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HAEMONCULUS COVENS™

A CODEX: DARK ELDAR SUPPLEMENT



HAEMONCULUS COVENS



MASTERS OF THE ABYSS

INTRODUCTION



From the labyrinthine darkness of Commorragh, the Haemonculus Covens emerge into realspace. Theirs is a world of sinister delight and depthless pain, for they feed on agony as a leech feeds on blood. When the monstrous armies created by these demented flesh-sculptors are released upon the galaxy, whole worlds are plunged screaming into madness.

The denizens of the Dark City are fathomless evil personified. Some were old even before the Fall of the Eldar, wizened creatures that have engineered the death of suns just as they have given life to thousands of monstrous forms. Many of their number are the selfsame hedonists that led the ancient Eldar empire to utter catastrophe. Yet they regret not a single moment of their depraved existences. So steeped are these Haemonculi in matters arcane that they see even death as no more than an interesting curio. To them, the multitudinous races of the galaxy are mere fodder for their enjoyment.

HAEMONCULUS COVENS

The Haemonculi do not work alone. Concepts such as manual labour – or any kind of exertion, come to that – are distasteful to them in the extreme. Instead, they wreak their evil deeds through the masked minions and pallid servants that form the bulk of each Haemonculus Coven. The most common of these slave castes are the grovelling Wracks and the lumbering Grotesques; fleshcrafted Covenites that visit terrible acts of violence upon the armies of the lesser races. The most fearsome of a Coven's creations are its Engines of Pain; biomechanical nightmares that tear apart the bodies and even the souls of the warriors that defend realspace. To cross a Haemonculus is to bring evil to your door, and perhaps even doom an entire planet to a grisly demise.

HOW THIS CODEX SUPPLEMENT WORKS

This book tells you of the sinister history of the Haemonculi of the undercity, revealing their gruesome deeds within Commorragh and on the battlefields of the wider galaxy. Furthermore, it details a range of bizarre Covens and Haemonculus disciplines, such as those of the Nadirists and Black Cornucopians, that can act as a basis for your own collection should you wish. You'll also discover a showcase of fantastically painted Dark Eldar miniatures depicting the Haemonculi themselves, as well as their hideously altered warriors and the twisted Engines of Pain. You will then find rules which allow you to arrange your collection of Citadel miniatures into Formations or Detachments from the Haemonculus Covens, as well as the Relics and Warlord Traits available to the Haemonculi. You can add these to an existing army, or use them to field an army from the Haemonculus Covens themselves. Finally, this book includes new missions, allowing you to recreate some of the most important of the Haemonculi's realspace raids and employ the favoured tactics of the Coven lords.



LORDS OF PAIN



The Haemonculi are the depraved surgeon-alchemists of the Dark Eldar. Ruling over Covens deep in the undercity of Commorragh, these withered fiends ply their wicked trade on captive prisoners and eager donors alike. Theirs is an unspeakable craft, yet without the malignant genius of these diabolical figures, the Dark City would soon devour itself.

The Haemonculi are masters of torture, flesh distortion and poisonous malice. They are true connoisseurs of pain, utterly dedicated to their craft. As masters of regenerative techniques, they hold the power of life and death over their Commorrite kin, handing out a sham immortality to those who court their favour. The strange science of the Haemonculi allows them to regenerate a fallen 'client' from even the most ruined remains, essentially bringing him back to life in exchange for a portion of his soul.

The Coven lords are just as happy to dabble in the cosmetic as well as the metaphysical. A Dark Eldar who seeks their expertise will be slowly and agonisingly reshaped with new appendages or sinister bodily enhancements. Many Haemonculi also brew deadly philtres and poisons for their Commorrite brethren, usually distilled to a truly extreme concentration. The specific request is not always adhered to, for the Lords of Pain believe they always know best, whether within the Dark City or without.

The majority of Haemonculi do not exist in isolation, but instead form into like-minded bands known as Covens. Each horror-aesthete revels in expanding his Coven's knowledge of pain by perfecting nefarious sciences and mastering the visceral arts. Covens can vary in size, from small, elitist coteries of Haemonculi to huge torture-conclaves that boast several thousand minions at the least.

Every Haemonculus considers himself akin to a god, and hence surrounds himself with a retinue of freakish acolytes that obey his every whim without hesitation. Many do not care to debase themselves by touching the ground, let alone sully themselves with physical labour. To this end, they are assisted at all times by esoteric technologies and an entourage of abominations. Megalomaniacs all, their egos require the constant obeisance of subservient beings, most of whom they have fashioned themselves. These servants ensure the Coven's captives are hauled about, flayed or dissected according to their master's will.



It is amid the stalactite-like citadels deep under Commorragh that the Haemonculi make their lairs. The Covens themselves are nigh impossible for the unwelcome to locate, and each is laced from end to end with deadly traps and sanity-blasting sights. In the heart of each Coven's underspire, pitch-black oubliettes and vaulted flesh laboratories jostle together in great number. Racks of alchemical vials are held up by webworks of sinew, the vessels upon them shimmering translucent in the gloom or wobbling as their contents shift within. Sinister apparatus loops down upon barbed chains, waiting to activate at its creator's command. At the fringes of these Covenite underspires are the glistening breeding walls where, inside row upon row of amniotic tubes, new Dark Eldar are incubated and messily birthed.

Just as the Haemonculi oversee the birth of most Dark Eldar, they also cater for them after death. At each Coven's heart are the pain-slabs upon which the Haemonculi practise their evil craft. The screams of their victims do not only invigorate the Haemonculi, but also their clients. Ranged above each slab in concentric circles of crystal-fronted sarcophagi are the mortal remains of those who have entered into regenerative pacts, each client nourished back to life by the agonies radiating upwards from the slab.

Over the millennia, the most ancient Haemonculi have become exceptionally obscure in their perversions. They seek ever more bizarre and exotic ways to draw out the agonies of their victims, for as the aeons slide by, their hunger for anguish becomes increasingly difficult to quench. Some of the most diabolical factions, such as the Altered, may depopulate entire colonies in order to produce a toxin of the right consistency. Others, like the Hex, treat their realspace raids as monstrous art exhibitions, thriving on flamboyant displays of carnage.

The Haemonculi are always seeking new ways to inflict horror upon the denizens of realspace. Certain Covens, such as the Children of Bone, specialise in developing skeletally thin Grotesques to aid them upon the battlefield, while the Coven of the Ebon Sting are famed for their especially venomous Engines of Pain. It is these hideous horrors and monstrous constructs that do the majority of the killing when the Coven mounts a raid. Having lived for thousands of years, the Lords of Pain look upon the quotidian, planet-wrecking wars of lesser races with a snickering amusement. Yet as the 41st Millennium draws to a tumultuous close, the Covens of the Haemonculi launch larger raiding parties than ever, revelling in – and gleefully adding to – the confusion and carnage of this dark age.

'Realspace is a spoiled banquet, turned rotten by the passage of aeons. Still, delectable sweetmeats remain there for the taking if one knows where to find them...'

- Vynquiliac Xorl, Marquise of the Fabled Few



THE THEATRE OF HORRORS



When a Haemonculus Coven gathers its might and descends upon the worlds of realspace, it brings with it all the horrors of the dark realms beneath Commoragh. Terrible creations burst out from shimmering webway portals to slaughter and pillage, claiming their screaming bounty before disappearing as suddenly as they came.

Dark Eldar society is built upon the suffering of others. The survival of this ancient and murderous race requires a regular influx of luckless, screaming captives. Thankfully for the Commorrites, the galaxy has such unwilling prisoners in plentiful supply. It is for this reason that the Dark Eldar make regular ventures into realspace. Yet it is rare for each Commorrite faction to have the same agenda. The Archons of the Kabals make bold, swift strikes in order to capture vast hosts of slaves and further their power base within Commoragh. The Wych Cults of the arenas launch raids to bring back the elite warriors of the lesser races – worthy playthings for their nightly bloodsports. But when the Covens of the Haemonculi burst out of the webway, they do so with more monstrous and esoteric goals.

The most common objective of the Coven raids is to obtain specimens for the purposes of experimentation and nourishment within the Haemonculi's dungeon-lairs. By ensuring that their slabs are never empty, the Coven lords not only fulfil their own strange needs, but also supply pain enough to restore their clients in their sarcophagi. Some Haemonculi will be incredibly discerning about what specimens they bring back, selecting their victims based on bizarre criteria such as age, eye colour, pitch of voice, cruelty of spirit, or a myriad other incomprehensible peccadilloes. Others will simply depopulate entire settlements, or even continents, harvesting raw materials to be sorted and categorised properly upon return to their lairs. Perhaps the infected lungs of a forge world's defenders are a pleasing colour when rendered down, or the gizzards of greenskins from an ice planet are of the perfect tensile strength for tendon-webbing. The Haemonculus Croniarch Sekh is much envied by his rivals for his artisanal workbenches, which are crafted from the colossal oesophagi of the now-extinct Vengoliath race. Indeed, none can fathom the twisted motives of these ancient deviants, for their whims are beyond the grasp of sane minds.



Raids are not always focussed on acts of theft or abduction. Certain Haemonculi, such as the Prophets of Flesh, revel in the creation of meaningful and intricate patterns of corpses to be admired from the depths of space. Excursions from Commoragh may also allow the opportunity for a long-standing grudge to be transformed into a poetic punishment. When Archon Vanxil once made a disparaging comment about the quality of the poisons purchased from Kariok of the Everspiral, the Haemonculus offered to enhance the potency of Vanxil's splinter weaponry seven times over by way of recompense. He lived up to his promise. When Vanxil's Kabalites raided the Imperial planet of Fool's Hope, their splinter weapons fired toxins so potent they became airborne and turned not only the Imperial defenders to primordial sludge, but Vanxil and his Kabalite raiders too.

In comparison to other Dark Eldar, the Haemonculi take an almost languid approach to waging their campaigns of terror. These dark fiends are unearthly creatures, some a dozen millennia old, and time is of little relevance to them. Masters of aeon-spanning ambition, the Haemonculi plan their realspace raids with the precision of a master surgeon. Specifically equipped Engines of Pain may need to be created for the final denouement, or certain allegiances formed with other factions of the Dark City in order to overcome a planet's specific defences. As the time draws near to step onto the stage of war, there is an air of excited competition within the Coven, each of its perverse lords making ready to bring his own dark performance to life.



TO KILL A MONSTER

Provided at least some of their bodily remains make it back to Commoragh, all Dark Eldar can be regrown in the shadowed dungeons of the Coven lords. So vain and self-centred are the Commorrites that, even after death, a portion of a soul clings to their cadaver – a silver thread that their wandering spirit can trace to their regenerating physical shell. This thread can be cut, however, and fades to nothingness unless properly reinforced. It is because of this that the Dark Eldar raid realspace at breakneck pace, recover their fallen, and return home before their dead are robbed of a chance at resurrection.

The Haemonculi of the Dark City are able to transcend death entirely. By means of their twisted soul-science, they often leave a small part of their essence in rune-carved caskets and extradimensional pockets, so that even should their corporeal form be vaporised they can inhabit new flesh. For a Haemonculus to be truly extinguished he must be utterly destroyed, both corporeally and spiritually.

It is perhaps no surprise that the experts in killing Haemonculi are the Coven lords themselves, for the Dark City's treachery affects even these ancient terrors. Hundreds of arcane schemes and artefacts have claimed the lives of Haemonculi over the aeons, ranging from the fabled Obliterata to the soul-killing Nihil Stone. Needless to say, the Haemonculi are not above turning such devices against mortal prey, much to the despair of those who face them.

Through hidden webway portals these ancient beings and their sinewy horrors make their entrance. A planet's boneyards, eerie forests or long-abandoned manufacturums are favoured locales from which to begin their operations. As patient as spiders, the Haemonculi may bid their abominations whittle away at a planet's defenders little by little, spending days or weeks spreading terror and confusion before the main assault. Alternatively, they may make an outrageous spectacle of their arrival, glorying in the bizarre and hideous sight they present to their victims.

It is the Wracks and Grotesques that bring the full force of their master's flair for bloodshed to the front lines. With monstrous surgical implements, these masked horrors rip open torsos and tear through bone or armour, their liquifier guns burning through enemy squads with gouts of hyper-distilled vitriol. Engines of Pain hover across the battlefield, sent into the ranks of the foe by the dismissive gestures of their creators. The weapons of these constructs are myriad, from lances of searing energy and webs of barbed chains to boiling ichor, flickering needles and monstrous siphons that drain the life-force from their victims. The spoils of agony they reap are then shared with their depraved creators, who steal the lives of their foes with a gourmet delicacy that is

unsettling in itself.



Most Haemonculi take great pride in their discernment when it comes to their selection of victims. When they are not gifting an excruciating demise to those who stray into their path, these diabolical figures can be seen prodding the skin of captives or probing the stress points of skulls. Some will taste a dribble of a victim's blood upon the tips of their fingers, working it upon their tongues like true connoisseurs. Others view such direct interaction as sullyng themselves, and have their monstrous bodyguards open up innards for scrutiny according to their every whim.

Once the battlefield bacchanal has reached its end, the Haemonculi will return to Commorragh with a fresh collection of captives. Even the most nonchalant Haemonculus will be privately exhilarated by the potential of his haul. There is no guessing what the grim gourmands will actually do to their unfortunate trophies. Living victims are forced into the dungeon-lairs, where a new life of anguish will begin. Lesser specimens may be disassembled and, perhaps whilst still breathing, melded as decoration into the walls of a Coven's stronghold. Captives may be released through labyrinths so that their hope of freedom spawns more appetizing endorphins, only to be hunted down once more by sinister horror-engines. All captives are seen as mere fodder, be they the mightiest Space Marine or the lowliest Gretchin. After all, there are always more victims to be taken from realspace, more specimens to be examined upon the slab. As long as life abounds in realspace, these dark displays will never cease...



COVENS OF COMMORRAGH



The underworld of the Dark City is a near endless labyrinth of shadows that plays host to Covens beyond counting. Yet even amongst this loose brotherhood of torturers and twisted servants, there are some Covens whose infamy is so great their names are feared throughout Commorragh and beyond.

THE BLACK DESCENT

The Haemonculi of the Black Descent love to lay traps and sit back to enjoy their lethal denouement. These range from the feigned flights and baited ambushes of their realspace raids to thousand-year intrigues that see their rivals fully humbled. To cross the Black Descent is to invite a punishment darkly twisted to fit the crime. One who uses brute force against them may later find himself stung by an insect-sized Wrack, the hyperdrenaline introduced into his bloodstream forcing him into a frenzy so severe he literally tears himself apart. One who delays payment for the Black Descent's poisons may awake one morning trapped in a Sslyth venom-nest. Even unintended offense can yield retribution – when an ambassador from the Kabal of the Baleful Gaze wrinkled his nose at the stench of the Coven's dungeons, he soon found himself coughing on transmutative gas. Later that night he sprouted the quivering nostrils of an Ur-Ghul, his eyes sealing over so he could better appreciate the fine bouquet of rot.

The Haemonculi of the Black Descent have constructed a pyramidal labyrinth of glass that hangs inverted beneath the Dark City. Promising captives are thrown into the labyrinth's sensory deprivation chambers whilst the Covenites leer outside. The only way out is to negotiate the maze's trap-strewn confines through touch and instinct. Almost all of those that undertake this journey are killed, caught in paradox cubes or falling eternally into Moebius pits as they try to avoid the labyrinth's bladed convolutions. Those that pass through safely are rewarded with a new life as a Wrack, becoming a part of the Coven forever more.



THE DARK CREED

Specialising in the arts of terror, the Haemonculi of the Dark Creed have a deep reverence for the indirect kill. They love nothing more than seeing their victims debase themselves in fear, and will drive their captives to madness or suicide purely to show they are above such primitive notions as physical intervention. Having long grown bored of traditional murder techniques, the Dark Creed believe it is the height of sophistication to end a victim's life without making a direct attack. An abstract death, perhaps caused purely through heart-stopping emotion, is considered the finest victory. Aside from any aesthetic considerations, such a demise has the practical benefit of being difficult to trace. Even their Wracks prefer the esoteric kill; each cell boasts at least one liquifier gun, ossefactor or hexrifle with which to slay their targets from a distance, where their death throes can be enjoyed by all.

It is because of their preference for unusual deaths that the Coven has a great many Cronos Parasite Engines in its number. Strung with blooded chains and grisly trophies, these constructs generate so much negative energy that they can kill without striking a single physical blow. Likewise, the Dark Creed's forces are often joined in battle by the night-clad denizens of Aelindrach, for that realm too thrives on the weaponisation of fear. During their realspace raids, the Coven is often accompanied by packs of Mandrakes that hurl soul-blistering balefire to terrorize their victims, before the Haemonculi close in for an elaborate kill.

'A blade to the chest? How pedestrian. We left behind such base concepts long ago, dear heart. Let me introduce you to a far more interesting demise...'

- Haemogarch Vanthis, Necromaester of the Dark Creed



THE HEX

The Haemonculi of the Hex consider themselves to be the pre-eminent artists of flesh, with the entirety of realspace as their canvas. To construct truly impressive works they employ large cells of Wracks and Grotesques, mind-bound in much the same manner as hive organisms so they can be better suited to enact their master's artistic vision.

Ever since their creation in the dark days that followed the Fall, the Coven has specialised in the fabrication of curses. Most of these are the product of baleful technologies, the effects of which have been refined to the point where – in the eyes of the primitive races – they are indistinguishable from magic. However, some of the Coven's favourite curses truly border on the supernatural. It was the Hex that harnessed the Plague of Glass in 926.M36, their discoveries leading to the invention of the rifle that bears their name to this day. It was the Haemonculi of the Hex that refined the macrosteroidal effects of a stolen bone virus to create the ossefactor – a weapon favoured by the Acothysts of their employ. They were even responsible for the creation of the fabled Orbs of Despair – heavy black spheres so saturated with raw negativity they can reduce a grown man to a gibbering wreck in a heartbeat.

The glee with which the Hex unleash their carefully cultivated curses upon an unsuspecting universe is palpable in its intensity, and the Haemonculi's thin lips curl back over their sharpened teeth as they drink in each fresh nightmare. However, the unbridled use of curses leaves its mark on the wielder as well as the victim. Those that deal with the Coven's most arcane weapons are often pale to the point of albinism, covered with inkblot discolouration, or possessed of a slight greenish pallor. Regardless of form, the servants of the Hex are always unsettling, their leers somehow obvious even behind their masks.



THE COVEN OF TWELVE

The Coven of Twelve is a conclave of several Haemonculi, each of whom considers himself the foremost practitioner of the dark arts. Membership of the Coven is restricted to just eleven individuals at any time – the twelfth spot is left open for Urien Rakarth, should he ever deign to accept the Coven's invitation. Since Haemonculi have a habit of overcoming death, the only way that a new aspirant can ascend to join the Twelve is to dispose of a current incumbent in a manner so thorough that even a master Haemonculus cannot undo it. Shegmeth Kro was pushed into a mirror dimension the size of a coffin too small for his frame. Khaebrys Xulfur was posed an impossible riddle that, with each wrong answer, turned more of his body into bone until finally he was nothing more than an osseous statue. Zakrodevia was rendered into a sentient soup using acids from captured Tyranids and then imbibed by his peers at a banquet.

A warped arms race consumes the Coven of Twelve. Their quest to stay one step ahead of each other ensures these Haemonculi bear the deadliest devices their arcane science can yield. These tools of atrocity feature strongly in the arsenals of the Coven during their realspace raids – flesh gauntlets, electrocorrosive whips, null batons, mindphase gauntlets and even stranger weapons abound. Many of the Coven's members are Scarlet Epicureans, their tastes for inventive fatalities so all-consuming they seek to experience them in person. Many of the Wracks in the service of the Twelve are flayed of their skin, their nerves left raw so they can better appreciate the full spectrum of sensation.



DISCIPLINES OF THE HAEMONCULI



Haemonculi are not immune to the fashions and fads of the Dark City. Where one Covenite might specialise in fleshcrafting, another might become an expert in cultivating fear, and yet another might strive to master death itself. Despite their differences, there exist informal schools of thought that have thrived amongst them for millennia.

The dark pursuits of the Haemonculi help them stave off the ennui that haunts all those free of time's grip. Sometimes known as disciplines, these practices allow the Covenites to focus their capricious attention on a body of study long enough to become its master. The concept is not dissimilar to that of the Eldar path, though where the craftworlders follow a single strand of experience through fear of falling prey to excess, the Haemonculi do so in order to better secure their power over the mortal realm. To them, rules and restrictions are for cowardly children; the Haemonculi would never admit that they are bound to their fields of expertise any more than they would concede that they may have chosen the wrong course during the Fall of the Eldar. Should a Haemonculus tire of a certain body of work, or become known by his peers as unfashionably predictable, he will switch focus without hesitation. It does not do to belittle the scope of a Coven lord's studies, for such an incautious soul risks experiencing the full extent of that Haemonculus' diverse talents.



THE CANVAS GALACTIC

Though they forsook realspace many millennia ago, all Haemonculi see the material dimension as theirs to do with as they wish. The realms of Man, Ork, Tau and Necron are treated as little more than a combination of playground, banqueting hall and exhibition space. No Covenite truly believes the empires of the lesser realms to be a threat. Even on those occasions when brutish Orks or foul-smelling Space Marines have crashed through the dimensional veil to invade the Dark City, the Haemonculi have watched with little more than detached interest, idly chatting amongst themselves about the finer points of their uninvited guests' anatomies.

In truth, the Haemonculi and their minions are slain by the heroes, monsters and even common soldiers more often than they would like to admit. The sheer variety of deaths the species of the galaxy are able to visit upon their foes is part of their appeal to the Dark Eldar, for though Commorragh has mastered a million types of murder, it always hungers for more. For a lowly Kabalite Warrior, to be killed in realspace is a calamity. For the elder Covenites of that realm, however, it is a diverting pastime. Unless that Haemonculus' enemies directly conspire to prevent his resurrection, he will be back soon enough to wreak an inventive revenge.

As the 41st Millennium draws to a close, the Haemonculi are raiding realspace with increasing frequency. They not only seek to line their nests with as many victims as they can catch, but also to paint their own bloody designs across the canvas of the stars. After all, what self-respecting Covenite would want to miss out on the end of all worlds?

Despite the diversity of a Coven's chosen studies, certain pursuits recur across the ages. It is common enough for these to aggregate into similar schools of thought. Their adherents are as likely to collaborate in ever more elaborate realspace 'exhibitions' as they are to strive to outdo each other on the battlefield. However, not all of these disciplines are compatible – their conflicting agendas can lead to ever more complex rivalries and acts of sabotage, both within Commorragh and without.

Over the millennia, these loose allegiances have become tacitly recognised, if not strictly codified. A Coven that includes specialists in different fields enjoys a greater degree of symbiosis with the Dark City at large. If the Coven is visited by a Commorrite that wishes to become a Scourge, he will be directed to a Master of Apotheosis without delay. If the supplicant wishes instead to take a great toll upon the lowly empires of Man or Ork, he finds himself advised by a Penumbra Voyer. In this way the Haemonculi serve their collective needs to the best of their ability, preening their egos with grandiose titles whilst largely remaining out of each other's way.



NEMESINES

Amongst the most deadly of disciplines practised in the dark hearts of the Covens are those of the Nemesines – Haemonculi who seek the best ways to kill every creature in the material universe and beyond. The Nemesines strive to uncover the death-secrets of every sentient being, from the tiniest Tyranid eater-organism to the most titanic void whale, and even the Daemons of the Warp. If a life can be ended, a Coven lord in the depths of the Dark City will know how to achieve the deed in the most efficacious fashion possible. Their warhosts include a great many Engines of Pain and arcane artefacts, the better to visit murderous and efficient violence upon the foe.

Some Nemesines, such as the Haemonculi of the Altered, broaden their chosen remit even further. They raid realspace extensively, systematically exterminating entire species purely for the challenge. Others seek to bring an end to more abstract phenomena than simple life. These self-styled *Ilynneads*, or 'Ever-Nemesines', work to kill off ephemeral concepts such as hope or joy across entire sectors, erase progressive knowledge or enlightenment from the galaxy, or slay visionaries and great leaders in order to stifle inconvenient ideas before they occur.

