

Index Astartes



A regular series focusing on the Imperium's finest warriors, the Space Marines of the Adeptus Astartes.

PURGE THE UNCLEAN

The Grey Knights & Deathwatch Chapters

by Graham McNeill

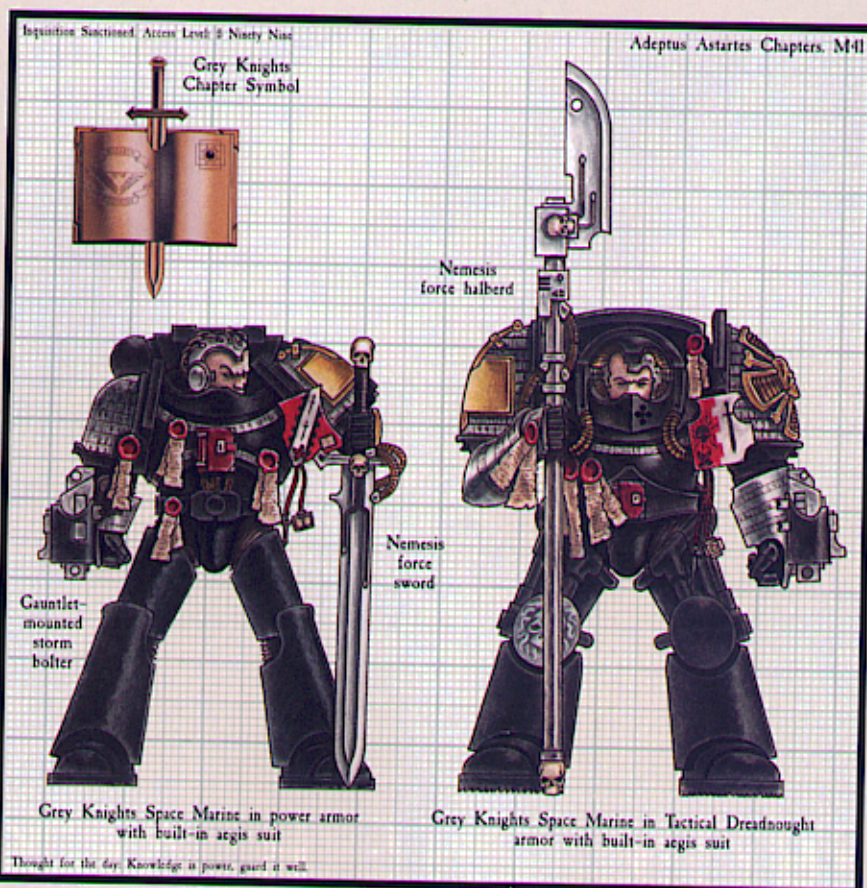
The Space Marines of the Adeptus Astartes are the mightiest warriors in the Imperium and their fury in battle is legendary. Few can stand against the might of a Space Marine Chapter and the foes of Mankind tremble at their name. But there are alien races whose evil is beyond human understanding and beings that exist outside the realm of realspace that seek to plunge Humanity into the realm of Chaos. To face such foes demands warriors whose hearts and souls are trained to withstand extremes of pain and terror, whose faith in the Emperor is as unwavering as it is strong. Since the dawn of the Imperium, two brotherhoods of specially trained Space Marines have fought these foes and defeated them. They are the Deathwatch and the Grey Knights.

The Grey Knights

Founded in great secrecy around the time of the Second Founding (although this is uncertain), the Grey Knights are amongst the most highly specialized defenders of Humanity in existence. Uniquely amongst the Space Marines of the Adeptus Astartes, the Grey Knights Chapter has no antecedents, having been created from specifically engineered gene-seed. Legend has it that the Emperor himself ordered the creation of this unique Chapter to form a force designed to fight the dread creatures of Chaos, though, of course, this is impossible to verify. Following the awesome scale of bloodshed during the Horus Heresy, the necessity for such a force was clear. Designated

Chapter 666, the Grey Knights are permanently attached to that most secretive of organizations, the Ordo Malleus. The Ordo Malleus is only ever spoken of in whispers, and though its stated purpose is to keep watch on the Inquisition itself, its true purpose is far more sinister, the destruction of the daemonic.

