging effects of Radiation, and in fact require it in order to survive. They suffer no negative consequences when exposed to Mild or Severe Radiation, but are not wholly immune to Deadly Radiation, which affects them as if it were Mild Radiation.

***Note:** Though the Blightspawn cannot indefinitely dwell in areas of Deadly radiation, it is still considered a source of radiation for them, and thus a means of at least short term survival.*

If deprived of a source of Radiation, Blightspawn will begin to sicken as a human affected with Mild Radiation Sickness. If they do not return to a source of Radiation within 24 hours, the condition will escalate, applying the effects of Severe Radiation Sickness.



If, after a further three days, they have not returned to a source of Radiation, they will be incapacitated, capable of nothing more than crawling slowly, and perish after a further 24 hours.

Synergy

Just like the Broodspawn, the Blightspawn also use Synergy, but are severed from the rest of the Broodspawn and the two groups are hostile to one another — thus are unable to form combined hordes.

The tainted and erratic nature of their Synergy also makes them difficult to control, and their permanent Synergy is counted as 1 higher for these purposes.

Anima

Blightspawn are severed from the power of the Broodsong; instead they derive their Anima from directly from Radiation. This has its limits when compared to the Broodsong, and irradiated areas of different intensities provide a maximum amount of Anima.

- **Mild:** 1 Anima per Turn
- **Severe:** 2 Anima per Turn
- **Deadly:** 3 Anima per Turn

The Blightspawn can absorb more Anima per round than their Synergy. Blightspawn in mildly irradiated areas normally consume irradiated materials, raising their level of contamination to Severe.

FURTHER ADVANCEMENT

The Blightspawn are capable of continuing their evolution into the higher forms of Broodspawn, though they do so more slowly than their kin.

In addition to the normal requirements, they must continue to spend time within a radioactive environment for the same rules as advancing from the Reaver Phase.

These transformations occur as normal with the exception that Alpha and Beta Strains lose the Fractured Mind Feature, and although Alpha Strains become Free-Willed, they retain the more human-like behavioural features of the Blightspawn.

CONTAMINATION

The odds of an individual Blightspawn being created are very low, but once they exist, their numbers can steadily grow over time. If any Blightspawn kills a human and that individual transforms, they will become another instance of Blightspawn.

These creatures can also contaminate Broodspawn by incapacitating them and forcing them to remain in an irradiated area. In this case, the captured Broodspawn will always survive, and complete the transformation into one of the Blightspawn.

NEW BASIC STRAINS

The first Blightspawn and any Broodspawn which become contaminated retain their forms, but increase their Reason by 1. Blightspawn which begin their existence as such will go through the two new Basic Strains below.

Phase 1 – Wretch

The first stage of the Blightspawn's existence closely resembles its former human form, albeit with the disfigurements common to its kind.

These Broodspawn retain their host's original Attributes with the following modifications;

- Replace Fate with Synergy 1.
- Remove all non-applicable Qualities.
- Lower the host's Reason and Cunning by 1, to a minimum of 1.
- Gain the **Fractured Mind** Feature.
- May pay 1 Anima per Round to access Type 1 Regeneration.

To advance to the next stage, the Wretch needs to spend a total of 24 hours exposed to Radiation. Each hour in a zone of Severe Radiation counts as 6 hours for this purpose, and 1 hour spent in a zone of Deadly Radiation will allow it to evolve immediately.



Phase 2 – Reaver

Though not as strong or fast as other Broodspawn, these creatures are still terribly resilient – worse still, they possess a malign cunning which can make them far more dangerous than their more common kin.

- Increase Synergy to 2.
- Increase Body and Prowess by 1.
- May pay a cost of 2 Anima per Round to access Type 2 Regeneration.
- Increase Resilience by 1.

In order to advance, the Reaver must spend a total of 24 days exposed to severe radiation. Each day in a zone of Deadly radiation counts as 6 days for this purpose.

NEW FEATURE: FRACTURED MIND

Broodspawn with this Feature retain a vestige of their human intelligence. This allows them to use tools and weapons, though they do so with a -1 Pool Penalty.

Unlike other Broodspawn, these beings sometimes have moments of lucidity and more genuine human-like behaviour. These periods are brief however, and in combat usually only last a few Rounds at most. Outside of combat, the effect is persistent enough for some Blightspawn to have constructed basic shelters and rudimentary tools for survival.

This lucidity can also extend to showing fear, though this too is only temporary. It does mean however that these creatures are far more likely to retreat from battle and attempt to set ambushes for their prey than die fighting.

TRUE HIVESPAWN

True Hivespawn are not the broken creatures most have encountered. Unlike the Lesser Hivespawn, these creatures share a consistent appearance; their forms, though alien, are predatory and graceful.

Their behaviour is far more calculated and patient than most would expect and like their Herald masters they are capable of a degree of malice and cruelty unknown to the Broodspawn.

THE FIRST OF MANY

Unlike their Brood kin, the Hivespawn don't arise from human corpses. Their existence at first represented only an anomaly within the Broodsong, an echo of the Mother's will that tainted the Broodmothers' attempts to forge new life.

These first creatures are an abomination; though not made from human clay, they are still bound like all Broodspawn to an echo of a human soul. The Mother's alien will and the power of the Broodsong rebel against one another, twisting these creatures and in many cases driving them to self-destructive insanity.

Only the coming of the Heralds allowed the creation of the True Hivespawn. These creatures are not accidents; each is forged from a memory of an ancient weapon shared by the Mother. They start their lives as a parasitic seed remarkably similar in appearance to a Nemissary's Aenthir.

In this form, the Hivespawn are vulnerable and seemingly inanimate, but if brought before a living human being their true nature becomes apparent. Their form twists and rends, expanding rapidly, lurching forward in an attempt to bind themselves to a human host.

The victim may struggle, but there is no hope; the Hivespawn's pale sinew expands outwards from the seed, and binds the victim in order to eventually entomb them forever. The Hivespawn is a parasite but it doesn't desire the body in particular – what it needs is the host's suffering.

The nascent Hivespawn then use their host's endless pain and despair as a source of Anima to sustain their twisted existence. Even in defeat, there is little hope for its host, for like their Mother, these creatures are spiteful. Should recovery or freedom seem likely for the host, the Hivespawn will devour their own host in a final act of malice.

Like their cruelty, the Hivespawn's strength is great, far beyond Broodspawn of comparable stature, but mercifully there is still a binding limit to these creatures. Without The Mother's direct presence, these creatures can only evolve so far. Unlike their lesser kin, they avoid the transformations which would break or destabilise them, and with a low, predatory cunning, they are content to forestall their evolutions in order to remain in their current deadly forms.

MECHANICS

True Hivespawn are handled mechanically similar to Broodspawn and use those rules as a starting point. They possess the **Facts of Life** and **Essential Being** Features from page 266 of the Core Book except that the words **Broodspawn** and **Synergy** should be replaced with **Hivespawn** and **Communion** respectively.

True Hivespawn do not possess the standard Anima Use or Evolution Features and instead possess the **Empty Soul** and **Hive-Forged** Features.

Empty Soul

The Hivespawn are bound to darkness; pain and suffering are a foundation of their existence. As such they can only use Dark Anima – Neutral Anima provides no benefit to them and Light Anima functions like a poison. If for any reason a Hivespawn would gain Light Anima, they instead lose 1 point of Dark Anima for each point gained. If the Hivespawn has no Dark Anima remaining, they instead suffer 1 Light Baleful Wound per point gained.

Unlike the Broodspawn, the Hivespawn are capable of storing Anima in their forms and have a maximum Dark Anima Pool equal to $3 \times$ Communion Rank. However, as

artificial beings they lack souls and thus have no natural means of replenishing Anima. Instead, they function as a parasite, drawing upon the Anima of their human hosts.

It can be assumed that a Hivespawn regains 1 Dark Anima per hour for each living human bound within its form. In desperate circumstances a Hivespawn with more than one host can choose to consume one as a Standard Action, generating 1D6+6 Dark Anima.

Hive-Forged

The Hivespawn are the direct servants of The Mother, weapons in the truest sense. The following effects apply:

- Hivespawn gain the **Discordant** Keyword.
- When facing Nemissaries, they gain a bonus Pool equal to the Nemissary's Permanent Spite.
- Hivespawn may be affected by the **Song of Brood** as if they were Broodspawn only if the user has the **Discordant** Keyword as well. For all other purposes, they are not considered Broodspawn.
- Hivespawn possess the **Voidglass** Keyword to both their unarmed attacks and armour.

In addition to these effects, the Hivespawn evolve differently than the Broodspawn. Their forms are not random but determined by specific patterns. They begin their existence in Phase 1 as a **Seed** and once they acquire a human host, will transform into a Phase 2 **Shade**.

In order to evolve further, a Hivespawn must return to an awakened and active Hive, something which is mercifully impossible at present.

NEW BASIC STRAINS

As it stands, only two Phases of the True Hivespawn have yet been encountered.

Phase 1 (Seed)

This first stage of the Hivespawn's existence is immobile and appears to be a shard of Voidglass similar in many respects to a Nemissary's Aenthir.

In this state, the Seed is extremely difficult to destroy and seems inert and otherwise harmless. This state will persist until a suitable, living human host is within striking distance of it; whereupon it will open and rapidly expand an array of pale white tendrils in an attempt to ensnare its victim.

If the victim is aware, treat the Seed's attempt as a standard Combat Action using the Seed's **Prowess/Athletics** against a relevant Combat Action of the victim's choice.

If the victim does not either destroy the Seed outright or end their Action by moving out of Close Range with the Seed, then they will be bound by the Seed and a final contest will begin.

LESSER HIVESPAWN

Going forward it's important to make a clear distinction between the Hivespawn mentioned in the Core Book and those mentioned here.

For the purposes of these rules, the original Hivespawn from the Core Book are considered "Lesser Hivespawn" and will be referred to as such. Any abilities such as Arietta or Features which interact with Hivespawn will affect both types equally, though it's important to keep in mind that whilst Lesser Hivespawn are a form of Broodspawn, True Hivespawn are not, and so abilities which only affect The Brood will not function on them.

The Seed constricts and attempts to bind the victim with an Opposed **Body/Athletics** Roll. The Seed has three attempts in total to succeed; after each attempt, the Seed loses 1 Body and the victim gains Bonus Pool equal to their Outcome from the previous roll.

If the Seed fails all three rolls, it dies having expended the last of its strength and its tendrils collapse limply, its form beginning to slowly crumble into ash.

If however the Seed manages to succeed on any of the rolls, it has successfully encased the victim in a Voidglass cocoon. This stage lasts a number of hours equal to the victim's Body, after which the process will be completed. During this period the Seed is considered to be in its **Inert** form, but gains additional Resistance equal to its host's Body.

Attributes (Inert): Body 2, Prowess 0, Reason 1, Cunning 4.

Attributes (Active): Body 7*, Prowess 5, Reason 1, Cunning 4.

Note: In its Active state, the Seed uses its Body only for opposed rolls. For determining Damage or resisting effects, it uses its Inert Body of 2.

Communion: 2 **Skills:** 4+/5+

Features: Empty Soul, Hive-Forged

Wounds: 4/3/2/1 **Thresholds:** 2/3/5/7/9

Resilience: 3 (Voidglass)*

Note: The Seed's Resilience drops to 1 and loses the Voidglass characteristic when it becomes Active.

Initiative: N/A*

Note: The Seed always wins Initiative for attempts to claim a host, but when Inert is treated as an object, not a character.

Phase 2 (Shade)

These Hivespawn, though amongst the weakest of their kind, are still terrifying opponents. Their strength is far greater than any comparable Broodspawn but it is their cruel alien intelligence which makes them truly deadly.

***Note:** Unlike Broodspawn, a Shade is not a mutation of a human and instead represents a specific engineered weapon. As such its traits are fixed and not dependent upon the host or its earlier stages.*

Attributes: Body 7, Prowess 5, Reason 3, Cunning 4

Communion: 3 /Dark Anima 9 **Skills:** 4+/5+

Features: Empty Soul, Hive-Forged, Natural Weapons
Shiva's Child, Regeneration Type 1.

Enhancements: Natural Armour × 2, Night-vision,
Tentacles, Tremor Sense.

Vitality: 4/3/2/1 **Thresholds:** 4/8/15/22/29

Resilience: 4 (Voidglass) **Initiative:** 7/4+

Combat:

Claws: (10+1/3+) (Damage: 9) (Threat: 7) (Reach
2) (+2 Pool for Grapple)

HEROES AND VILLAINS

For all the horrors in the lengthening shadows, there are many who choose to make a difference and, for better or worse, impose their will upon the world around them.

LORDS OF THE DOMINION

Beyond its cities and its soldiers, there is another final and terrible power at the heart of the Hierarch Dominion, for its masters are amongst the strongest Nemissaries that walk the earth.

THE LORD HIERARCH – SORESH

The mightiest and eldest of the Hierarchs and the last survivor of the First Cabal, Soresh has a claim to be the strongest living Nemissary. Few on the East Coast have any real idea of the kind of power he possesses.

Only during the siege of Boston has Soresh unleashed his full might, and by the time the Dominion began their assault, the Brood's slaughter had left few witnesses. Those survivors now hold Soresh in reverence, considering him as a god made flesh.

For his own part, Soresh regards this cult and the Dominion's faith with indifference – a simple means to an end. For Soresh, the Hierarch Dominion and its operations – Bureaucracy and all – are a necessity if humanity is to survive. Soresh's primary concern is a search for answers however; he is nearing the end of his Creed, but is as yet unable to pass through the final door which Ah'kesh mastered.

Long ago, when Ah'kesh called for the gathering of the First Cabal, Soresh refused to listen, and instead wandered, looking for his own answers. It was on that journey he met a being he took to be a Nemissary - one that seemed older even than The Fall.

This entity he came to know as "Faith," and in time he pressed them more and more for answers. The truths he learned shook him to the core. Wracked with doubt, he abandoned Faith and returned to the Dominion, only to find it on the brink of war.

Those he'd once called friends had, in his mind, poisoned all that Ah'kesh sought to do – and he slew them without mercy. Standing at Ah'kesh's grave, he came to a new realisation and saw much of what Faith had taught him in a different light, but the picture was still incomplete.

A part of what Faith had said had been a warning, and he knew for a fact then that the Reapers were not dead, nor their work unfinished. With the Dominion burning around him, Soresh turned his eyes to the place he thought most likely to find answers – America.

Attributes: Body 4, Prowess 5, Reason 4, Conviction 7,
Passion 5, Cunning 4

Natural Skills: Athletics 1, Perception 3, Logic 2,
Panache 3, Authority 3, Resolve 4

Learned Skills: Keening 4, Stealth 2, Survival 1,
Knowledge 3



Combat Skills: Marksmanship 3, Fight 1, Melee 2

Specialities: Command, Determination, Strategy

Notable Qualities: Bright Soul, Determined, Inspiring

Arietta:

Soresh has access to a vast array of Arietta; in particular he favours the Songs of Bone and Will, and will possess all common Arietta in these Songs.

He can be assumed to have any Arietta needed for the story up to Rank 5 in the Songs of Blood and Flesh, and up to Rank 4 in the Song of Brood.

Creed: 6 (Tower)

Permanent Spite: 4 (Deceiver)

Wounds: 7/6/5/1/1

Thresholds: 3/5/7/10/13

Initiative: 10/4+

Combat:

Hand to Hand: (11/5+) (4 Damage) (Threat 1)

Handgun: (11/4+) (5 damage) (Threat 1) (Auto-fire 1)



STILL HUMAN



For all his alien might, Soresh is still a human being with all the emotional complexities that brings. His age and power separate him from his fellows however, and he has precious few human connections.

The most prominent and strongest connection is found in Beroth, but also in a small handful of human servants and lovers, largely hidden from the outside world.

Behind closed doors, Soresh is a decent and kind individual and holds Beroth in particular reverence, but this in some way is the most dangerous thing about him. His conviction is great and it binds his Hollow, but if an enemy managed to bring final death to Beroth, or slaughtered his private servants, it might free his Hollow and unleash a near unstoppable nightmare upon the East Coast.

BLADE OF THE HIERARCHS – BEROTH

Soresh is mighty in his own way, but he has little need of his own strength, for he has a weapon of a different nature – his loyal confidant and the Blade of the Hierarchs, Beroth.

Beroth is younger than Soresh, and the pair met during Soresh's long wanderings. Though Beroth has no patience for subtle politics nor the intricacies of lore, he has spirit, and hope for what humanity might become when given a fresh start. Before Soresh, Beroth had nothing – Now, he has purpose and drive.

To repay Soresh for that gift, Beroth has forged himself into a living weapon; virtually every spare hour has been spent in training his mind and body. To the world, Beroth appears implacable, a terrifying and deadly shadow to his master, but Beroth is no simple brute – though normally stoic, he sometimes shows a cutting, sardonic wit.

The bond between the Lord Hierarch and Beroth is a deep one, and in truth Beroth is no servant, but a companion and friend. In many ways, Beroth serves as a conscience for Soresh; the two often spend their rare private moments together, in discussion over games of chess.

Attributes: Body 7, Prowess 6, Reason 4, Conviction 5, Passion 3, Cunning 4

Natural Skills: Athletics 4 Perception 3, Logic 2, Panache 0, Authority 2, Resolve 3

Learned Skills: Keening 3, Stealth 1, Crafts 0, Survival 2, Knowledge 1, Medicine 1

Combat Skills: Marksmanship 0, Archery 1, Fight 4, Melee 0

Specialities: Compound Bows, Improvised Weapons, Intimidation

Notable Qualities: Dedicated, Dire-Hit, Quick

Arietta:

Beroth is a lethal combatant and can have access to any Arietta that is needed up to Rank 4 in the Song of Flesh, and Rank 3 in all others. He particularly favours the following Arietta;

Rank 1: Creeping Flesh, Restore Flesh, Rend Flesh, Enhance the Coil

Rank 2: Quicksilver Flesh, Refine Self, Shape Flesh, The Horror Within

Rank 3: Dark Restoration, Grace of the Undying, Homunculus, Impossible Form

Rank 4: Consume, Flesh Unrestrained, Thousand Faces
Keep in mind that Beroth has the **Iron Soul** Feature, allowing him to mitigate some potential Spite gains.