BLACK CORNUCOPIANS

The discipline of the Black Cornucopian revolves around the concept that all of reality is theirs for the taking. The most acquisitive of all their kind, these expert plunderers are often the architects of the large-scale raids that mark the final years of the 41st Millennium. Sending out cells of Talos organ-thieves on a constant rota of abduction, they have lately imitated the master Haemonculus Urien Rakarth by stocking their pocket dimensions with enough victims to see them through centuries of isolation.

NADIRISTS

The Nadirists embrace sin and corruption wholeheartedly, more so than even their brother Covens. For them, depravity is an aim in and of itself. Unlike their rivals, the Masters of Apotheosis, they seek to attain godhood not by the creation of malefic angels, but by passing through the nadir of experience to become the embodiment of evil. Should they bleed enough darkness into the fabric of reality, they believe they will transcend the mortal plane altogether and become something far more sinister.

Many modern Nadirists begin their journey upon the downward spiral by following in the footsteps of the Dark Muses, the folkloric anti-heroes that populate Commorragh's myths. The eldest of Nadirists have become little more than withered geist-things that must spend their lives immersed in atrocity lest they fade away altogether, and are usually accompanied by active Cronos Parasite Engines at all times. They look down upon even other Haemonculi as faint-hearted cowards, and have a bottomless hatred of the ascetic craftworld Eldar.

'The most glorious of illuminations are found in the deepest darkness.'

- Nothraq Gnull, Nadirist of the Ebon Sting

PHOENEX

The Phoenix are a hidden offshoot of the Ever-Nemesines. They seek to forge the Eldar race anew by the means of actively exterminating their own kind, be they Commorrite, craftworlder, Harlequin, Corsair or Exodite. They believe that should the Eldar become extinct, Ynnead, the god of death, will be awakened and the spiritual malaise of the Eldar lifted forever. The Phoenix is the most secret of all brotherhoods, for their eagerness to see their brethren slain could easily see them undone. It is whispered that their morbid philosophy is not limited to Commorragh. Some say that entire troupes of maverick Harlequins – and even the spiritual leaders of more than one craftworld – share the Phoenix's goals. When the Eldar are ready to be reborn, the practitioners of this philosophy intend to be the ones in control, guiding their race's destiny from guttering spark to glorious inferno once more.

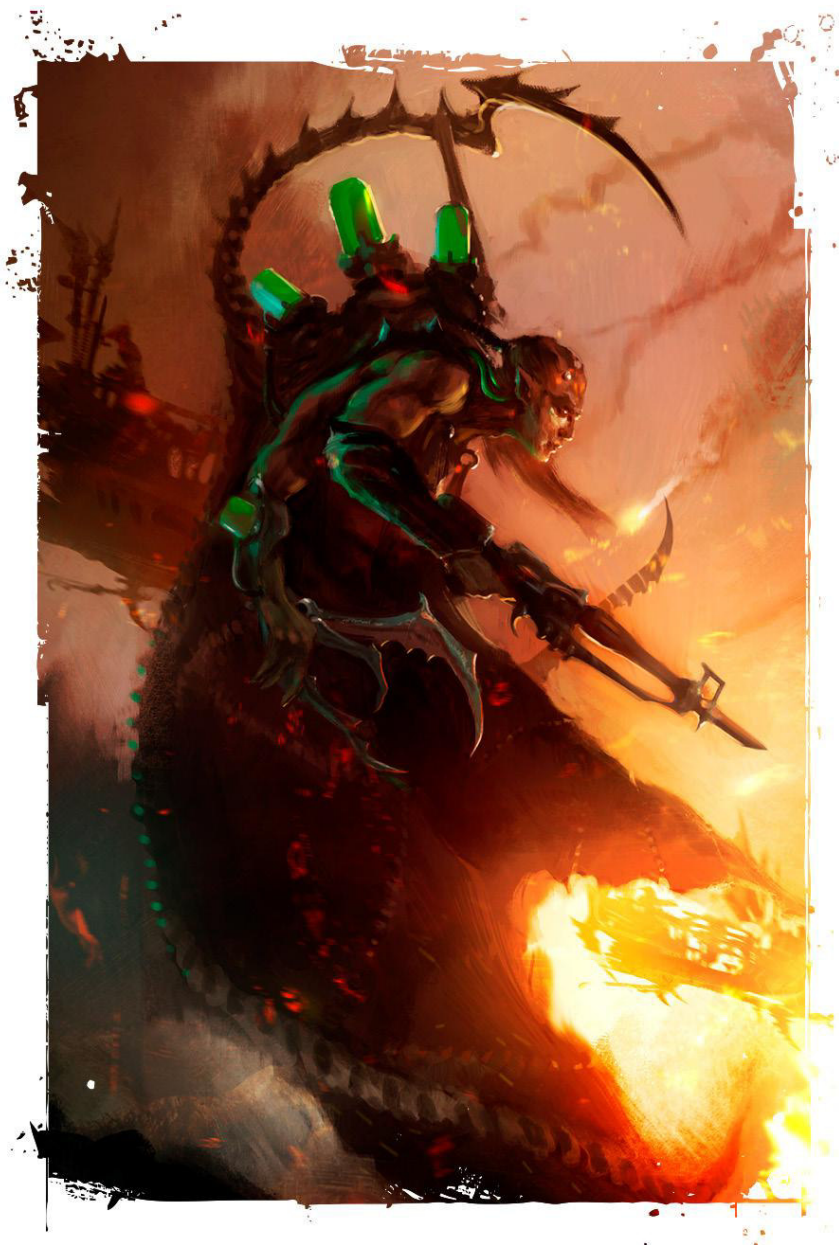


SCARLET EPICUREANS

The Scarlet Epicureans are perhaps the closest spiritual descendants of those Eldar whose hedonism led to the birth of Slaanesh. These Covenites and their devoted Wrack minions revel in every iota of sensation that they can wring from the universe. Some of these maniacal orgiasts attack the military forces of realspace in order to invite unusual varieties of death, savouring the sublime moment when their lives are snuffed out. After drinking in their own last moments like a vintage draught, they will be regrown in the depths of Commorragh, ready to seek out an even more unusual and fascinating demise.

UNITED BY DARKNESS

All Haemonculi like to think themselves eternal, but in truth they are as capricious the rest of their kind. One century may see a resurgence of Apparitions – those Haemonculi that make their lairs in mirrors and delight in the capture of the vain. Another may see the arrogant Vilethi, named for the Dark Muse Vileth, deign to accompany realspace raids purely to demonstrate their own superiority. Repugnancancers, despite their lethal surprises being seen as somewhat gauche by the eldest of Haemonculi, are enjoying a resurgence as the 41st Millennium draws to a close. With the constant twists of fate that typify Covenite society, only one thing can be counted as fact – whatever disciplines the Haemonculi are perfecting, it bodes ill for the rest of the galaxy.



A MURDER OF RAVENS



The Haemonculi and the Raven Guard have crossed blades many times, for just as the Dark Eldar will always prey upon Humanity, so the Space Marines will always defend it. Upon the rural world of Parocheus the two factions would clash once more, each force vying to control the shadows they both counted as their ally.

The Haemonculi of the Altered were no strangers to the world of Parocheus. They had last visited the planet in 018.M36, and it had not ended well for them. The people there were stifled by superstition, and most were afraid of their own shadows – the ideal playthings for the Coven's Repugnanciers. A great many webway portals existed upon Parocheus, and the Altered had in the past competed between themselves to see how many of the populace they could scare into the grave without actually touching them.

The last time the Altered made the journey to Parocheus, the Covenites found the Raven Guard waiting in ambush. The finest stealth operatives in the Adeptus Astartes, the sons of Corax had launched a blisteringly effective ambush that had seen the Covenites maimed, disfigured, or – in the case of Viscount Syndriq – blasted into messy chunks by a volley of heavy bolter shells. Though the surviving Haemonculi had fled to the nearest webway portal and escaped back to Commorragh, and although enough of Syndriq's latest fleshform was scraped together to effect his regeneration, the damage to the Coven's pride had already been done.

Viscount Syndriq in particular took the defeat hard. His rage was so great that he discharged himself from his regeneration sarcophagus long before his regrowth was complete. So it was that when the Altered returned to the planet of Parocheus, Syndriq was still a pale and hairless fiend, his knife-sharp teeth bared in a permanent rictus grin that was unsettling in the extreme.



The vengeful Haemonculus was in good company. Amongst the Coven lords of the Altered were several Repugnanciers that had altered their appearance to be as disturbing as possible, the better to raise their chances of frightening the defenders of Parocheus to death. Their true mission, however, surpassed mere recreation. Reasoning the Raven Guard would still be keeping a watchful eye on the planet's fate, they intended to draw the defenders of Humanity into attack once more – only for the Raven Guard to find that this time, the roles of ambusher and victim had been reversed.

Parocheus was largely a mining world, its ochre mountains honeycombed with tunnels and electromagnetic conveyor rails. The Haemonculi had been alerted to the world's presence when the planet's servominers had accidentally struck a dormant webway portal with a seismic hammer. Since that day, the planet had been haunted by terrible nightmares – both imagined and horrifyingly real.

Syndriq gathered the sycophantic cells of the Altered to his side, his expedition joined by those of his allies who thought the forthcoming spectacle would be too entertaining to pass up. The Viscount led his fellow Haemonculi through the webway towards Parocheus as soon as his forces were mustered, bidding the majority of his entourage linger in the webway to await his signal.

Once they had made planetfall, the majority of the Coven's Repugnanciers were content to make their lairs in the deep woods and so-called 'haunted tunnels'. They were ready to savour the wait before the kill, just as they always had. Syndriq, however, would brook no delay. His sinewy form drifted through the outskirts of the nearest mining town, looming over miners and geoservitors alike to sniff the air over their heads. Their fear was palpable, but it was nothing compared to the rich scent of despair to come.

The miners united against the horror in their midst, but Syndriq merely floated above them, activating his clone field so that the cobblestones hurled at him passed harmlessly by. Lipless mouth wide, the Coven lord threw back his head and gave a keening shriek that was echoed by a dozen identical doppelgangers.

The things that loped from the shadows to answer his call were, if anything, even more terrifying than the Haemonculus himself.



SHADOWS IN THE NIGHT

When the Raven Guard made planetfall in answer to an astropathic distress call from Parocheus's capital city, their operation was slick and fast. Not for them the thunderous strike of Drop Pods; the Raven Guard instead entered the planet's main spaceport aboard a mining hauler, only stealing out once nightfall was upon them. Making their way along a disused culvert, the Space Marines rendezvoused with their contacts planetside. Their informers, having long had their ears to the ground for the supernatural, spoke of their predicament at great length.

Every morning, new accounts of terror abounded from the populace. They spoke of gangling monsters stalking the twilight, of armed enforcers turned to obsidian statues, of red-slicked skeletons wandering back into their houses and climbing into bed, of strange symbols chalked on barrack walls, and white-haired cadavers found with rigor mortis fingers clutching at their stilled hearts. Worst of all were the tales of the pallid fiend that haunted the twilight hours, known to the populace as the Grinner. The Grinner had left in its wake the wreckage of a hundred defence troopers. The corpses had been spread-eagled and stained so that their ribcages resembled the wings of a raven, a clear challenge to the sons of Corax. They were hung by these macabre pinions all the way along the New Road.

The Raven Guard captain, Yaroslan Medexus, narrowed his eyes in silent fury. The Dark Eldar were back, and were preying on those brave enough to challenge them for their own twisted amusement. Their contacts had already uncovered the common point between each apparition – the haunted mines in the crevasse known as Devil's Gulch. The course ahead was clear. After their Scouts confirmed the location of the xenos base, it would be time to launch as sudden and as deadly an attack as possible.

The Haemonculi allowed their Raven Guard guests to imagine themselves hidden for a little longer – just long enough, in fact, for their Tactical Squads to reach the mouths of the tunnels ranging through Devil's Gulch. The Raven Guard, as circumspect as ever, had sent servo-skulls into each tunnel the better to map out its contours and trigger any unwelcome traps. They found nothing inside but darkness. In fact, once the servo-skulls had passed a certain point, they garnered only static interference. The Raven Guard attributed the phenomenon to the mine's electromagnetic rails, but in their hearts, none of them were quite so sure.

Into the mine tunnels the Raven Guard ventured, keeping together in squads of ten – the Codex Astartes was very clear on such clearance measures. As each Space Marine approached, his field of fire interlocked so cleanly with that of his fellows that even a charging ambull would have been quickly dispatched. Mile after mile of tunnel was searched with no sign of the Haemonculi, nor their minions.

As the Raven Guard progressed in single file down the thin passageways at the mine's heart, the Space Marine at the rear of each squad simply went missing. As soon as the anomaly was detected, fierce subvocal comments were exchanged. The Raven Guard sergeants weighed an all-out blitz to recover their battle-brothers against the stealth parameters of their mission.



The decision was made for them when the Raven Guard felt the entire mountain shudder. The webway portal in the depths of the mine had been violently breached. The Raven Guard, suspecting the ominous tremors to be the initial rumblings of an earthquake that would trap them underground, enacted a tactical retreat towards the mouths of each tunnel.

It was then that the Covenite skimmers fell from the skies with a great tearing scream. Bolters raised, every one of the mustering Raven Guard looked upwards at the same time. In that moment, scores of disfigured Wrack minions boiled out of the darkened mineshafts behind them. Several of the Dark Eldar were blasted apart by the Raven Guard's reflexive bolter drill, but in many cases the Space Marines took a fraction too long to respond. Syndriq's Wracks hacked and sawed with ecstatic abandon at the joints of their foes' battle plate, their gleeful shrieks muffled by their masks. Many earned only broken necks and gouged hearts as the Space Marines fought back hard, but the Covenites kept attacking nonetheless.

The skies above boomed as a Stormraven Gunship squadron burst from the clouds. Assault cannons thudded death into the Wracks below. Each craft's metallic jaws opened wide, and wedges of Assault Marines rocketed from their interiors, flipping in mid-flight to crunch feet-first into the Covenite craft that were skimming the mountain's shoulders. Several of the arrowing Raiders broke apart under the sheer force of their power-armoured charge, but the leading craft evaded them without harm.

Standing with one foot upon each of his flagship's balustrades, Syndriq opened a jewelled, egg-shaped casket and cooed encouragement to whatever was inside. A passing Land Speeder lanced a melta beam a hair's breadth from the Haemonculus' bald pate, the residual heat leaving a black scar. Syndriq only laughed. A split second later a tentacle of unlight lashed out from the casket, yanking the craft's pilot from his seat and causing the skimmer to crash headlong into the mountainside.

A Stormraven Gunship's underslung missiles arced down. Viscount Syndriq, enraptured by the spectacle of his Wracks tearing a Space Marine limb from limb, was struck in the small of the back. He was thrown unceremoniously forward an instant before the missile detonated, blasting him into little more than a spattering of wet flesh.

Quvelich the Emaciator, a reed-thin Haemonculus that had known Syndriq for millennia, twisted his lips in a moue of irritation. He gave an imperious command to the Grotesques clambering along the ruined gatehouse. A moment later, they flung themselves headlong at the night-black Stormraven tearing along the mountainside. All but one of them missed altogether and dropped flailing down into the dust below. The one that caught its prey knocked the gunship off course so that it careened into its brother craft, sending them both spinning to an explosive death on the moonlit slopes below. The lone Space Marine that fought his way out of the cockpit was fallen upon by the creations of Maestru Thrylemnus, an ally of Syndriq's from the Prophets of Flesh. The dark artisan's Talos Pain Engines tore the pilot limb from limb before reassembling his corpse in a fashion more acceptable to their master.

At the mouths of the tunnels the surviving Raven Guard had regrouped and were fighting back hard. They were almost all engaged at close quarters, fighting back-to-back as they battled to contain the Wracks closing in around them. Bolt pistol shells blasted striated muscle from bone, gauntleted fingers dug under face masks and combat knives plunged into Dark Eldar brains. Here and there a grenade detonated, shrapnel sinking into pale flesh whilst ricocheting harmlessly from ceramite power armour.

'To die once to a prey's attack is indulgent. To die twice to the same force, in the same manner... That is positively embarrassing. Gather this fool's remains, that we might teach him the error of his ways.'

- Quvelich the Emaciator, prior to the creation of Syndriq's Sump

Already tired of all this imprecise violence, the aristocratic Lord Faerughast was halfway towards his waiting Raider when a bearded Scout Sergeant lunged out of concealment and impaled him with a power sword. Faerughast raised his eyebrows and nodded in appreciation – the human had hidden himself well. If the Coven lord had still possessed a heart, it would have been run right through. The Space Marine yanked his sword up through Faerughast's torso, but it achieved little more than imparting a delicious thrill of pain – the Covenite's vital organs were nowhere so predictable. With an almost casual grace, the Haemonculus reached out to caress the warrior's open jaw with his flesh gauntlet. The Scout Sergeant swelled briefly before exploding in a welter of blood.

Faerughast licked his worm-like lips appreciatively, his refined senses analysing the vintage as his secondary limbs stitched together the bloodless valley of his chest. There was something there, some kind of flaw-taste dancing tantalisingly on the tip of the tongue. Then he had it: the gene-seed of the Raven Guard was still functional, yet by the tang of corruption within, it was only a heartbeat away from something far fouler. Eyes creased in silent amusement, the Haemonculus tapped a ruby at his throat and contacted his fellow Covenites. A far more inventive revenge was within their reach.



Brother Kynus of the Raven Guard dropped into a crouch, painfully aware that he was suddenly alone in the unnatural darkness that had consumed him.

There was a low hiss, a flash of teeth in the gloom, and he was alone no more.

'Die, abomination!' shouted Kynus, darting forward to slash his chainsword six inches below the glittering smile. There was an eerie laugh, but the smile did not shift. Kynus slammed an elbow into the place where the thing's chest should be, staggering slightly as he found nothing.

'Oh dear,' chuckled a mellifluous voice, the High Gothic translation overlaid upon the lilting syllables of the Eldar language. 'There is no need for such vulgarities, Brother Kynus. You and I shall be the best of friends soon enough. We shall get to know each other inside and out.'

Kynus whipped his chainsword around once more, firing a bolt pistol shell on instinct. It detonated almost immediately, underlighting a withered fiend with a ragged hole blasted right through its ribcage.

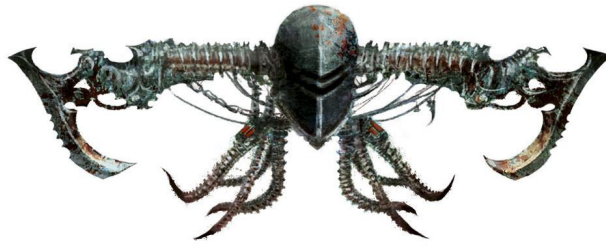
'Ouch,' said the Haemonculus, running a finger around the wound's edge and bringing it to his greyish lips.

Then the darkness fell, and Kynus' punishment began.

THE BLEAK HAUL

With Syndriq dead, Faerughast's fellows took little convincing to go along with his plan. Ichor injectors and flesh gauntlets were set to paralysis rather than fatal doses; cells of Wracks and Grotesques alike were commanded to capture rather than kill. The Raven Guard's Assault Marines fought with renewed fervour when they saw several of their number, rendered as motionless as statues, borne off in the claws of hunchbacked Grotesques. They made little progress, for the Wracks pouring out from the minehead outnumbered them three times over. One by one, the Space Marines were being borne to the ground and paralysed. Several activated their jump packs and boosted away, only for the Venoms circling above to send them crashing back down to earth with streams of splinter cannon fire.

Desperate now, Captain Medexus pounced upon the laughing Quvelich as he was busy peeling a scalp from a fallen Space Marine. The captain punched his lightning claws through the Haemonculus' neck with such force he not only decapitated him, but slashed apart his spinal sump in a fountain of hideous liquids. The Dark Eldar's disembodied head rolled to a halt nearby, laughing quietly to itself as it stared at Medexus with beady black eyes. A cell of Wracks skittered in close, one stabbing a needle into the back of the Space Marine Captain's neck as a second gingerly picked up Quvelich's grinning head.



Suddenly, two more Stormravens hurtled out of the skies to send missiles slamming into the mountainside, blasting two Grotesques to pieces and sending rubble tumbling down to partially block the mineshafts. It was all the signal the Haemonculi needed. As one, the Covenites retreated into the darkness, the largest of their number dragging their Space Marine captives with them. Bolter fire hammered into fleshy backs and blasted holes in the metal carapaces of Pain Engines, but the Covenites were so invigorated by the slaughter they ignored even the most grievous of wounds. The last of the Wracks scabbled across the scree on all fours, closely pursued by tearing volleys of fire from the Stormravens. One of the Covenites juddered as large-calibre bullets tore him apart, but the rest made it into the darkness intact. A second later, the mountainside shuddered, and the avalanche the Stormravens had begun finally buried the minehead openings altogether.

The Raven Guard, having lost not only their comms feeds but also dozens of good men, were ill-inclined to dig their way through the rubble in pursuit of their foes. Pragmatism overrode the fiery desire for vengeance, and as the Stormraven Gunships settled down with their metal jaws open, the remaining Raven Guard regrouped. Over a score of their number had been stolen away into the darkness by the very foe they had come to slay; they could not afford to lose more.

Vowing that this was not over, the Raven Guard solemnly boarded their gunships and made for low orbit.

A DARK LEGACY

Two days later, a Space Marine strike force blasted its way into the webway tunnels that fringed Parocheus. After a brief skirmish with the Covenites in the otherworldly tunnels beyond, the missing Raven Guard were recovered to a man, their memories clouded but their bodies intact. After a lengthy quarantine the abductees rejoined their battle companies, dying one by one in noble service to their Chapter. Their gene-seed was recovered and implanted into fresh recruits. Over time, their legacy was dispersed throughout the Chapter. Yet a darkness now lurked there, written into the very genetic code they prized the most.

A hundred years and a day after the clash upon Parocheus, the sudden mutation of Raven Guard gene-seed saw dozens of their finest warriors hatch into grotesque monsters. An entire generation of new recruits had to be put down. In the end, the vengeance of the Haemonculi had been wrought by the hands of those who sought to defy them.



A HIDEOUS BEAUTY



The Haemonculus Covens prey on the lesser races as a matter of course, though their malefic attentions are by no means isolated to the denizens of realspace. When the Cadian battalions of the metal-skinned planet Refusal fell under the gaze of the Prophets of Flesh, it was not only the world's garrison that felt the Coven's dire touch...

Though the Haemonculi prefer to appear aloof, they still find the betrayals and rivalries of their fellow Commorrites extremely entertaining. Nor is this the only reason why the Covens dabble in the intrigues of the Dark City. Though they would love to think themselves immune to the plotting and scheming of those they see as their lessers, the Haemonculi must ensure they are abreast of the city's events if they wish to remain crouched at the centre of the causal nets they weave. For this reason, it is not unheard of for a Haemonculus to venture into the upper spires to treat with Archons and Succubi alike. Some even deign to attend the feasts of murder laid on by the Wych Cults, gazing impassively from under awnings of stretched, still-living skin to better observe what passes for entertainment in latter-day Commoragh.



BLOOD IN THE SAND

One of these blood-soaked spectacles was hosted by Yctria Ghularis, a doyenne of the arenas known behind her back as the Flayer Queen. Once of the First Blood but now a Succubus of the Red Grief, Yctria was as ravishing as she was ambitious. She was also possessed of a truly foul temper. Whenever Yctria felt slighted, she would fly into a spectacular rage. The bladed frenzies that usually followed made for excellent entertainment, and the subsequent flayings, administered by Yctria herself, were a potent source of psychic nourishment.

So it was that Croniarch Sekh and several fellow Prophets of Flesh found themselves attending one of the Red Grief's nightly bloodbaths. Unlike the Dark Eldar baying for blood around him, Sekh was not there to see Yctria fight. Instead, he was really rather looking forward to seeing her rival, the dusky beauty known as Kariasche the Marred.

Kariasche was a character much discussed in the subterranean society of the Haemonculi. She alone amongst the Hekatarii queens had never sought out the Covens in order to procure augmentative salves or beautifying elixirs. Kariasche instead wore her many disfiguring scars with pride. This made her tremendously unpopular amongst the elitist echelons of the Wyches – and especially with Yctria, who took the battlescarred Succubus' appearance as a personal affront. Still, Kariasche's elegance and skill with the archite glaive made her popular enough that she was grudgingly allowed to tread the sands.