The Grey Knights form the main fighting strength of the Ordo Malleus and, traditionally, its Chapter Master is a member of the Inner Conclave of the Inquisition. The men of the Grey Knights are no ordinary warriors. Plucked from the fiercest warrior cultures on a dozen different worlds, only the bravest and strongest youths are selected for the training. Aspirants are taken to the Chapter's base on



Saturn's moon, Titan, where they undergo arduous tests of faith, strength, endurance and courage that break all but the strongest warriors. Those few that survive the tests are then implanted with the gene-seed that will transform them into superhuman Space Marines. Now the aspirants are ready to begin their real training.

The most advanced bio-engineering and psycho-surgery is utilized to condition the Grey Knights into warriors of great prowess. The six hundred and sixty six Rituals of Detestation enable the Space Marines of the Grey Knights to face terrifying foes without fear and withstand pain that would cripple a 'normal' Space Marine. Their lives are filled with ritual, meditation and self-denial, designed to strengthen the mind and steel the soul against the horrors of the daemonic. The Chapter's warriors are heavily conditioned to resist the whispered seductions of Chaos and the honeyed lies of daemonic creatures. These precautions are vital and, thus far, have proven to be effective, as not a single Grey Knight has faltered in battle or become a pawn of the Dark Powers.

It is through unprotected psykers that daemonic creatures can gain entry to the material universe and it is for this reason that the Grey Knights are screened to exclude all but the most resilient psykers. The strongest and purest of these psykers are then trained until they reach a level of mastery that equals the powers of Librarians of the Adeptus Astartes. Those who distinguish themselves in battle may be elevated to the honored position of the Grey Knights' 1st Company and take to the field of battle in modified Tactical Dreadnought armor, more commonly known as Terminator armor, with bolt weaponry incorporated into the gauntlets. The Librarians of the Grey Knights are taught to combine their abilities in a gestalt power that far exceeds anything they could achieve alone. The Grey Knights fight in baroque, heavily ornamented suits of armor with the Chapter's symbol, a sword through a tome, prominently displayed. They fight with the finest equipment and weapons the Imperium can manufacture, mighty sigil-encrusted swords and halberds. These warriors alone can stand before the might of a Greater Daemon with any hope of banishing it back to the Immaterium from whence it came.

The millennia the Grey Knights have spent in battle against the forces of darkness has furnished them with

blasphemous knowledge, painstakingly pieced together by the Inquisitors of the Ordo Malleus. This damned collection of knowledge is gathered together on Titan in the Librarium Daemonica, a gloomy repository of ancient tomes, crumbling parchments and data crystals that groans under the weight of the psychic evil that dwells within its walls. This is one of the most heavily guarded locations in the Imperium, and the threat of such knowledge falling into the wrong hands is taken very seriously by the Grey Knights. Each warrior of the Grey Knights carries a copy of the sacred Liber Daemonica, the holy battle rites of the Chapter, in a ceramite case on his breastplate, and it is this which symbolizes a Grey Knight's most potent weapon; an unshakable faith in the Divine Emperor. The book contains the essential tenets of lore culled from the Librarium Daemonica by psychically monitored servitors. These servitors are permanently wired to toxin dispensers that can be activated immediately should some daemonic entity attempt to force a passage into real space through the servitor's brain.

The threat of Chaos permeates the entire galaxy, and while the Chapter maintains a fortress-monastery on Titan, much of its strength is scattered

The Daemon has many forms. You must know them all. You must tell the Daemon from his disguise and root him out from the hidden places. Trust no one. Trust not even yourself. It is better to die in vain than to live in abomination. The zealous martyr is praised for his valour: the craven and the unready are justly abhorred.

Excerpted from the
First Book of Indoctrinations

across the Imperium. Guided by the finest Navigators of the Navis Nobilite and conveyed by the fastest ships produced by the Adeptus Mechanicus, the Grey Knights stand ready to meet the foul minions of Chaos wherever they may strike. Typically, the warriors of these forces have trained together for their entire lives, and the bonds of loyalty and honor that bind them are stronger than adamantium. Every Grey Knight is ready to lay down his life to ensure the safety of the Imperium, and should that sacrifice be necessary, it is the fervent wish of all those who fall to be transported back to Titan and buried in the hallowed crypts beneath their fortress. A great basalt wall in the heart of the monastery is carved with the names of all those who have fallen in defiance of evil and, though no one outside the Chapter will ever know of their bravery, some of the Imperium's greatest heroes lie buried on Titan.