Creed: 4 (Sword)

Spite: 3 (Monster)

Neutral Anima: 4

Light Anima: 14

Dark Anima: 16

Focus: 8

Wounds: 5/4/3/1/1

Thresholds: 3/7/14/21/28

Resilience: 4

Initiative: 8/4+

Combat:

Hand to Hand: (10/3+) (Damage 13) (Threat 1) (Impact 9)

***Notes:** Beroth has the following enhancements from his Arietta; Corrosive Blood, Natural Armour x2, Natural Weapons x3, Tremor Sense*

HERALDS OF THE STORM

The Stormlands Empire lives and dies on the strength of personality of the mighty warlords who lead it, and the might of the god-king who forged it.

THE STORMWALKER

The dynamic, violent prophet-monarch of the Stormlands Empire, The Stormwalker was a nomad before he was taken by the Brood as a young man and underwent the torturous transformation into a Harbinger. The agony of that transformation broke him in a way that was not expected; as he became a Nemissary he left the man he once was dead, and slaughtered his way free to found an empire on the blood and bones of dead Broodspawn. As such he gives himself no name or identification; it is his followers who call him The Stormwalker, and while he claims he still has no name and will not take one, he does not dissuade them from calling him such.

The Stormwalker looks like a young man in his mid twenties, bedecked in splendid golden armour and carrying an axe of solid voidglass. He is a handsome man, his good looks furthered by a wild, easy charm. While it may be the flattery of sycophant poets, it is often said that a fire can be seen burning just under the surface of his tan skin. He is known to be skilled in the songs of Flesh and Blood as well, an autodidact who honed his Arietta in combat and uses his abilities to strengthen his followers, protecting them from radiation.

He is a consummate warrior and a dynamic leader who is able to frenzy a crowd in a moment's notice, imparting his own burning passion onto others. As the ruler of the Empire he is no stranger to combat, the victor of countless battles against Brood, humans and Nemissaries alike. To this day, he leads his wars from the front and has put down more than one rival in single combat.

Attributes: Body 7, Prowess 6, Reason 3, Conviction 4, Passion 6, Cunning 4

Natural Skills: Athletics 3, Perception 3, Logic 1, Panache 4, Authority 4, Resolve 4

Learned Skills: Keening 0, Stealth 1, Crafts 0, Survival 2, Knowledge 1, Medicine 3

Combat Skills: Marksmanship3, Archery 1, Fight 3, Melee 4

Specialities: Axes, Command, Intimidation

Notable Qualities: Alluring, Impressive Speaker

Refinements: Gift of the Sun, Mantle of the Storm, Rage of the Tempest, Mantle of the Sun



Arietta:

Rank 1: Creeping Flesh, Enhance the Coil Exsanguinate, Gift of Sensation, Purify Anima, Restore

Rank 2: Blood Lash, Hoard Anima, Quicksilver Flesh, the Horror Within

Rank 3: Dark Restoration, Grace of the Undying, Ravage, Vital Anima

Rank 4: Consume, Dire Sensation

Rank 5: Greater Regeneration, Maelstrom

Creed: 5 (Sword)

Spite: 4 (Monster)

Wounds: 4/3/2/1

Thresholds: 3/7/14/21/28

Resilience: 4 (combined voidglass armour)

Initiative: 9/3+

Combat:

Hand to Hand: (10/4+) (Damage 7) (Impact 2, Threat 1)

Edge of the Sun: (10/3+) (Damage 11) (Impact 4, Threat 1) (Variable, Voidglass, Special)

Edge of the Sun (special): (9/4+) (Damage 6) (Variable, Incendiary)

Equipment: Edge of the Sun, masterwork combined Voidglass armour

MATTHEW CURTIS – THE VOICE OF THE SUN

One of the most influential humans in The Stormwalker's court, Matthew Curtis was once a nomad who became one of the earliest believers in The Stormwalker's cause. When he lost his right arm from below the elbow in battle against the Brood, he turned his attention to supporting the fledgling Empire in other ways. He founded the Church of the Sun Incandescent, forming the organisation to grant spiritual legitimacy to The Stormwalker's rule, and to provide an organisation that supports the Empire as a nation, not just as an army.

Matthew has many roles, acting as an advisor who does the work that The Stormwalker has no real interest in doing himself. He has shaped the Church into a civil service for the Empire, using priests as bureaucratic agents as well as spiritual ones; he is savvy enough to recognise that paper pushing won't be respected by the Empire's warlords and warriors, but knows that playing on the poor education and superstition of its citizens can be an effective tool.

Despite being a fervent believer in The Stormwalker's cause, in recent years Matthew has become increasingly exasperated with his liege's disinterest in being a ruler. The two have been overheard arguing more than once, their own visions of what the Empire could become increasingly at odds with one another. For now Matthew remains loyal to

THE EDGE OF THE SUN

This Voidglass axe is wielded by Stormwalker in battle, and is said to have been gifted to him by the sun itself. Those who carry it can focus their will to set the head of the axe aflame, making it a truly devastating weapon.

If a character were to somehow defeat Stormwalker and claim the Edge of the Sun as their own, it has the following profile:

Damage: 4

Pool: +1

Size: Large

Qualities: Impact +2, Variable, Voidglass, Special*

*You may spend 1 focus to give a close combat attack made with the Edge of the Sun the Incendiary quality. You may also spend 3 focus to give the Edge of the Sun the following ranged weapon profile until the beginning of your next turn, in addition to its normal profile:

Damage: 6

Pool: —

Range: Short

Qualities: Flamer, Incendiary

The Stormwalker, in part for their shared goal and in part from the loyalty that he holds as The Stormwalker's former lover, but as his age encroaches and his concerns with leaving a lasting legacy grow, he is finding this loyalty tested more and more.

Attributes: Body 3, Prowess 3, Reason 5, Conviction 4, Passion 4, Cunning 4

Natural Skills: Athletics 1, Perception 4, Logic 3, Panache 3, Authority 3, Resolve 3

Learned Skills: Keening 1, Stealth 1, Crafts 1, Survival 2, Knowledge 3, Medicine 1

Combat Skills: Marksmanship 2, Archery 0, Fight 1, Melee 2

Specialties: Inter-state diplomacy, Imperial Politics

Notable Qualities: Awakened, Experienced Devout Faith, Veteran

Refinement: Herald of the Sun (bonded with the Stormwalker)

Fate: 4

Wounds: 4/3/2/1

Thresholds: 2/4/7/10/13

Resilience: 0

Initiative: 8/4+

Combat:

Hand to Hand: (7/6+) (Damage 3) (Threat 1)

Pistol: (7/5+) (Damage 5) (Threat 1) (Auto-Fire 2)

FAREEDAH MELIR

A Nemissary of considerable power and expertise in the Song of Bone, Fareedah Melir is the most powerful figure in the northern Empire, holding the natural barrier of the Ozark mountains Brood and radiation and ruling the region with an iron fist.

She has led dozens of expeditions into the wastes beyond, slaughtering Blightspawn and claiming a fortune in loot. As such, she has built a reputation as an accomplished warrior and inspiring leader, but it is known that she is growing increasingly ambitious, frustrated by The Stormwalker's apparently lax rulership.

For now, she seems content to wait before making any move against The Stormwalker, trying to consolidate her own position first. She has the loyalty of hundreds of her own warriors, and can field considerable numbers of her own Nemissary forces, but is also aware that starting a war now may collapse the Empire entirely.

Not wishing to be a queen of ashes, Fareedah is biding her time. Her and The Stormwalker keep a wary eye on one another, each sizing up their opponent but for now hesitant to strike the first blow. Matthew Curtis has been working tirelessly to try and ease these tensions, but many outside the Empire now view a civil war as a matter of when, not if.

Fully aware that a conflict is looming, Fareedah has been searching for an edge. She has gleaned, through the ravings of Harbingers and the sibilant mutterings of maddened Hivespawn, that there is something in the Godfall waste - something powerful and ancient - and if she were to seize and control it, she is sure it would give her the edge she needs to win.

Attributes: Body 5, Prowess 5, Reason 4, Conviction 6, Passion 3, Cunning 5

Natural Skills: Athletics 3, Perception 2, Logic 2, Panache 2, Authority 3, Resolve 4

Learned Skills: Keening 0, Stealth 1, Crafts 2, Survival 1, Knowledge 2, Medicine 0

Combat Skills: Marksmanship 3, Archery 0, Fight 2, Melee 4

Specialities: Bonecrafting

Notable Qualities: Dedicated, Hardy, Iron Soul (Bone), Implacable Resolve

Refinements: Gift of the Sun, Mantle of the Storm

Arietta:

Rank 1: Bone Growth, Harden, Maiming Touch, Shape Bone

Rank 2: Bone Wind, Enduring Bone, Living Bone, Strike Within

Rank 3: Aegis of Pain, Symphony, Void Tainting

Rank 4: Lance of Pain, Wing of the Firstborn

Creed: 4 (Tower)

Spite: 3 (Tyrant)

Wounds: 6/5/4/1

Thresholds: 2/5/10/15/20

Resilience: 3

Initiative: 9/5+

Combat:

Hand to Hand: (11/5+) (5 damage)

Great Sword: (12/3+) (8 damage) (Threat 3) (Reach +2, Two-Handed)

SMG: (11/4+) (6 Damage) (Threat 1) (Auto-Fire 3, Full Auto, Two-Handed)

Equipment: Greatsword, Boneweave Armour

A LIVING LEGEND

A figure wreathed in myth and known only by what should surely be an alias, this "Davy Crockett" is a Ranger known for the raccoon skin pelt on his shoulder and the Voidglass-adorned lever-action rifle he carries.

DAVY CROCKETT

A folk hero of past and present, legend has it that Crockett never misses a shot, and stories of him defying Brood and laying low tyrants are told all over America. Rumours abound that he was one of the first Rangers - a Nemissary who emerged early in the Fall to protect those in need - and some stories say he's older still.

Whoever he truly is, Davy Crockett is a name hailed haughtily around Ranger and Thorns campfires alike as a champion of the people, and though he is rarely seen, the prospect of him riding into town keeps many Vigilants aware of their duty to protect the community above all else.



Attributes: Body 4, Prowess 8, Reason 4, Conviction 6, Passion 4, Cunning 5

Natural Skills: Athletics 2, Perception 4, Logic 1, Panache 2, Authority 2, Resolve 3

Learned Skills: Keening 3, Stealth 2, Crafts 1, Survival 3, Knowledge 1, Medicine 1

Combat Skills: Marksmanship 4, Archery 1, Fight 1, Melee 3

Specialities: Rifles, Tracking, Woodcraft

Notable Qualities: Daredevil, Quickening, Sleep of the Dead, The First Duty, The Long Watch, Shepherd's Duty, Vigil of the Wastes, Vigil of the Hearth.

Arietta:

Rank 1: Brood Mind, Subdue the Mind, Whispers of the Brood

Rank 2: Direct the Pack, Disrupt, Resist the Call, Shatter the Horde

Rank 3: Scourge, Brood Renewal

Rank 4: Command the Horde, Dark Laughter, The Black Wind Voice

Creed: 5 (Mask)

Spite: 3 (Traitor)

Neutral Anima: 4

Light Anima: 18

Dark Anima: 15

Focus: 8

Wounds: 6/5/4/1/1

Thresholds: 2/4/8/12/16

Resilience: 1 (Hardened)

Initiative: 9/3+

Combat:

Hand to Hand: (12/6+) (Damage 4) (Threat 1)

Hatchet (Axe): (11/4+) (Damage 6) (Threat 1) (Impact +1, Simple)

Davy's Repeater: (13/3+) (Damage 7) (Auto-Fire 1, Epic, Two-Handed, Voidglass)

Equipment: Davy's Repeater, woodsman's hatchet, light ballistic vest, raccoon-skin pelt, and a seemingly endless supply of cheap cigarillos and strike-anywhere matches.

DAVY'S REPEATER

Davy Crockett's repeating rifle is a unique take on an antique design, and its superb craftsmanship is augmented by the supernatural effect it has on any bullets that it fires.

Damage: 7

Pool: +1

Ammo: 15

Size: Large

Qualities: Auto-Fire 1, Epic, Two-Handed, Voidglass, Special*

* All bullets fired by Davy's Repeater gain the Voidglass property. This stacks with any other properties the bullets have.



THE ARTIFICERS

*"Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day; Rage, rage against the dying of the light.
Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning, they do not go gentle into that good night."*

— Dylan Thomas

The Artificers are a part of the lives of many across the East Coast; their trade missions and personnel exist peacefully within many of the settlements of other factions. Despite this, most know virtually nothing about this organisation, its true motives and operations shrouded in secrecy.

The truth is that the Artificers are far more powerful and influential than virtually anyone on the East Coast realises. No minor faction, they are simply part of a vast organisation whose reach spans the globe, and whose power could threaten even the strongest of Nemissaries, or lay waste to entire factions.

THE COLD TRUTH

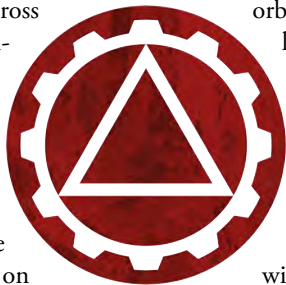
To most, the Artificers are merely merchants; dangerous to cross and highly secretive, but of no real threat or concern. The truth however, is that the Artificers are far more than their customers realise, for each member is part of a large and highly structured organisation that reports directly to the headquarters built in the ruins of the orbital elevator in central Africa.

Each member of the Artificers is handpicked and highly trained. Further, the organisation goes to enormous lengths to ensure the loyalty of its members, to the extent that each Artificer explicitly understands that if they are in any way compromised, they are fully expected to take their own life – and preferably take their enemies' with them.

Of course, there are a vast number of Artificers that never measure up and are thus never assigned to field roles, remaining instead in larger operation centres and administrative positions where their loyalty is unlikely to be put to the test.

In addition to their well-trained operatives, the Artificers maintain access to various military assets and their own specially trained commando units. Unlike most factions, the Artificers are capable of deploying these assets almost anywhere in the world using low-orbit transfer craft that are themselves potentially devastating weapon platforms.

These military assets however, for all their equipment and maintenance, would still not be enough to defend the faction against the ambitions of the powerful and organised factions that exist in the remnants of Africa and Europe. What truly keeps the Artificers safe is the fact that such rival powers understand the Artificers have access to a final, terrifying line of defence – the stable command of the remaining



orbital weapon platforms, along with an arsenal of long-range tactical nuclear missiles.

By merit of this capability, the other major factions give the Artificers a wide berth, regarding them with intense suspicion; after all, with all the power they wield, the Artificers seem content to simply watch, trade and record, and there are those who wonder – not without reason – why such power is rarely used.

ORIGINS

The Artificers in America are part of a far larger organisation that has its roots in the final days of The Fall. At the height of the Second Renaissance, the construction of the orbital elevator in Central Africa led to the formation of the



Central African Federation, or CAF; a united nation that would go on to become one of the richest and most influential powers of the Pre-Fall era.

The CAF was one of the most active nations in orbital development, and a key player in the ratification of the orbital weapons treaty, a policy which set in motion a large scale process of global nuclear disarmament in favour of the construction of a network of orbital defence satellites.

The initiative had in large part been pushed forward by the CAF's Intelligence Agency, which in the years prior to the construction, had learned of the buried Shards already on Earth via recovered cold war-era Soviet documents.

Eventually, they managed to locate several of the Shards and the information gained from them, along with the recovered documents and their own research, led them to conclude that Earth would be threatened by the arrival of a new wave of Shards at some point in the imminent future. Armed with this knowledge, the CAF's Intelligence Agency did everything it could to advance the construction of the orbital defence array.

ARK

As the construction of the satellite network progressed, the CAF's Intelligence Agency tentatively reached out and attempted to warn their counterparts in many of Earth's other major nations. The response was largely dismissive, but one group not only answered, but offered an exchange of information.

Unbeknownst to the CAF, a trans-national civilian agency known as the Ark Project was also aware of the impending threat, and in fact had access to a far more reliable and direct source of knowledge.

It was revealed that the Ark Project had in their custody an individual claiming to have arrived on Earth at the site of the Tunguska Blast. They had claimed that they were not alone, but sent as an advance guard in order to prepare Earth for an assault by an entity of scarcely comprehensible power.

NO WARNING

To the world in general, the Brood and the Reapers came without warning, but there were a small number of organisations that, to varying degrees, had some fore-warning of what was to come.

The reason this knowledge failed to become widespread was simple – the scenario being proposed was so outlandish that it was dismissed out of hand by most Intelligence Agencies. As a result, most nations and their respective militaries had no warning whatsoever of the nightmare they would face.