That evening, Kariasche was set to duel a mind-slaved Imperial Knight in a battle she was not supposed to survive. Despite the walker's raw might, however, the scarred Succubus was winning the duel, cartwheeling away from every blast and taking out wiring and cabled tendons with every sweep of her glaive. Yctria, as impatient for her plans to unfold as ever, strode into the arena and speared Kariasche through the back with a tox-javelin. The Flayer Queen then flicked her wrist towards the looming Knight. A haywire grenade sailed from her impeccably manicured hand to detonate upon the iron monster's engine housing. The slave-Knight's chainblade juddered to a halt mere inches from Yctria's ponytailed head as she sashayed past. The Flayer Queen tiptoed over to her rival, spitting delicately upon Kariasche's limp form before slinging her over one shoulder. Hauling the fallen Succubus atop the incapacitated walker like a hyperfelid dragging a slain zellion into a tree, Yctria bathed in the adoration of the crowd before slowly and carefully skinning Kariasche alive.

As Yctria tied her rival's stolen skin around her neck like a silken robe, Croniarch Sekh slunk out of the arena early, his face twisted in a mask of ill-concealed rage. The Haemonculus called in a few favours, and part of Kariasche's corpse found its way into the stasis coffins of the Prophets of Flesh. It would not be the last time Sekh would cross paths with the warrior queens of the Red Grief.



A DARK PROPOSAL

The wheels of the Dark City turned, and a new generation of captives was ground to bloody waste. Before a single Ilmaean cycle had passed, however, the Cult of the Red Grief made their way down into the titanic stalactite cities that clustered beneath Commoragh. They brought with them seven hundred and seventy seven slaves, each of a different species, reasoning this would please the Haemonculi. And please them it did; enough for the Cult to gain an audience in the lower halls.

It was not long before Queen Yctria stood before Croniarch Sekh himself. The portcullis shadows of the dungeon played across their skins, further accentuating the difference between the sculpted physique of the warriorress and the attenuated husk that Sekh had chosen as his latest fleshform. Flayed skin fluttered at Yctria's perfect shoulders as she spoke, the dried remnants of her rival caught in the sucking vents of the oubliettes below.

The Cult of the Red Grief wished to spearhead a realspace event, one of such unbridled violence that it surpassed even those launched by Lelith Hesperax herself. Yctria had identified a location perfect for her purposes – Ghulavast, a fortress world that had been reinforced by Humanity's footsoldiers as a defence against Craftworld Saim-Hann. Though they knew it not, the Astra Militarum's Warp translation had dislocated them in time, for Saim-Hann had long ago taken what they wanted from the planet. The witless buffoons of Cadia had stood vigil for months, waiting with bovine patience for a foe already long gone.

Yctria planned to give them the war they so richly desired, and in great measure. If they obtained not only the allegiance of the Prophets of Flesh but also the rare elixir rumoured to be in Sekh's possession, the Wych Cult's exhibitionist slaughter would be memorable indeed. Yctria would ensure the Coven received the lion's share of the spoils, including – at this point the Succubus smiled radiantly – several platoons of Ogryn abhumans; the perfect raw

material for forging new flesh-terrors.

Sekh's fellow Haemonculus, the scarecrow-thin Quvelich, recoiled imperceptibly at Yctria's presumption. It was a serious breach of etiquette to tell the Covens of their own business, let alone to dictate terms of employ. Croniarch himself merely smiled, sketching a slight bow as he agreed to take part in Yctria's proposed realspace raid. He had indeed perfected the Elixir Barghesi – a vintage so rare and so original that not even Asdrubael Vect himself possessed a sample. What good was the creation of such a marvel, mused Sekh aloud, without a chance to try it out?

Before the night was out, a magnificent fleet left the Port of Infinite Sorrow. Shark-like and graceful, its vessels glided out of the Dark City and passed through the star portals beyond. Their departure was broadcast into a million waking dreams as a titillating hint of the carnage to come. In the command boudoir of her flagship, Yctria examined her prize; a sharp crystal sliver imbued with a single drop of the priceless elixir she had sought. She had already switched the shard she had received from the Haemonculi with that of her second-in-command, the Succubus Idyliane, just in case. The youthful pretender to Yctria's throne was getting too popular for her own good, and if the arena queen's instincts had been correct, Sekh's mask of politeness hid a poisonous bite. To her mind, the flesh-sculptors had agreed rather too readily to her proposal. Only an ingénue trusted a Haemonculus, and she was far too cunning to be caught in their webs of deceit.



A FORTRESS AWAKENED

The midwinter sun glinted feebly from the metal-skinned fortress world of Refusal, failing entirely to warm the Cadians that manned every rampart and bastion. Breath frosted as the Astra Militarum troopers stared impassively at the skyline. They were expecting to face Eldar, a race said to be able to appear out of nowhere. Where such a notion would seem terrifying to an untrained citizen of the Imperium, it was nothing new to warriors such as these, for every Cadian spends his youth training on the Chaos-haunted threshold of the Eye of Terror.

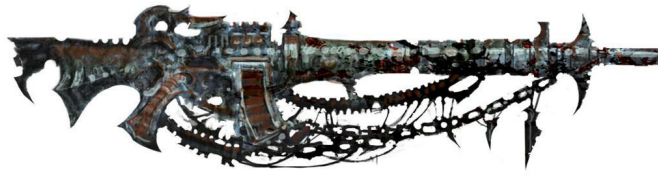
The Cadians had spent months of inactivity in the constant, gnawing cold. By now, even the ice troopers of Valhalla would have let their guard slip a little, whiling away the hours with conversation and perhaps a little gambling for contraband Iho-sticks. Not so the garrison of Refusal. It was a credit to the Cadian mindset that their response to the Dark Eldar invasion took less than three seconds to begin.

Wreathed in shadow, dozens of Raiders hurtled out of nowhere towards the Cadian emplacements that perched upon the shoulders of the mountainous metal fortress. As soon as the first silhouette of a Raider flitted over the silvered landscape, war klaxons were sounded and distant artillery thumped large-bore shells high into the skies. The Cadians manning the fortresses shouldered their lasrifles with professional calm, taking shots at the skeletal skimmers arrowing towards them even as the artillery shells ploughed down to detonate amongst them.

Each craft attracted a storm of missiles and lascannon beams as the Guardsmen cannily aimed ahead of the darting transports – their orders were to land a hit where the targets would be, rather than where they were. And still their shots had no effect. Cadian brows furrowed under regulation helmets as krak

missile and laser alike passed right through the shimmering transports.

The Haemonculi, knowing that the dull ranks of Humanity had never mastered flight, had set their apparent attack to skim tight to the steel plains. The Cadians, whose limited imaginations had subconsciously assumed a horizontal vector of invasion, had emerged from the gargoyle-crusted crenulations of the fortress to level a hurricane of firepower at the incoming craft. Only once the armada of skimmers came close did the deception become clear. The attack was nothing more than an illusion, a shadow mirage bought from Commorragh's Aelindrachi allies at a high price in royal souls.



The illusory invasion broke across the Cadian defences like smoke, dispersed into tenebrous tendrils, and faded into shadowy nothingness. Then the skies above screamed like an open mouth, and the true Covenite attack began.

A cluster of black-hulled craft were suddenly carving downwards like knives hurled from the clouds. Platoons of soldiers reformed with parade ground efficiency, squinting into the midday sun as they took speculative shots at the jagged craft above. Hydra flak batteries cranked their autocannons upwards to draw a bead on the newcomers, each loosing a fourfold barrage that riddled the skies with clouds of black smoke. Venoms and Raiders darted and veered, but the flakstorm hurled upwards by the Cadians' air defence was so thick that three of the Dark Eldar craft were caught and blasted into jagged shrapnel.

The Wracks that had clung onto their craft's sparse fuselage fell flailing from the skies, their half-naked bodies thudding into the weapon emplacements below with such force their blood burst out in spreading haloes. Impossibly, some of the Wracks still dragged their shattered bodies towards the Cadian heavy weapons teams nonetheless, their faceless masks staring up with silent intent. Others gave sharp cracks of bone as they twisted their mangled bodies into spidery new shapes and wriggled towards the horrified Astra Militarum defenders. The Cadian Heavy Weapons Teams were unable to reposition their mortars in time. Instead, they grabbed their lasguns and blazed away at close range. Many scored kill shots in the nick of time, but many more fell to the jabbing silversteel blades of the shattered wrecks writhing on their bellies towards them.

A skimmer squadron swung in low, several more cells of Wracks leaping from the open decks of their Venoms to land barefoot on the silvered grilles of the artillery platform. The Cadians scrambled to engage, but although their hastily-taken lasgun shots burned through the muscular frames of the invaders, they slowed the Covenites not in the least. Hollow laughs rang out as the Wracks stepped in, their surgical tools glinting in the emerald light of the webway portal high above. Within a matter of seconds the gunners had been dismembered, their wounds cauterised and their limbless torsos propped near the gunnery decks to better appreciate their own impotence.

With a curt shout, a platoon of weatherbeaten soldiers emerged from a vault door on the slopes above. A rain of metallic objects bounced down the incline, and the Wracks were killed in their turn, their bodies ripped apart by demolition charges and krak grenades. Still, the cells' work had been done – the Covenite vanguard had cleared the entrenchments of threat with scalpel-like precision. Bought a reprieve, the Raiders and Pain Engines bursting from the portals above were approaching unopposed.

A trio of Raiders swept towards the Astra Militarum troopers manning the lower balconies of the fortress, and the Wyches that clung to its fuselage vaulted and somersaulted downwards to land amongst the tightly packed ranks with acrobatic precision. Masterwork knives whipped out to plunge into necks and eye sockets, hydra gauntlets drove thickets of blades into torsos and backs, and razorflails transformed into segmented whips as their victims tried unsuccessfully to evade them. Yet for all the speed and precision of the kills, it was nothing that had not been seen a thousand times before in the arenas of Commorragh.



Then, Yctria called out a single command from the prow of her personal Raider. Her voice was as clear as a chiming glass bell – musical and pure, but a death knell nonetheless. Grinning fiercely, the Flayer Queen's Wyches pushed their elixir-crystal slivers into their wrists. Within moments the battle changed from a spectacle to a slaughter.

Squad after squad of Wyches hurtled up the incline of the mountainous fortress with blurring speed, leaping from gargoyle to spar, vaulting over the battlements and sinking their blades into the faces of the men behind. Metal doors clanged shut as the Cadian platoons above withdrew in good order, only to be wrenched back open with impossible strength by the Dark Eldar pursuing them. Silvered corridor walls were splashed red with Cadian blood, only to be stained soot-black by the fires of counter-attacking flamer teams. But even billowing fire could not keep the elixir-driven Wyches from their prey.

Cackling madly, the gladiatrixes slid deftly under the oily flames to leap back up, blades-first, into the stunned humans beyond.

Yctria herself was riding high on the invigorating effects of the Barghesi elixir. Outdistancing all but Idyliane and her own Hekatrix Bloodbrides, the Flayer Queen sprinted from kill to impeccable kill, leaving a trail of decapitated human bodies that impressed even the Haemonculi watching from their hovering Raiders above. Licking his long fingers in anticipation, Quvelich turned to Croniarch Sekh and raised a bald eyebrow, but a shake of the ancient's head sent a simple message – not yet.

Far below, the Cadians and their abhuman allies were fighting back with all the thuggish tenacity of their kind. Wyvern Suppression Tanks had trundled from the postern gates of the fortress, their stormshard mortars hurling steel flechettes into the skinless Wracks that had dismounted in search of fresh meat. Wherever the razored metal aquilas exploded outwards, corded muscle was shredded and bone splintered, but the Wracks merely shivered in silent glee. They scuttled forwards to surround the nearest tanks, tapping their sides like insectivores probing a hollow tree. Another airburst detonated nearby, flechettes slicing fingers and studding backs. The largest of the Wracks plucked three steel aquilas from his wounds and hooked their wingtips into the striated muscle of his chest so they shone there in the twilight, a mockery of Imperial medals.



Nearby, the Haemonculus gourmet Iridivyst rose up from the midst of his skinless attendants, scanning the Cadian lines for an enemy more interesting. So many deaths here, yet in its blunt and oafish manner the Imperium had failed to do much more than explore the hackneyed theme of kinetic trauma. Here and there a plasma blast shot out, coring the torso of a loping Grotesque or incinerating an unlucky Wrack, yet even that was an end the Haemonculus had already experienced. Aside from the obvious faux pas of experiencing the same death twice, Iridivyst was not in a hurry to repeat it – despite the delicious spike of agony that plasma provides, his resurrection had taken an impractically long time.

The Haemonculus' eyes lit up when he saw a white-bearded human psyker leaning over the battlements, two blinding whips of psychic energy lashing out from his temples to blast the Wyches darting below to atoms. Iridivyst snipped off a gnarled finger with a scissor-like appendage and handed it to his nearest Wrack – an unnecessary precaution given his extensive flesh-banks, but something that had become a pleasurable ritual for him over the millennia. The Wrack stowed the digit away in a thin crystal tube.

His traditional pre-death ritual complete, the grinning Haemonculus drifted straight towards the elderly human psyker, spraying his stinger pistol's poisoned needles into the packed Imperial Guardsmen below in order to prove himself a threat. Those unfortunates he hit convulsed as they drowned in their own blood.

Iridivyst loomed in closer and closer, but still the human psyker ignored him. The Haemonculus was on the verge of rolling his eyes in impatience when the Cadian witch opened his mouth wide and screamed out a pulse of blinding fire that consumed Iridivyst from pale head to atrophied toes. As he burned, the Coven lord shook with ecstasy, his convulsions reaching a blurring peak before he burst apart in a cloud of ash.

'Ah, death! An old and welcome friend. One day we shall join as one forever, but not today. He still has so much to teach me...'

- Iridivyst, Scarlet Epicurean

Nearby, the dark artisan Maestru Thrylemnis sent his Engines of Pain towards a pack of Bullgryns that were busily stamping a cell of Wracks into the dirt. Upon seeing the macabre machines hover close, the abhuman brutes raised their slab-like shields and locked them together to form an impromptu wall, protecting not only themselves but also the Cadians that were redeploying behind. Thrylemnis' creations merely floated up over the shieldwall, Synistrex the Talos plucking shields from muscular fingers as the Cronos Dextrisyn sucked in great draughts of abhuman life essence. Whilst the Talos' apparatus-limbs opened brain-pans and removed the pulsing prizes inside with clinical efficiency, Thrylemnis strode up to those Bullgryns that had been drained white by his Cronos and simply pushed them over with a series of sharp shoves. The Talos signalled its work complete with a metallic chime. As the trio moved on, Thrylemnis carefully peeled the skin away from the hand that had touched the abhumans and cast the contaminated remnants aside.

The dark artisan's fussy precision was a stark contrast to the orgy of fleshcraft erupting from the Aegis defences above. Three more Talos Pain Engines had made it to the Cadian line – corpsethief machines that Thrylemnis would consider laughably inferior copies of his own devices, but terrifying nonetheless. They slashed and drilled and impaled everything they could catch in a whirlwind of blood, turning those too slow to evade into a selection of sweetmeats that they took inside them before seeking fresh prey.

A stone's throw away, the Haemonculus Xeryndtuil looked on in almost comical dismay as his Grotesques were hammered by the punisher galling cannons of a Cadian battle tank squadron. Two of the lumpen monsters were blasted bodily apart in a spray of black fluids, though their masked comrades seemed not to notice. Frowning crossly, the Haemonculus clapped his primary hands twice, and the remaining Grotesques gave shuddering roars as the ichor dispensers in their backs dumped potent hypersteroids into their bloodstreams.



The swollen beasts rushed forwards right into the hail of bullets that were tearing fist-sized chunks of flesh from their torsos. Heedless, the flesh-constructs fell upon the Leman Russ tanks, pounding their upper hulls and scrambling atop them. One of the Grotesques wrenched away the red-hot barrel from the cannon that had riddled it with holes, hurling it into the ranks of the Cadian riflemen that were desperately trying to level a kill-shot. Another ripped off a cupola plate and somehow funnelled itself inside the tank, dislocating its joints so it could push in like a snake forcing entrance to a subterranean warren. A third punched a hole clean through the hull of the tank beside it and stuck its liquifier gun into the gap. A moment later the screams of the melting crew inside mingled with the muffled bellows of their killer. As the chorus of terror, rage and pain rose high, Xerynduil's frown melted away into an expression of utmost tranquillity.

All across the slopes of the silvered fortress, scenes of surreal and disturbing power were unfolding. A veteran Cadian was hit by an ossefactor just as he pulled the detonator pin from his frag grenade, his body bursting into thorny spears that impaled his comrades a moment before the whole tableau was mercifully blasted apart. A raging Ogryn bit down heavily into one of the Wracks bearing him to the ground, only to find his jaws dissolving in the acidic ichor that gushed out of the wound. A Ratling sniper put a needle rifle shot through the heart of one of the Wracks scrambling up the swarf-screes towards him, and the rest of the Covenite's cell fell upon their fellow's twitching corpse, long tongues probing the wound to get a taste of Imperial poison. A reeling Grotesque was barged into the side of a tank by a heavy-set Commissar, the officer blasting the thing's head from its neck with his bolt pistol only to be throttled by its corpse nonetheless.

Each of the events that the Haemonculi considered worthy of attention was absorbed by Medusae-hybrids and modified Cronos for later delectation. The pageant of violence was in full flow, the grisly denouement of years of fleshcrafting unfolding in a hundred different ways. Yet as far as Croniarch Sekh was concerned, the main attraction was yet to come.

At the peak of the metal-skinned mountain, Yctria and her Bloodbrides were darting in amongst the Cadian high command. A trail of dead Wyches was testament to the bloody tenacity with which the Astra Militarum had fought, but now their doom was upon them. Even the psychic lightning crackling from the Cadian commander's psyker advisor was not fast enough to catch the pirouetting Succubus Yctria, nor the least of her handmaidens.

A nod came from Sekh, and Quvelich's grin reached the corners of his eyes. He waved his activation needle. Each of the Cronos positioned on the shoulders of the mountain belched lighter-than-air gas from their carapaces, their emissions combining into a purplish mist that drifted upwards to shroud Yctria, the Bloodbrides, and their Cadian playthings alike.

The gas engulfed Yctria and her Bloodbrides; all but Idyliane – who had been gifted with an antidote in reward for her role in the Coven's treachery – coughed and wheezed as the miasma filtered into their lungs. Their focus slipped as the purplish mist blurred their senses. One of the Wyches went down hard, impaled by a scar-faced Cadian's chainsword, as the others scattered in disarray.

Sekh's Raider drew in close as a strange transformation began. Yctria's perfect flesh began to buckle and writhe, sinews of ropy muscle and bulges of

gross meat roiling out from every blood-flecked limb. Hurling those nearby away from her, the Succubus swelled like a ripening fruit, doubling, then tripling in size as her spine erupted from her back in shocking profusion. The Bloodbrides tumbled away in shock, and though they made a fighting retreat, all of them, even the nimble Idyliane, were shot down by Cadian veterans capitalising upon their sudden advantage. Yctria flailed and roared, her lilting soprano voice reduced to a saliva-choked bass as the terrible transformation took hold. The flayed skin she wore around her neck came loose, fluttering like a hideous flag caught in the breeze.



At a flick of the finger, Sekh sent his Raider lunging after Yctria's cloak of scars. Leaning out with his elongated fingers extended, Quvelich plucked the fluttering shroud of scarred skin from the skies and handed it reverently to Sekh, who caressed it for a moment before locking it in a stasis chest. The elder Haemonculus nodded once, eyes closed. His Wrack gestured at a control panel, and the skies above the fortress pulsed white.

With uncanny synchronicity every Wrack, Grotesque and Engine of Pain simply abandoned the carnage they were wreaking and made to retreat. The Cadians sent stabbing volleys of lasfire into the backs of their retreating foes, hardly able to believe the tide had turned so suddenly. Wherever a Covenite fell, his slump-shouldered fellows would unceremoniously scoop up his remains, loading them onto waiting Raiders and Venoms before departing en masse for the webway portals high above. At the peak, the Yctria-thing was bound in crackling shardnets and hooked chains before being lifted like a fisherman's prize beneath the largest of Sekh's skimmer fleet. The rays of a new dawn started to push over the horizon as the Dark Eldar departed, leaving a corpse-strewn wasteland and a smattering of Cadians to claim victory behind them.

Seven Ilmaean cycles later, the Prophets of Flesh returned to the grand amphitheatre of the Red Grief. Croniarch Sekh and his fellows watched with quiet smiles from under their shadowed balcony. They drank in the sight of the Red Grief's new queen as Kariasche, made whole once more, strode into the arena. Every one of the scars and blemishes that the dusky Succubus had worn so proudly in her former life was perfectly intact, a network of memories preserved in the very same skin her mysterious benefactors had taken from Yctria at the peak of the Cadian fortress.

Led by a bone chain in Kariasche's wake came a lumpen beast of impressive size. Its anguish was plain as it moaned and drooled from a dozen wound-like mouths. Clapping hesitantly at first, but rising to a crescendo as the truth of the spectacle sank in, the Dark Eldar in the arena got to their feet until the entire arena was united in a standing ovation. There was nothing so gratifying for the citizens of Commorragh than witnessing another's pain, after all, and Yctria's new incarnation had enough of that to last a thousand years. Subtly, but unforgettably, the Prophets of Flesh had reminded the denizens of the Dark City that to cross the Haemonculi was to invite a far darker destiny than mere death.



MONSTERS AND MACHINES



Amongst the stalactite spires of Commorragh's undercity, there are those Covens that specialise in the creation of Engines of Pain. These uncanny monstrosities are fusions of flesh, metal and demented spirit, and are just as capable on the field of war as they are in the bowels of the Haemonculus oubliettes.



THE EVERSPIRAL

The Haemonculi of the Everspiral consider even the lords of the other Covens to be rank amateurs. They are the most committed of all to the headlong plunge into depravity, believing themselves evil gods born to prey on the cusp of the mortal realm. Treading the downward spiral into the blackest depths of immorality is an unholy crusade for these monsters, and they do everything in their power to ensure each day is a little viler than the last.

Because of their wholehearted dedication to the arts of evil, their ranks boast a great many Nadirists – those who seek to become deified not by ascending into the heavens, but by descending into the abyss. The Haemonculi of the Everspiral require even more anguish to survive than their fellow Covenites, and utilise Cronos Parasite Engines to better supply the soul-stuff that they require for nourishment. Amongst their number are those so ancient, so inured to the spectacle of suffering, that without the constant feedback loop of dark energy provided by a syphoning Cronos they would wither away to dust.



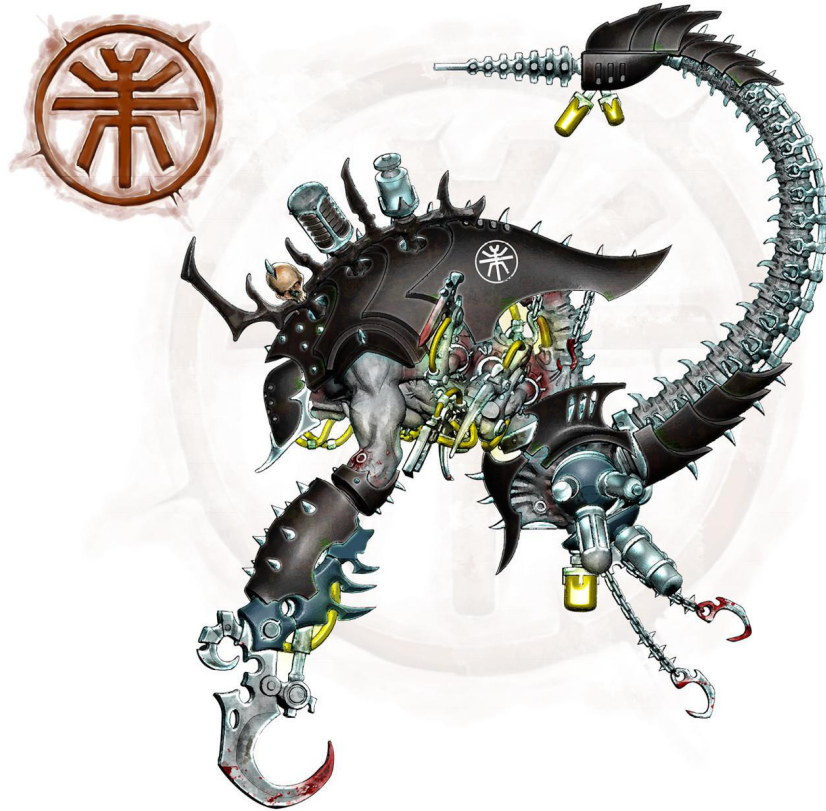
THE EBON STING

The Ebon Sting is renowned for its exceptionally well-made Talos. Innovation is key to this Coven's artisans, and their respect is given only to those who can combine art with efficacy to create the ultimate war machine. From the revolting Black Jester, with its forest of macrosteroidal syringes, to the many-bladed Iron Dervish, the Engines of the Ebon Sting are true abominations. Yet it is for their forcibly administered poisons that the Coven is truly feared. The weapons of their Talos are coated in the Ebon Sting's signature elixir – a black toxin derived from the rendered flesh of the worm-like nichtovermid. The moment it is introduced to the victim's body, the toxin begins to replicate, manifesting dark and leprous blotches. Eyes harden into sightless orbs, and skin stiffens into black chitin. Soon, the victim has swollen and solidified into a shuddering chrysalis. This is taken back with the utmost care to adorn the Coven's galleries. Inside the agonised host, a new clutch of nichtovermids grows, chewing through flesh and bone to finally burst out in a geyser of stinking liquid that draws a ripple of polite applause from its audience.