The Deathwatch

On uncounted battlefields the servants of the Emperor must wage war against the vileness of alien creatures. Often the first, last and only line of defense against these abominations are mysterious figures in black powered armor who fight the aliens with preternatural skill and dedication. With the battle over, these figures vanish as quickly as they arrived, leaving no trace of the creatures they fought or that they were even there at all. These men are the Imperium's highly trained alien fighters. They are the Deathwatch.

The Deathwatch forms the Chamber Militant of the Ordo Xenos, the branch of the Inquisition tasked with the study, containment and, in most cases, extermination of alien races. However, it is not a single unified Chapter in the same way as the Grey Knights of the Ordo Malleus. The Space Marines of the Deathwatch are drawn from many different Chapters, all of which have sworn sacred oaths to maintain specially trained alien fighters and stand ready to deploy them at a moment's notice. These warriors are drawn together as and when needed to combat alien menace whenever and wherever it rears its ugly head.

From the furthest corners of the galaxy to the very heart of the Segmentum Solar, there exist alien races that threaten the continued existence of Humanity. Every Space Marine Chapter and Imperial Guard regiment stands ready to fight these races, but the Deathwatch has been specially trained to fight aliens since its inception thousands of years ago. Many such alien races, such as the C'tan and Necrontyr have lain dormant for thousands or even millions of years, and the Deathwatch stand sentinel over their worlds, ready to fight should they awake once more. More dangerous than the most violent of Orks, these races were ancient before humans crawled from the oceans and their evil is beyond measure.

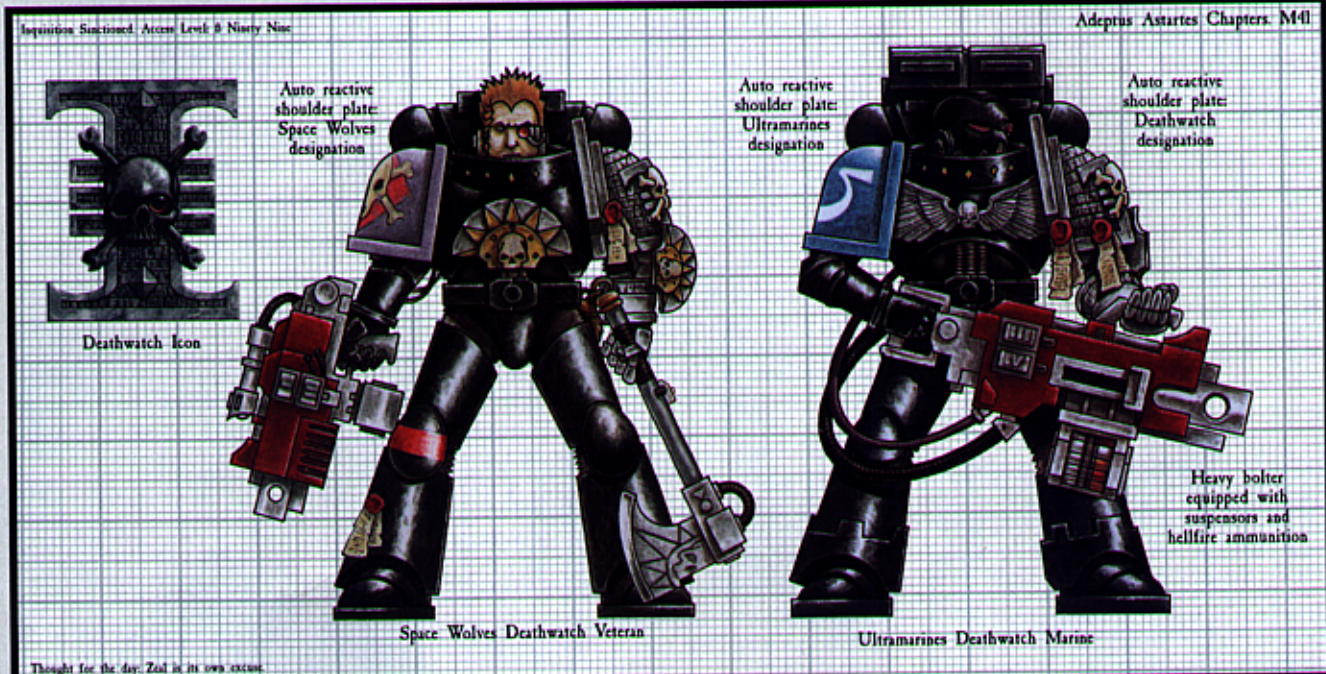
To guard against the return of these ancient alien races, lonely fortresses orbit desolate worlds on the edge of the galaxy where Deathwatch Space Marines maintain a constant vigil. In