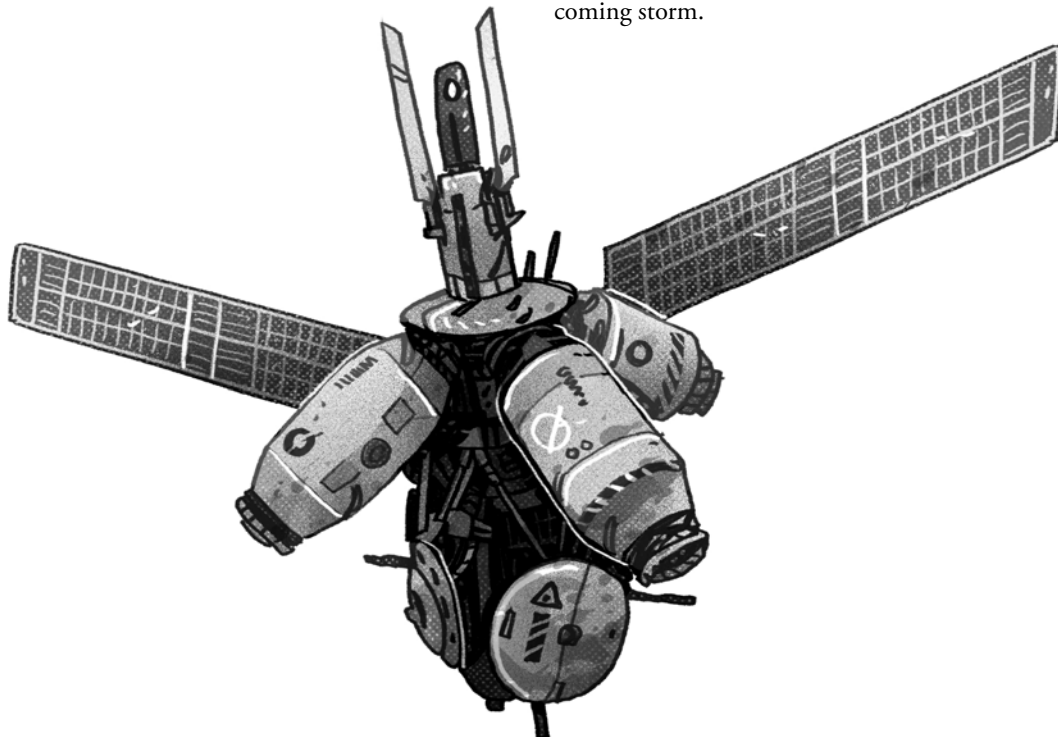
The CAF's Intelligence Agency was sceptical at first, particularly when the Ark Project's representatives argued that the CAF should alter its focus from the orbital defence network to instead providing Ark with funding to expand its network of underground facilities.

Unsurprisingly, the CAF were initially unwilling to accept Ark's proposals, but agreed to consider them if Ark would give them custody of their informant. Lacking in resources of its own and fearing that time was against them, the Ark Project consented and transferred their informant to CAF's Intelligence Agency's custody.

After completing their own interrogations, the CAF was convinced to assist the Ark Project. In the years which followed, the deployment of the orbital weapon platforms was significantly reduced and instead resources were diverted to assist Ark in the creation of numerous fortified bunkers that would contain both critical personnel and vital resources.

The added resources greatly accelerated the completion of Ark's bunkers, and only months after the first wave of facilities came online, the existence of the Black Rain became common knowledge and panic swept the globe.

To protect their operations, the CAF created an independent military branch codenamed "Artifice". This taskforce was given strict instructions to avoid all engagement with potential enemy forces and to wait out the coming storm.



Once the initial chaos of the Black Rain was over, Artifice's task was to protect the Ark bunkers and then attempt to preserve or rebuild as much governmental infrastructure as possible in preparation for an eventual rebirth of civilisation.

Once Artifice weathered the dark days of The Fall, they emerged to a ruined world, and began the long and arduous process of exerting control over the former CAF territories.

REBIRTH

Artifice was armed and equipped for the task of re-establishment, but it was still no easy undertaking. The extent of the Fall's devastation made it abundantly clear that the organisation would have to expand their operations and gather intel from across the globe if humanity were to ever stand a chance of truly rebuilding in the aftermath of such untold destruction wrought by the Fall's architects.

Many of Artifice's first operations concerned the reclamation of the orbital elevator in CAF territory, in order to not only secure a well-equipped base of operations, but also preserve and protect one of humanity's greatest technological efforts. Once the Orbital Foundations were secured, Artifice turned their attention to the outside world. Beginning with large-scale goods and infrastructural tools traded out of the Foundations' bunkers, Artifice's commercial operations quickly spread out from central Africa.

Given that their operatives primarily functioned as traders in the early years, it took little time for them to become referred to as "Artificers", and the organisation embraced that name wholeheartedly.

Under that name, they began to spread their influence across the globe, subtly assisting fledgling communities and influencing them wherever possible towards stability and humanism. For the surviving communities of the Fall who could not trade in goods, information or raw materials, Artifice took in the best and brightest survivors, promising the education and tutelage of doctors, peace-keepers and community leaders. Even in the face of an Apocalypse, the CAF's original purpose of unity would survive.

RIVALS

As the reach of the Artificers grew, they couldn't fail to become aware of the Nemissaries and their rising influence. At first, the Artificers were simply cautious, but as powerful and organised factions such as the Dominion began to emerge, they began to see the Nemissaries as a deadly threat.

Above all else, the Artificers feared a world of humans ruled by immortal, unaccountable monsters, and the rise of The Dominion in Europe seemed to validate this fear.

Carefully, the Artificers began to work to undermine the Dominion's power. Decades of planning set the leaders of the Dominion against one another, and brought the collective Cabals to the verge of civil war.

As the various emerging factions in the feuding Dominion prepared for war, one of the eldest members of Ah'kesh's Cabal returned to the Dominion's council and proposed a compromise. He and many of the younger Nemissaries who were discontent with the Dominion's leadership would accept an exile of sorts, and form a new order in the ruins of America.

The expedition would be vast and while it was a massive drain on the Dominion's resources, it was substantially less devastating to them than the civil war the Artificers had attempted to instigate.

AMERICA

Internally, the Artificers debated on how to proceed. The idea of using the orbital defences to eliminate the Dominion outright was one seriously and gravely considered, but in the end calmer heads prevailed; after all, the devastation that such an action would unleash might well destroy everything the Artificers had been working for. Worse still, many of the elders might still survive and seek justified retribution.

In the end, it was decided that the only course of action was to shadow the Dominion and begin inroads into America as well. Various small task forces were assembled and, taking everything they could carry, the hazardous journey across the Atlantic was made.

The Artificers were not going completely unprepared; even before this looming crisis, they'd had a handful of recon operatives in America, but these individuals were scarcely trusted and generally thought of as little more than expendable sources of information.

It was easy enough in the chaos of the east coast for the Artificers to gain a foothold and with great care they began the process of establishing outposts across the eastern coast.

Now the Artificers wait; there are horrors in the former land of the free, some expected — others entirely unlooked for — but there is Hope there as well. Amidst America's calamity, there is a chance to bring real change, and to help fan the flames of rebirth.

OPERATIONS

The Artificers' operations in America take numerous forms and are carried out by a wide array of personnel, most of whom have only a dim understanding of the greater organisation they serve.

HIERARCHY

The Artificers divide their organisation into three broad categories; Third, Second and First Circle. These categories are not ranks in the strictest sense, for each has numerous specialised positions — rather they are a broad measure of how much trust is placed in any individual within the organisation's hierarchy.

Members of the First Circle have been taken into the Artificers ranks, and represent a diverse array of personnel. They range from simple pawns, merchants and radio operators, to highly trained individuals with promising futures. What matters is that none of them have earned the trust of the organisation as a whole.

Second Circle members have had their loyalty tested directly by the Artificers. Each of them is expected to die before revealing information, and to be accepted, each Second Circle member must have proved their willingness to die for the Artificer's goals either directly in the field, or during carefully orchestrated and unexpected tests.

The Third Circle makes up the command of the organisation, and is made up only of the most senior, trusted and competent Artificers. Each of these is either a combat veteran or an expert in a particular field. They rarely leave fortified installations, and in the rare events that they have to, the Artificers take no chances with their safety.

MOTIVATIONS

To outsiders, the Artificers maintain an attitude of careful indifference. They seem to be concerned only with trade and to a lesser extent, the exchange of information. In many respects, this image isn't far from the truth.

In America, the Artificers have a pressing need to gather resources in order to grow the organisation's strength, but this process is simply a means to an end.

More than anything else, the Artificers seek knowledge – in particular they seek to better understand the true nature of the Brood, but in general they are seeking to preserve and expand upon broader human knowledge.

What the Artificers want in the long run is the restoration of human civilisation and a Third Renaissance. To do this, they know that the Brood must be defeated, and the Nemissaries brought to heel.

In the Americas in particular, the first responsibility is to monitor the activities of the Hierarch Dominion, and where possible use the distribution of technology and materials to other factions in order to slow or contain the growth of the Nemissary-centric Dominion.

Another important concern of the Artificers is the search for the American equivalent of the Ark project. The Artificers are well aware that the Reapers – Seraphim and Blacklight in particular – were successful in destroying numerous subterranean facilities, but the Artificers have reason to believe that they were defeated before their goal was completed. The Artificers have cast their nets far and wide in the search of potential leads that would uncover America's remaining bunkers and vaults, though as for what they may find within them, the organisation has little clue.

In their search for these subterranean facilities, the Artificers have uncovered information that has led them to believe that at least two of the Reapers are still alive; dormant, in hiding, and possibly wounded. Finding and containing these creatures is of critical concern, and tactical

THE AMERICAN EXPEDITION



The vast majority of the Artificers' personnel in America have been recruited on-site, and as a result are members of the First Circle. The command of the organisation in America is headed by a council of the Second Circle, and no Third Circle members of the organisation are permanently stationed there as of yet.

The fact that only a handful of American-born personnel have been accepted into the Second Circle is a source of continuing friction. This power imbalance is a growing concern, and worries about potential loyalties have further lowered the number of promotions, creating a vicious administrative cycle.

planning has begun in the Orbital Foundations to ensure that should the harbingers of humanity's destruction re-emerge, humanity stands victorious.

SETTLEMENTS

In America, the Artificers maintain no open settlements of their own, but instead keep a presence in most large communities across the East Coast. Internally, the Artificers refer to these as "Nodes", each of which is a small self-contained facility with a satellite uplink.

The personnel at these facilities are mostly of the First Circle, but each always contains at least one Second Circle operative in a command position. The Nodes operate as trading stations and communication networks, though workshops and material collection facilities have also been established in developed areas. To a lesser extent, the Nodes also operate as rudimentary banks, and should a community come under threat, the Artificers will lend what defensive assistance they can within means and reason.

Beyond these Nodes, the Artificers maintain a number of well-hidden military outposts along the coast, the largest of which – Landfall – is on the southernmost tip of Nova Scotia in eastern Canada. This sophisticated facility was constructed in an area deliberately situated so that should it ever be captured, it could not be maintained without access to the Artificer's advanced production capabilities and land-to-air transport infrastructure.

Landfall is primarily subterranean, but has a number of heated landing strips that allow it to function as an airbase. The facility itself is incredibly well-defended and possesses a number of readily deployable short-range tactical nuclear weapons.

In addition to their main base of operations, the Artificers have established several military bases which operate under the guise of freelance mercenary companies.

Finally, they have managed to occupy and capture several former United States Military facilities. Several of these are simply being stripped for parts and resources, but some of them are in the process of being converted into full facilities, complete with material processing warehouses and communication uplinks.

COMMERCE

The first thing which comes to mind to most people in regards to the Artificers is their position as traders – an image which the organisation is keen to encourage.

In most American communities of any notable size, there is usually a small compound or large, fortifiable building operated by the Artificers. Here, people can come and barter for the services or goods on offer.

The goods on offer are generally of better quality than is available elsewhere, and the Artificers are also very willing to sell their services as engineers and technicians. In addition to this straightforward trade, the Artificers also operate as information brokers.

The organisation is always careful to conceal the full and true extent of their knowledge, but make no secret of being in radio communication with other Artificer outposts, and uplink operators will happily send messages between communities for a very reasonable fee. Notably, they often provide this service free of charge for community leaders or for messages of a humanitarian nature such as warnings about Broodspawn movements or natural disasters.

For a more substantial fee, the Artificers will also move to actively find out information on a client's behalf. This usually consists of requests for trade information, but the Artificers are perfectly willing to deal with more exotic subjects such as pre-Fall knowledge or detailed maps of areas.



SLAVERY AND THE ARTIFICERS

The Artificers consider themselves to be heirs to, and protectors of, the legacy of the Second Renaissance. As a result, the organisation is opposed at every level to the slave trade. This is applied equally to slavery in its straight-forward format and the dubious practice of “indentured servitude”.

The Artificers’ non-confrontational nature means that they don’t openly oppose groups such as the Breakers, and attempt wherever possible to maintain normal, amicable relations. That said, Artificers categorically will not accept payment in slaves, and often work in subtle ways to hamper the activities of slave-driving groups and individuals.

Artificers also offer assistance where possible to escaped slaves, sometimes going so far as to offer internships and placements to the individuals who show talent and aptitude. In their own a slow and methodical way, the Artificers are attempting to use their information and trade network to break down and hinder the practice of slavery in America, and they fight harder than most to ensure the practice does not take root in fledgling communities.

In these instances, the Artificers will always make a show of having to find the information, and requests will normally take several days, in order to both avoid suspicion and to reinforce the idea that the Artificers are “looking” for information, as opposed to the truth – simply recalling it from the central databases that the organisation maintains.

SALVAGE

One of the places in which the Artificers are most active is in the general search for Pre-Fall resources. In America, this currently takes the form of small-scale sponsored scavenging expeditions. Many of these are handled by third parties in the employ of the Artificers, but more sensitive operations are often overseen or performed by Tier 1 Strike Teams.

For the most part, these operations are more about information gathering than outright treasure hunting – in particular the Artificers are attempting to ascertain the accuracy of pre-Fall Intelligence regarding the old United States. When the Artificers do discover something of significance, their first move is usually to withdraw and to make careful plans, weighing up the merits of extraction, retrieval and salvage – after all, the last thing they want is to draw the attention of other powerful factions.

Of course, the Artificers still need coin, and so they use their knowledge selectively to pinpoint potential resource caches and extract their contents prudently. The material is then either sent to Nova Scotia for transfer back to HQ or distributed amongst local Nodes to be sold to help fund the organisation’s efforts.

THREAT RESPONSE

The Artificers are not an aggressive organisation, but that doesn’t mean they’re to be underestimated. On the whole, the Artificers prefer to avoid violence, and when it’s unavoidable, they attempt to keep any given response appropriate to the threat at hand.

To deal with threats, the Artificers have a number of Strike Teams of varying capabilities. These teams fall into three tiers, generally following along the same hierarchal lines of importance as the organisation’s Three Circles.

When possible, the Artificers will first respond to a threat by a simple retreat. Unlike many factions, they have little interest in holding territory and their access to satellite uplinks means that there is little need to keep valuable information on site. In the same vein, the Artificers avoid keeping sensitive or irreplaceable materials in insecure locations.

If a genuine threat presents itself and retreat isn’t an option, the Artificers will employ a “Scorched Earth” strategy; all data and resources will be destroyed. Personnel are expected to attempt to evacuate once this is done, but Second and Third Circle members are expected to take their own lives before allowing themselves to fall into the hands of the enemy.

What happens after the implementation of Scorched Earth procedures depends on whether the threat was an isolated event or not. If it was simply bad luck or the random actions of individuals, the Artificers are likely to write off the affair and simply begin again. If, on the other hand, the attack represented a persistent threat, then the organisation will move to eliminate the threat with an appropriate Strike Team.

TIER 1 STRIKE TEAM

These teams make up the bulk of the combat-ready forces available to the Artificers in America. They're made up of First Circle combat operatives with a handful of Second Circle operatives in leadership and management positions.

Tier 1 Strike Teams operate as mercenary companies and beyond their ties to the Artificers, are free to accept third party contracts, the revenue from which is expected to go towards the continued practice of operations.

The organisation uses these Strike Teams directly when it needs to eliminate human opponents, wishes to take aggressive action in a situation with many unknowns, or where failure is a distinct possibility. Unless the situation is desperate, these teams will not be deployed against Nemissaries or large numbers of Broodspawn.



NEMISSARIES AND THE ARTIFICERS

It bears mentioning that the Artificers do not hate Nemissaries – they distrust them and fear what they may represent, but they also know that each one is still fundamentally human.

It's this understanding that is the root of the problem. From the point of view of the Artificers, no one person can be trusted with the sort of power Nemissaries represent. As a result, the Artificers are fundamentally opposed to any organisation that is directly controlled by Nemissaries.

In the long term, the Artificers haven't yet truly decided on any one solution. They certainly don't reject the notion of Nemissaries serving with humanity and wouldn't oppose a future where Nemissaries are simply an extended definition of Human, but while they entertain that idea in principle, they are convinced that it is a fantasy – one that will lead to tragedy in the end.

AGGRESSIVE ACTIONS

As stated, the Artificers are generally passive and unwilling to get involved in conflicts, but their operatives are still human and as a result, the organisation sometimes finds itself deploying Strike Teams in the defence of threatened communities.

This practice is frowned on by the organisation, but its leaders generally turn a blind eye to the deployment of Tier 1 Strike Teams. Higher tier response teams are never used in this way; the risks from an impromptu deployment are simply too high.

It's possible that a Tier 2 Strike Team might be employed by a Second Circle operative, but such an action would most likely end their career within the Artificers; worse, the organisation might well decide to silence all witnesses to the event.

Organisation: Tier 1 Strike Teams normally comprise 12 or 24 combat operatives with half that number of support personnel. These personnel are led by a Second Circle operative with extensive combat experience, though it should be noted that these are officers never deployed directly to the front-line, and instead the unit is led directly by a subordinate First Circle officer in combat.

Base of Operations: These Strike Teams generally remain mobile. They travel light and set up temporary encampments relevant to their operations.

Equipment: By the standards of the East Coast, these teams are armed to the teeth. The unit will have access to any appropriate armour of up to Uncommon Availability. They will also generally be equipped with Advanced Assault Rifles and handguns as a sidearm.

Generally, a third of the unit will also be deployed with a specialised weapon such as Heavy Flamethrowers, Advanced Combat Shotguns or Grenade Launchers. Individuals using these weapons will carry a Light SMG as a backup weapon instead of their Advanced Assault Rifle.

Each member of the team will also have a personal radio and a number of grenades, including not only fragmentation or incendiary grenades, but also flashbangs for operations in close quarters.

It should be noted that these teams can request, and will likely be given, access to any military hardware that the Artificers deem reasonable for an operation, such as transport or weather appropriate gear.

Tactics: The unit will generally divide itself into small four-man fire teams, each of which will contain three riflemen armed with Advanced Assault Rifles and one team member with a specialist weapon.

The fire teams will spread out over an area, sticking to cover where possible and attempting to get the enemy into overlapping lines of fire.