THE ALTERED

The Altered are well known for never wearing the same anatomy on consecutive occasions. However, their true expertise is in poisons, toxins and phages. They are the premiere suppliers of lethal elixirs in the Dark City – if an artisan were to take a splinter weapon from any Kabal or Cult and break down its constituent venoms, they would find several that hailed from the laboratories of the Altered. Many of their number are Nemesisists, dark scientists who collude with the Shaimesh-worshipping toxmaidens of Lhilitu. Though it may take millennia of experimentation, their single-minded quest is to unlock the death-secrets of every sentient creature in the galaxy. When raiding realspace, the Coven will capture as many victims as they can, regardless of quality – they think nothing of rendering down entire populations or even races into a single poison of unparalleled potency. To reap the raw materials they need for their deadly distillations, the Altered employ a standing army of Corpsethief Claws, each Talos equipped with stinger pods and ichor injectors that bubble with the most lethal liquids imaginable.



THE PROPHETS OF FLESH

The Prophets of Flesh enjoy the favour of Urien Rakarth himself. So many aspirants seek their employ that each of the Prophets presides over thousands of Wracks. Upon induction into the Coven, each Wrack's limbs will be extensively branded, tattooed or altered according to his new master's whim. Should he impress his superiors with especially inventive acts of sadism, the Wrack will have one of his marked appendages cut off and replaced with a bare limb taken from the Prophets' flesh libraries. Those favoured few who make it to the lesser ranks of the Haemonculi will be entirely free of blemish. Though they become convinced of their own purity, the opposite is true, for in climbing the heights of status, the aspirant will have stained his soul. Many of the Prophets of Flesh dabble in soothsaying, despite the prohibition of psychic activity that pervades Commorragh. They seek to learn the truths of the universe not through the shaman's technique of reading entrails, but by interpreting the effects of the atrocities they wreak.



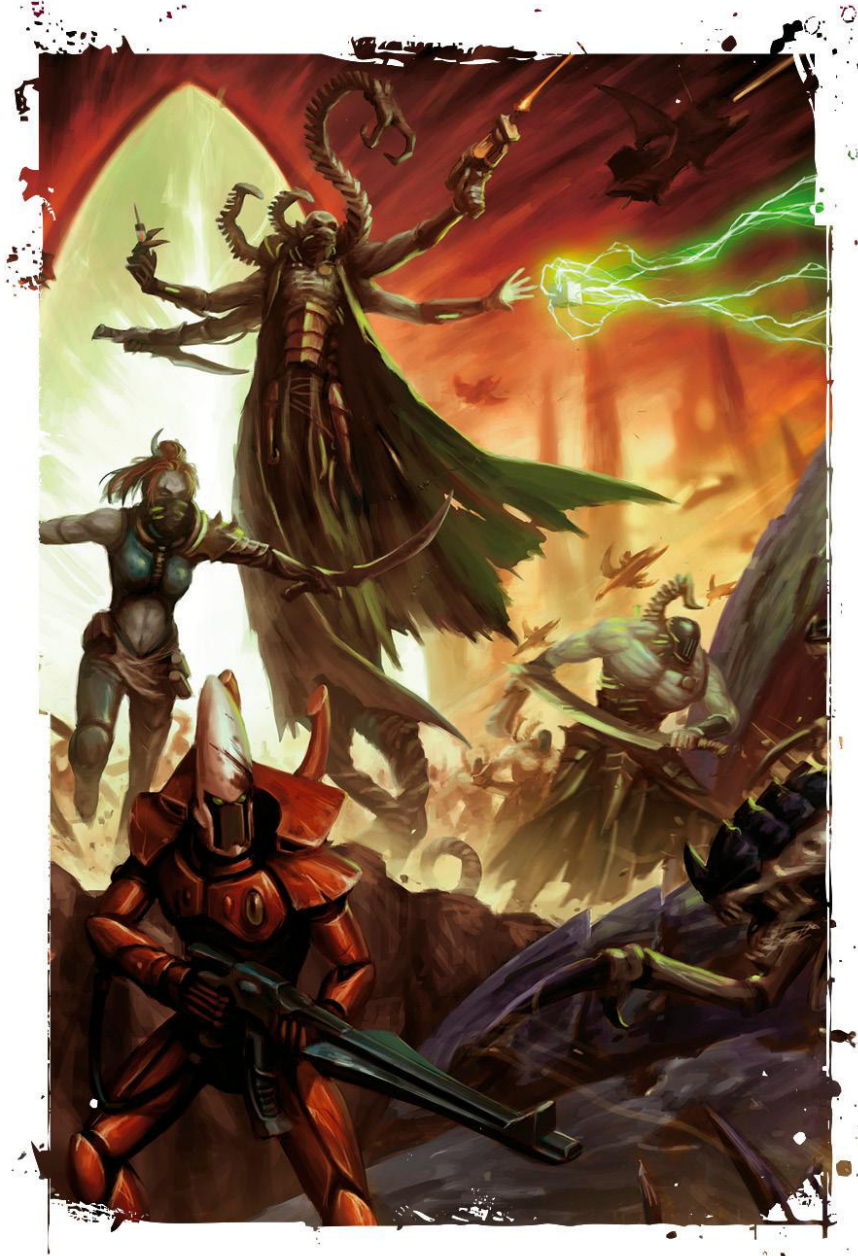
THE THEFT OF LETHIDIA

An untamed maiden world recently assailed by a Tyranid hive fleet, Lethidia represented a unique prize to the ever-curious Covenites. The Haemonculi descended whilst Saim-Hann was attempting to rescue the planet's indigenous Eldar. The Coven's plan was not merely to abduct the entire Tyranid invasion, but to achieve something far greater...

In the first few days of 999.M41 Hive Fleet Leviathan invaded the arboreal planet of Lethidia, a maiden world on the southern fringe of the galaxy. Though the planet played host to a variety of savage saurian life forms, it had no real chance of surviving a hive fleet's colossal hunger. Leviathan's rampage would see the hive ships gorge themselves on the forest planet's plentiful biomass, along with the Exodites that tended its world spirit.

Saim-Hann, a craftworld known for its long-standing vigil over the Exodite worlds, had watched carefully for just such an occurrence. The Eldar made planetfall scant hours after the first brood spores had descended, their wind rider hosts slaying Tyranid leader-beasts with shuriken cannon volleys and thrusts of their power spears. Though they were too few in number to stop the voidspawn's conquest, the Saim-Hann Eldar instead planned to rescue as many of the native Exodites as possible – be they living or dead.

All Exodite worlds are shot through with psychoactive webway tunnels that housed the spirits of their deceased, a crystalline version of the craftworlds' wraithbone infinity circuits. Saim-Hann's Spiritseers intended to mystically transfer the essences of those who had joined with Lethidia's world spirit into their own limbo-like afterlife. In this way they would save the planet in spirit, if not in body.



WATCHERS FROM BEYOND

The lords of Commorragh are always on the lookout for juicy morsels of knowledge. Their agents are strewn across the universe, numbering raiders, outcasts, Harlequins and dimension-hopping Mandrakes amongst them. It was not long before the Covens got wind of the Lethidian invasion.

The idea of an untamed maiden world newly infested by Tyranids caused a great stir in the undercity. As the architects of Commorragh proved long ago, wherever intense bodies of psychic power exist, magnificent deeds can be achieved. One had only to look at the Ilmaea – the captive suns that the founders of the Dark City had reaved from realspace – for proof of the Dark Eldar's supremacy. Some of those who orchestrated these great thefts lived on as the eldest and most influential of all Haemonculi.

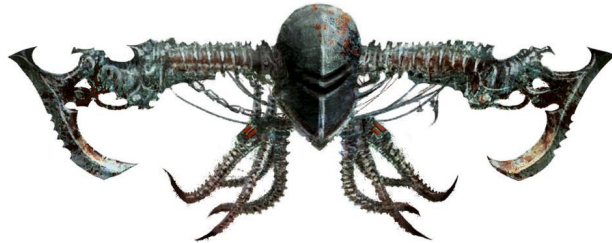
The Covenites' interest was not benevolent in nature, for in severing themselves from the decadent ways of the ancient Eldar empire, the Exodite cowards

had forfeited their right to survive. Instead it was closer to the excitement a cryptoscientist feels upon the threshold of a breakthrough. A whole new race entering the galaxy was something to be investigated thoroughly, preferably at the point of a scalpel.

Living Tyranids had been captured from realspace and taken back to Commorragh many times in the past, yet no more than a handful of broods had ever made it to the undercity intact. The alien weapon-beasts were violent in the extreme, and fetched a high price within the Wych Cult arenas and Haemonculus Covens alike. Thus far, the attempts of the Covenites to recreate or synthesise Tyranid biomatter had proved stillborn. Even the haul taken from the ill-fated world of Dûriel – specimens from two different hive fleets that the Haemonculi had attempted to blend together – had dwindled almost to nothing. The Tyranids were made from matter far stranger than mere flesh and blood, and their race would not be easily manipulated.

In this lay the Tyranids' appeal, for many Haemonculi were tired of working with humdrum musculature and predictable circulatory systems. They longed for something more exotic to adorn their slabs – the more varied in form the better. The Tyranids, as adaptable as they were proving to be, represented a body of learning so extensive in its myriad forms and abilities that they might never grow dull.

To stave off ennui indefinitely was considered the highest of all prizes by the Haemonculi. So it was that the undercity burned with something approaching hope. If the Covens could secure an ecosystem infested with self-replicating creatures from another galaxy, the variety it represented might afford them an entirely new canvas on which to operate. Though none dared speak of it, such a notion was as close to salvation as the Haemonculi could ever come.



TO STEAL A WORLD

It was the monstrous ambition of the master Haemonculus Urien Rakarth that showed the Covens the way. To abduct a brood of Tyranids was a simple enough matter – the runic hexcages of the Seventh Woe had proven that – but such small-scale abductions were worthy only of lesser Commorrites. With a major craftworld so close to a planet that still had an active world spirit, Rakarth knew of a way the entire Tyranid invasion could be stolen into the night.

Before long, the Haemonculus Covens worked together with an unprecedented degree of cooperation. The fabled Carnival of Pain would be accompanied by warriors from across Commorragh and beyond. Mercenary Incubi were hired, favours called in from Kabals and Wych Cults, and allies brought in from other dimensions. Meanwhile, Nemesisists and Penumbra Voyeurs conspired to plan the most efficient path to the planet's demise. They concluded that Rakarth's scheme would only succeed if they could not only prevent the Tyranid invaders from completing their feeding process, but also manipulate two major webway gates. Just such a portal is held astern of all Eldar craftworlds, Saim-Hann amongst them. Another is held at every Exodite world's principal geomantic shrine.

Rakarth's prize was in reach. Should the energies of these two great portals be destabilised whilst in close proximity to one another, the resultant feedback loop would see the dimensional gates forced open, yawning wider and wider until they were large enough to swallow a world. Once this was achieved, moving Lethidia into the webway would require a planetary translocation.

It was an act made possible by the history of the Dark City itself. In the aftermath of the Supreme Overlord's vengeance upon the Archon Kelithresh, Asdrubael Vect had left a howling hole in the universe. Rakarth knew the webway routes to Vect's tame singularity – the true miracle would be to ensure Lethidia was conveyed to Commorragh's orbit without tearing apart the space-time continuum. To achieve this, the webway breachers would have to be placed in precise geomantic locations that corresponded to nodal points in the planet's crystalline skeleton. It was a task so important, so monumental, that the Haemonculi would entrust it to no one else. The Coven lords would have to visit Lethidia in person.



THE BANQUET DENIED

The Commorrite alliance forced their way into realspace through the grand webway gate at the rear of Craftworld Saim-Hann. While the Kabals and Wych Cults delighted in spiting their craftworld cousins with unsanctioned use of their grand portal, a vertical vector of assault was vital to ensure a surprise assault. Lethidia's skies were shrouded by a thick pall of Tyranid spores launched by the hive ships loitering in low orbit. The tiny spores were spurring the Exodite world's biomass into uncontrollable growth, just as an agri-worlder fattens his herd before the butchery begins.

Dotted across Lethidia's landscape were numerous digestion pools. Just as the last days of Dûriel had shown, once the planet's conquest was assured, those devourer-beasts that had eaten their fill would hurl themselves into these bilious lakes in an act of instinctive suicide. In this manner the Tyranids would render down every shred of biomass into a biological gruel that the hive ships would later drain from the surface. The Penumbra Voyeurs had alerted their contacts in the Altered of this practice, and the master alchemists had prepared accordingly.

Hidden from sight by the spore clouds, the Dark Eldar descended from the grand webway portal in great numbers. Voidraven Bombers and Razorwing Jetfighters criss-crossed the planet's skies by the hundreds. Their passage was so supersonically swift that the winged Tyranids haunting the spore-choked mist found it all but impossible to intercept them. The pilots took great pleasure in slicing alien heads from necks with the razored wingtips of their craft, but none shirked from their true mission. Whenever a digestion pool was detected, these arrow-swift craft would fire the Altered's modified necrotoxin missiles into the midst of each quagmire. The resultant detonations instantly rendered the pool's contents inert. Those Tyranid eater-beasts that had plunged into each digestive morass found themselves not dissolving as the hive fleet had intended, but flopping about in harmless, brackish water.

The Commorrites were not the only Eldar to be running rings around the Tyranid living tides. Scarlet streaks blurred through the forests as Saim-Hann's jetbikers sent monomolecular-edged shuriken slicing through vegetation and Tyranid alike. Wherever alien tunneller-beasts burst out to prey upon the Exodites protecting their megalith shrines, entire tribes of Saim-Hann Wild Riders would intercept the swarms, slaying the voidspawned fiends with little loss of their own kind. Nimble Eldar jetbikes then darted inside the holes left in the planet's surface by the Tyranid attacks, zooming down tight and twisting tunnels as they hunted the slithering horrors of the next wave. A similar battle unfolded within the crystalline tunnels of Lethidia's webway network, their

sacred reaches stained by rivers of alien blood as the craftworlders took their toll.

Whilst the Tyranid swarms were focussed upon Saim-Hann jetbikers and Exodite dragon riders, Rakarth gave the order to descend. Raiders were soon skimming over the planet's canopy, Wrack gunners blasting apart the Gargoyles that flew up to intercept them. Here and there a skimmer was torn from the sky by swooping Tyranids the size of Voidraven Bombers, its passengers tumbling into the canopy below. The Haemonculi paid them little heed.

The Talos belonging to the Black Cornucopians had begun their harvest early. Eager to steal the finest alien material, their Corpsethief machines had dropped from the skies directly onto the largest of Tyranid leader-beasts. Many of the clacking Pain Engines were reduced to sparking, bleeding wrecks as the giant Tyranids fought back with tendon-like whips and sentient swords. Some Talos succeeded in their visceral missions nonetheless, scissoring apart their prey and flasking their constituents in a macabre mirror of the hive fleet's own feeding strategy.



Many of the Haemonculi making planetfall were privately dismayed at the efficiency with which the Dark Eldar had cut off the Tyranids' escape. Iridivyst in particular had been rather looking forward to one of his incarnations being rendered down and subsumed by a new and exciting race. He splashed disconsolately in a neutralised digestion pool, his red-muscled Wracks fighting back the scythe-limbed Hormagaunts at the quagmire's edge. Whilst the Haemonculus sullenly thrust his webway breacher into the soggy earth, a Haruspex lumbered in close, jaws distending wide. Iridivyst's eyes gleamed as the monstrous eater-beast flung out its great grasping gullet to catch him up and yank him bodily inside its thorn-ridged craw. The Epicurean's freshly flensed Wracks nodded in satisfaction as chittering tides of Gaunts closed over them, content to enjoy their own painful deaths now their master was happily dissolving inside an extragalactic horror.

Nearby, Xerynduil looked on like a proud father as his Grotesques tore into the Tyranid Warriors closing in from all sides. The swarms had sensed the Haemonculi were the true danger, and their leader-beasts were attempting to slay them with bio-cannon and razored claw. For all their size, the Tyranids were making little progress. Xerynduil was surrounded by his latest triumphs: a living art gallery he called the Ruination of Flesh. Whenever a blade-sharp Tyranid limb plunged into a Grotesque's broad chest, the masked brute would simply rip the offending limb before hacking its attacker down in a flurry of brutal blows. Wherever a Tyranid gun-beast gouted out a stream of burrowing beetles, even those Grotesques half-eaten would stride through the volley to slay their foes. Setting his own breacher in place, Xerynduil looked around to see if any of his fellow Haemonculi were appreciating the scene.

Maestru Thrylemnis, ever eager to impress his role model Urien Rakarth, had for once prioritised the Coven's wider agenda over the care of his beloved Engines of Pain. It was a grave mistake. A pair of gangling Lictors burst out from their concealment, thorn-ridged talons aimed at Thrylemnis's sunken chest. With a burst of speed, the Talos Synistrex darted in to interpose itself between its creator and the Tyranid assassin-beast. The Lictor's claws clanged from the Pain Engine's impeccably curved carapace, denting it badly and tearing one of its grasper-claws from its polished torso. Nearby, Dextrisyn had wrapped its tentacles around a writhing Lictor opponent of its own. The Parasite Engine was bleeding from a dozen wounds, a thin keening emanating from its spirit syphon.

Thrylemnis screamed as if he had been plunged into boiling mercury. His alabaster features twisted as he darted forward, the fastidious artisan becoming a snarling, hissing beast. The Haemonculus plunged his scissorhand into the nearest Lictor's face, its blades lopping off feeder tendrils before taking the thing's head from its body entirely. The second Lictor, having cut itself free from Dextrisyn's stranglehold, loomed over the Maestru's many-eyed sump. Thrylemnis' latterhand jabbed upwards so his stinger pistol sunk into the Tyranid's throat, discharging a solvent so potent the assassin-beast simply dissolved away like a wax statuette held to an invisible flame.

Everywhere, the Tyranids were closing in upon the Haemonculi as they thrust their crystalline breachers into the planet's crust. Carnifex broods were intercepted by Cronos that hovered just out of reach, their baleful energies reducing the wrecker-beasts to dry and colourless husks. Lesser Covenites hurled themselves by the dozen into the path of snake-bodied terrors to buy their masters a few more precious seconds. Wracks stood shoulder to shoulder, their liquifier guns turning chitinous seas of Gaunts into harmless slop. Knots of chattering Rippers slithered past the legs of the Wrack escorts to wriggle in close, but at the last moment worm-like haemovores would snake out from their masters' robes to strangle and constrict.

Rakarth himself drifted blithely towards the main world shrine, nostrils wide as he breathed in the glorious scents of war. A wounded Tervigon brood-beast barrelled its way through the elder Haemonculus' bodyguards, lesser Tyranids scuttling in its wake. The cell's Acothyst, Vigotrex, fired a beam from his ossefactor at the creature's carapace, but the Tervigon barely seemed to notice. Shaking his masked head, the Wrack tapped new parameters into the weapon's transmutor pad and fired again. This time the Tervigon shuddered and burst in an explosion of chitinous spines, its fluid-covered young spasming and dropping dead around it.

Rakarth cared little for such corporeal distractions. Drifting over the lip of the pit-like chasm that contained the world shrine, he gazed down imperiously at the chanting Eldar Spiritseers below. The crystalline megaliths of the shrine's webway gate were pulsing white, and Saim-Hann's majestic outline was blurring bright in sympathy high above. The time was nigh.



Crooking a long, gnarled finger, Rakarth bade the Haemonculi to his right approach the pit's edge. Daolchu Xeve, a skeletal Nadirist swathed in the still-living skin of his last victim, reached into his moaning robes and withdrew a glittering Orb of Despair. Xeve stretched out his hand, tipped his fingers, and let it fall. The Orb wailed as it dropped down into the pit, hitting the earth with a thud.

A soul-blasting scream tore the air as millennia of anguish were released from the psychosensitive sphere. As one, the Spiritseers convulsed as if electrocuted before slumping to the ground. Shorn of psychic governance, the soul-transference by which the Saim-Hann seers were rescuing the planet's ancestor spirits immediately roiled out of control. The light pulsing from the world shrine's megaliths became blinding in its intensity as webway portals above and below amplified their own impossible energies. At that same instant, the Haemonculi activated their crystalline webway breachers. A net of

etheric power crackled from pole to pole, catching the planet in a metaphysical trap.

Rakarth raised a glowing ruby to his thin white lips and spoke a single forbidden word. Throughout the labyrinth dimension, ancient portals were forced open just as others were sealed closed. Just for a moment, a direct channel was opened between Vect's howling, captive vortex and the energy net that surrounded Lethidia. Slowly, impossibly, the planet began to distort, shimmer, and move.

The planet quaked, screamed, and in a single apocalyptic instant, vanished altogether.

THE SPOILS OF WAR

By the time the Haemonculi had returned to their lairs, a new celestial body orbited the multidimensional sprawl of Commorragh, its grand translocation powered by the death of countless Exodite souls. Lethidia hung like a cataracted eye above the Dark City, the planet's outer layers rich not only with Tyranids but also the tortured spirits of those craftworlders and Exodites too slow to escape.

The stolen planet was not the only legacy of Rakarth's grand ambition. The rending of the veil had left a gaping wound in reality, and a large spar of the webway had been opened to the realm of terrors that mankind calls the Warp. Saim-Hann was reeling in the face of a large-scale daemonic invasion that was spilling through the rift, and the tendrils of Hive Fleet Leviathan, denied the power of its planetary feast, was being slowly torn apart by the hellspawned host that appeared within its bio-ships.

The galaxy was scarred forever, and millions of Eldar souls had been plunged into a living nightmare. Still, the Covens had their prize. It would be a long time indeed before the lords of the undercity need face ennui once more.



THE WAR-FORM OF THE HAEMONCULUS



When the Haemonculi go to war, they bring with them the most diabolical of instruments with which to prove their superiority. In the nights before a raid, they will modify their own physiques to better serve them in the battle to come.



1. The blades used by Haemonculi during their realspace raids are razor-sharp without exception, and frequently envenomed.
2. The vital organs of the Haemonculi are invariably moved to a location easier to protect – usually placed within a fleshy sump at the top of the spine.
3. The toxins borne to war by the Haemonculi are distilled to such concentrated lethality that even their scent can paralyse a foe. Some Coven lords will even replace their own blood with such fluids.
4. A Haemonculus's waist is waspish and thin, not only because of their relocated organs, but also likely because of some proto-fashion of the ancient Eldar that never faded.
5. The core form of a Haemonculus rarely, if ever, touches the ground. Instead, the Coven lords prefer to slither on elongated spines, hover upon suspensor crystals, or even be borne aloft by writhing nests of haemovores.



The Haemonculus who goes by the name of Ylgasuil Vharc has worn a thousand forms over his long existence, each an excellent example of the fleshcrafter's art. When making his forays into realspace, his limbs are typically worn at least six at a time, each armed with its own diabolical tool of death. Vharc has in the past shown great variety in the appendages he chooses before each battle. However, much like his brother Haemonculi, he has certain weapons and extremities that he prefers to use when visiting pain upon the lesser races of the universe.