CATECHISM OF THE XENO

To be Unclean
That is the Mark of the Xenos
To be Impure
That is the Mark of the Xenos
To be Abhorred
That is the Mark of the Xenos
To be Reviled
That is the Mark of the Xenos
To be Hunted
That is the Mark of the Xenos
To be Purged
That is the fate of the Xenos
To be Cleansed
For that is the fate of all Xenos

Extract from the
Third Book of Indocinations.

addition to this, secret bases are scattered throughout the Imperium, providing staging posts from where the Deathwatch can launch their missions. The Chapters from which the Deathwatch draws its members are constantly ready to despatch their alien fighters if called upon by a member of the Ordo Xenos. The warriors who have been given the honor of becoming a member of the Deathwatch ritually repaint their armor in the black of the Deathwatch, leaving a single shoulder plate bare to signify



their Chapter of origin. A Space Marine's armor is never completely obscured by the Deathwatch colors, as to do so would dishonor the armor's spirit, and no warrior would be willing to run such a risk. Each warrior may also bear the Icon of the Deathwatch on his other shoulder plate, and it is a great honor to be chosen. Once in the employ of the Deathwatch, there is no set length of service, and its members will remain together for as long as its commander deems necessary. Each Space Marine can serve for a discreet period of time or a particular mission, which, in itself, may take many years. With the completion of their service, the Space Marines are free to return to their Chapter, their oaths of loyalty fulfilled.

As well as the destruction of aliens, the Deathwatch are also charged with the recovery and study of alien artifacts and technology. Though distasteful in

the extreme, members of the Inquisition are forced to study the heretical artifacts of the foes they must fight, and there are none more qualified to retrieve such items than the Deathwatch. Occasionally it becomes necessary to use the technology of alien races and, though such an undertaking is never entered into lightly, its use against aliens themselves is a pleasing irony. The Adeptus Mechanicus is always eager to profit from the Deathwatch's victories and the C'tan phase sword, employed by the Callidus temple of assassins, was recovered by members of the Deathwatch from a long-dead Necrontyr world.

In battle, each team normally comes under the authority of an Ordo Xenos Inquisitor, but, in some exceptional cases, a Deathwatch Captain or Librarian may assume command if circumstances dictate. Their authority is absolute and none dare question their word. The commander of a Deathwatch detachment may freely requisition forces and equipment without a word of complaint being raised against him. The Deathwatch

Do not ask, 'Why kill the alien?'
rather, ask, 'Why not?'

Battle Brother Artemis

have access to the very best equipment, both Imperial and alien, and are trained to the highest standards.

There are many ways an Ordo Xenos kill-team can see action alongside regular Imperial forces. It may be that the team has uncovered an alien threat too great for it to deal with alone and needs the backup of a larger, more conventional force. Such was the case when a kill-team under the command of Inquisitor Reynaard discovered an alien worshipping cult on the world of Mandall IV. It was believed that the cult was localized to a particular district of the capital city, but when righteous retribution descended upon the blasphemers, the entire population of the city turned upon the kill-team. Reynaard and the Space Marines barely managed to escape with their lives and later returned at the head of over half a million soldiers. To ensure the destruction of the cult, Reynaard's forces laid waste to the city, leaving no trace that it had ever existed and killed every living creature within its walls.

Situations may also arise where an army of the Imperium has encountered a foe it is ill-equipped to fight and

the Ordo Xenos dispatches a kill-team to provide support or purge the battlefield of alien contamination. The ravages of the K'nib in the Donorian Sector was halted by a Deathwatch kill-team commanded by Battle Brother Artemis himself following a request for aid from the colonel of the Kaslon Imperial Guard regiment. Artemis slew the Alcayde of the K'nib on Assumptus V and ended their incursions into Imperial space (though official records credit the Kaslon regiment with this victory). However it comes about, the support of an Ordo Xenos kill-team is always welcomed by Imperial commanders facing an alien threat.

He who allows the alien to live,
shares its crime of existence.

Inquisitor Apollyon