These teams are professionals and each fire team is expected to engage using its own discretion. If faced with serious opposition, fire teams will generally fall back to regroup with other fire teams and attempt to concentrate fire on a single target.

Such teams are not expected to fight to the death, and the Artificers on the whole prefer an ordered retreat which preserves equipment and personnel. As a result, individual acts of bravery are discouraged and these teams can seem cowardly to an unwary opponent – something that can be a deadly mistake.

Keep in mind that these teams have easy access to explosives and will often have established pre-arranged fall-back positions with ready-made traps and ambush points.

TIER 2 STRIKE TEAM

These soldiers are all members of the Second Circle and have generally spent a decade or more in active service as part of a Tier 1 Strike Team. As a result, they are without exception hardened veterans, equal in skills and abilities to any elite fighting force from before The Fall.

These teams are precious to the Artificers and much of their equipment is either extremely difficult or outright impossible for even the Artificers to manufacture should it be lost. As a result, they are deployed only when a threat has reached a stage where it can no longer be tolerated and Tier 1 Strike Teams would be unable to ensure the destruction of the target.

Generally, this means that Tier 2 Strike Teams are usually deployed against Nemissaries and as a result they have become extremely adept at eliminating them. It is a testament to their effectiveness that virtually no-one outside the Artificers are even aware of the existence of these Strike Teams.

Organisation: Tier 2 Strike Teams always consist of twelve active members, with eight reserve operatives. The reserve operatives are full combatants and the team rotate the active members on a routine basis allowing them to rest wounded or fatigued teammates and rapidly replace casualties.

Each team elects a primary and subordinate officer from amongst their own number. They fight as a brotherhood and don't consider officers superior in any way, but recognise the need for a clear chain of command under combat situations.

In terms of the hierarchy of the organisation as a whole, these teams take their orders from the Artificer's central command in Africa and they judge all other requests on their own merit, deciding for themselves whether to accept a deployment or not.

Base of Operations: Each Strike Team of this tier has a permanent base of operations from which they deploy via air-transport. In America, this is generally the Nova Scotia airbase, but plans are currently in motion to establish secondary operation centres in the Appalachian, Colorado and Rocky Mountains, to provide a better range of deployment positions across America.

Equipment: If Tier 1 Strike Teams armaments are impressive, they pale in comparison to the Arsenal that Tier 2 Teams have access to.

Each member will be given specialised Carbon-weave armour, the helmet of which incorporates a full warfare information suite, in addition to infrared and night-vision filters. The teams are also equipped with long range radio communications systems, linking them to the Artificer's data network. Over all this, they also have a reactive camouflage cloak to assist in stealth operations.

In terms of armament, the baseline weapons for the team are the MN-K8 Helix Rail rifles. They also have access to a number of Linear Rail sniper rifles, Rail Flechette Carbines and the Artificers' own custom spear-gun style weapon known as a Quill Rifle.

Any weapons the team are equipped with will also have access to any specialised rounds from the Core Book, in addition to those noted under Faction Gear.

Furthermore, teams also have access to any grenades they need, and will also have a number of one-shot long-range laser-guided missiles. They will also carry any necessary explosives or demolition equipment for a mission, and perhaps most terrifyingly they always deploy with a pre-armed, small scale tactical nuclear warhead.

Finally, Tier 2 Strike Teams have access to aircraft for rapid deployment, particularly the G8-1 Fellhawk. These vehicles, though potent in their own right, are not generally deployed with the team, and usually withdraw to a secure location once the team has been deployed.

Tactics: A Tier 2 Strike Team generally never deploys without significant Intelligence on its target. Once they begin operations, they are generally inserted via Fellhawk, which drops them several miles from the actual target. The Fellhawk then remains in locale whilst the team advance towards the pre-planned engagement zone.

In the unlikely event that the target is a human individual or group, then any given attack is likely to be brutal, quick and thorough, and it's highly unlikely that any outpost other than one defended by powerful Nemissaries will withstand an assault by a Tier 2 Strike Team.

In the event that the Strike Team is required to engage Nemissaries, they will proceed according to a carefully arranged plan. First, the team will split into three groups, designated Alpha, Beta, and Delta.

Alpha and Beta teams will advance towards the target whilst Delta team take up sniping positions a kilometre or more away from the engagement. Alpha team then moves within three hundred metres of the target, whilst Beta team begins to flank. Once in position, Delta team will begin the assault.

Delta Team will prioritise their targets and then fire a staggered volley of shots from their long-range linear rail rifles. As soon as the first shots are fired, the Spotters in Delta Team will then fire the laser-guided missiles. Once this is done, Delta Team will begin to reposition immediately.

Once the missiles strike their target, Alpha Team will engage and open fire, while Beta Team engage any targets that attempt to flee or reach the firing position of Delta Team.

From this point, the teams will operate under their own reconnaissance. In general, Alpha team will always attempt to directly engage the enemy, whilst Beta Team will attempt to flank and keep pressure on the enemy.

Meanwhile, once Delta Team is repositioned, they'll begin using their Rail Rifles to pick off targets of opportunity or those who attempt to flee.

The overall goal of the operation is not to kill Nemissaries, but rather to disable them in order to remove their Aenthir – the importance of which every Tier 2 Strike Team member explicitly understands. If the Team succeed, the Aenthir will be placed in containment, and transferred as fast as possible to the Nova Scotia base. Any Nemissary whose Aenthir reaches the Artificer's HQ is dead for all intents and purposes – the Artificers may not be able to directly kill the Nemissaries, but there they have the means to permanently contain them, preventing their rebirth.

Keep in mind that any time such a Strike Team deploys, that it does so with a primed tactical nuke, which will be used in the event the team fails to eliminate the target and is unable to retreat.

TIER 3 STRIKE TEAM

When all other options have failed them, the Artificers have a final line of defence in the form of the Tier 3 Strike Team. These represent a massive commitment of resources on the part of the Artificers, and so far in the history of the organisation, they have only been deployed a handful of times.

Only an insistent and protracted threat from a group of powerful Nemissaries is likely to draw this sort of attention, and even then the risk involved in the deployment of so many potentially irreplaceable assets means that the Artificers would generally prefer to use multiple Tier 2 Strike Teams than fall back on this option.

Organisation: The organisation of a Tier 3 team is the same in structure as that of its Tier 2 counterpart, and its members are universally made up of veterans from such Strike Teams. Worldwide, the Artificers only currently possess two such teams, but are in the process of assembling a third Strike Team, specifically for operations in America.

Base of Operations: All Tier 3 Strike Teams operate out of the Artificer's main headquarters in Africa. In the event that such a team is needed, its personnel and gear will be transferred via a specialised aircraft which is launched into low earth orbit, and then begins a descent to the area of operations.

Equipment: Six members of the team will be piloting "Jackal" Light Battleshells. The other six members of the team will be equipped as per snipers in a Tier 2 Strike Team, but with the exception that the team will have three Linear Rail Sniper Rifles along with at least six Short Range Laser-Guided Missiles.

Tactics: The Strike Team will divide itself into three uneven groups. The six Battleshell pilots will form into two three-man fire teams designated Alpha and Beta, and the remaining six members will deploy together as Delta team.

The engagement will begin with Delta Team firing in the same manner as a Tier 2 Strike Team's tactics, including the secondary volley of laser-guided missiles. Even before the missiles hit, Alpha and Beta teams will begin their assault, trusting the Battleshells to weather any damage from the missiles.

The Battleshell fire teams will then attempt to bring down any opponents with overwhelming firepower. Meanwhile, Delta Team does not reposition but continues to fire, using additional target data fed to them by the Battleshells via satellite uplink.

Unlike a Tier 2 Strike Team, no nuclear weapon is present; instead the operation will be timed as such that at least one of the orbital Kill-Sats is in optimal firing position at the moment of engagement. If for any reason the team is unable to withdraw, or in the event that multiple members of such a team request it, the satellite will fire its payload, eliminating anything at ground zero.

Unless the target was a Reaper, there will be an immediate deployment of a Tier 2 Strike Team that will proceed to the blast site and attempt to recover the Aenthir's of any surviving Nemissaries, or otherwise eliminate any enemy survivors.

In the event the target was a Reaper, standing procedure is to withdraw all personnel from the area and then fire an additional orbital strike on the position, before deploying a Tier 3 Strike Team that will then recover any remains for transport back to the Artificer's HQ.

NEW EQUIPMENT

The following armoury provides stats and details for the new equipment utilised by the Artificers.

FACTION GEAR

The equipment in this section represents technology that has been specifically developed by the Artificers themselves, and as such is highly unlikely to be encountered outside the hands of a senior faction member.

Quill Rifle

The Artificers, like everyone else, have had to engage the Broodspawn to survive, and the Quill Rifle is a result of their ingenuity. It is in essence a semi-automatic spear-gun similar in size and shape to a grenade launcher. The rounds it fires are approximately six inches long before deployment, but extend in flight to a final length of around eighteen inches. The rounds, or Quills, are also barbed – making them extremely difficult to remove without causing massive physical trauma.

Damage: 5

Pool: —

Range: Medium

Ammo: 16

Availability: Unique

Size: Large

Qualities: Ballistic, Impaling, Slow Reload, Two-Handed

Linear Rail Sniper Rifle

These rail weapons were developed by the Artificers for the express purpose of eliminating Nemissaries or potentially engaging a Reaper. They use many of the same systems found in a standard linear rail gun, but fire a carefully designed round which spins in flight, helping to stabilise the trajectory.

These weapons are large and awkward and require an external power source, but are man portable. In the event that a team needs to make a hasty retreat, the main barrel can be detached from the weapon, and the power source can be abandoned to allow for an easier retreat.

Damage: 15

Pool: +1

Range: Very Long

Ammo: 5

Availability: Unique

Size: Large

Qualities: Impaling, Powered 3, Relic, Single Shot, Two-Handed, Voidglass

Special: This weapon incorporates a **Laser Target Designator** (see page 67 in Chapter 2 – Flesh and Blood). Furthermore, this weapon uses unique ammunition by default. It may use non-standard rail munitions, but loses the **Impaling** and **Voidglass** keywords if it does so.

FACTION VEHICLES

The Artificers have access to a broad array of vehicles, along with the facilities to maintain and construct them. In addition to the Fellhawk and the Jackal Light Battleshells noted below, the Artificers have access to any non-faction specific vehicles.

G8-1 Fellhawk

The Fellhawk is a low-orbit capable military transport, representative of the height of aerospace technology during the Second Renaissance. The aircraft is large and sleek, capable of transporting at least twenty-four personnel or two light vehicles.

The aircraft is capable of supersonic flight and long duration, high efficiency gliding. At slow airspeeds, it can also reconfigure its wings and air-intakes to allow for vertical take-off and landing (VTOL).

In combat terms, the Fellhawk is lightly armoured and possesses only a modest array of weapons, but does incorporate a number of sophisticated defensive systems, including an electronic warfare suite and a laser anti-missile system. As a backup, it has access to flares and chaff.

Offensively, the aircraft has a nose-mounted rail turret and two deployable weapon pods on each wing, potentially allowing for a wide variety of other armaments, though the Artificers rarely ever use the Fellhawk in such a capacity.

Stats:**Availability:** Unique**Scale:** Massive**Mass:** 4**Structure:** 4**Senses:** +2 (Low light, magnification, thermal)**Control (Powered Flight):** Fast/+1, 460 mph**Control (Supersonic):** Extreme/-1, Mach 3**Control (VTOL/Hover):** Fast/-3, 0 – 90 mph**Qualities:** Electronic Warfare Suite (ECM & ECCM), Internal Power Supply (12 Flight hours), On-board Radio (Approx. 50 mile range), Orbital Relay, EM Hardened, Stealth, Relic**Armaments:**

Forward and Aft mounted Light Helix Rail-turrets

2 Multipurpose guided missile launchers (6 missiles each)

Flares & Chaff

Jackal Light Battleshell

A marvel of engineering, the Jackal represents one of the first truly effective exo-armour suits developed during the Second Renaissance.

Like others of its kind, the Jackal is essentially a suit of powered armour that is controlled directly by the movements of the user's body. It considerably enhances the capabilities of a soldier on the battlefield offering near immunity to small arms fire and the strength necessary to comfortably use heavy weaponry normally only found on vehicles.

Far from compromising the pilot's mobility, the Jackal allows for considerable battlefield speed through its own mobility and the limited use of on-board thrusters. The suit incorporates a full electronic warfare suite and each has an independent satellite uplink, along with integrated laser target designators and basic life support functions for the pilot.

These suits are enormously complex and require a great deal of maintenance, meaning that although some do exist outside the hands of the Artificers, they are almost guaranteed to be non-functioning. The ones in the Artificers hands are all but irreplaceable, as although their workings are understood, many of their sophisticated components are beyond anyone's capabilities to manufacture in the Post-Fall world.





Availability: Unique

Rules: Mechanically, the Jackal is handled as a suit of wearable armour with a Resilience of 3, and the Complex and Hardened Qualities. Furthermore when powered, the armour also enhances the character's capabilities in numerous ways.

In order to function, the Jackal requires a power source, which is supplied via specialised Vacuum Batteries which give a maximum non-combat operation time of 36 hours; however, combat drains the batteries rapidly, losing 6 hours of charge per Scene.

In the event that a suit enters combat with less than six hours remaining, it can sustain its power for 1 Round per hour of charge remaining. Without power, the suit is more or less useless. Simply moving requires the character to have a Body of at least 4 and even then the suit will provide a -3 Pool penalty to all Actions.

Whilst the suit has power, it provides the following benefits;

- The user's Body is increased by 3, or replaced by a flat value of 7, whichever is greater, for all purposes related to physical strength.
- The user's Prowess is increased by 2.
- Manoeuvring thrusters allow the wearer to have extreme mobility in combat, granting them a free Standard Move Action each Round.
- The user gains enhanced visual abilities, giving them access to the Low-light and Infra-Red vision modes from the Vehicle rules.
- The suit is considered to have both the ECM and ECCM Vehicle Qualities.
- +2 Pool to Combat and Initiative Pools. This bonus is lost if the suit becomes affected by ECM.
- The suit has two integrated Laser Target Designators, each mounted in the wrists.
- The arms of the suit have an integrated weapon mount which allows a weapon with the Support Quality to be wielded one handed.

These suits are extremely sophisticated devices and require extensive repair and maintenance after each deployment. Without specialised knowledge, tools and resources, these suits will break down after only a few sorties.

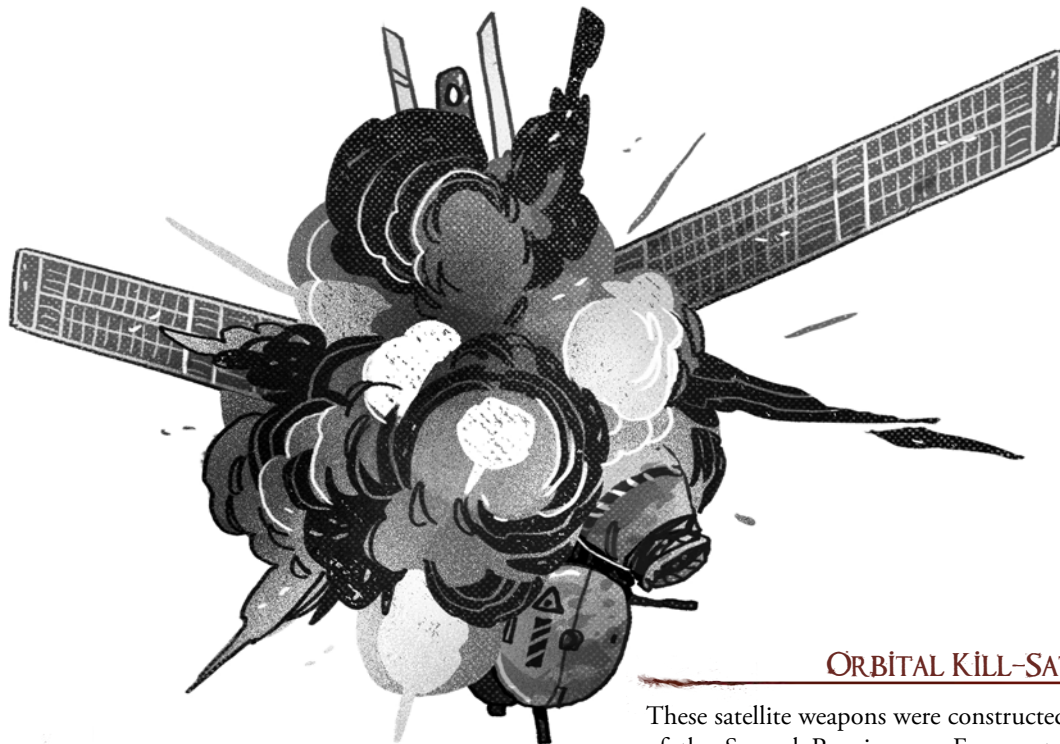
In addition, all Artificer variants of these suits incorporate an array of biometric sensors. The suit will refuse to activate for an unregistered human, and in the case of a Nemissary, the suit will self-destruct.

This process occurs over three Rounds. The suit will lock down immediately, and removing it is a Sustained Body/Athletics Action. The character can attempt the roll each Round, needing a total of 6 Outcome, and the Difficulty of the roll starts at 3, dropping by 1 each Round.

If the target has not escaped in the first Round, this results in a massive electrical shock with a damage of 1D6+4, and is treated as if it had the Flash Quality.

In the second Round, a series of small explosives detonate within the suit, inflicting 1D6+10 Damage.

In the final Round, the last of the suit's systems detonate in a final explosion which is treated as a frag grenade centred on the wearer.



EXCESSIVE FORCE

When the Artificers want to kill something, they mean for it to stay dead. The following artefacts represent some of the most devastating tools in the arsenal of the Artificers. As such, they are beyond any individual faction member to use, and use of either requires specific authorisation from the Orbital Foundation headquarters.