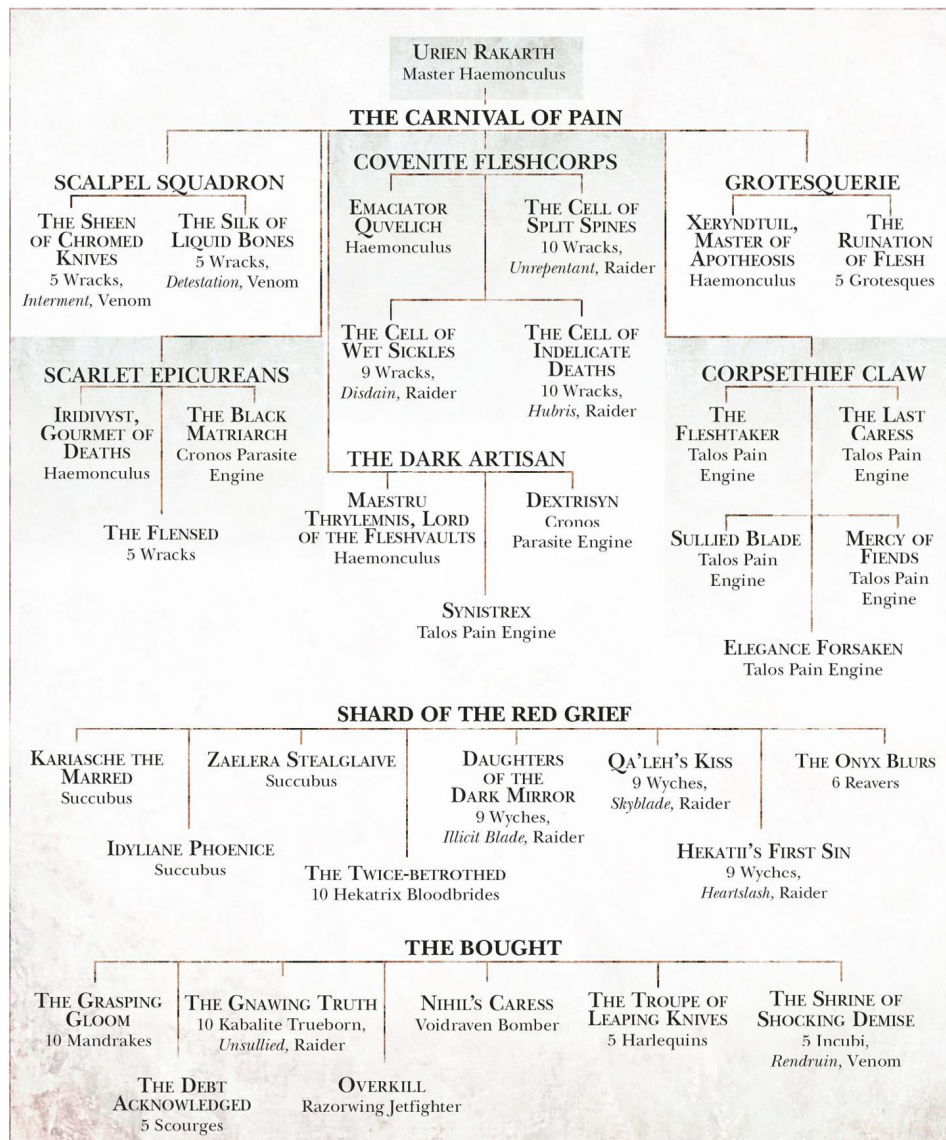




LETHIDIA'S BANE



The main orchestrators of the theft of the maiden world Lethidia were the Prophets of Flesh, an influential Coven who often act as the right hand of the legendary Urien Rakarth. Though both craftworld and Commorrite Eldar fought against the Tyranids in force, the Prophets of Flesh were at the forefront of the counter-invasion.



THE CHRONICLE OF ENDLESS WOE



Over the aeons, the Haemonculi and their ilk have committed a billion atrocities, each one fouler and more inventive than the last. At first, they did so out of malignance twinned with curiosity, then later to stave off the crippling ennui that curses all those who flirt with immortality. Now, they sew their tapestry of terror as a matter of survival. Though they maintain the facade that they are above such mundane concerns as nourishment, in truth their parasitic relationship with realspace is the only thing that sustains their existence.

THE AGE OF DARK GENESIS



C.M15-20 RULERS OF THE STARS

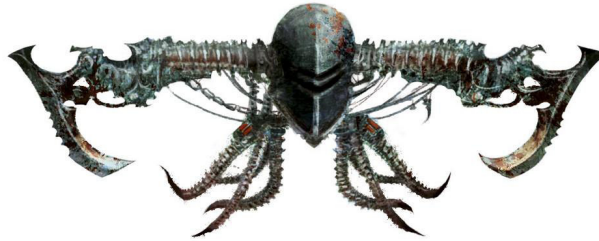
Those who would become the first Haemonculi are the masters of the Eldar empire. Powerful beyond the dreams of mortals, they hold dominion over the stars themselves. Worlds live or die at their whim, and suns are born and quenched under their command.

C.M18 SHADOWS IN THE TWILIGHT

With the other races of the galaxy posing little threat, currents of complacency begin to flow throughout Eldar society. A new paradigm of self-indulgence begins to rise. The Eldar turn to ever more capricious acts in order to fill their lifespans with excitement. Many become addicted to the finest sensations their empire can provide. As the centuries slide past, cults of decadence thrive in lawless port-cities of the labyrinth dimension – Commorragh foremost amongst them.

C.M19-24 FAITH BLED DRY

The worship of the Eldar gods fades as the Eldar indulge their obsessions at all costs. Obeisance is instead paid to the Dark Muses, figures synonymous with unrepentant vice. New depths of depravity are plumbed inside the webway and without. Those who will become the Haemonculi are central to each new orgy of experience. These shadowy figures grow daily in power and influence, feasting on ever more esoteric banquets of sin. The worst of their number begin to change, body and soul, though for now their corruption is hidden behind fine words and ethereal beauty.



C.M25-30 DEVILS IN THE DARKNESS

The core of Eldar society becomes infected by the spiritual malaise. Some have mixed feelings about the direction their society has taken, whilst others – the forefathers of the Haemonculus Covens amongst them – are utterly unrepentant. As the lines between unbridled experience and outright evil are blurred, the rich emotions seeping into the Warp begin to coalesce. The more puritanical of the Eldar, horrified by the degeneration of their society, flee their home worlds in an attempt to escape the imminent catastrophe.

C.M31 THE FALL OF THE ELДАР

The tempest the Eldar are unwittingly stirring in the Warp reaches a stormy climax, and a new god is born. With a soul-shattering scream of triumph, She Who Thirsts rips her way into existence. The heart of the Eldar Empire is torn out by Slaanesh's birth, annihilating almost all of the Eldar race and leaving a sector-wide wound in reality in its place. Only those Eldar who had fled to the fringes of the galaxy survive. Even those hidden in the port-cities of the webway pay a terrible price.

C.M31-32 THE RISE OF COMMORRAGH

Despite the aching void that now blights their souls, the Eldar controlling the sovereign realms of the webway amass ever more power. One city in particular, the mighty Commorragh, grows strong upon the carrion of the old empire. As the multi-dimensional metropolis becomes ever more influential, it subsumes many lesser port-cities until its pre-eminence is beyond doubt. The Dark City grows at an exponential rate, and countless factions and dynasties build ever more impressive monuments to their own prowess. The true architects of the city-realm's supremacy, hidden from sight by the vaunting ambition of those who claim to rule, withdraw to haunt its lowest levels. The underspires of Commorragh grow like stalactites beneath its impossible reaches, and within them the Haemonculus Covens are born.

THE AGE OF PAIN



C.M35 THE SLAVE KING RISES

A low-born wastrel by the name of Vect engineers his rise to power in Commorragh. It culminates in a great coup that sees the aristocracy of old replaced by the deadly meritocracy of the Kabals. Throughout the seismic upheaval that emerges from the Imperial invasion Vect lures into the city and the resultant counter-attack, the Haemonculi of the underspires remain neutral. They watch with detached interest as the squabbles of their younger counterparts play out. The Covens allow Vect to take overall power, for in the arts of treachery the Haemonculi excel, and the Dark City's blades must remain sharp if it is to rule over the labyrinth dimension forever more.

156.M35 THE GHOST PLANET

The far-flung hive world of Auxilion makes a deal with Eldar mercenaries, though after one diplomatic gaffe too many the alliance turns sour. Led by the Haemonculus Kresthekia, a Carnival of Pain descends upon the planet. Five years later, Imperial authorities visit Auxilion investigating its failure to pay tithes. They find the world deserted, and not a single spot of blood or spent bullet casing which might explain the phenomenon.

522.M36 A MURDER OF RAVENS

926.M36 THE PLAGUE OF GLASS

The Covenantites of the Hex contain and harness the glass plague released by the sculptor-fraud Jalaxlar. Vitrifying weapons are soon in evidence whenever the Coven mounts its realspace raids. The Hex soon becomes famous for their weaponisation of esoteric curses. Their ornate rifles still fetch a high price in the barter and trades of the undercity.



C.M37 THE BREACHING

Asdrubael Vect consolidates his power by forcing open the portals to the last few port-cities that claim autonomy from Commorragh. Over the next few millennia, he relegates all but the province of Shaa-dom to the status of satellites of the greater whole. The Covenants of the undercity remain neutral throughout, though they profit handsomely from the rising demand for regrowth during the resultant civil wars.

993.M37 VENGEANCE OF THE SCARS

The renegade Fabius Bile, having studied the Haemonculi's craft under the Coven of the Thirteen Scars, betrays the trust of his Commorrite mentors. By teaching the secrets he has been entrusted with to the Emperor's Children in his employ, Bile dilutes the art of the fleshcrafter to an unforgivable degree. The Thirteen Scars have long watched for just such an infraction. Using energy pillars linked to the Ilmaean suns, they animate their living fortress for war – a towering pillar of flesh fashioned from the bodies of those who have defied them in the past. The fortress breaches a long-sealed webway node on Belial IV, and lumbers into the Eldar palace that the Emperor's Children were using as a base of operations. Bile's heavily mutated Noise Marine allies turn their sonic weaponry upon the hordes of Covenantites that pour out from the Tower of Flesh's yawning maws, rupturing and splitting countless monstrosities as they sally forth. Their charge hits home nonetheless.

The violence that erupts from the close-quarters battle is as intense as it is invigorating, Chaos Space Marine and Wrack alike screaming in glee as they are physically torn apart. The Tower of Flesh itself duels with the corrupted god-machines in Bile's employ, smashing them aside with its flailing appendages. As their minions fight tooth and nail outside the shattered palace, the Primogenitor Bile is paid a visit in his throne by the Coven lords of the Thirteen Scars. After the renegade's private army of horrors experiences a dozen esoteric types of murder at the hands of the Haemonculi, an understanding is reached. Bile's augmented Emperor's Children are granted death by masochistic ecstasy, and the Haemonculi depart after surgically ensuring that the renegade cannot speak of his learnings to any other living creature.

198.M39 PITCH DARK

A piratical warband of Traitor Space Marines from the Night Lords Legion ambushes a Dark Eldar fleet and breaches the hull of its flagship. Several Haemonculi from the Altered are sent spinning out into the cold void of space, though their desiccated corpses are eventually recovered by specially-made Engines of Pain. The Haemonculi are once more regrown, but the insult done to them is not forgotten.

Before the year is out, the Night Lords warband – whilst plunging the Imperial planet of Wystengradt into a violence-haunted twilight – encounter the Dark Eldar once more. The Night Lords have robbed the planet of power using high-yield static bombs, ensuring that its cities are gloom-shrouded playgrounds for their terror tactics, though the horrors wreaked by the Traitor Legionnaires are mild in comparison to what is to befall the planet next. The Altered, having enlisted the aid of several thousand Aelindrachi elders and deployed an ancient antiphoton engine from their deepest oubliettes, shroud the world of Wystengradt in an unnatural darkness. War unfolds as Mandrakes and Wracks engage in a deadly running battle with the Night Lords. The dearth of light is so supernaturally intense that even the acute vision of the Chaos Space Marines is rendered all but useless. The Traitor Legionnaires' doctrine of psychological warfare is slowly and painfully turned against them, and the spark of paranoia that nestles in each Night Lord's breast fanned to an inferno. Mandrake attacks come from impossible quarters as new scenes of stomach-churning vileness are uncovered with every hour.

The Night Lords seek out the antiphoton engine with the intent to destroy it and wage the war anew on their own terms. The ancient machine is finally blown apart by melta charges, but when visibility is restored to Wystengradt, the Haemonculi are gone. Only a lingering fear of the darkness is left in their wake.



569.M39 A HIDEOUS BEAUTY

232.M40 THE BONE CURSE

The Haemonculi of the Hex learn of the aberrant Cursed Founding of the Adeptus Astartes, and are taken by one Chapter in particular – the Black Dragons, whose corrupted gene-seed forces sharp protrusions of bone to grow out from its warriors' skeletons. Striking a bargain with the piratical Duke Sliscus, the Hex attack the Chapter as it is purging the Donorian system of the monsters that have spilled into Imperial space. A vicious hit-and-run war erupts across the space lanes, fought within the Adeptus Astartes warships and without.

Though the resultant war costs Sliscus several of his prized starships, the Covenantites that board the cavernous Imperial flagship capture a dozen of the most mutated Black Dragons in the Chapter and bear them back to Commorragh. Over the course of an agonising three-year period – during which no fewer than eight breakout attempts are thwarted – the Hex's Haemonculi take it in turns to experiment upon the slab-bound Space Marines. Soon enough they have isolated and synthesised the curse lurking in the Bone Dragons' genetic patterns. The resultant osseovirus is distilled, weaponised and – in one particularly memorable experiment – reintroduced to its host in a concentrated form. The twisted bone 'dragon' that hatched from the unlucky donor's flesh is hung above the Coven's Chamber of Whispers.

543.M41 THE HARVEST OF CHOGROS

703.M41 A MADDENING GIFT

Seething after an imperfect regrowth that he judges to be a deliberate slight, the disfigured Acothyst Mydilian gifts his masters in the Coven of Twelve with a flock of Aelindrachi shaderavens. The avian terrors are well received, for though it is rumoured their caw slowly drives those who hear it insane, it would be seen as an act of cowardice to refuse them. Given the inherent strangeness of the Haemonculi, few notice that the Coven of Twelve are becoming ever

more eccentric.

A year to the day after Mydilian's gift, several of the Coven's senior Haemonculi depart into a shattered spar of the webway without warning. Their clarity of thought long gone, they plunge through a forbidden gate onto a long-lost crone world, rubbing their clammy hands in anticipation of having daemonic 'specimens' to experiment upon.

Upon a plain of burning bones the Covenantites find more in the way of Daemons than they bargained for. The horizon is scarlet from end to end with the footsoldiers of the dreaded Blood God. A never-ending cycle of battle begins as the souls of the Haemonculi are claimed as playthings by Khorne himself, denying them any chance of regeneration in their Commorrite lairs. They are condemned to an endless grind of unimaginative but extremely gory deaths, whilst Mydilian and three of his peers enjoy a sudden promotion.



718.M41 BEAUTY AS A BLADE

Acts of inventive self-disfigurement suddenly become high fashion in Commorragh, and then fall out of favour just as swiftly, allowing the Haemonculus Covens to capitalise upon both sides of the trend. The Time of Reparations sees every Commorrite noble who bought into the fad restored to his or her former grandeur. A pattern emerges over the next few years of realspace raids: those who betray the Haemonculi in lieu of their own agendas find their beautiful new faces melting from their skulls.

983.M41 HIGH ART

The senior Acothyst Ymodrian, having spent four hundred years in gruelling servitude to Drecht of the Altered without reward, steals a hexrifle from his master's vaults and leads a host of his fellow Wracks into realspace. Emerging from a costly sojourn through the webway onto the Tyranid-infested waste planet of Hope's End, the Acothyst hunts down the largest and most dangerous Tyranid he can find. Whilst his fellow Wracks battle the swarms around him, Ymodrian makes a thousand-to-one shot that turns a rampaging Trygon to glass, yet leaves the Commissar it has recently swallowed trapped like a fly in amber inside the towering thing's gullet. The Acothyst waves his Raiders in low, his fellows binding the strange statue with chains and bearing it back through the webway to be presented as tribute. Within a single Ilmaean cycle, the artwork is displayed in pride of place inside Drecht's sanctum. Ymodrian is rewarded copiously, undergoing the alchemical rituals that see him join the lower ranks of the Haemonculi.

990.M41 THE WAR OF DARK REVELATIONS

991.M41 THE PLUNDERED FLESH OF PECH

After capturing not only countless Tau upon Vigos but also the mercenaries with which they bolster their cadres, the Prophets of Flesh find out that the Kroot are able to learn and even evolve purely by selectively devouring the fallen. To appropriate such an ability would be seen as a coup even amongst the Haemonculi.

Before long, the Prophets of Flesh have opened up a webway gate upon the Kroot home world: the humid jungle planet of Pech. Hovering through the mists upon Raiders lined with barbed rails, the Haemonculi begin a lengthy scouring of the planet's tribal centres. The Kroot respond in force, loosing packs of Kroot Hounds that leap from bough and bole to bear Covenantites into the leafy mulch below. Krootox-borne gunners blast apart Venoms and Ravagers in the gloom, though in truth the skimmers in the jungle canopy are little more than distractions. The true prize is seized by the Pain Engines of the Haemonculi, each Corpsethief Claw rendering down as many Kroot Shapers as they can catch.

The Tau, fiercely defensive of their empire's mercenary allies, counter-invade in force by mobilising twelve Hunter Cadres to scour the jungle clean. The unfolding battle ends abruptly when the Prophets of Flesh withdraw, their Raiders straining to the point of collapse under the weight of the Kroot corpses they have stolen. Though the Tau propaganda machine celebrates a great victory, the Dark Eldar have what they came for. They leave a message behind, spelt out in the bloody corpses of their victims. It is loosely translated by the Water caste as the phrase 'Welcome to the Feast'.

THE AGE OF PLENTY



999.M41 THE LARDER WELL-STOCKED

The winds of change electrify the stale air of Commorragh, and an insistent pounding comes from the other side of Khaine's Gate. There is a sharp rise in realspace raids mounted by the Haemonculus Covens, the largest of which are led by Urien Rakarth himself. Entire sub-realms of stasis caskets and rune-sealed exception vaults are populated with sentient creatures stolen from across the length and breadth of the galaxy. Rakarth appears in person to discuss the future with Asdrubael Vect, and an accord is reached. In the pocket dimensions created by the Dark City's forefathers, an unimaginably vast storehouse of raw material is amassed; fodder for the Commorrites to prey upon in safety should a cataclysm occur.

999.M41 THE DRAGONS ENTWINED

The world of Dûriel burns. It is finally tipped over the brink of destruction by an Eldar countermeasure that prevents Hive Fleet Kraken, glutted upon the gene-stuff of Craftworld Iyanden, mingling with the bio-ships of Leviathan. The Dark Eldar, despite having supplied the ancient doomsday device that triggered the world's destruction, ensure they recover specimens from both hive fleets during the roiling battles around the planet's highest peak. Runic hexcages full of Tyranid weapon-beasts are taken back to Commorragh, though they are quickly expended.

999.M41 THE THEFT OF LETHIDIA

The Haemonculi of the undercity are fascinated by the Tyranid race's ability to hyperadapt, and the bio-fleet's incredible ability to tailor its attack-beasts to their prey's destruction within a matter of hours. Reasoning the hive fleets represent an unprecedented glut of test subjects, the Covens muster under the leadership of Urien Rakarth and take to the Southern Fringe en masse. Over the course of the war for the planet Lethidia, the Dark Eldar use forbidden technologies to abduct the entire planet whilst it is still infested with Tyranids. Using webway breachers and a captive black hole, the planet and its inhabitants are transported to Commorragh's orbit for the Covens to analyse and dissect at their leisure.

999.M41 THE GATEWAY AJAR

Beneath Commorragh, the occult phenomena haunting Khaine's Gate intensify to a daunting degree. As the thunderous pounding on the other side of the portal increases in frequency and volume, the elders of the Dark City prepare for a Dysjunction of dimension-shattering magnitude. Each Coven looks to the future in its own way, enacting ancient failsafes and putting long-honed plans into action. Rumours of Neocommorragh, an exclusive sub-realm that Vect has created as a shelter against the coming cataclysm, are whispered in boudoirs and bordellos across the Dark City. The future looks uncertain

indeed.

THE PAGEANTRY OF EVIL

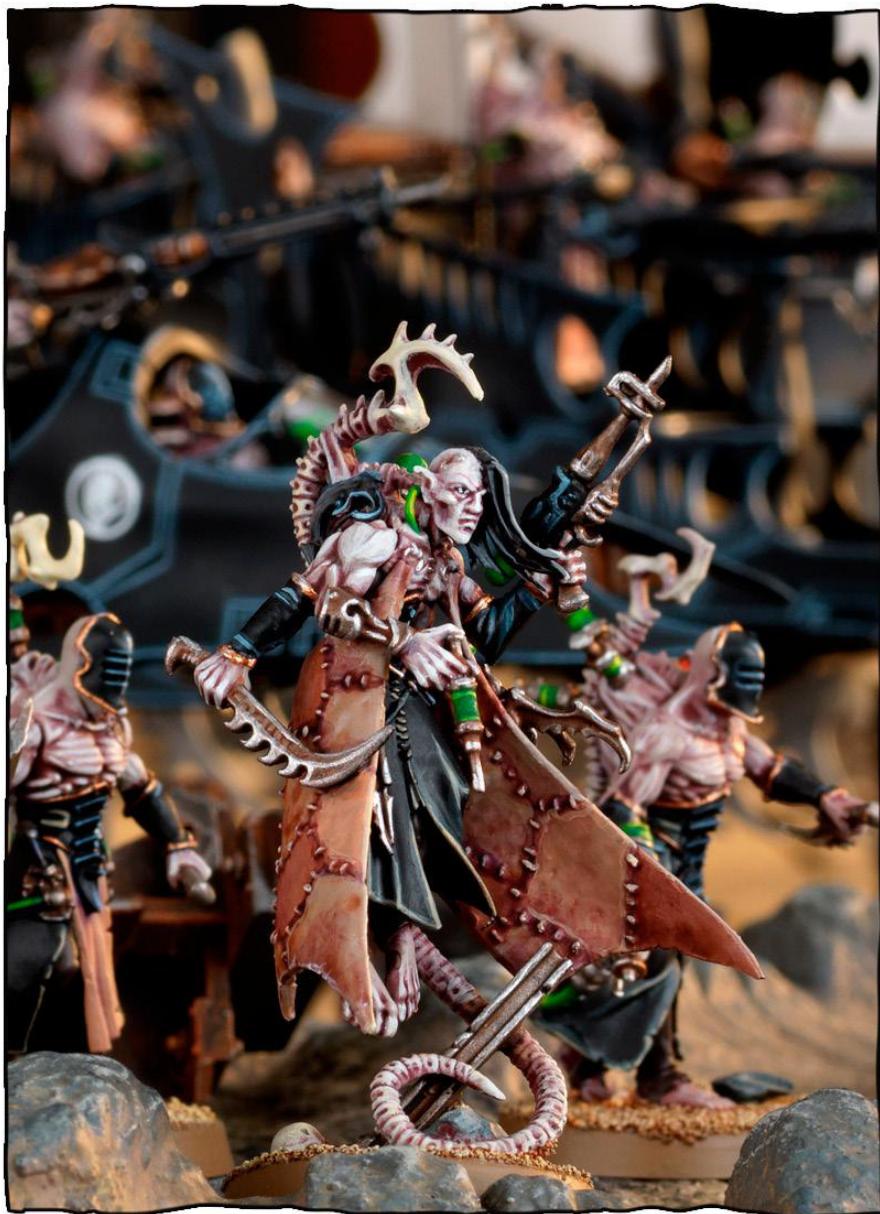


The Haemonculus Covens are repulsive in the extreme, but there remains a dark majesty to their armies. When the Covens go to war, a nightmarish host of monsters is hurled into the enemy's ranks. On the following pages you will find a showcase of fantastic Haemonculus Covens miniatures collections.





Urien Rakarth, Master Haemonculus



Croniarch Sekh, Haemonculus



Ylavondis, Acothyst with hexrifle and electrocorrosive whip

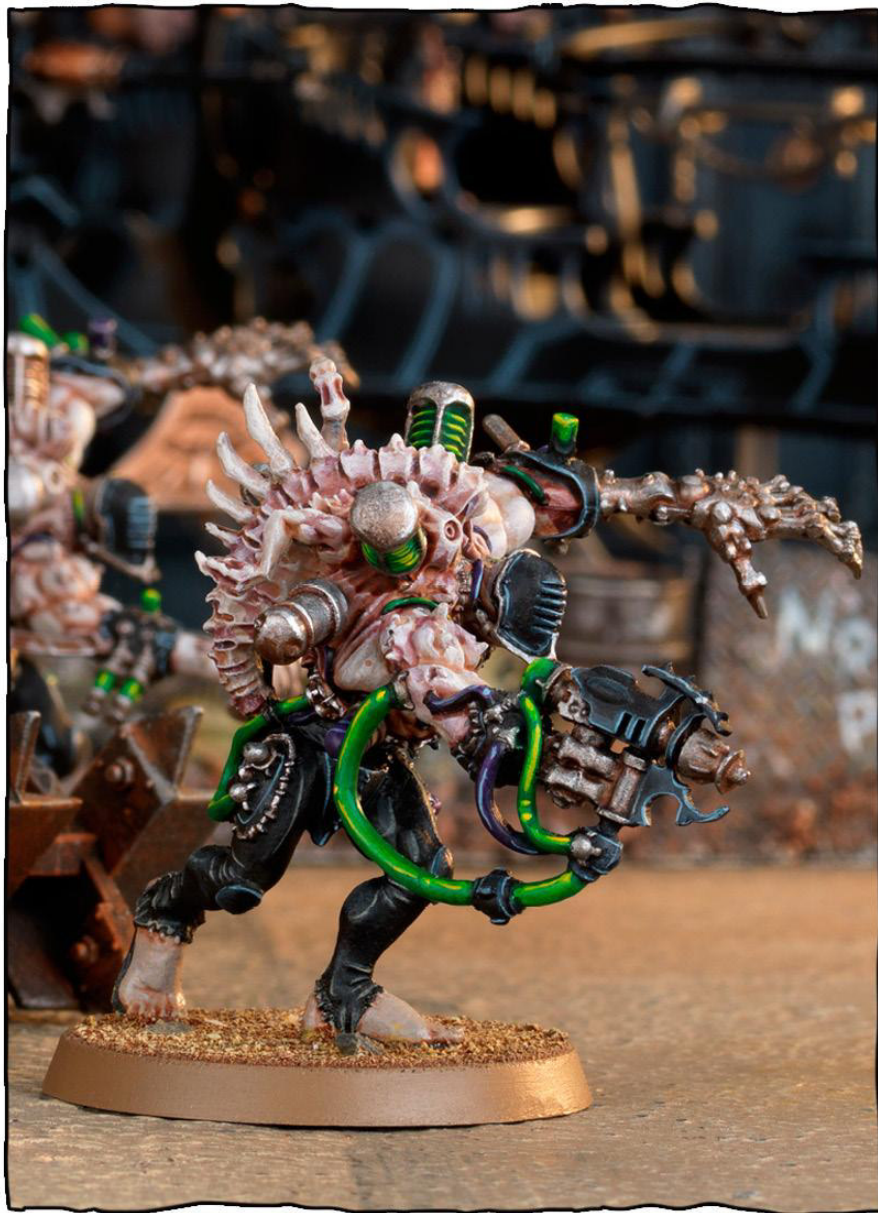


Ghondruil, Acothyst with stinger pistol and venom blade

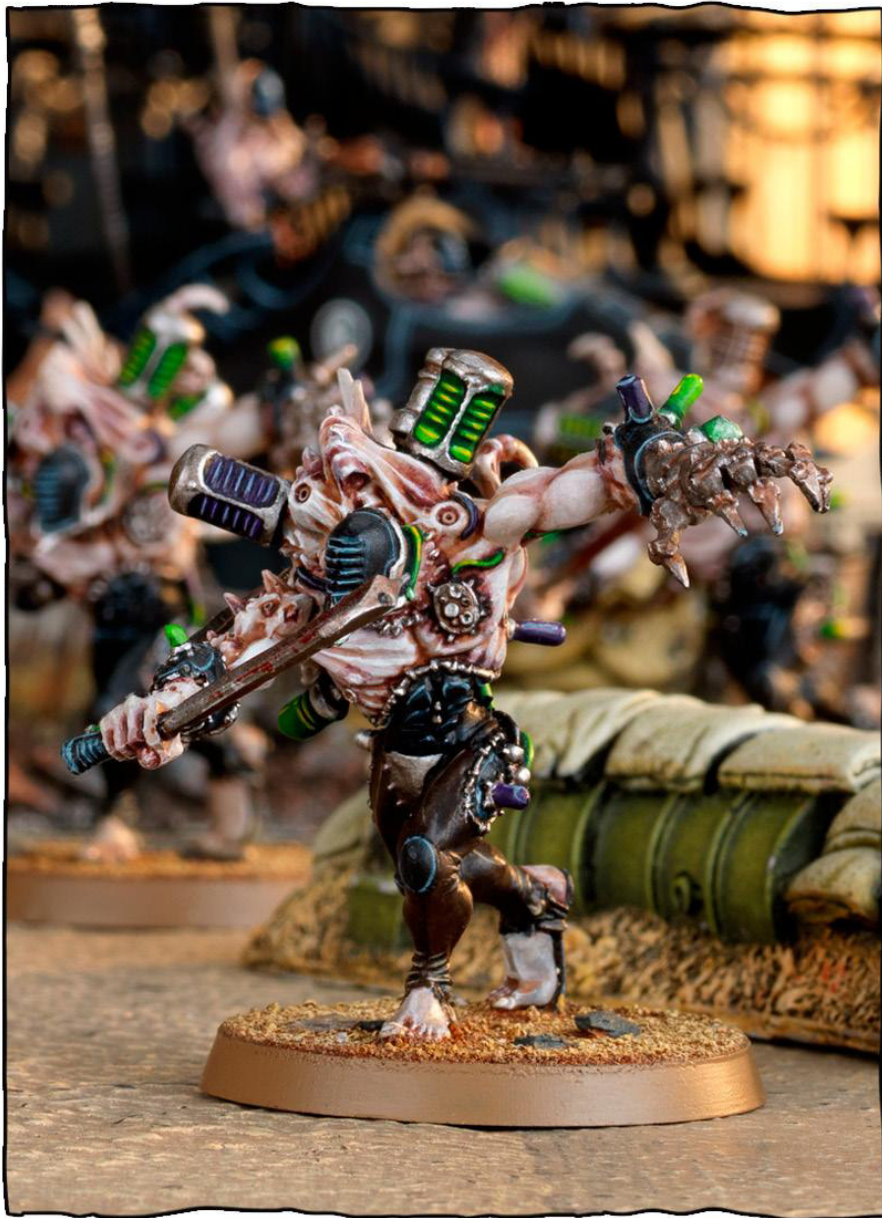


The tools of the Wrack are many and terrible; all bear searing venoms.

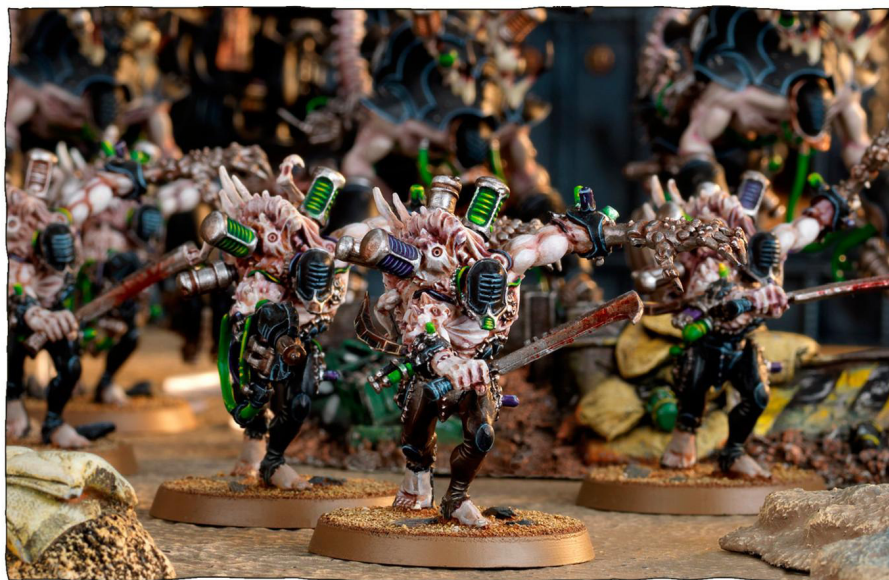




Thelexhoi the Faceless, Grotesque with liquifier gun

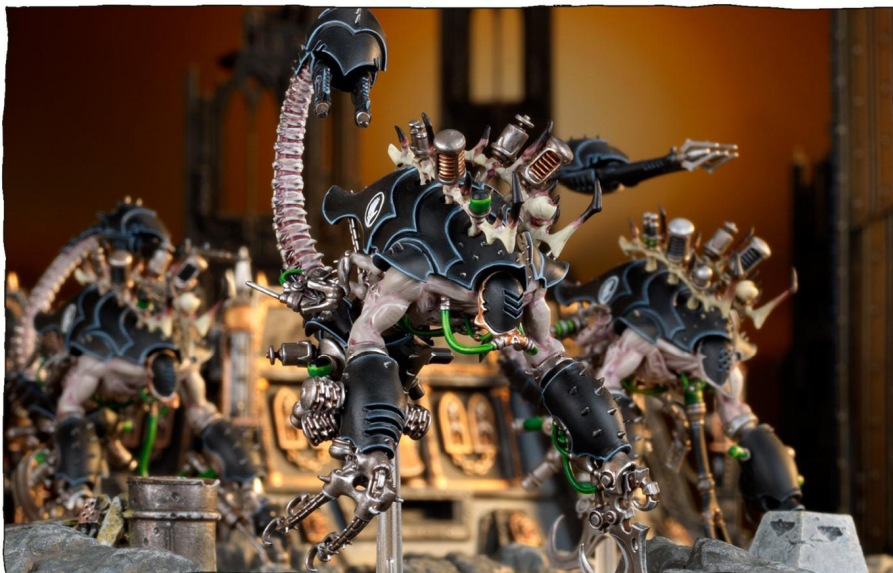


Melghero Rasp, Aberration



All Grotesques are armed with the dreaded flesh gauntlet.





Hatemaker, Talos with chain-flails and twin-linked splinter cannon





FORCES OF THE COVENS



On these pages you will find additional special rules, Warlord Traits, Relics, a Detachment and Formations that reflect the composition and fighting style of the Haemonculus Covens. You can add the Detachment and Formations from this section to an existing army, or use them to field an army from the Covens themselves.

HAEMONCULUS COVENS SPECIAL RULES

If you use the Formations or the Covenite Coterie Detachment in this book, the following supplemental special rules apply to all of the units they contain.

POWER FROM PAIN

Though all Dark Eldar feed on the pain and suffering of their victims, the vile agents of the Haemonculus Covens savour this delicacy in a very different manner; the more of their victims' fear and torment they imbibe, the more horrifying and implacable the twisted denizens of Commorragh's underworld become.

At the start of each game turn, look up the game turn number on the Power from Pain table below. All models with the Power from Pain special rule gain the special rules listed on this table instead of those found in *Codex: Dark Eldar*, in addition to any other special rules they have.

POWER FROM PAIN TABLE	
TURN	SPECIAL RULES
1	None.
2	Fearless.
3	Fear, Fearless.
4	Fear, Fearless, It Will Not Die.
5	Fear, It Will Not Die, Zealot.
6+	Eternal Warrior, Fear, It Will Not Die, Zealot.

DIABOLICAL PLAYTHINGS

Any units from a Detachment or Formation presented in this book that can select Artefacts of Cruelty cannot select from those listed in *Codex: Dark Eldar*, but can instead select Diabolical Playthings, presented opposite, at the points costs shown.

WARLORD TRAITS

If your Warlord is a Haemonculus, you may choose to roll on the table to the right instead of those found in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules* or *Codex: Dark Eldar*.

COMBINED UNITS

Some Formations allow you to combine several units together into a single, combined unit. Where Victory Points are awarded for units that have been completely destroyed, a combined unit awards a number of Victory Points equal to its constituent number of units if it is completely destroyed. For example, if the combined unit from a Dark Artisan Formation, was completely destroyed, your opponent would count as having destroyed 3 units.



WARLORD TRAITS TABLE

D6 WARLORD TRAIT

1. Master Artisan: *The Haemonculus is not only gifted in the art of metallosculpture, but also in the more metaphysical arts – all of his creations are works of dark genius.*

All friendly Talos and Cronos models within 12" of the Warlord re-roll failed Feel No Pain rolls of a 1.

2. Master Regenesist: *The Haemonculus' flesh, and that of his monstrous Grotesque creations, regenerates at a frightening rate.*

Your Warlord and any Grotesque models in a unit he is part of have the It Will Not Die special rule.

3. Master Symphoneus: *The Haemonculus is the orchestrator of a symphony of disaster, and considers his realspace raids to be an expression of his talents.*

As long as your Warlord is alive, you can add or subtract 1 from your Reserve Rolls.

4. Master Epicurean: *Some Coven lords have been slain and later resurrected so many times they relish the experience of a new death, seeking out unusual foes in order to better appreciate an interesting end.*

If your Warlord was slain by an attack or weapon that has either AP1, AP2 or the Instant Death special rule during the course of the game, you score D3 Victory Points.

5. Master of Apotheosis: *Some Haemonculi prefer to reward their favoured Wracks with 'improvements' whilst still punishing them harshly for their lapses.*

Your Warlord and any Wrack models in a unit he is part of have the Feel No Pain (4+) special rule.

6. Master Nemesine: *Out of a twisted scientific curiosity, the Haemonculus knows a variety of ways to kill every realspace species he has ever discovered.*

Your Warlord has the Preferred Enemy special rule.



DIABOLICAL PLAYTHINGS



Diabolical Playthings are unique and incredibly powerful artefacts of the Haemonculus Covens that have served the twisted masters of the Commorrite underworld for many millennia. Only one of each of the following relics can be chosen per army – there is only one of each these items in the entire galaxy!

SYNDRIQ'S SUMP...10 POINTS

Viscount Syndriq was a toweringly arrogant fiend whose thirst for vengeance was his undoing. Since suffering not one but two violent deaths at the hands of the Raven Guard, Syndriq has not been regenerated, but instead has experienced new life as a fashionable augmentation for his peers. When threatened, a Haemonculus wearing Syndriq's Sump can rely on the finest of augmentative potions being dumped into his bloodstream, for the fleshy remnant will do anything it can to preserve its miserable existence in the hope it can one day be regrown.

At the beginning of each of his turns, the controlling player nominates one of the following special rules to apply to the bearer of Syndriq's Sump: Fleet, It Will Not Die, Poisoned (4+) or Rampage. The effects last until the start of the controlling player's next turn.

THE VEXATOR MASK...10 POINTS

Sutured to the withered visage of an elder Haemonculus, the Vexator Mask can play horrifying tricks on the mind. The legends say that the mask was fashioned from the flayed face of a Shadowseer. Those who approach the wearer with intent to harm find themselves staring into the face of their most beloved leader, a cherished parent, or even their lover. The moment of hesitation this affords the wearer is enough – the Haemonculus plunges a surgical blade into the gaping viewer's heart as the illusory face twists from grateful recognition to hateful spite.

When fighting in a challenge, the bearer's opponent suffers a -5 penalty to their Initiative (to a minimum of 1).

THE ORBS OF DESPAIR...25 POINTS

As black and pitted as the souls of those who wield them, the Orbs of Despair are fist-sized spheres of wraithbone carved with runes of hopelessness. Each is left on a plinth in the owning Coven's deepest dungeon to soak up a measure of the boundless negative energy that pools there, sometimes for millennia. The Haemonculi only take up these artefacts once they are replete with the black energies swilling through their lairs. When hurled to the ground, the Orbs of Despair send out all the pain they have absorbed in a blast of pure trauma that can still the heart of any sentient organism in a single agonising moment.

When a model armed with the Orbs of Despair makes a shooting attack, the controlling player can choose to throw a grenade with the following profile, rather than using another shooting weapon. Vehicles hit by an Orb of Despair are unaffected. The Orbs of Despair cannot be used in close combat.

Range	S	AP	Type
8"	1	2	Assault 1, Blast, Instant Death

THE KHAÏDESI HAEMOVORES...10 POINTS

The cartilaginous worm-things that writhe beneath the most fastidious Haemonculi are repulsive to look upon, though they play a valued role in the culture of the Covens. Haemovores feed on the messy by-products of the Coven's craft, guzzling down morsels of forgotten flesh and sucking up blood wherever it is spilt until not so much as a stain is left. The Khaïdesi Haemovores, grown strong on the vile tides of the River Khaïdes, are the largest of their kind. They dart out from beneath their master to drain blood and devour flesh whenever it comes too close, allowing him to remain fashionably spotless.

A model equipped with the Khaïdesi Haemovores makes D6 additional Attacks and are resolved at Strength 3 with AP-. These Attacks does not benefit from any of the model's special rules (such as Furious Charge, Rending etc.). These Attacks are resolved during the Fight sub-phase at the Initiative 10 step, and grant the model an additional Pile In move.

THE PANACEA PERVERTED...20 POINTS

The Panacea Perverted is a triumph of dark alchemy. The Panacea – an ancient STC that healed human diseases and genetic flaws – was stolen from the world of Verdigris IX by Lady Aurelia Malys. The master Haemonculus Trelexis was inspired to create a far more powerful version for his own use. One who is invested with this fluid is practically invulnerable to poison and toxin alike, his flesh healing at an astonishing rate.

The bearer of the Panacea Perverted has the It Will Not Die special rule, but passes these rolls on a 4+. Furthermore, attacks with the Poisoned special rule only ever inflict Wounds on the bearer on the roll of a 6.

THE NIGHTMARE DOLL...35 POINTS

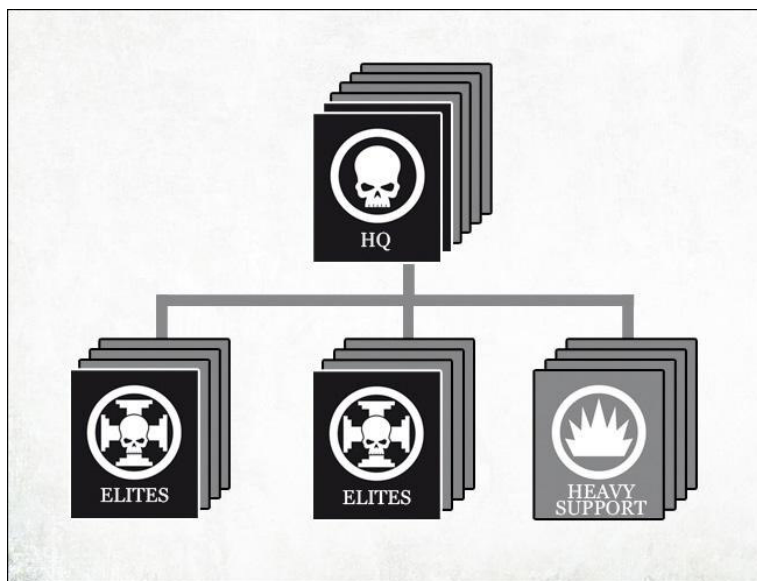
When a drop of blood is passed from the owner's withered finger into the Nightmare Doll's red slash of a mouth, the creature forms a sympathetic link with its parent Haemonculus. Should the owner be harmed in battle, his injuries are absorbed by the Nightmare Doll. If its owner is riddled with bullets, tiny holes appear in the thing's writhing body whilst its master remains whole. Should the Haemonculus be hit by a decapitating strike, the foe's blade will pass through his gnarled neck without leaving so much as a scratch. The doll's mewling, disembodied head will require restitching; an interesting challenge in itself.

The bearer of the Nightmare Doll adds 1 to any Feel No Pain rolls he makes. Furthermore, the Nightmare Doll automatically negates the first unsaved Wound with the Instant Death special rule that the bearer suffers, though as soon as it does so, the Nightmare Doll will immediately cease to work for the rest of the battle.

COVENITE COTERIE DETACHMENT



This book details a unique Detachment – the Covenite Coterie Detachment – that reflects the fighting style of the twisted Haemonculi. This follows all the Detachment rules presented in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.



COMPULSORY

2 HQ
2 Elites

OPTIONAL

4 HQ
6 Elites
4 Heavy Support

RESTRICTIONS

Only units from the following list may be selected as part of this Detachment:

- Urien Rakarth
- Haemonculus
- Raider (must be taken as a Dedicated Transport)
- Venom (must be taken as a Dedicated Transport)
- Wracks
- Grotesques
- Talos
- Cronos

COMMAND BENEFITS

Seeker of Torment: If this Detachment is chosen as your Primary Detachment, you can re-roll the result when rolling on the Warlord Traits Table.

Freakish Spectacle: Enemy units within 12" of one or more models from this Detachment suffer a -1 penalty to their Leadership value.



FORMATION DATASHEETS



The following section details background and rules information for a number of Formations commonly used by the Haemonculus Covens. Each Formation grants the units within it powerful bonuses, which can really enhance their effectiveness on the battlefield. You may include these in your army as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

Each datasheet contains the following information:

1. **Faction:** The unit's Faction is shown here by a symbol.
2. **Formation Symbol:** Formation datasheets are identified by this symbol.
3. **Formation Name:** Here you will find the name of the Formation.
4. **Formation Description:** This section provides a background description of the Formation, detailing its particular strengths along with the tactics and methods it employs to wage war in the grim darkness of the 41st Millennium.
5. **Formation Composition:** This section shows the number and type of units that make up the Formation.
6. **Formation Restrictions:** This section details specific unit sizes, equipment, transport options and any further restrictions that you may be required to adhere to in order to include the Formation in your army.
7. **Formation Special Rules:** Every Formation includes one or more special rules associated with the units that make up that Formation. The special rules for a Formation only apply to the units that make it up (even if there are other units of the same type in your army). Special rules that are unique to the Formation are described in full here, whilst others may be detailed earlier in this section or in the Special Rules section of *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

1

2

3

SCARLET EPICUREANS

4

Where their craven craftworld cousins shy away from tasting the fruits of the galaxy, many Haemonculi love to dive into the surreal extremes of sensation-seeking within the relative safety of their lairs. Having long ago grown bored of such home-brewed thrills, the Scarlet Epicureans take esoteric pleasures from the wider realms of realspace, each rapacious experience enhanced by the spirit syphon of a nearby Cronos. They may seek to taste the cerebral fluids of a visionary strategist, to feel the electric kiss of psychic lightning, to smell the pheromonal stink of mass panic, or to indulge in a thousand stranger quests besides. Eager to give the gifts of experience as well as to receive, these Haemonculi flay the skin from their Wrack attendants so they can better feel the hot kiss of uninhibited sensation.

5

FORMATION:

- 1 Haemonculus
- 1 Cronos
- 2 units of Wracks

6

RESTRICTIONS:

None.

7

SPECIAL RULES:

Freakish Spectacle.

Macabre Collectors: All units of Wracks from this Formation that are within 12" of this Formation's Haemonculus have the Precision Strikes special rule.

Master of Epicureans: The units of Wracks in this Formation treat the current turn as being one higher than it actually is when determining what special rules they benefit from as the result of the Power from Pain special rule. This is cumulative with the Master of Pain or Father of Pain special rules (see *Codex: Dark Eldar*).

Furthermore, if this Formation's Haemonculus is your army's Warlord, do not roll to determine his Warlord Trait; he automatically has the Master Epicurean Warlord Trait.







Many Haemonculi believe the creation of fleshy horrors to be the pinnacle of their esoteric craft. They maintain that to take an uninspiring form and transform it into a work of dark magnificence is to prove oneself superior to the idiot biology of nature. These master fleshcrafters constantly try to outdo each other by crafting ever more violent and outlandish Grotesques. Some of their creations are seething hulks of muscle and hypersteroid, others living weapons platforms that boast a variety of large-scale torture implements. These musclebound horrors are gathered together into loose cells and led into battle by their creator, their destructive capabilities thoroughly field-tested upon their master's chosen victims. Once their killing fury abates, they are gathered up and returned to the slab for further 'modifications'.



FORMATION:

-
- Urien Rakarth or 1 Haemonculus
- 2 units of Grotesques

RESTRICTIONS:

None.

SPECIAL RULES:

Freakish Spectacle.