Getting this authorisation requires a majority vote of at least two thirds of the Artificer's High Command. Generally, this authorisation would require at least six hours of deliberation, in which numerous factors and alternatives are proposed and discussed. As a result, any operation that could involve their utilisation, such as the deployment of a Tier 3 Strike Team, will be approved well ahead of time.

Two circumstances can skip this initial process, allowing the weapons to be armed with the authority of only a single Council Member. The first is the confirmed re-emergence of one of the Reapers, in which case standing orders would be to ready and use the weapons as rapidly as possible, and then gather the Council to assess the Artificer's next moves.

The second circumstance is classified at the highest level, with only Third Circle members of the organisation even being aware of this particular protocol. It involves the emergence of a stable Hive – in which case, the Artificer's would be to fire a staggered sequence of three nuclear warheads, followed by a bombardment of no less than six orbital kill-sat strikes, at which point the Council will be convened as with the emergence of a Reaper.

ORBITAL KILL-SAT

These satellite weapons were constructed during the height of the Second Renaissance. For most nations they were simply the natural outcome of a change in international treaties regarding satellite weaponry.

In some cases, particularly the CAF, the weapons were actually intended as a defence against the Black Rain. Many did operate in this capability and a not inconsiderable amount of the Shards were destroyed or deflected before they ever impacted.

One of the first true signs that the Black Rain was more sinister than it appeared was that those weapons which fired were almost universally destroyed by fragments as they entered Earth's orbit.

Notably, the CAF chose not to use its orbital weapons, instead directing them into a higher orbit and out of the path of the incoming Shards; the net result of this was that although a significant number were destroyed, several dozen survived. Of these, nine are still armed and functional - held under the complete control of the Artificers.

Rules: Arming a Kill-Sat to fire requires an authorisation code held only by High Command. Once given, the weapon only requires a few minutes to arm and orientate itself, at which point it awaits final authorisation to deploy a round.

This round is a carefully-constructed and reinforced carbon rod which is housed in a sabot, fired via linear accelerators built into the satellite. The satellite calculates the necessary speed and trajectory to have the round successfully enter the atmosphere and reach the target with maximum force.

Each satellite can actually target almost anywhere on the globe as the satellite can fire the rounds indirectly, so that they circle the planet before beginning their re-entry. However, this process is inefficient both in terms of time and destructive yield, and as a result the satellite closest to the target will generally be used.

If the strike was pre-planned, it's safe to assume that there is a satellite in an optimal position; in which case the travel time for the round will be less than a minute. A direct shot but from a less favourable position will generally involve a travel time of about three to ten minutes, with an indirect firing potentially taking anywhere up to an hour for impact.

For an optimal strike, targets will likely have as little as thirty seconds to react. With a direct shot this time will be closer to a minute, and an indirect shot might give as much as ten minutes warning.

When the round impacts, anything hit directly by it is going to be vaporised, simply having every health box filled with Baleful Damage; in practice, this isn't likely to be a factor, as while the rounds are accurate to within a few metres, they're not reasonably capable of directly hitting a human sized target, though this might be relevant for something such as a Leviathan Broodspawn.

Once the round impacts, there will be an initial blast with enough intensity to vaporise surrounding matter, sublimating it into a plasma state. Anything within the blast area will suffer an amount of Baleful Damage as noted below.

- **Close Range:** 100 Damage
- **Short Range:** 80 Damage
- **Medium Range:** 60 Damage
- **Long Range:** 40 Damage

As the superheated gases expand, the actual explosion will take place, travelling outwards from the impact site in a devastating wave, destroying virtually everything in its path. Anything unfortunate enough to be nearby will take an amount of Normal Damage as noted below.

- **Within 1 km:** 35 Damage. Any buildings at this distance will be entirely destroyed and offer no cover of any sort.
- **Within 5 km:** 25 Damage. Buildings at this range will be demolished, but some may still be partially intact. They may offer some small cover, reducing the damage to 20 but most likely burying the unfortunate individual under tons of rubble.
- **Within 10 km:** 20 Damage. At this point, buildings will be heavily damaged shells, but will provide some cover, reducing the blast to a more potentially survivable 15 Damage.

Once these two effects have passed, anything still alive within a kilometre of the blast site will likely be sucked up by a vortex of superheated air. Even if they manage to hold fast, they are still going to take Damage from the sheer heat and force. This starts at half the Damage for the initial blast (i.e: 50 Baleful Damage at Close Range).

Each Round, the target takes this Damage again, though the total Damage inflicted drops by 1 each Round as the energies unleashed are released.

In addition to everything above, anyone within several hundred kilometres is going to feel the after effects of the shockwave. Whilst this won't necessarily inflict damage, it will likely shatter glass windows and the entire area will have substantially diminished daylight for weeks following the impact, as the vaporised debris scatters throughout the atmosphere, obscuring the skies.

Unlike nuclear weapons, these impacts are "clean", meaning that they don't release noticeable amounts of radiation into the atmosphere. That said, the descent of the round is not dissimilar to that of a nuclear missile, and the actual blast produced is virtually identical, meaning that bystanders will have no way of knowing whether they need to flee from potential radioactive fallout.

Notably, once the satellite has fired, it's necessary for it to adjust its orbit. In extreme cases, the satellite can use its on-board supply of reaction mass to correct its position in as little as an hour, but in general the satellites adjust their solar and heat dissipation arrays to serve as a solar sail, and use this over the course of several months to correct their orbits.

Hypothetically, the satellite can be ordered to fire multiple times, but this would likely push the satellite out of a stable orbit and as such the satellite might never be recovered or usable again. In terms of munitions, most of the Artificer's satellites still have a full complement of six rounds each, though some have been fired for various reasons in the past.

TACTICAL NUKES

These weapons are well known to humanity and a vast number were deployed during The Fall. Their destructive capabilities vary tremendously; even the smallest is capable of catastrophic destruction and the largest can erase whole cities.

Throughout the modern era, most nuclear weapons had shifted to lower yield tactical warheads designed to be deployed in clusters. The missile would break apart releasing multiple smaller warheads, each of which had substantially less power than their older 20th Century counterparts, but their cumulative effect was devastating.

Aside from the devastation these weapons would cause, the single greatest drawback is the long term effects of their use. Upon detonation, these weapons release an enormous amount of radiation. This causes matter from the blast to be irradiated and the vast heat and pressure unleashed forces this irradiated material into the upper atmosphere, which then begins to fall back towards the earth, potentially contaminating vast areas far beyond the blast site.

The weapons in the possession of the Artificers are largely decommissioned, older nuclear warheads, which have been refitted and rearmed. In addition to these older warheads, the Artificers do have a handful of more sophisticated cluster warheads. In both cases, the Artificers are extremely unwilling to deploy these weapons except in the most desperate circumstances.

While the Artificers might be reluctant to deploy traditional nuclear warheads, they do manufacture a small number of customised low-yield warheads of their own design. These devices are not missiles, but are man-portable and can be carried in a space no larger than a backpack. These weapons are not intended for mass destruction; rather they are used as a last resort either to deny assets to the enemy or to ensure that a Strike Team that has failed their mission at least takes their target down with them.

Rules: The tactical warheads carried by Artificer Strike Teams can be activated by a unique code given to that Strike Team, or remotely by a majority vote of the Artificer's High Council. Once activated, the device can be ready to detonate within as little as ten seconds and can have a variable timer set.

Standard operating procedure is for Tier 2 or 3 Strike Teams to enter the zone of operation with one of these devices already primed and set to detonate if not deactivated by a member of the Strike Team.

Given the capabilities of Nemissaries, this deactivation must be given both by one of the Strike Teams on the ground and a second deactivation code must be transmitted from the reserve team or from a base of operations. The devices can also be immediately triggered by the agreement of at least two members of the Strike Team.

Once triggered, the blast is almost instantaneous. Anything caught within the blast will take Baleful Damage as shown. This Damage also has a unique disruptive effect upon Voidglass. Armour with this keyword offers no protection and all items of Voidglass construction will have their Quality lowered by one (i.e. Normal quality becomes poor quality).

In addition, any target with an Anima Pool which is affected by the blast loses all their current stored Anima, and takes 1 Light Baleful Injury for each point of Anima lost in this way.

- **Close Range:** 100 Damage
- **Short Range:** 80 Damage
- **Medium Range:** 40 Damage
- **Long Range:** 20 Damage

There will then be a blast which inflicts Normal Damage to targets depending upon range, as shown below.

- **Close to Medium Range:** 45 Damage. Any buildings at this range will be completely levelled.
- **Long Range:** 30 Damage. Buildings at this range will offer minor protection, lowering the Damage to 25, but the target will still have to deal with collapsing buildings and falling rubble.
- **Extreme Range:** 15 Damage. Buildings at this range will be heavily damaged but will likely remain mostly standing, offering some minor protection and reducing the damage sustained to 10.

LARGE SCALE NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Functionally, high yield nuclear warheads should be handled using the same basic rules for the orbital kill-sats but with the added disruption to Voidglass and the Anima effects, though the effects concerning Anima should be extended by one Range bracket. Where a Range Bracket would be extended beyond Extreme Range, consider it to affect everything within 10 km.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND RADIATION

Remember that the actual blast is going to be the least of someone's problems in regards to a nuclear weapon. For more information regarding radiation and fallout, see page 77.

Once the dust begins to settle from the blast, there will be a powerful release of Anima within the area. All targets will begin to gain a number of points of Anima based on their range from the blast as noted below.

- **Close to Medium Range:** 3 Light Anima per Round
- **Long Range:** 2 Light Anima per Round
- **Extreme Range:** 1 Light Anima per Round

This Anima gain is not voluntary and a target that possesses the ability to use Anima but whose Light Anima pool is full suffers 1 Light Baleful Wound for each point of Anima they are unable to absorb. This effect diminishes over time. Every minute, the amount of Anima gained at each range bracket is reduced by 1 to a minimum of 0. Once all the brackets reach 0, the effect ends.

For mortals, what comes next is the fallout. This isn't something handled with hard mechanics but is intentionally left in the hands of the GM. Given that the device is of relatively low yield, the effects will likely be manageable but still very dangerous for a couple miles around in every direction, and for twenty to thirty miles in the direction of the current wind.

Communities within these areas will need to be evacuated and surrounding farmland will be potentially unsafe for decades. The medical effects for anybody exposed to intense ionising radiation are likely to be fatal.

THE HARBINGERS AND THE LOST CHILDREN

*"Murderers are not monsters, they're men.
And that's the most frightening thing about them."*

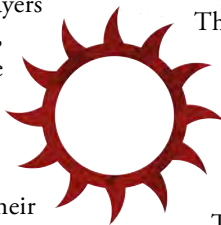
— Alice Sebold

Most Nemissaries have little desire to understand the Harbingers – they are at best cowards and betrayers unworthy of consideration, and at their worst, monsters to be slain. There are no words to be had, no secrets to be learned – just a remorseless enemy to be destroyed.

For all of that opinion however, there are indeed secrets – terrible truths in fact – and in their disgust and fury, the Nemissaries have so far failed to truly understand their enemy. This ignorance may yet cost every living thing dearly, for the Harbingers are not at all what they seem.

Most who become Harbingers are either created as such, or were once Nemissaries seeking an escape from a painful existence and a return to the comforting oblivion of The Brood.

The Harbingers should be mindless – after all, casting aside their individuality was the entire point for most, even when many of them seem to display an all too human capacity for malice.



THE FIRST HERALDS

The Hollow's victory is a slow one, but in the end it consumes each and every Harbinger. For a long time, so few of these beings existed that they went unnoticed, but now their numbers are growing and the world has no idea of their true potential.

The first of these creatures were ill-made, their minds utterly broken in their reforging, but as their numbers increased, so too did their stability. These dangerous entities no longer regarded themselves as Nemissaries or Harbingers.

They looked into the depths of the Broodsong and came to realise that it was broken, a perversion of an ancient power – the same power that had controlled the Reapers and that the Brood now contained. That power had a name – The Hive.

The Hive was older than the Broodsong, older still than mankind, and older even than the Earth. It had remade them, and they were to be the instrument of its rebirth, the breakers of its prison - the Heralds of a new world.

SHATTERED MINDS

The Nemissaries that join The Brood become lost in the sea of consciousness, but the darkness they bear remains quite awake. For a time, it remains impotent, choked within the Song, and yet bit by bit - it grows.

Unlike the Hollow of a free Nemissary, those trapped within the Broodsong are not consumed in their victory. Instead, they are called to a voice, a whisper in the darkness. In its embrace, the remnants of their human self are dragged from the Broodsong and bound together with the Hollow so that it is reformed – free now to exist in the service of the **True Mother**.

THE SEARCH

The Hive gave these Heralds their purpose, but it was weak and its ability to communicate with them was limited. The Heralds understood their purpose, but had little clear notion of how to proceed. Most were twisted beings, wilful but not sane by any conventional standard, and so their responses were varied and not always rational.

As the Heralds' numbers grew, they began to hear the Hive's Song more clearly and through it gained a clearer understanding of what must be done; the Hive needed a

CAUTION

This section deals with themes and material that may be troubling or distressing to some readers. In particular, it deals with indoctrination and psychological manipulation of children and young adults.

These are subjects that should never be dealt with lightly and it's not our intention to trivialise real world abuse in any aspect. In the context of the game, the Lost Children represent one of the most insidious horrors of the SINS universe players are likely to encounter, and it's impossible to properly address them without an acknowledgement and discussion of those themes.

It's important to keep in mind that roleplaying is about having fun. This means that the kind of complex moral dilemmas that the Lost Children present by their very nature should only enter into a game where all the players are capable and comfortable with roleplaying scenarios like these.

If the group are familiar enough with one another, it's best to discuss the nature and content of a game before it begins. If this isn't practical, then it's essential that some safeguard be put in place, such as the X Card or Lines and Veils system, both of which you can find more information on online or in the opening pages of the revised edition of the SINS core rulebook.

Ultimately, it's important to remember that the themes and issues surrounding The Lost Children are not well suited to the kind of scenarios involved in quick convention games, 'pick-up games', open table games or the more light-hearted campaigns that focus on action and heroism.

Reaper. Only a being of such power could free it from its bindings.

Whispers in the dark proposed that at least one of the Reapers still lived, though where exactly the Heralds had no clue, and so many of them began to scour the earth. Others searched for knowledge and came to a strange understanding; at least one of the Reapers had betrayed their own kind.

They sought answers, but the Mother's rage was too great for them to bear – yet there were glimpses of another path. The most zealous and possessed of the Heralds proposed that a new Reaper could be forged. The Heralds' broken souls could not bear such power, but it was possible, however slim a chance, that a Reaper might be forged by bringing a new-born Nemissary to one of the Shards which contained the Hive's essence.

THE LOST CHILDREN

The Brood has inflicted terrible suffering upon mankind and most survivors have learned to hate it in turn; yet for its own part, the Brood has no hate, nor malice. Ultimately, its consciousness is an alien one with no regard for its actions, nor compassion for its victims.

The Harbingers though can never be truly part of the Broodsong; something of their humanity persists and thus they are capable of a kind of sadism that would otherwise be alien to the more bestial Brood.

Most simply play with their prey, dragging out their hunts and revelling in the suffering of their victim, but occasionally they display a terrible patience; not content with simple slaughter, they turn their minds to inflicting lasting horror upon immediate victims or communities within their reach.

HISTORY OF THE CULT

The survivors of the East Coast have encountered the Harbingers often enough. All know the danger they represent, but only recently have humans and Nemissaries become aware of the more subtle and sinister horrors they are capable of inflicting.

Rumours have always circulated that the Harbingers do more than simply slaughter indiscriminately, and that occasionally they keep survivors alive. It's said that the Harbingers keep these unfortunate victims as playthings, killing and torturing at their whim and feeding on the suffering and despair they inflict.

For the most part, these rumours remained just that, but the discovery of the **Lost Children** would shatter this delusion and bring into keen focus the true horror the Harbingers represented.

HERALDS AND HARBINGERS

The Heralds represent a new and terrible evolution of the Harbingers. Not only are they stronger, but their intellect is more focused, making them capable of long-term planning and carefully measured cruelty.

Of course, not every Harbinger is destined to become a Herald; some are simply unsuitable, their wills too bound to the Broodsong or their Hollows too weak to begin the process.

Ultimately, the decision to incorporate Heralds or any other material into a campaign should be up to the players and GM. If the Heralds and their modes of operation are not a good fit for the tone of a campaign, it's perfectly fine to omit them from your game.

A CRUEL JOKE

The origins of the Lost Children cult are not far removed from the rumours circulated around the East Coast. Some twenty years ago a group of Harbingers arrived at and subsequently slaughtered a Breaker's Chainer facility in the foothills of the Appalachian mountains.

Having sated their fury on the guards, they turned their attention to the Breaker's possessions, and discovered there a significant number of young slaves awaiting sale. As the doors were opened, there was a moment of hope for the captives, which soon turned to crushing despair and fear.

The Harbingers gathered before the youth decided not to kill their prize immediately. Normally, they would have turned to seeking their entertainment there and then, but they knew Breakers would soon respond and the Harbingers, having depleted a great deal of their strength, would soon have to withdraw.

So, the Harbingers gathered the slaves and began to lead them to a place of safety, and on the way those same captives began to think once again that they had indeed been saved. The Harbingers for their part were amused by this naivety of youth, and the beasts heinously realised what a feast could be made if they were to draw out such hopes of the imprisoned.

AWAKENING

With their victims in tow, the Harbingers chose a site where they could play out their pantomime deception to its bitter end. The Harbingers were ill-equipped to maintain even the illusion of being saviours for long however, and in frustration they began to turn to more violent forms of entertainment.

What followed should have been mercifully brief, but amongst the pleas for mercy and the screams of the injured, one of the Harbingers stood silent and still. The other Harbingers, lost in their violent revelry, were heedless of the danger.

The silent one, its Hollow now ascendant amidst the carnage, devoured its former kin and stood alone amongst the blood and death. The remaining captives simply waited for the relief of a quick death, but it never came.