Latest Experiments: After determining Warlord Traits, but before deploying the first unit in your army, roll a D6 and look up the result on the table to the right. All units of Grotesques in this Formation receive the characteristics bonus or special rule listed on the table for the duration of the battle.

LATEST EXPERIMENTS TABLE

D6	RESULT
1	Mauler Steroids: +1 Strength
2	Subcutaneous Chitin: +1 Toughness
3	Hyperstimm Glands: Fleet
4	Flensing Claw: Shred
5	Elixir of Distilled Fury: Rage
6	Restructured Nervous System: Feel No Pain (4+)





Where their craven craftworld cousins shy away from tasting the fruits of the galaxy, many Haemonculi love to dive into the surreal extremes of sensation-seeking within the relative safety of their lairs. Having long ago grown bored of such home-brewed thrills, the Scarlet Epicureans take esoteric pleasures from the wider realms of realspace, each rapacious experience enhanced by the spirit syphon of a nearby Cronos. They may seek to taste the cerebral fluids of a visionary strategist, to feel the electric kiss of psychic lightning, to smell the pheromonal stink of mass panic, or to indulge in a thousand stranger quests besides. Eager to give the gifts of experience as well as to receive, these Haemonculi flay the skin from their Wrack attendants so they can better feel the hot kiss of uninhibited sensation.



FORMATION:

- 1 Haemonculus
- 1 Cronos
- 2 units of Wracks

RESTRICTIONS:

None.

SPECIAL RULES:

Freakish Spectacle.

Macabre Collectors: All units of Wracks from this Formation that are within 12" of this Formation's Haemonculus have the Precision Strikes special rule.

Master of Epicureans: The units of Wracks in this Formation treat the current turn as being one higher than it actually is when determining what special rules they benefit from as the result of the Power from Pain special rule. This is cumulative with the Master of Pain or Father of Pain special rules (see *Codex: Dark Eldar*).

Furthermore, if this Formation's Haemonculus is your army's Warlord, do not roll to determine his Warlord Trait; he automatically has the Master Epicurean Warlord Trait.





Haemonculi find it most irritating to be killed before they have had a chance to fulfil their dire agenda. Where a sniper shot or rifle volley can be confounded, a megatonne explosion is not so easily dodged. In answer to the indiscriminate firepower of Man and Ork, the Haemonculi devised Scalpel Squadrons – Venom-borne cells of Wracks that soar ahead of their main advance to excise the offending organ from the military body that opposes them. These forces cut across the battlefield at unseemly speed, debarking from their skimmers to slice into gun crews and weapons teams. Though they are usually killed by the resultant counter-attack, those Wracks that did their duty to the Coven are later reconstituted – and perhaps even raised to another circle of subservience as a reward for their selflessness.



FORMATION:

- 2 units of Wracks
- 2 Venoms

RESTRICTIONS:

Each unit of Wracks in the Formation must be given one of the Formation's Venoms as a Dedicated Transport.

SPECIAL RULES:

Freakish Spectacle.

First Pickings: If a unit from this Formation completes the First Blood Secondary Objective, the controlling player scores D3 Victory Points instead of the usual 1.

Surgical Excision: All of the Wrack units in this Formation begin the game embarked upon their Venom transports, and must be placed in Reserve. All units in this Formation arrive automatically in the controlling player's first turn, and must deploy by Deep Strike.





The undercity gets through a great deal of raw materials. Though the influx of experimental subjects is maintained at a constant pace, there are times when very particular specimens are required. On these occasions the Covens' Talos are released from their duty as guard-creatures and sent forth to strip out specific biological components from their unfortunate targets. Realspace raids represent unparalleled opportunities for such a grisly harvest. These 'corpsethieves' are fitted with extra flasks and plundervials, gathered together and set upon the enemy battle line with instructions to bring back a variety of quivering organs and bubbling distillations. To the parasitic Haemonculi, the carnage their Pain Engines leave behind is a feast in itself.



FORMATION:

- 1 unit of Talos

RESTRICTIONS:

The unit of Talos must include 5 models, even though this is not normally allowed.

SPECIAL RULES:

Freakish Spectacle, Scout.

Let the Harvest Begin: Each time a unit from this Formation completely destroys an enemy non-vehicle unit in close combat, the controlling player scores 1 Victory Point. In missions where players earn Victory Points for completely destroying enemy units, the controlling player will score 1 additional Victory Point each time a unit from this Formation completely destroys an enemy non-vehicle unit in close combat.





The Haemonculi known as Dark Artisans consider themselves masters of sculpting not only the physical, but also the metaphysical. Creators of living miracles, it is they who specialise in the strange birth of the Talos, the Cronos, and a dozen other Engines of Pain besides. They are accompanied at all times by the finest of their creations, true works of dark genius that escort their masters with an air silent menace. These sculptors of the esoteric walk a tightrope between pride and anxiety. Though a Dark Artisan desperately wants to show off the superiority of his beloved children in as dramatic a theatre as possible, he cares for them like a proud father, and will wreak a terrible vengeance on any who so much as dents their perfection.



FORMATION:

- 1 Haemonculus
- 1 Talos
- 1 Cronos

RESTRICTIONS:

None.

SPECIAL RULES:

Freakish Spectacle.

Follow Me, My Children!: All units in this Formation must be fielded as a single unit, even though this is not normally allowed. Models with the Independent Character special rule cannot join this unit.

Master of Diabolical Machines: This Formation's Talos and Cronos add 1 to the Weapon Skill and Initiative characteristics on their profile.

Furthermore, if this Formation's Haemonculus is your army's Warlord, do not roll to determine his Warlord Trait; he automatically has the Master Artisan Warlord Trait.





COVENITE FLESHCORPS

When pillaging realspace, each Coven, regardless of its goals, will ensure that it is accompanied by a great many Wracks. Some Haemonculi prefer to foster the proper air of terror by sending their minions into battle on foot, each cell advancing towards the foe in a slow but implacable coterie of killers that cannot be stopped by anything short of total annihilation. When such theatrics are impractical, the Coven lords will instead bid their Fleshcorps ride anti-gravity skimmers adorned with the remains of their previous conquests. Striking from hidden webway portals like spiders bursting from burrows to pounce on their prey, the Covenites dive into the enemy battleline, maim or kill the choicest foes, and seize the rest to suffer a far darker fate.



FORMATION:

-
-
-
- 1 Haemonculus
- 3 units of Wracks
- 3 Raiders

RESTRICTIONS:

Each unit of Wracks in the Formation must be given one of the Formation's Raiders as a Dedicated Transport.

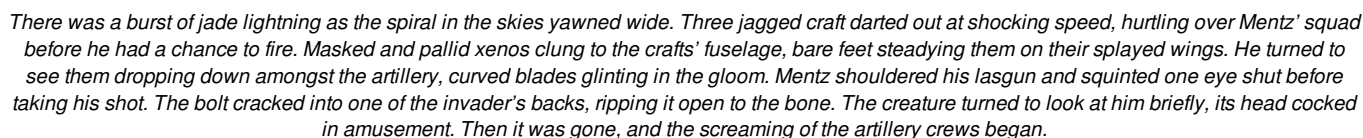
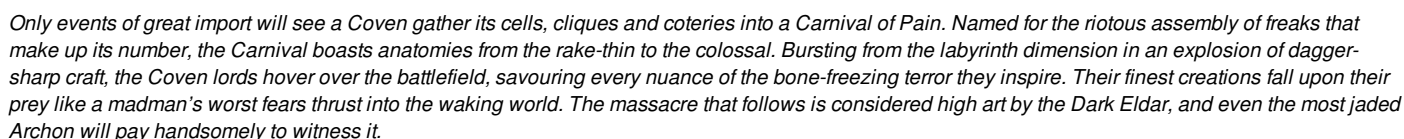
SPECIAL RULES:

Freakish Spectacle.

Master of Flesh: As long as the Formation's Haemonculus is alive, his Master of Pain special rule affects all units of Wracks in this Formation within 12", not just his own unit.

Furthermore, if this Formation's Haemonculus is your army's Warlord, do not roll to determine his Warlord Trait; he automatically has the Master of Apotheosis Warlord Trait.





Mentz turned back to the sky-portal to see a flotilla of knife-like xenos skimmers carving overhead. More of the twisted things were leaping down from their barbed hulls, their hollow laughter audible over the storm of lasfire searing up to intercept. One of the craft came in low, a trio of Ogryn-sized horrors dropping directly into Beta Platoon and picking up infantrymen as if they weighed nothing at all. Green light glinted from the bubbling flasks jutting from the monsters' mountainous shoulders, and the masked brutes fell into a frenzy, lashing and stamping and raging against the bayonet charge Sergeant Weiss had led to put them down.

Running over to aid his comrades, Mentz pulled up short when a nameless construction of blades and pale flesh descended from the skies. He stood agog, his shaking hands desperately raising his lasgun. The thing was a nightmare made flesh; part giant, part insect, part machine. It reached for him, and as he levelled a shot point-blank at its impassive mask, he found himself plucked by the legs from the ground.

Suspended upside down in the thing's pincer grip, Mentz fumbled at his waist for his last grenade. There was nothing there. A wizened face swam into his tear-blurred vision, its visage the purest expression of evil he had ever seen. He felt the trickle of his bladder betraying him as the leering creature ran its fingers over his eyes. He opened his mouth to scream, and the thing delicately placed his pinless grenade in his mouth a moment before its pet monstrosity hurled him aside. The sky swirled a moment before he struck Sergeant Weiss, bearing him bodily to the ground. Then there was only light.



- Grottesquerie
- Scarlet Epicureans
- Scalpel Squadron
- Corpsethief Claw
- Dark Artisan
- Covenite Fleshcorps

RESTRICTIONS:

The units in this Formation must adhere to all of the restrictions detailed in each of the corresponding Formation datasheets.

The units in this Formation retain all of the special rules specified in the corresponding Formation datasheets. In addition, the following special rules apply:

SPECIAL RULES:

Lord of Pain: As long as Urien Rakarth (or the Haemonculus from the Grotesquerie Formation) is alive, his Father/Master of Pain special rule affects all non-vehicle units in this Formation.

The Torturer's Art: All non-vehicle models from the Carnival of Pain re-roll failed To Wound rolls of a 1 in close combat.



'Rejoice, vermin, for we come to rescue you from your insignificance! You are blessed indeed, for your lives will be forged anew in pain! The Carnival is here!'

- Vodzhe Maelian, Prophet of Flesh



MISSIONS



This book includes eight new missions which are themed around the Haemonculus Covens and the way they fight. This gives you a chance to discover more about the strategies used by these degenerate warriors, and then to enact them on the tabletop with your own army. It also means that the composition of the army you command can affect the types of battle you are likely to fight. This is highly appropriate – after all, you would expect to fight a very different sort of battle as a Haemonculus than you would as any other commander.

The missions in this book are split into two sections: Altar of War missions and Echoes of War missions.



ALTAR OF WAR MISSIONS

The three Altar of War missions illustrate the different sorts of strategies used by the Haemonculus Covens and provide new tests of your tactical ability as a commander.

It is very straightforward to use an Altar of War mission – these can be selected at The Mission step described in Preparing for Battle in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*. Like the missions presented there, Altar of War missions are ‘pick up and play’ missions – it is not necessary to know which of these missions you will be playing before selecting an army, only the agreed points value of the two armies.

If you (or your opponent) have a Warlord that is a Haemonculus with the Dark Eldar Faction, you can select one of these missions just as you would any other, as explained in the Preparing for Battle section in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

HOW TO USE ALTAR OF WAR MISSIONS

If either you or your opponent wish to use an Altar of War mission, then you must make a ‘Choose a Mission’ roll-off at the start of The Mission step of Preparing for Battle in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

The winner of the roll-off can choose either to roll on the Eternal War or Maelstrom of War mission tables, or instead roll on the Altar of War mission table for their army. Other supplements also have new types of mission tables, and the winner of the dice roll-off could choose to roll on one of those, if they prefer and are allowed to do so. These rolls will determine which mission is used for the battle. Note that each set of Altar of War missions is linked to a specific Faction; in order to use Altar of War missions, your army’s Warlord must have the appropriate Faction. Occasionally, further restrictions may apply. In the case of *Altar of War: Haemonculus Covens*, the player rolling on the mission table must choose a Warlord with the Dark Eldar Faction, and in addition the Warlord must be a Haemonculus model.

THE ENEMY

The player that won the roll-off and rolled on the Altar of War mission table is known as ‘the Haemonculus Covens player’ in the rules and missions that follow; their opponent is known as ‘the enemy player’, even if they have a Haemonculus Covens army too.

ALTAR OF WAR: HAEMONCULUS COVENS MISSION TABLE

D6	MISSION
1-2	Fear the Reaper
3-4	Glorious Slaughter
5-6	Vanish in the Gloom

ECHOES OF WAR MISSIONS

After the Altar of War missions, you will find a selection of Echoes of War missions inspired by the battles fought by the Haemonculus Covens. The Armies section of each of these missions provides guidance on the forces present so that you can replay the pivotal events using the armies and characters described in this book. Many of the Echoes of War missions include a map that depicts the battlefield on which the conflicts were fought.

If you wish to fight an Echoes of War mission, you and your opponent must agree which mission you wish to fight, ensuring that you have the appropriate armies and models you will need.

Designer’s Note: *Whilst the Echoes of War missions have been inspired by specific events, with a little imagination they can easily be repurposed to recreate battles of your own invention. If you choose to go down this route, you can modify these missions so that they can be fought using any combination of forces and terrain in your collection.*



ALTAR OF WAR: FEAR THE REAPER

Every Haemonculus Coven has an insatiable need for fresh materials to be used in experiments and to make their unholy constructions. Raiding parties are despatched from Commorragh with specific orders about what type of materials are needed; these are often quite general – a few dozen Ork Boyz, for example – but can often be arcanelly specific – every individual born on a specific planet on a specific date. When an ingredient or material is especially important, then the lord of the Haemonculus Coven is not above leading the raid himself, carefully directing the operations of his minions to ensure that he gets exactly what is needed for his next vile experiment.

THE ARMIES

Choose armies as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*. One player is the Haemonculus Covens player, and his opponent is the enemy player. The Haemonculus Covens player must choose a Warlord as described in the Altar of War Mission instructions. There are no restrictions on what can be taken in the enemy player's army.

THE BATTLEFIELD

Set up terrain as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*. Use the Deployment Map included with this mission. Each player rolls a D6, re-rolling ties. Whoever scores higher decides which half of the table they wish to deploy in. The opposing player deploys in the opposite half.

OBJECTIVE MARKERS

No Objective Markers are set up at the start of the battle. Instead they are placed when enemy units are destroyed (see the Mission Special Rules).

DEPLOYMENT

The enemy player deploys first, anywhere in his deployment zone. The Haemonculus Covens player deploys second, anywhere in his deployment zone.

FIRST TURN

The Haemonculus Covens player can choose to take the first or second turn. If they decide to take the first turn, their opponent can attempt to Seize the Initiative as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

GAME LENGTH

The mission uses Variable Game Length as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

At the end of the game, the player who has scored the most Victory Points wins the game. If players have the same number of Victory Points, the game is a draw.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

At the end of the game, each Objective Marker is worth 3 Victory Points to the player that controls it.

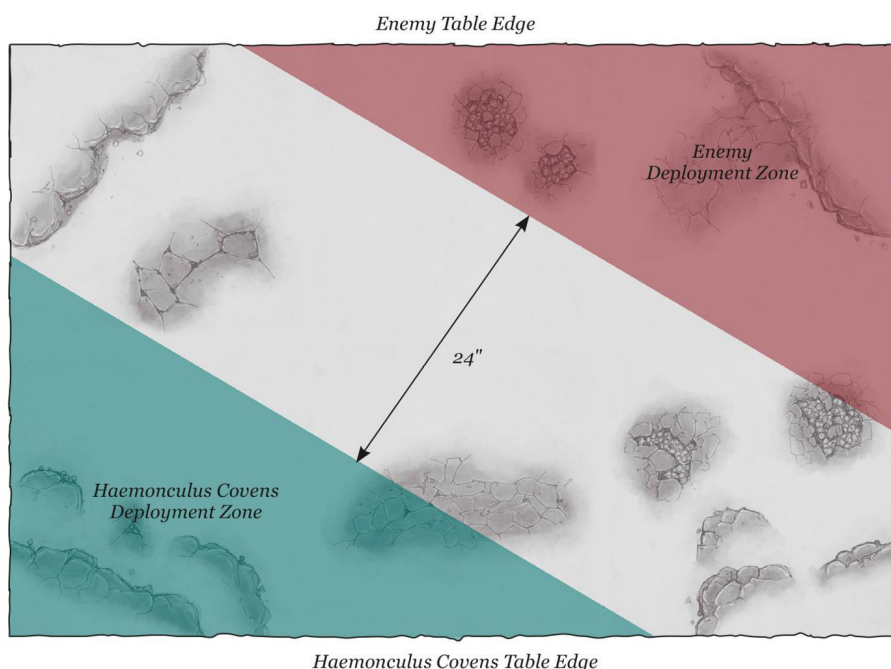
SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

First Blood, Linebreaker, Slay the Warlord.

MISSION SPECIAL RULES

Night Fighting, Reserves.

Flesh Harvest: No Objective Markers are set up at the start of the battle. Instead, each time a unit from the enemy player's army is completely destroyed, an Objective Marker is placed by the enemy player within 1" of the location occupied by the last model from the destroyed unit to be removed as a casualty (but not in impassable terrain). The normal restrictions that apply to placing Objective Markers are not used in this mission, which can result in an Objective Marker being placed within 6" of a table edge or 12" of another Objective Marker. Note that only units from the enemy player's army generate Objective Markers; units from the Haemonculus Covens player's army do not.





ALTAR OF WAR: GLORIOUS SLAUGHTER

Haemonculus Covens are haughtily proud of their achievements, and are always searching for ways to prove their superiority over rival Covens. One of the most observable ways for them to do so is by showing their prowess in battle. A raiding party will be sent through the webway in search of a worthy foe. At the forefront of this force will be the Haemonculus Coven's latest and most powerful creations. The resulting conflict will be carefully choreographed to show the qualities of these creations in the best possible light, and recordings of the battles will be flaunted in the faces of the Coven's most hated rivals.

THE ARMIES

Choose armies as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*. One player is the Haemonculus Covens player, and his opponent is the enemy player. The Haemonculus Covens player must choose a Warlord as described in the Altar of War Mission instructions.

THE BATTLEFIELD

Set up terrain as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*. Use the Deployment Map included with this mission. Each player rolls a D6, re-rolling ties. Whoever scores higher decides which half of the table they wish to deploy in. The opposing player deploys in the opposite half.

DEPLOYMENT

The enemy player deploys first, anywhere in his deployment zone. The Haemonculus Covens player deploys second, anywhere in his deployment zone.

FIRST TURN

The Haemonculus Covens player can choose to take the first or second turn. If they decide to take the first turn, their opponent can attempt to Seize the Initiative as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

GAME LENGTH

The mission uses Variable Game Length as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

At the end of the game, the player who has scored the most Victory Points wins the game. If players have the same number of Victory Points, the game is a draw.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

At the end of the game, each player receives 1 Victory Point for each enemy unit that has been completely destroyed. Units that are Falling Back at the end of the game, and units that are not on the board at the end of the game, count as destroyed for the purposes of this mission. Remember that Independent Characters and Dedicated Transports are individual units and award Victory Points if they are destroyed. Furthermore, both players have the chance to earn additional Victory Points (see the Mission Special Rules).

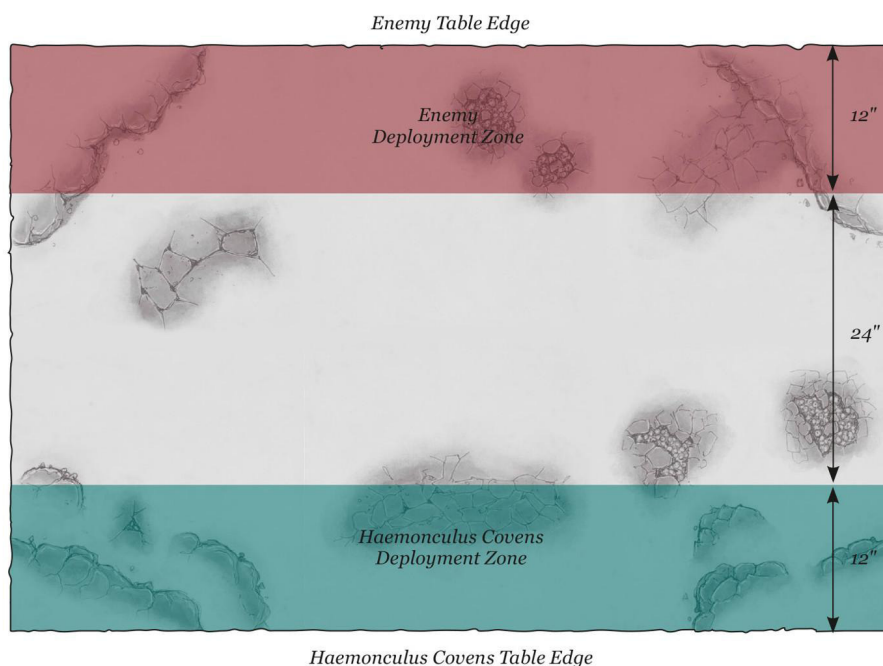
SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

First Blood, Linebreaker, Slay the Warlord.

MISSION SPECIAL RULES

Night Fighting, Reserves.

Exhibitionist Talent: At the start of the first turn, after both sides have deployed, the Haemonculus Covens player must pick one unit in his army. That unit is the Principal Unit in the Haemonculus Covens player's army. Each enemy unit that is completely destroyed is worth D3 Victory Points instead of only 1 Victory Point, providing the last model to be removed as a casualty from the unit was removed because of an attack made by the Principal Unit. However, if the Principal Unit is itself completely destroyed, then the enemy player receives D6 Victory Points instead of only 1 Victory Point.





ALTAR OF WAR: VANISH IN THE GLOOM

The raids and exhibitions of violence carried out by the Dark Eldar are lightning fast, and usually completely unexpected. An enemy subject to such an attack will usually be caught completely by surprise, and at first can do little but fight for survival. However, once the initial shock of the attack starts to fade, the embattled prey will start to mobilise their forces and strike back against the invaders. When this happens, a Haemonculus Coven will quickly find itself heavily outnumbered, and will be forced to withdraw back to the webway.

THE ARMIES

Choose armies as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*. One player is the Haemonculus Covens player, and his opponent is the enemy player. The Haemonculus Covens player must choose a Warlord as described in the Altar of War Mission instructions.

THE BATTLEFIELD

Set up terrain as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*. Use the Deployment Map included with this mission. Each player rolls a D6, re-rolling ties. Whoever scores higher decides which half of the table they wish to deploy in. The opposing player deploys in the opposite half.

DEPLOYMENT

The Haemonculus Covens player deploys first, anywhere in their deployment zone that is more than 12" away from their own table edge. The enemy player deploys second, anywhere in their deployment zone that is more than 12" from the centre line.

FIRST TURN

The Haemonculus Covens player can choose to take the first or second turn. If they decide to take the first turn, their opponent can attempt to Seize the Initiative as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

GAME LENGTH

The mission uses Variable Game Length as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

At the end of the game, the player who has scored the most Victory Points wins the game. If players have the same number of Victory Points, the game is a draw.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

At the end of the game, each player receives 1 Victory Point for each enemy unit that has been completely destroyed. Units that are Falling Back at the end of the game, and units belonging to the enemy player that are not on the board at the end of the game, count as destroyed for the purposes of this mission. Remember that Independent Characters and Dedicated Transports are individual units and award Victory Points if they are destroyed. Furthermore, both players have the chance to earn additional Victory Points (see below).

SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

First Blood, Linebreaker, Slay the Warlord.