THE FIRST TEMPLE

That creature before the youths was a Harbinger no longer, but a Herald, and it was no mad beast but rather a creature now possessed of purpose and drive. It turned to the remaining captives and offered no false promises; it simply decreed that it was an avatar of the Mother – their Goddess – and that they would worship and serve.

At first, the survivors assumed that this was simply another deceit, but the Herald was true to its word. The Broodspawn they had been told to fear for years began to bring them food and supplies seemingly at the avatar's command, and although they remained prisoners, the lives of those young and unfortunate souls seemingly improved.

Bit by bit, they began to see the Herald as a true saviour, and their obedience – which at first had been born of fear – slowly became true reverence.

The Herald and its Broodspawn made for the captives a subterranean hideaway that would become their home

and their temple. They made a shrine both to their lost friends and to the Mother that had given them salvation.

A NEW PURPOSE

As the months went by, the Herald was joined by others of its kind and they brought with them prisoners of their own. The existing youth within the temple were taken to live within the depths of the temple, and there they were joined by the youngest of the new arrivals, chaperoned by Broodspawn. Of the adults that arrived with them, there was no sign.

The Heralds, amidst weeping and pleas, then told the children that they must stand witness to death once again, and that this was the price the Mother demanded of them. They made the children watch as one by one, the adults were ritually slaughtered, only to rise immediately as Broodspawn.

With the deaths over, the Heralds spoke again and told the observant youths that their duty now was to watch over the new arrivals, to treat them with kindness and teach them the same mercy of the Mother that they had known before the building of the temple.

From time to time, more Heralds would arrive, bringing with them lost young causes to join the embrace of



Mother's Mercy. Eventually, some began to reach the end of adolescence, and they feared their own ritual slaughter was imminent, but the Heralds again defied expectations with their machinations.

The young charges that reached adulthood were not to simply be slaughtered upon the altar. The Heralds explained that each of them would have a chance to be reborn as an emissary of The Mother. They explained that the chances were slim, but better at least for those who were devout and willing.

And so, the Heralds would take each devotee far away from the temple and the curious eyes of the younger members and stand them before a seemingly broken Shard. There, in the presence of the Heralds and a gathering of their Hivespawn servants, the faith of the young is put to the test.

If the Heralds deem the supplicants strong enough, they begin a process intended to create a Reaper – a process which has mercifully failed in every instance thus far.

Those the Heralds deem unworthy are instead given a twisted version of the “eternal reward” which was promised to them; these poor young men and women are not killed, but used as the base upon which a parasitical **True Hivespawn** can grow.

AN END IN SIGHT

Over the years, the Heralds moved subtly and carefully; ranging far and wide in search of suitable victims, they avoided detection. Their success made them overconfident, and they began to establish new temples – but soon enough their actions came to light.

Pyreflame scouts were the first to stumble across one of these temples and face the awful truths contained within. Unsurprisingly, a great search was made for additional temples and in an unusual but warranted act of cooperation, word quickly spread between all major factions and organisations of this new and heinous threat.

The Heralds for their part began to withdraw and marshal their forces. Temples relocated to further and more remote regions, and many larger cults of the Mother's Mercy splintered into smaller enclaves to better avoid detection. They knew that the horror they had created would incite lethal retribution from both human and Nemissary opponents, and time was running out.

TO REIGN IN HELL

As it stands at the present, the cult represents one of the smallest factions active on the East Coast, yet despite this it casts a far greater shadow over the region.

Few individuals have ever survived an encounter with the cult's guardians, and the few survivors rescued in the aftermath of these battles have given confused and conflicting accounts of its actions.

Even more disturbing, is that many of the ragged youth rescued from the cult remain blindly devoted to its doctrine. For outsiders, the cult is often a distant and alien menace, but for its victims, it's their whole world, and for many it is the only life they've ever known.

LIFE IN THE CULT

Years have passed since the discovery of the first temples, and within them a degree of order and routine have taken root. For its victims, the cult is not the obvious nightmare that outsiders imagine. In practice, the daily lives of cult members are often safe but monotonous. The cult separates its members into three broad categories; the **Faithful**, the **Bound** and the **Wayward**.

The Faithful represent the largest group within the cult. They are comprised of the youth which have fully accepted the cult's doctrine and those who have been born and raised entirely within the temple. Their lives are relatively easy by the standards of the wasteland. Their basic needs are tended to, and they are given a limited degree of freedom.

This freedom has distinct limits of course, and no member of the Faithful can refuse the orders of the Heralds, nor can they stray outside the immediate vicinity of their homes.

Many of the Faithful have specific responsibilities and duties and often form impromptu hierarchies amongst themselves. Usually their duties involve the maintenance of the community, but those longest trusted will also be assigned to watches, both of the immediate area and more importantly over the stewardship of new recruits – or The Bound.

The Bound is a term the cult uses to refer to new recruits. These individuals are kept imprisoned in the depths of the temple but are otherwise treated well. The Faithful are encouraged to befriend and to aid in the indoctrination of them. Over time, the Bound will be invited to take part in the rituals of the cult and eventually raised to the status of the Faithful.

Fear, isolation or simple peer-pressure drives most to accept their new situation, but there are always some that resist. Along with this, there are also members of the Faithful that occasionally have “lapses of faith” or otherwise anger the Heralds. These reticent young adults are referred to by the cult as The Wayward.

The treatment of the Wayward is far closer to the nightmare that outsiders imagine. The Heralds use them to indulge the violent whims and desires that they must otherwise restrain. Few survive long, and only a handful of these are ever readmitted into the ranks of the Faithful again.

The Heralds keep the Wayward far from the eyes and ears of the rest of the cult; only when they are to be put to death or to re-join the Faithful are they brought back into the Temple. If they are to re-join the Faithful, their

return is a joyous one – otherwise their broken, barely living bodies are brought forward for the gathered Faithful to watch them breathe their laboured last in silence. It is a demonstrated lesson of control that few ever forget.

When these unfortunates die, the Heralds prevent their resurrection as Broodspawn; for the victims this is a mercy, but for the devoted of the cult, it represents a terrible punishment – their sin has denied them a glorious Rebirth, making them a failure in the eyes of the cult and The Mother.

DOMAIN OF THE LOST

The individual temples are diverse in their nature but all share a variety of elements in common. First and most importantly, they are always situated as far from major trade routes or communities as possible. Generally, the temples are also well hidden.

Most temples are primarily subterranean, often utilising existing underground facilities with a series of branching dug-out burrows. The area chosen will be one of little to no interest to scavengers however, and preferably many days journey from the nearest inhabited settlements. Notable locations where previous temples have been found have included rural train tunnels, subway maintenance shafts and the networked basements and storm-drains of suburban ruins.

In addition to this, the temples are never situated within areas fully overrun by the Broodspawn. This strange condition is motivated by the fact that the Heralds and their Hivespawn servants present a growing discordance within the Broodsong – one that can turn to outright violence and potentially overwhelm and destroy a Heralds' enclave should a pack become territorial or fall under a Broodmother.

Internally, most of these sites have been dug out by the Heralds' Broodspawn servants and decorated by the ranks of the Faithful. There are generally a great number of individual rooms, some given over to sleeping areas and

others functioning as storage. The deeper levels contain the holding areas for new arrivals and the shrine which serves as the heart of the temple. In this shrine, is a malformed parody of a Shard, which is decorated in a twisted mixture of the childish and macabre.

Deeper still is an area which few but the Heralds ever leave alive. Within this area are the private domains of the Heralds, and beyond them the dark cells in which the Wayward await their grim judgements.

THE FAITH

The Faithful are led to believe that they are the primary focus of the cult; they are taught that they are uniquely blessed, for they alone amongst humanity have been brought directly into the service of the True Mother.

In shaping these beliefs, the Heralds have imparted a few fragments of a greater truth. The cult has been taught that the Mother was ancient beyond imagining and that all life bore a debt to Her that could never be repaid.

THE FIRST SIN

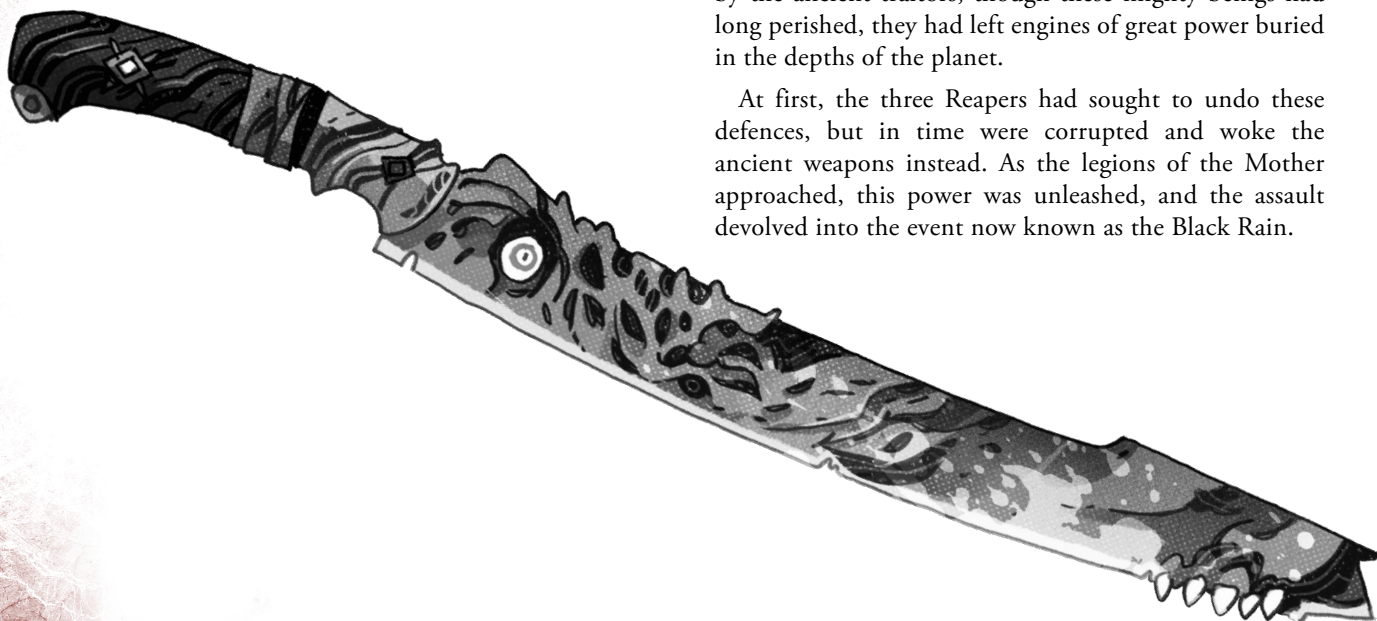
Long ago, our forebears rebelled against The Mother. The war which followed led to their defeat and they fled justice, hiding amongst the pale stars of the heavens. From the defeated, the Mother chose Her champions – Her Reapers – and sent them forth to pursue Her betrayers.

In time, She learned of this world and dispatched seven of Her servants to reclaim it. Three came first; alone and unaided, they were to lay the foundations for our world's judgement. Their four siblings and the legions of The Mother arrived and called out, but the three gave no answer. Assuming the worst, that legion began its descent upon the Earth, but realised too late that they had been betrayed.

THE BETRAYAL

The world humans inhabit had not been left undefended by the ancient traitors; though these mighty beings had long perished, they had left engines of great power buried in the depths of the planet.

At first, the three Reapers had sought to undo these defences, but in time were corrupted and woke the ancient weapons instead. As the legions of the Mother approached, this power was unleashed, and the assault devolved into the event now known as the Black Rain.



This treachery bore a final blasphemous fruit in the form of the Broodsong – for the Mother’s power was corrupted upon this world and her legions were unbound and served no clear master. The four Reapers managed for a time to control the Broodsong and turned their attention to punishing the traitors, but ultimately their strength was not enough, and though they bested the traitors, they too perished in the fires of The Fall.

REBIRTH

With the Reapers gone, the Brood had no master; the Mother’s power here was diminished greatly, reduced to an echo within the cacophony of the Broodsong. But for the coming of the Harbingers, our world might have forever escaped Her judgement.

She whispered to these broken Nemissaries and offered redemption to those that would listen. They were remade as Her Heralds and they gathered the faithful in the pursuit of Her glorious cause.

The Faithful were to assist in the Mother’s true rebirth, for in them lay the potential to forge the Reapers anew. In death, their souls would be weighed, their innocence protecting them from the wages of their ancestral sins, as the Mother required a pure vessel, a soul which could be reformed to bear Her might.

Nearly all would fail. Generations could pass before one succeeded, but even in failure there was purpose and forgiveness. Their souls, now purified, would strengthen the Mother, and the remains of their physical forms would be animated by the Mother’s Will, to protect and serve the Faithful. The errant three may have forestalled the battle, but it would not win the war. A cycle has been born, and long shall it continue.

TRUTHS

It’s important to keep in mind that the Heralds are not telling the whole truth. As a matter of fact, they don’t know it themselves. For the most part they’ve been truthful in so far as they understand it, but they have certainly twisted that truth to serve their ends.

Any notion of forgiveness or an afterlife is a lie; the Mother certainly has no forgiveness or mercy. The Faithful are simple tools and perhaps the most horrifying secret is that the Heralds begrudge every sacrifice, for the Mother doesn’t desire to kill mankind, but to bind it forever in eternal suffering without the merciful release of death.

CHILDREN OF NIGHTMARES

The cult of the Lost Children is a scattered and secretive organisation. It deploys its forces only against isolated communities or groups and as such many have come to imagine it poses little real threat. When its enemies strike

against it, they are often motivated more by hate and a desire to save its victims than any real fear of its power.

A great many of its enemies have realised far too late just how dangerous the cult truly is. Even those which succeed have little idea of just how devastating the cult could become should it achieve its goals, for in its present state it only represents failed endeavours and a fruitless, ill-fated quest.

THE HERALDS

Currently, the most dangerous assets of the cult are its guardians and creators, the true servants of the Mother – the Heralds. Each is deadly in its own right; all the cunning of a human mind coupled with the malice and power of a fallen Nemissary’s Hollow make for a terrifying foe.

Every Herald possesses strength far greater than the Harbingers and each one can call and bind the Hivespawn to their abhorrent will; for all that, they are all mere shadows of what they will become if the True Mother, their Hive, is freed.

DISCORDANCE

When humans die to the Brood, their souls and their essence are bound within the cacophony of the Broodsong. Within that symphony is a second, discordant song – the voice of The Mother- it is faint, but it is inescapable.

Without the Mother’s disruption, the Nemissaries could not have emerged; each of the Trueborn heard that song and so set themselves apart from the multitudes that refused to listen.

When they claw their way back to life, the song remains within them – an echo of their minds, a Hollow reflection of all they hate and despise. Even in those rare Nemissaries forged by their kin, an echo of that song is passed on to them.

If a Nemissary falls to that Hollow while freed from the Broodsong, it cannot endure, but for the Harbingers things are different. Bound within the Broodsong, the Hollow can join directly with The Mother and thus be reformed.

HUMAN EVIL

The Harbingers and the Hollows alike are capable of inflicting terrible suffering on those around them, but in some respects it could be said they are not “evil”. They have no concept that what they do is wrong – they have no more empathy for other humans than a cat does for a mouse.

The Heralds are different. Each is not simply the Hollow, but a reunion between it and its human soul, and that is something that can only be achieved through choice.

That choice is a loaded one, and each Harbinger made it when they gave into despair, willingly choosing to return to the oblivion of the Broodsong. In doing this, they cast aside their humanity and gave tacit permission for what was to come.

The Heralds understand the full ramifications of the things they do. They possess empathy and they understand all too well the suffering they inflict, and they enjoy it.

To outsiders, the Heralds might seem redeemable at first; it would be easy to imagine that some lingering human part of them decided to take mercy on the youth of the cult, but that could not be further from the truth. There is no kindness or mercy left in a Herald, and unlike their Harbinger kin their long-term goals are far more important than their own twisted satisfaction.

PURPOSE

Ultimately, the Heralds are driven by a desire to free the Mother. Each of them has felt Her presence but She is not yet capable of commanding them directly. Her will seeps into their actions and so little by little, they have stumbled closer to their true goal.

They seek constantly for the means to free Her, and the Lost Children are but one of their twisted experiments. Through them, they hope to model the Mother's dark purpose within a human individual, so that in the moment of their Rebirth they might bear Her presence back into the world.

Their attempts in the case of the Lost Children are futile; the process they are attempting will never succeed and many older Heralds know this all too well. Their experiment may be a dead end, but it has borne fruit of a sort; through it, they have finally been able to create true, albeit weak, Hivespawn.

Even in the face of failure, the Heralds now maintain the cult primarily as a sick taunt; it is simply another suffering to inflict upon humanity in punishment for its ancient sins.

Horrifying as this thought is, those who knew the whole truth would be relieved. The benign reality is that in their Spite, the Heralds consider their nascent Hivespawn a mere by-product of their insidious actions – albeit one they are all too content to continue producing. It is only a small mercy to understand that were the Heralds organised enough to turn all their efforts to the creation of Hivespawn, they might have succeeded in their true goals.

MECHANICS

A Herald is created when a Harbinger would fall to their Hollow in the same manner as a Nemissary. When this occurs, they go through a process similar to Judgement – their physical forms and Aenthirs are not destroyed, and they arise several hours later as one of the Heralds.

Mechanically, they are functionally identical to a Nemissary with the following exceptions:

- The Herald uses their Permanent Spite in place of Creed as their Fate Trait. Any actual ranks of Synergy or Creed they possess are lost.
- Each Herald is under the effects of the **Bearer of the Dark** Refinement. The effects are counted as a Feature instead of a Refinement.
- Heralds cannot gain Refinements. Any Refinements they possessed are lost and exchanged for an equivalent value in Qualities.
- The Herald loses any effects from being a Harbinger. This means that they are no longer considered Broodspawn and can use the Song of Brood normally.
- They gain the **Discordant** Keyword and can use the **Song of Brood** on Hivespawn.
- The Heralds' default forms are now the **Spite** variant of the Destroyer Shape. If they wish to change to a human form, they must spend Dark Anima equal to their Permanent Spite. They can remain in this shape as long as they desire. Returning to the Destroyer Shape takes 1 Standard Action, and the Herald cannot ever assume the Creed variant of the Destroyer form.
- Heralds cannot cheat death in the same manner as Nemissaries or Harbingers. If they suffer an Overkill Wound or otherwise are killed in some other fashion, their Aenthir breaks and they can never return.

One final difference between a Herald and a Harbinger is the consequences of attempting to **Devour** one. If a Nemissary or Harbinger attempts to devour a Herald, the process proceeds as normal up to Step 4. The Nemissary does not receive the automatic chance to stop and instead their Hollow makes an immediate attempt to seize control using the higher of the Nemissary's permanent Spite, or that of the Herald.

If the Nemissary succeeds, they can choose whether to persist in Devouring. If they actually do decide to complete the process, or the Hollow is victorious in the contest of wills, the character is immediately consumed by their Hollow and converted into a Herald, with a Permanent Spite equal to the higher of its host or the original Herald.

In the event that the Nemissary chose to stop at the last moment, they gain a number of Temporary Spite equal to the Herald's Permanent Spite, but are otherwise unharmed.

FAO: Lucian Gray

I'm sorry for the delay in contacting you. As you know, the turmoil in the north has required me to relocate, and as such I have been forced to shift my base of operations to Pyreflame territories. In regards to our prior correspondence, I have regrettably been unable to find any useful information on the current state of either Jack Bramhall or Jessica Myers. Still, my search has not been wholly fruitless. I have managed to gain some standing within the Pyreflame as of late, and have managed to secure a transcript of an interview with a rescued survivor from the cult of the Lost Children. For brevity's sake, I have included an abridged transcript of the interview, and a solid-media recording should arrive with you shortly.

The interviewer's name is not given in the recording, though I believe their identity to be a Nemissary by the name of Adam Walker, and so I have noted him as "AW" below. The name of the child is noted simply as "C", based on the name given in the transcript.

INTERVIEW BEGINS

AW: How are you doing today, Callum?

C: That's not my name. I don't have a name.

AW: We spoke about this. Names are important, it's the one your parents gave you.

There is a long pause in the audio at this point. A faint noise, possibly crying, is heard.

C: I only have a Mother. I don't have any other parents.

AW: Why don't you tell me about her, then?

C: Her? If you understand, you wouldn't use that term. I suppose it doesn't matter. None of you matter.

Another long pause here.

C: Why did they take me?

AW: You mean the Harbingers?

C: No. The soldiers. Why did I have to go? I was so close...

AW: Close to what?

C: Becoming one with Mother.

AW: Being sacrificed, you mean? Dying, like the others?

C: They didn't believe. They were weak.

AW: What does it mean, then? What do you think was going on?

C: They were trying to make them Awake, like you.

AW: Like me?

C: Yes, and no. Not broken like you. A new champion, to bear the Mother's true power. One greater than even the Broken God; one who might yet bear his sword. I was so close!

AW: None of that is true, Callum. They didn't-

The voice is cut off at this point and there is the sounds of a struggle, followed by shouting and screaming.

==

As I said, you will receive the full transcript shortly, and there are further details within it, but this I feel is the most critical information within it.

Your faithful servant,

Arun

REAL HORROR

The Lost Children are a group of antagonists which should be used with care. They're not intended as throwaway villains and generally their inclusion in a campaign will involve a lot more issues than simply putting down their Brood or Hivespawn minders.

USING THE LOST CHILDREN

Integrating the Lost Children into a game poses a number of potential challenges but it also offers a wealth of opportunities for roleplaying and storytelling.

Getting the best out of this content requires a GM to have a clear understanding of the boundaries of their players. It is important not to push the group into dealing with issues which make members of it uncomfortable.

The responsibility to not distress players means that a badly planned scenario can get derailed. Normally, if a singular aspect of a game makes a player uncomfortable it's simple enough to retcon, wrap up a scene, move on or otherwise tone down the descriptions and such, but with the introduction of the Lost Children to a game that's not always going to work.

The issues that the Lost Children raise are generally going to run deeper. For instance, what will the group do with the surviving youth that now regard them as kidnappers? This isn't the kind of issue that can be easily skipped over.

Skirting the Edge: As we said at the start of this section, the Lost Children are not generally well suited to the kind of scenarios involved in quick convention games, or the more light-hearted campaigns which focus on action and heroism. Still, it's not impossible to make use of the Lost Children in these instances, but you'll want to be careful in how they are presented.

One option is to involve the Heralds' attempts to kidnap children and coerce wayward teenagers. This allows you to make use of the material in this section but doesn't require dwelling on the additional horrors and indoctrinations that occur within established temples.

If on the other hand, you do want to have the group attack a temple directly, one option is to have it be a new facility that doesn't yet have any of the Faithful. This approach is definitely darker and allows for an eerie atmosphere, but still puts the player characters in the straightforward position of rescuers and heroes.

In the Shadows: A second approach to introducing the cult is to keep the full horror in the shadows. In these scenarios, the players may well face the Heralds themselves and deal with the sorts of issues as described above, but with a darker, more serious tone.

Using the cult in this way means that the players shouldn't have direct access to conversations with the

Faithful. If the time comes that the players are going to succeed in storming a temple, then the GM has a few options.

The first is simply to have the Faithful evacuated. This isn't entirely out of character for the cult, but it's something that needs to be handled with care as most groups tend to bristle at antagonists who continually escape them.

A second, far darker option, is to have the Heralds or their servants sacrifice the Faithful before the group arrives. This can be used as a way of illustrating just how callous and cold the Heralds truly are and there's certainly something to be said for facing the final villain of a campaign in an aftermath of loss.

In either case, the GM can give the players a feeling of fulfilment by having them strike against the Herald, whilst encountering the Bound or even some surviving Wayward. Through them, a GM can convey a great deal of horror and shed more light on the cult's activities as a whole.

This approach has the advantage that fading to black or wrapping up a scene won't derail the story. Providing the group is comfortable with such an approach and the experience in play, this kind of exploration could allow a GM to later introduce the greater ramifications of the cult, such as their indoctrination of the Faithful.

Horror: The last option is to confront the players with all the twisted realities of the cult. This isn't about shock-value or gore, but the awful consequences of systemic abuse and indoctrination. As with any material that could shock or upset, we do not recommend presenting the cult in this way unless you are explicitly aware of the boundaries of your player group.

At the centre of this horror are the Faithful themselves. These individuals, which could range from young adults to children, are not straightforward to deal with. Unlike the Bound or the Wayward, they won't regard the players as saviours, but murderers and heretics. This inevitably puts the players in an extremely difficult position of having to decide how to deal with the situation.

Not only this, but in exploring a temple, the Faithful aren't the only horror the players are likely to find. There are a number of other awful revelations that a full exploration of the cult is likely to bring.

One of these issues is the fact that the Heralds and their servants are unlikely to be particularly choosy about what they feed to the Faithful or the Bound. Certainly, their seclusion and secrecy means adequate food quotas are often hard to meet.

Sometimes the cult members will get rations and other stolen food, but there's a very real possibility that most members of the Lost Children will have been forced to engage in cannibalism to one extent or another at some point.

The remaining horrors are the results of how young people with virtually no moral guidance will behave towards one another. The description and implications of this kind of environment alone can understandably be too upsetting for many people, and involving them even in a peripheral way should be handled with care, forethought and safety tools.

THE AFTERMATH

In the event the players triumph in liberating a cult, the issue of how to deal with the survivors is not something that's just going to go away. This issue gets even more complicated if the Faithful are involved and their presence can potentially become the source of entire Stories and narrative arcs in their own right.

How these issues are going to be dealt with is something that should be thought about before the game even begins and there are a number of potential options available.

Salvation: It's unlikely that a player group is going to be equipped for having a large number of followers in tow, let alone a group of forlorn youth. This means that for most groups their first priority is likely going to be finding a new home for the Lost Children.

How easy this could be depends very much on the nature of the story and the world the GM is presenting. In a more hopeful interpretation of the setting, the players may be able to convince a local settlement to take in the children.

Two good options for this route are the Hierarchy Dominion or the Pyreflame Crusade. These organisations are both capable of accepting a group of unskilled children and each of them is likely to accept – if not on moral grounds, then at least as a political statement.

Of course, other factions such as the elusive Thorns might be willing to accept the children, but this would require the player characters to be in good standing with the faction, or at the very least be owed a serious favour.

A final – if very questionable – option is to give the children to the Breakers. This option may seem at face value to be horrendous, but depending upon how harsh the Breakers are presented in an individual game, this may not be quite so damning.

In a harsher version of the setting, many communities will be simply unable to support a sudden influx in population and the Breakers, though slavers, will at least feed and shelter children. It is important to remember that however you run your games, the Breakers are still human for the most part, and are not utterly without compassion.

SAVING THE FAITHFUL

Finding homes for members of the Bound and Ward is one thing, but the Faithful present a far more difficult problem as few communities are going to accept them.

The Dominion and Pyreflame are likely the only short-term options available. Both these factions will still require the players to have some kind of favour or influence over them to be persuaded; after all, the Faithful represent a long-term problem for anyone, and the beliefs they hold are difficult to understand at best, and dangerous at worst.

The Factions' approaches are likely to be very different as well. On the surface, the Pyreflame may seem the more cruel of the two – there, the Faithful will be little more than prisoners and the best that can be hoped for is to replace one kind of indoctrinated belief system with another.

The Dominion on the other hand are likely to resort directly to supernatural means to solve the problem. Through the use of various Arietta, the Faithful's indoctrination can be undone, but some may be disquieted by the fact that the children's minds are being further altered against their wills.

Ultimately, it comes down to whether the ends justify the means. There's no simple answer to this sort of dilemma; in an ideal world the children would be cared for and treated by professionals and then rehabilitated into society as a whole, but the world of Sins is not a perfect – or particularly happy – one.

They may well agree to take at least some of the children in as apprentices, and may even be willing to free other enclaves or be sent in pursuit of Heralds depending on their resources. After all, though the Lost Children are not a pervasive force on the East Coast, it was a Breaker outpost where the first Heralds took their enclaves, and many older Breakers who know what occurred in the Appalachian Mountains still feel there is a score to settle.

Destruction: As we mentioned before, in some scenarios it's possible that the Heralds will have slaughtered every living thing within the temple. From a storytelling perspective, this removes the necessity of dwelling on the darkest aspects of the cult. For all that, we're still talking about the mass murder of young people and if you're going to use this option it's important to think about what you're exploring and tread carefully.

However you choose to go down this route, we recommend that you do so with a degree of decorum and respect – both to the loss of life you're portraying, but also to your players at the table. There is no need to dwell on gory details, or be overt in your depiction of corpses. As with any exploration of tragedy and horror, implicit depiction is often more likely to be more palatable – and more resounding – than explicit depiction.

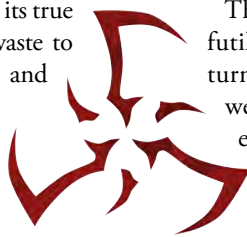
BLACKLIGHT

"When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love have always won. There have been tyrants and murderers, and for a time, they can seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall. Think of it--always."

— *Mahatma Gandhi*

The Black Rain began The Fall, but the Reapers are its true architects. Their power was terrifying; they laid waste to whole armies, wiped cities clean from the Earth, and bent the fury of the Brood to their will. Their victory seemed certain, and yet they failed.

To the best of human knowledge, seven Reapers came to this world, and at least three fell by human hands. The truth, as with many things however, is not so simple. Though there were seven Reapers, only four arrived with the coming of the Black Rain. Three were already here long before.



The defence mounted there was desperate but futile. At the crescendo of the battle, Blacklight turned its absolute defence – Oubliette – into a weapon, consuming the White House and everything within a kilometre of it in a sphere of absolute darkness. It was for this vast destruction that Blacklight was given its moniker by its human enemies.

DEFEAT

With the capital dealt with, Blacklight turned its attention to eliminating military facilities one by one. Heading westwards, it carved a trail of devastation, ultimately heading for one of the US's largest inland strategic missile sites, Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri.

As it approached the facility, it came under heavy assault from the US Air Force and became aware of an unsettling pattern. The air strikes were carefully timed, resulting in a near continual and relentless bombardment.

It came now to its mind that these creatures, weak as they were, might actually succeed if given enough time. Before it could ponder this fully, it received a command from the mightiest of its kin.

Its superior had engaged one of the traitors in the city of New York, but was struggling to gain the upper hand. The very idea that one of their kin would call for help – let alone the strongest amongst them – shocked Blacklight to the core.

It had no loyalty as humans would understand it, but it was bound to obey, and so it made to return east. At the same moment, a new assault began. Fresh aircraft unleashed volley after volley of long-range, guided missiles. High above, bombers dropped their full payloads of conventional explosives.

Through it all, Blacklight strode, bringing death to everything which caught its gaze, but as the bombs and missiles struck, a new weapon was deployed. Blacklight had moments to react as a warhead broke into dozens of smaller components – each a nuclear weapon in its own right – but Blacklight stood firm, believing its defence absolute, and thus falling for the trap.

The component missiles were staggered; twelve bombs, twelve detonations. Blacklight withstood only five.

RUINED FORM

Blacklight slept for decades, intending to begin the long, slow process of restoring its broken body. It dreamed of its vengeance and the slaughter it would bring to the humans, but its dreams were troubled.

THE FALLEN GOD

The entity that would come to be known as **Blacklight** arrived hidden amongst the Black Rain. The fragments which rained down should have been its army, a new-born Hive upon the surface of the Earth – a planet which should have already been brought to its knees.

Instead, Blacklight arrived to find itself weakened, isolated from the will of The Mother. The Shards would not answer, and instead another will opposed it, and it knew its cause of devastation had been betrayed.

Shaken by this revelation and severed from The Mother's guidance, Blacklight raged. It vented its fury first upon Canada's eastern coast, carving a trail of destruction through the most populated regions.

It was there it was opposed for the first time. The Canadian and US governments launched a joint operation in an attempt to slow its devastating progress. Blacklight responded with overwhelming force. Both the armed forces and orbital defence satellites used in the attack were annihilated.

Though Blacklight was unharmed, it realised that its position was not as unassailable as it seemed. For the first time in millennia, it was unable to access the endless reserves of Anima gifted to it by The Mother. It dawned on Blacklight that it might conceivably be overwhelmed by continuous assaults, and although it could slaughter any number of conventional opponents, without Anima it could not withstand a sustained assault from the orbital defence network.

Taken aback, Blacklight reached out and gathered a significant army of Brood to itself. Each of their minds was laid bare to Blacklight, and it decided to strike at the heart of its enemy, and thus moved to assault the US Capital in Washington D.C.

Soon enough its long sleep ended, but its body remained broken. The nuclear fire had poisoned the land and the Anima it needed had become a curse. The constant cycle of regeneration and destruction was an unimaginable agony.

Writhing in fury and madness, Blacklight lays broken, calling out for aid, its will bent upon its restoration. Little by little, it pours itself into the Broodsong, twisting it, driving the creation of True Hivespawn.

These creatures are drawn like moths to a flame, seeking in their madness to restore the avatar of their true Mother, but these broken creatures can achieve little. Their scattered and disorganised attempts are not enough, but Blacklight hears other voices now, so like its own.

The True Harbingers, the Heralds, are rising. They hear Blacklight's Song and move to restore their maddened, broken god.

USING BLACKLIGHT

There are a number of ways that Blacklight can be introduced to a game. Though it can certainly serve as a direct opponent, it deserves more build-up and its introduction in any form needs to be considered carefully by the GM.

RESURRECTION

The primary way of using Blacklight is as a looming consequence in a scenario where the players are attempting to prevent its resurrection. This could be set up in a number of ways. The simplest and most likely is that the players become aware of a group of Heralds that have located it and are going to attempt a resurrection.

Alternatively, Blacklight's physical form lies close to a massive military facility. It's possible that if one or more of the factions attempted to scavenge it, or ended up engaged in active fighting in the area, Blacklight might be able to gather enough Dark Anima to enable a partial awakening.

In either case, how this would occur is not something which needs to be covered by the rules. The practical situation is that Blacklight needs Dark Anima. It already manages to gather a trickle through various means, but never enough to overcome the damage that the radiation surrounding it causes.

This means that it exists on a tipping point that can be crossed when it's most appropriate for the narrative. Exactly what state Blacklight resurrects in is something



which needs to be considered carefully, and weighed against the relative strength of the group and the needs of the narrative.

MOTIVATIONS

Blacklight is a monstrous enemy and unlike most of the foes Nemissaries might face. It resembles in some ways the psychology of a Hollow – it has no compassion or empathy, and if it were not a slave to The Mother, it would perhaps be the closest anything could come to being truly evil.

Even severed from The Mother's will, Blacklight is beyond saving. Had Blacklight managed to take a new host, there is a chance, however slim, that the host's mind would have changed its moral course, but trapped and broken as it is, Blacklight has rotted in the ruins of its monstrous existence.

Now, after nearly a century of rage, hate and agony, its mind is all but broken. It no longer cares about goals, or strategy, or even the Will of the Mother. It wants to kill every living thing on Earth, preferably in the most horrifying manner its alien intellect can devise.

Certainly, if Blacklight is allowed to recover even a part of its strength, it might well lay waste to the East Coast before it eventually falls to Nemissaries or the desperate actions of the Artificers.

In terms of an actual encounter, Blacklight is perfectly capable of communicating, though it has little desire to do so. The only topic that might conceivably start a meaningful conversation is information regarding the state of the other Reapers; in particular any information pertaining to the possible traitors in their ranks.

It knows that it was once part of a group of seven, and that three of their number were sent ahead to Earth. Somehow, at least one or possibly more of the advance scouts chose to take a human host and for reasons beyond Blacklight's understanding, fell under the influence of their vessel.

Other than the fact that one of these traitors seems to have fought against Seraphim in New York, it has no knowledge of what became of them or the other Reapers.

Its interest in the traitors is not born out of a desire to avenge its kin or any sort of duty, but a fear of the power that one of them seemed to possess.

RULES

Blacklight has the potential to be amongst the deadliest enemies in the entire setting of Sins, but its death and long slumber have greatly weakened its strength to a point where it might conceivably be overcome.

How severe this weakening is can be altered depending upon the needs of the Story and as a result, Blacklight is presented as three possible variations. Its different forms

vary in terms of raw power and abilities, but all share certain common rules.

COMMON TRAITS

Reapers are not Nemissaries but resemble them in many ways. For mechanical purposes of this supplement, Blacklight is considered a Nemissary with the following exceptions;

- Unless altered by a Trait, Blacklight is capable of generating Anima only through **Consumption** or **Defiling**.
- Blacklight cannot benefit from the act of **Devouring** a Nemissary, but can perform the process in order to ensure the destruction of said Nemissary.
- Blacklight cannot use **The Gift**, nor can it create other Reapers through its own power.
- Blacklight's form is already akin to that of a Nemissary in the **Destroyer Shape**. This is not a transformation but its natural form. This costs nothing and its Attributes and Traits already reflect its form.
- A Reaper can, if it chooses, return to its original human form, though Blacklight will not willingly do this.
- For the purposes of the rules, any Arietta that Blacklight uses is considered to have the **Spite** Keyword.
- Blacklight is not affected in any way by **Ambient Synergy**, nor does it possess a Hollow. Reapers in general do possess something akin to a Hollow, but the remnants of Blacklight's human soul are far beyond reach.
- Blacklight can control the actions of Hivespawn within a number of miles equal to its current effective Creed. Affected Hivespawn will obey its orders without question or complaint, and there is no upper limit to the number of Hivespawn which can be controlled in this way.
- Reapers cannot endure **True Death** in the same manner as a Nemissary, but are not easy to permanently kill. Each variant of Blacklight lists a section for **Defeat**, explaining what happens when the Reaper is finally defeated.

Beyond these exceptions, there is a final key difference; Blacklight and other Reapers can possess multiple Deadly Wound levels, and do not need to spend Focus to continue to Act. This comes at a cost however, and upon first taking a Deadly Wound, the Reaper's **Destroyer Shape** will collapse. This reduces their Body by 2 and their Prowess by 1.

In Blacklight's case, the collapse will reveal a hideously scarred and burned humanoid form of relatively small stature and androgynous appearance.

ARIETTA

Blacklight, like the other Reapers possess many of the same abilities as Nemissaries, but generally is limited to only those which concentrate on death and destruction.

For the purposes of the Rules, Blacklight can use the effects of Arietta from the **Song of Bone**, up to its Creed +1, and the **Song of Will** to a rank no greater than its Creed. So long as its Creed is high enough, it will always possess **Wings of the Firstborn**, **Return to Grace**, and **Oubliette**. These Arietta have all their Anima costs converted into Dark Anima, and remove any associated Spite costs.

It's important to note that **Reapers do not actually use Arietta in the conventional sense, but are innate abilities possessed by the Reaper in question**. As a result, other Traits or abilities which explicitly interact with Arietta will not function.

EQUIPMENT

As a Reaper, Blacklight would be terrifying enough with no equipment whatsoever, but to the grave misfortune of anybody who faces it, it bears an alien relic of terrifying might.

Varas Ka Nahara – The Tear of The Well

Through all the destruction wrought upon Blacklight, the **Tear of The Well** has endured. This terrible weapon was forged in darkness before the Earth had even fully cooled.

Unlike lesser weaponry, it has no single true shape; existing without natural weight or mass, it shapes itself to the will of those who can bear its terrible presence.

In its current state, it resembles a Voidglass spear, albeit smooth, regular and almost perfect in form. It would be beautiful, but no being possessing a soul can look upon it without seeing in its depths the end of all things.

Abilities: The Tear of the Well can take the form of any melee weapon, granting it the **Voidglass** Quality and increasing its Damage by the Fate Trait of its wielder. This Damage increase may be useful but it is not the weapon's true power.

Any Wound inflicted by the weapon is converted into the next most severe type. Worse, if a target is slain by this weapon, it meets **True Death**, its soul lost to the hungry void of The Well of Souls.

Simply wielding this weapon is dangerous, and a user gains 1 Spite per day. Even humans and those beings without a Spite Trait gain these points and can acquire Permanent Spite in this way.

If at any point their Permanent Spite would be greater than their Conviction, then their soul is utterly consumed. Only the Reapers and entities such as a Hollow can safely use this weapon.

TRAITS

Regardless of form, Blacklight possesses the common Traits and Equipment listed above, in addition to the following Skills;

Natural Skills: Athletics 4 Perception 3, Logic 2, Panache 1, Authority 3, Resolve 2

Learned Skills: Keening 4, Stealth 0, Crafts 2, Survival 0, Knowledge 4, Medicine 4

Combat Skills: Marksmanship 3, Archery 0, Fight 3, Melee 4

Specialties: Torture, Spears, Intimidation

Weakened

The profile represents the most likely outcome of Blacklight's restoration, where its death and long exposure to radiation has reduced its strength considerably. Even in this form it is still a grave threat, which quite legitimately endangers all life on Earth.

Attributes: Body 12, Prowess 8, Reason 3, Conviction 5, Passion 4, Cunning 4

Creed: 5 (Effective)

Dark Anima: 20

Focus: 10

Wounds: 5/4/3/2/1

Thresholds: 7/13/25/37/49

Resilience: +1

Initiative: 9/4+

Combat:

Unarmed: (11+2/4+) (Damage: 13) (Threat: 1)

Tear of the Well: (12+2/3+) (Damage: 18)
(Threat: 4) (Reach 3)

Notes: Keep in mind that Blacklight has access to a wide array of Arietta that may further enhance its stats, though its unlikely to unleash its full abilities unless pushed to do so.

Defeat: In its Weakened state, Blacklight can die and so long as its body is destroyed completely, it will never return.

Broken

This profile is a Blacklight that has barely restored itself, and though still a deadly threat is but a shadow of its former might. This variant allows less experienced groups to potentially confront and overcome one of the Reapers, or alternatively allow the GM to avoid a campaign ending because the players got unlucky and failed through no fault of their own to stop its resurrection.

Attributes: Body 9, Prowess 7, Reason 1, Conviction 6, Passion 2, Cunning 4

Creed: 4 (Effective)

Dark Anima: 18

Focus: 6

Wounds: 6/5/4/2/1 **Thresholds:** 6/10/19/28/37

Resilience: +1* (see Notes) **Initiative:** 8/4+

Combat:

Unarmed: (10+1/4+) (Damage: 13) (Threat: 1)

Tear of the Well: (11+1/3+) (Damage: 14)
(Threat: 4) (Reach 3)

Notes: Once Blacklight suffers its first Mauled Wound, its armour will begin to crack and crumble, dropping its Resilience by 1, though it still retains the **Voidglass** keyword for rules purposes.

In this state, Blacklight is incredibly desperate, will lash out with all its available abilities, and will attempt whenever possible to consume its opponents in order to replenish its Anima supplies.

Defeat: Like its Weakened form, Broken Blacklight is very much mortal; though its defeat may reveal something both painful and tragic. As it dies, its small form may begin to speak.

Its voice is soft and distant, almost as if it has forgotten how to speak; though its words seem unintelligible, the meaning will feel clear to all present. The voice is that of Blacklight's host, long bound within its form. Their words are bitter-sweet, savouring a brief and final moment of freedom as it laughs at the fall of their captor.



BLACKLIGHT AND NEMISSARIES

Blacklight knows many things, but the true nature of both the Brood and Nemissaries eludes it. In practice, only one of the Heralds is likely to have the desire or ability to restore Blacklight, but they would receive little thanks for doing so.

Blacklight has no idea how powerful Nemissaries can grow, and sees in them a broken reflection of enemies it bested long ago. It sees their existence as an affront and will hasten to destroy any Nemissaries it encounters.

Ironically, if Blacklight were to truly cooperate with the Heralds, it might succeed in resurrecting a true Hive. If it did so, its mind would once again be bound to The True Mother; instead of a maddened, raging beast, humanity would face a calculating, malevolent entity with nearly limitless reserves of Anima.

Awakened

This final profile represents Blacklight at its full and terrible power; this is an enemy that even a well prepared Cabal of the most ancient and powerful Nemissaries might fail to defeat, and should provide an incredibly difficult challenge for any group of players.

Attributes: Body 16, Prowess 9, Reason 4, Conviction 4, Passion 3, Cunning 4

Creed: 6 (Effective)

Dark Anima: 22

Focus: 10

Wounds: 6/5/4/3/1 **Thresholds:** 9/17/33/49/65

Resilience: +1 **Initiative:** 10+3/4+

Combat:

Unarmed: (12+3/4+) (Damage: 13) (Threat: 1)

Tear of the Well: (13+3/3+) (Damage: 23)
(Threat: 4) (Reach 3)

Notes: Though near the pinnacle of its strength, this version of Blacklight is still mercifully denied some of its true power; namely it should have had a near limitless pool of Anima, and Blacklight is ill-equipped to adjust its strategy to deal with this.

As a result, its primary weakness is a tendency to massively overspend its available Anima reserves – though this is small comfort considering the sheer destructive power its rampage can bring.

In addition, at least initially, Blacklight was capable of controlling the Broodspawn in the same way as Hivespawn, but this control diminished quickly. Assuming that Blacklight was restored to full power in some way, it would regain this ability but its effective Creed will drop by 1 every 24 hours for the purpose of controlling the Brood. In any event, Blacklight is capable only of controlling Broodspawn whose Permanent Synergy is lower than its effective Permanent Creed.

Defeat: At full strength, Blacklight is capable of defying death to a limited extent. Upon its defeat, Blacklight's form will begin to collapse; if not Devoured, Blacklight's Aenthir will reform at some point within the next month, whereupon it will act like a parasite, latching onto the nearest available human adolescent.

The process of taking control is not guaranteed, and there is a small – but not insignificant chance – that the new human host may actually be able to take control of the Reaper's powers. After all, this has already happened at least once before.

The mechanics for this are outside the scope of these rules, but at the very least, the process of death and rebirth would lower Blacklight's effective Permanent Creed by 1.

I appreciate it is unorthodox for me to bypass your handler and contact you directly, but circumstances are such that I am left with few options.

It's likely by the time you read this that I am already dead. My post has been attacked and although I survived, I have no way of knowing that either my handler or other authorised points of contact are alive or secure.

As for myself, I along with several others survived the initial attack, but subsequently have been exposed to dangerous levels of radiation, and I am already showing early symptoms.

For all that, I can at least take solace that the primary mission entrusted to me has been successful; I am confident I have located and made contact with PoI Beta.

I appreciate you might be sceptical, particularly considering my condition and the circumstances, but I am confident the report will convince you.

The contact occurred two days after the attack on our facility, approximately six miles East of the former site of Harrisonburg, Virginia.

At the time, I was alone and being hunted by a strain of Broodspawn I have been unable to identify. My pursuers had driven me into a valley but when I came upon the site that I presume would have been the ambush point, I found instead a fire being tended by an adolescent male of European descent. Further, the bodies of the Broodspawn that pursued me were scattered about the clearing, each of which seemed to have been killed by an eruption of Voidglass from within their bodies.

The youth invited me to sit by the fire, and I have to confess I began to think he may be a Harbinger that was beginning some cruel game at my expense, but considering my options I couldn't really refuse. A conversation followed, much of which was irrelevant, though to my surprise I found my symptoms abating during the course of the conversation. Fearing I had been compromised, I moved to eliminate myself, but before I could the youth calmly stated that he knew who I was and who I worked for, and that he had no need for my secrets - further, he explained that he had no power to prevent my death, only to ease my inevitable passing.

He went on to reveal details about our organisation which proved beyond any doubt that he was PoI Beta, though he referred to himself as "Faith". I attempted of course to question him on numerous issues, but he remained evasive, and eventually tired of my interrogation. When I stopped however, he spoke on his own accord. He told me that I must pass to you and the Council a message, and the words he spoke are etched in my mind as I write this.

"The Seventh is contained, and while I endure, he will never be free, but the Fifth is waking. The fire did not consume it; worse, I was wrong when we last spoke. The Seventh did not bear the Spear. I am certain now it lies with the Fifth, the one you call Blacklight. If it wakes, I no longer have the strength to oppose it and as you know, a far worse nightmare will emerge. For all our sakes, find it and kill it before everything we sacrificed for is lost."

Heed his message, for Ours is the Burden, and Renewed Shall be the World.



I stand now at the end of my long journey; the Judgement I have long sought is finally at hand, but I cannot meet the Almighty without first confessing my sins and even knowing clearly what I must do, it troubles me to write these words. Perhaps then this doubt is a final test, for the truth I leave behind might destroy what good my life has left in its wake.

Understand that my followers believe me a Saint and their misguided reverence has lit a flame of hope. They fail to see that what they have wrought is not in my image, but theirs – it pains me to see them lessen themselves so, to believe that I alone was the font of this rebirth.

The journey I undertook was not one of discovery, but as I have alluded, atonement. At first, I tried to dissuade them and they thought me humble, then I said nothing and they thought me pious. In the end, what could I do but lead them?

Still, the crime burned within me, and it's of that which I must speak, I witnessed the Fall of New York and the coming of the False God. Of course, I died that day, and in time clawed my way free of the Brood. At first I was alone but soon enough I found others and in our way we strove to make a difference in the desolation that surrounded us.

One day, we came upon a terrible enemy; what you would now call a Harbinger. We underestimated it; though we could have bested it alone, it used the Brood with great cunning and sought to wear us down until our strength was utterly spent.

It would have succeeded but as all seemed lost the assault of the Brood stopped and we found the Harbinger dead by the hands of another. A boy stood there, not much more than a child; silhouetted in the dying light, I remember his eyes – so old and burdened with sorrow.

Beyond that, it was his power which shocked us – vast and terrible, and we understood all too well how he had bested the Harbinger. For a moment, we – or perhaps just I – feared another battle, but it never came. Instead, we sat together around a fire and he told us such terrible truths of the world.

He explained that he was not a Nemissary; that he was instead something more like the beings we called Reapers. You can imagine our horror at this revelation, but still he made no signs of aggression and only continued his tale.

He told us that he was one of three sent to this world, but when they arrived, they found an unexpected power. It lashed out at them and they found themselves wounded and dying – and there, in the northern tundra of what was Russia, this entity came across the boy we sat before now.

Had it not been so broken, it would have consumed the boy and likely unleashed the horrors of the Fall upon a world utterly unprepared for it, yet it found it could not completely suppress his mind. Slowly, the two became one.

Its new existence was a joy, but there was also a terrible fear; they knew they were among the first of more to come, for in total seven of its kin were to be sent – three to prepare the way, and four to break all resistance. It knew that when the four came, they would arrive with servants and power, and whatever strength that once resided within this world to forestall their coming now lay dormant. This new being understood that when the final four arrived, they would at best make it a slave once again, and so it set out to find its two companions.

I must admit that I should have paid more attention to the boy's words; in my arrogance and pride I thought them little more than lies or at best self-serving justifications. I said as much, but my companions wouldn't listen to me, and so I simply prayed, and tried to close my ears and mind.

But then the boy spoke of New York, and I remembered his voice – he was the child that dared to ask the False God "why?" – and the cold response of that day echoed in my ears once more. He told us that he had bested that False God and brought it low.

I was incredulous; in my fury I demanded to know why he waited to confront them, allowing the horror and death that took place that day. He tried to tell me, tried to explain that he was the weaker, that Seraphim had been his master and that if it had not been for the darkness in his human soul, he could never have prevailed.

In its union with the human spirit, the entity had gained what we called a Hollow, and he unleashed its might upon the False God. I asked then, why had he not defeated the others, and he gave an answer which chilled me to the bone – he told us that the False God was not dead, that he had merely contained it within himself, and that was all he could do to keep it in check.

I knew of course that it was possible to consume the soul of another, and I failed then to understand. I saw merely one demon overcoming and devouring another, and I saw it as their hubris. I saw my family, my friends, those that I had lost to the False God and the Brood, and I sought to end him and the monster within him, but he fled.

My companions were furious, and in my pain I gave in for the first time to the whispers of my own Hollow. With its strength, I devoured my former companions one by one. That crime has haunted me since that day, and I convinced myself for a time that they were a necessary sacrifice, that the strength I had gained would allow me to hunt the slumbering Reapers and end them one by one.

It was a lie of course, a self-serving justification of my own, and what drove me then was revenge, not faith. Eventually I found him, and even then he would not fight. Perhaps he lacked the strength, or perhaps he simply had more faith than I.

He told me that if I was so determined, he would show me what he contained – and he did. I will not speak of it; he left me there, shamed and broken, knowing the terrible fate that awaited those guilty of my crime, that even the release of death would be denied to me.

I resolved then that I would make my life what I could, and I travelled in the faint hope that the Almighty would show me a way to redemption.

All know the path of my journey from then, of the faith that I rekindled in so many. Every day was a trial; constantly I was faced with the pain and guilt as I saw the hope in their eyes, whilst the lie burned within me – but the truth would have destroyed everything.

I saw them rekindle hope, drive back the Brood and rebuild their homes. I watched as children were born into homes without fear, new generations who could grow up in some measure of safety, and I could not take it from them.

And so, I came to believe that this deceit and the pain it caused me was punishment from the Almighty, and I abandoned my quest. I resolved to live forever in this deceit, always a servant, chained to the fate that I had created, but in that act of humility, my eyes were opened.

I understand now that I should have never lied, that I should have trusted them, and that I guided them as a sinner, not a saint. I do not know what you will do with these words, but the hope that the faithful have built surely must be strong enough to weather my sins.

Mara Caillow



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SHARD KEEPER'S HANDBOOK

The Sage Experiment
Paula Romano
Daniel Christie
Colin Richardson
Kaiser
Lewis Zelly
Roger Campbell

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