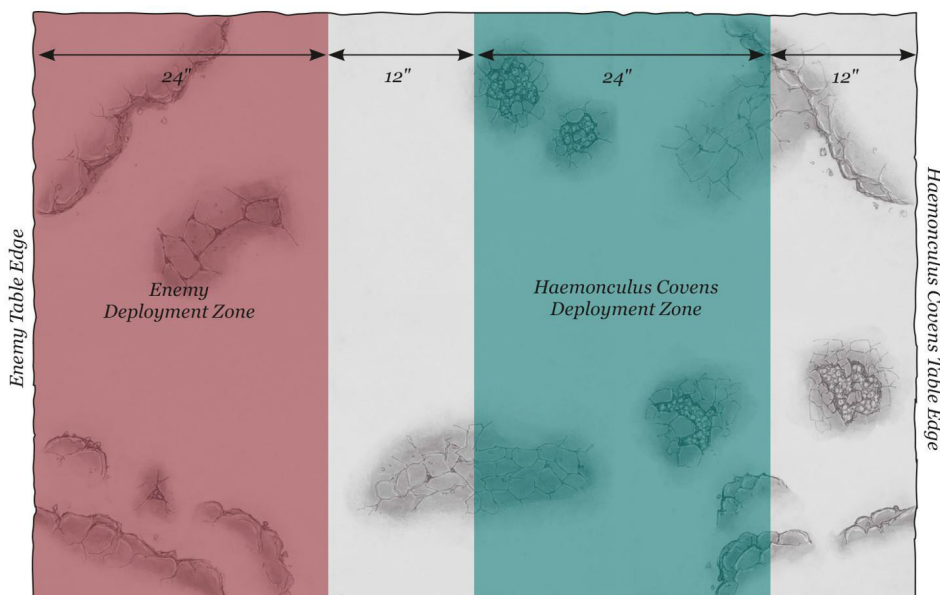
In addition to the Secondary Objectives listed above, **if any models from the Haemonculus Covens army are still on the battlefield when the game ends, then the enemy player receives 1 Victory Point. If no models from the Haemonculus Covens army are still on the battlefield when the game ends, then the Haemonculus Covens player receives 1 Victory Point.**

MISSION SPECIAL RULES

Night Fighting, Reserves.

Got Them On The Run: All enemy units have the Stubborn special rule.

We'll Be Back: In this mission, all units in the Haemonculus Covens player's army have the Hit & Run special rule. In addition, starting from Game Turn 3, units in the Haemonculus Covens player's army are allowed to exit the table by moving off their own table edge. These units do not count as destroyed unless they were Falling Back when they moved off the table.





ECHOES OF WAR: REFUSAL TO DIE

The fortress world of Refusal stands ready for war, and the joint realspace raid of the Prophets of Flesh and the Red Grief is poised to deliver it. However, the planet's Cadian defenders – though ready for combat at a moment's notice – are expecting to face the Eldar of Craftworld Saim-Hann, not the abominable Haemonculus Coven and their murderous Hekatarii allies. Will the Cadians stand before the merciless onslaught of the Dark Eldar, or will their regiment be consigned to history, butchered for the entertainment of the Commorrite masses?

THE ARMIES

Choose armies as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

All units in the Haemonculus Covens player's army must have the Dark Eldar Faction. He must include one Succubus (to represent Yctria the Flayer Queen) and one unit of Hekatrix Bloodbrides in his army.

All units in the enemy player's army must have the Astra Militarum Faction.

THE BATTLEFIELD

Set up terrain as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*. Use the Deployment Map included with this mission. The enemy player can place any number of fortifications anywhere within his deployment zone. He does not pay any points for these fortifications, and none start the game dilapidated. All fortifications deployed in this manner start the game claimed by the enemy player. Set up any remaining terrain as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

Designer's Note: When setting up the terrain, bear in mind that the Astra Militarum are defending the high ground along a fortified ridge, so try to ensure that the their side of the table has plenty of hills to represent this.

DEPLOYMENT

Players should first roll to determine their Warlord Traits and then deploy their armies as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

FIRST TURN

The Haemonculus Covens player has the first turn unless his opponent can Seize the Initiative as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

GAME LENGTH

The mission uses Variable Game Length as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

At the end of the game, the player who has scored the most Victory Points wins the game. If players have the same number of Victory Points, the game is a draw.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

At the end of the game, each player receives 1 Victory Point for each enemy unit that has been completely destroyed. Units that are Falling Back at the end of the game, and units that are not on the board at the end of the game, count as destroyed for the purposes of this mission. Remember that Independent Characters and Dedicated Transports are individual units and award Victory Points if they are destroyed.

SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

First Blood, Linebreaker, Slay the Warlord.

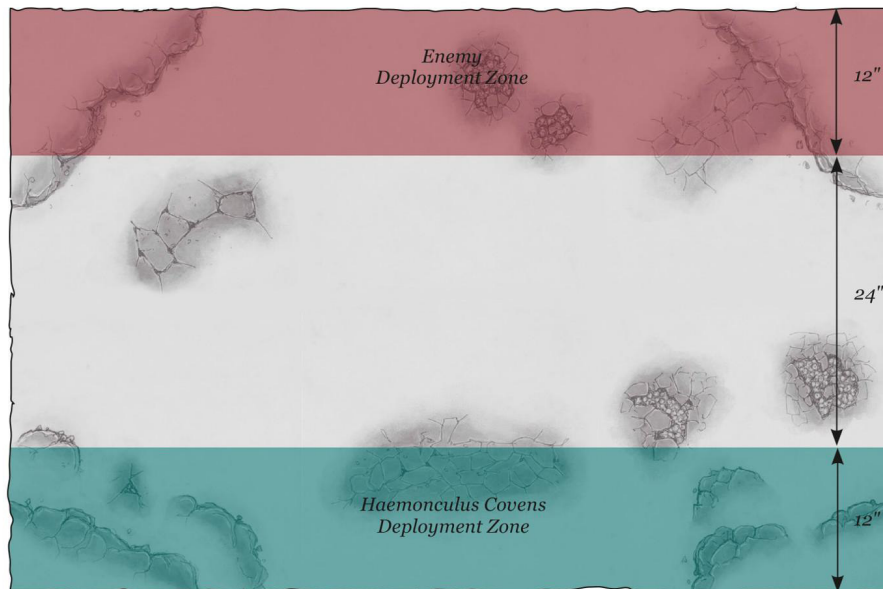
MISSION SPECIAL RULES

Night Fighting, Reserves.

Elixir Barghesi: During deployment, the Haemonculus Covens player must nominate one Succubus and one unit of Hekatrix Bloodbrides in his army. These units lose their Combat Drugs and Dodge special rules; instead, all models in the nominated units add 1 to the Weapon Skill and Strength characteristics on their profiles, and gain a 4+ invulnerable save.

Shadow Mirages: In the first turn of the game, when making shooting attacks, all units in the enemy player's army can only make Snap Shots.

Enemy Table Edge



Haemonculus Covens Table Edge



ECHOES OF WAR: STARVING THE SWARM

The maiden world of Lethidia lies at the mercy of a Tyranid hive fleet, though its hapless Exodite population does not stand alone. An unlikely coalition of Wild Riders from Craftworld Saim-Hann and the macabre forces of the Commorrite Haemonculus Covens have swiftly moved to counter the threat. Yet little do the unsuspecting ‘allies’ of the Haemonculus Covens realise that the intervention of the Commorrites is driven by a purpose that is far from benevolent. For now, the Covens have turned their attention to the Tyranid digestion pools in a bid to delay the hive fleet’s consumption of the planet before their secret plan reaches fruition.

THE ARMIES

Choose armies as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

All units in the Haemonculus Covens player’s army must have the Dark Eldar or Eldar Faction. He must include at least 3 Razorwing Jetfighters or Voidraven Bombers (in any combination) in his army. All units in the enemy player’s army must have the Tyranids Faction.

THE BATTLEFIELD

Set up terrain as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*, using the Deployment Map included with this mission.

OBJECTIVE MARKERS

After setting up the terrain, the enemy player places a total of 6 Objective Markers to represent the Tyranid Digestion Pools (see the Tyranid Digestion Pools mission special rule). No Objective Marker can be placed within 6" of any battlefield edge or 12" of another Objective Marker.

DEPLOYMENT

The players should first roll to determine their Warlord Traits.

The enemy player selects any one table edge to be his. The Haemonculus Covens player’s table edge is the one opposite the enemy player’s table edge.

The enemy player deploys his force anywhere on the battlefield. All of the Haemonculus Covens player’s units start the game in Reserve (see the Commencing the Attack mission special rule).

FIRST TURN

The Haemonculus Covens player has the first turn.

GAME LENGTH

The mission uses Variable Game Length as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

At the end of the game, the player who has scored the most Victory Points wins the game. If players have the same number of Victory Points, the game is a draw.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

At the end of the game, the Haemonculus Covens player receives 3 Victory Points for each Tyranid Digestion Pool that has been successfully rendered inert before the end of the game (see the Necrotoxin Missiles mission special rule). The enemy player receives 3 Victory Points for each Tyranid Digestion Pool that remains active at the end of the game (see the Necrotoxin Missiles mission special rule).

SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

First Blood, Slay the Warlord.

MISSION SPECIAL RULES

Night Fighting, Reserves.

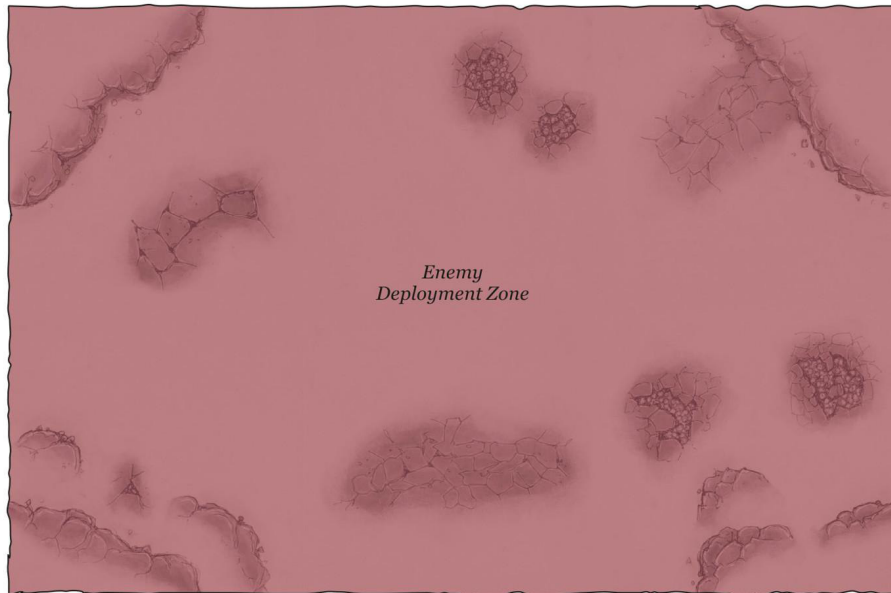
Commencing the Attack: All units in the Haemonculus Covens player’s army move onto the board from his table edge at the start of his first turn. All Flyer units in the Haemonculus Covens player’s army automatically arrive at the start of his first turn.

Tyranid Digestion Pools: Each Objective Marker represents a Tyranid Digestion Pool. Until it is rendered inert (see the Necrotoxin Missiles mission special rule), all terrain within 3" of a Digestion Pool is treated as Dangerous Terrain.

Necrotoxin Missiles: Before the game, the Haemonculus Covens player can exchange any number of missiles carried by his Razorwing Jetfighters and Voidraven Bombers for necrotoxin missiles. He does not need to exchange all of his missiles in this manner, though each Razorwing or Voidraven must carry at least one necrotoxin missile.

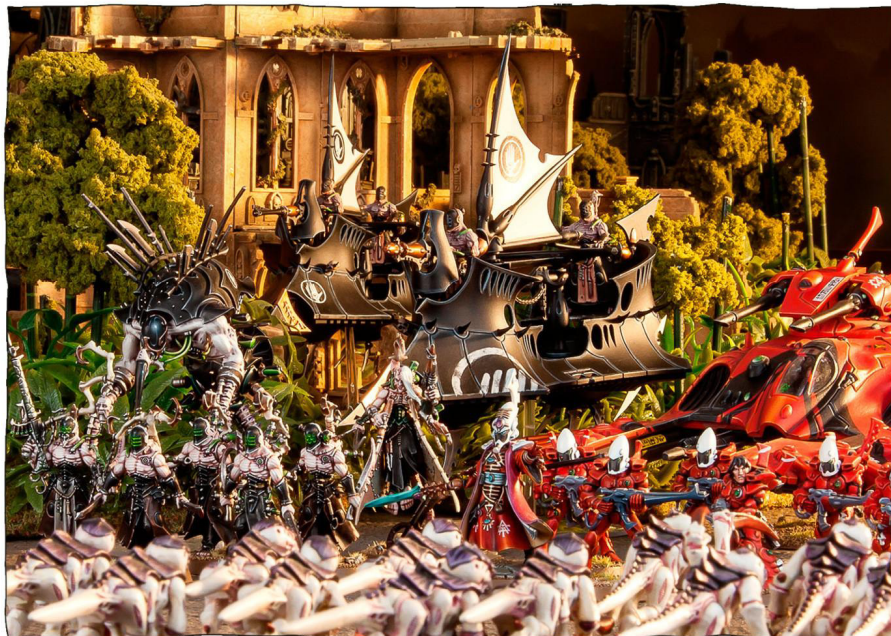
Only one necrotoxin missile can be fired by each unit in a turn. A necrotoxin missile can only be used to target a Tyranid Digestion Pool – it has no effect against any other target. Roll To Hit as normal. A miss has no effect, but if a hit is scored, instead of rolling To Wound, roll another D6. On a 2+, the targeted Digestion Pool has been successfully rendered inert. However, if the enemy player has an unengaged unit anywhere within 3" of the targeted Digestion Pool, he can make a 4+ cover save against the necrotoxin missile – if the cover save is successful, the necrotoxin missile has no effect.

Enemy Table Edge



*Enemy
Deployment Zone*

Haemonculus Covens Table Edge



ECHOES OF WAR: TO STEAL A PLANET

The terrible truth behind the Haemonculus Covens' actions on war-torn Lethidia is about to be revealed. But for Urien Rakarth's diabolical scheme to work, a network of webway breachers must be positioned at specific geomantic locations across the planet's surface. Eager to impress the ancient Haemonculus patriarch, Coven lords of every persuasion descend upon these critical locus points to ensure that the webway breachers are in position for when the time comes.

THE ARMIES

Choose armies as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

All units in the Haemonculus Covens player's army must have the Dark Eldar Faction. All units in the enemy player's army must have the Tyranids Faction.

THE BATTLEFIELD

Use the Deployment Map included with this mission. First of all, place a single Objective Marker in the centre of the battlefield to represent the Webway Breacher placement location (see the Webway Breacher mission special rule). Players then set up terrain as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

DEPLOYMENT

Players deploy their armies as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

FIRST TURN

The player that deployed first has the first turn unless their opponent can Seize the Initiative as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

GAME LENGTH

The mission uses Variable Game Length as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

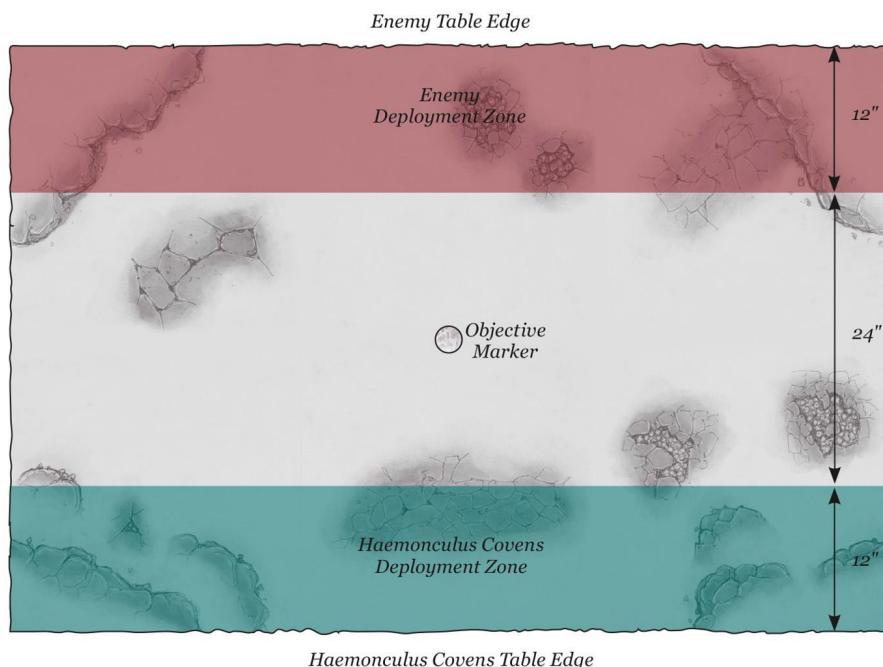
If, at the end of the game, one or more of the Haemonculus Covens player's Haemonculus models (or Urien Rakarth), is within 3" of the Objective Marker, he wins automatically. If, at the end of the game, this condition has not been met, the enemy player wins.

MISSION SPECIAL RULES

Night Fighting, Reserves.

High on Pain: All units in the Haemonculus Covens player's army treat the current turn number as being one higher than it actually is when determining what special rules they benefit from as a result of the Power from Pain special rule. This is cumulative with any other special rules, items or wargear that have a similar effect.

Webway Breacher: The Objective Marker represents the Webway Breacher placement location. Any non-vehicle units in the Haemonculus Covens player's army within 6" of the Objective Marker have the Counter-attack special rule as long as at least one model in the unit remains in range.





ECHOES OF WAR: RAVEN'S FALL

The Raven Guard have once more come to the aid of the stricken planet of Parocheus to save its inhabitants from the depredations of the malicious Haemonculus Coven known as the Altered. This time, however, the Covenite fiends have not come to prey upon the planet's populace – they come seeking vengeance against its saviours. As the Raven Guard emerge from the haunted tunnels of Devil's Gulch, they are assailed by the full might of the Altered's freakish hordes. But worse still for the Raven Guard, ill chance has granted the Haemonculi an even greater opportunity for revenge – corruption of the gene-seed that is the very lifeblood of their Chapter.

THE ARMIES

Choose armies as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

All units in the Haemonculus Covens player's army must have the Dark Eldar Faction. All units in the enemy player's army must have the Space Marines Faction and use the Raven Guard Chapter Tactics.

THE BATTLEFIELD

Set up terrain as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*. Use the Deployment Map included with this mission.

DEPLOYMENT

The enemy player deploys first, placing all of his unit anywhere in his deployment zone. The Haemonculus Covens player then deploys, dividing all of his non-Flyer units as evenly as possible between his three deployment zones, as shown on the Deployment Map.

FIRST TURN

The Haemonculus Covens player has the first turn unless the enemy player can Seize the Initiative as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

GAME LENGTH

The mission uses Variable Game Length as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

At the end of the game, the player who has scored the most Victory Points wins the game. If players have the same number of Victory Points, the game is a draw.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

At the end of the game, each player receives 1 Victory Point for each enemy unit that has been completely destroyed. Units that are Falling Back at the end of the game, and units that are not on the board at the end of the game, count as destroyed for the purposes of this mission. Remember that Independent Characters and Dedicated Transports are individual units and award Victory Points if they are destroyed.

Furthermore, the Haemonculus Covens player earns 1 additional Victory Point for each enemy non-vehicle unit that he completely destroys in close combat.

SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

First Blood, Linebreaker, Slay the Warlord*.

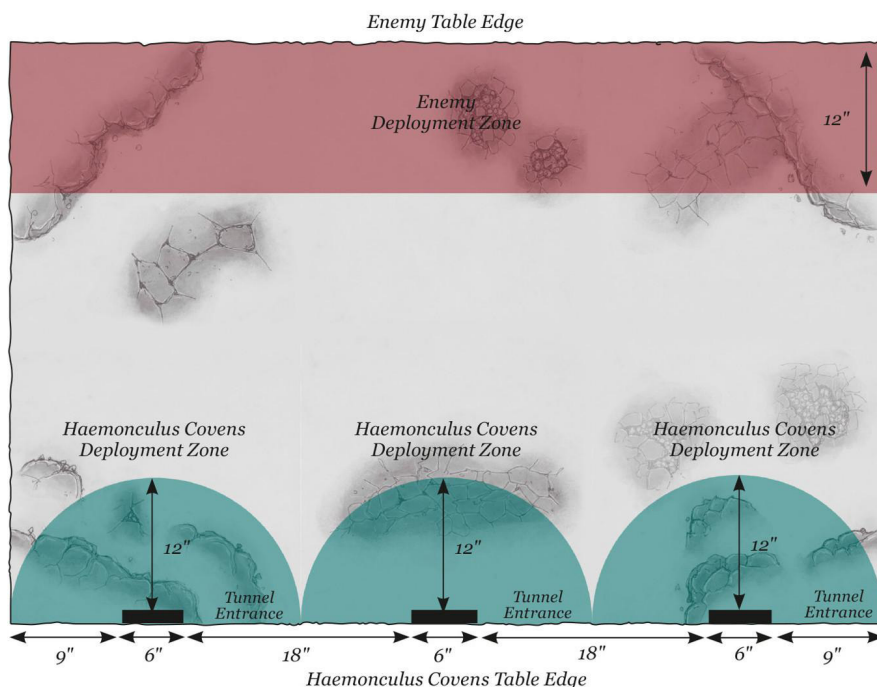
* **Slay the Grinner:** In this mission, the Slay the Warlord Secondary Objective is worth 3 Victory Points to the enemy player.

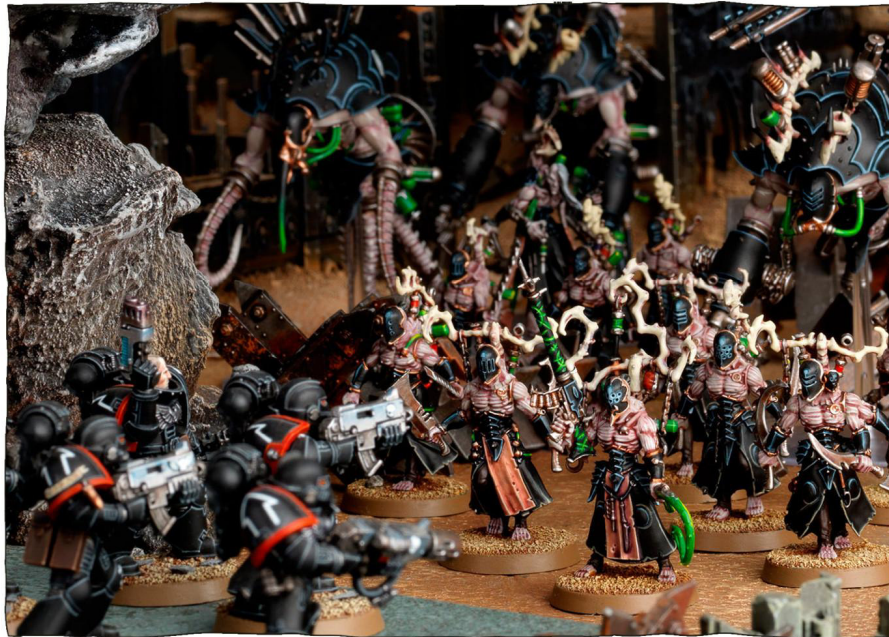
MISSION SPECIAL RULES

Reserves.

Death By Twilight: The Night Fighting rules are in effect for the entire battle.

Mountain Wall: The southern table edge is impassable terrain to all non-Skimmer and non-Flyer units. Any units belonging to the Haemonculus player that Fall Back do so towards the nearest tunnel entrance along their table edge (see the Deployment Map).





ECHOES OF WAR: PROFOUND DARKNESS

Having used potent EMP munitions to rob the surface of power, the Night Lords have descended upon the Imperial world of Wystengrad, intent on sating their desire for torment and murder on the planet's terrified population. Yet the tables are about to turn. Seeking vengeance for a prior defeat at the hands of the Traitor Legion some months earlier, the Coven lords of the Altered strike a deal with the Aelindrachi in a bid to visit their own brand of psychological horror upon the Night Lords. With the world plunged into unnatural darkness by the Coven's antiphoton engine, the Night Lords endure many days of war in total blackness, until even they are anxious to escape.

THE ARMIES

Choose armies as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

All units in the Haemonculus Covens player's army must have the Dark Eldar Faction. All units in the enemy player's army must have the Chaos Space Marines Faction.

THE BATTLEFIELD

Use the Deployment Map included with this mission. First of all, the Haemonculus Covens player must place a single Objective Marker anywhere in his deployment zone to represent the antiphoton engine (see the Mission Special Rules). Players then set up terrain as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

DEPLOYMENT

Players deploy their armies as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

FIRST TURN

The player that deployed first has the first turn unless their opponent can Seize the Initiative as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

GAME LENGTH

The mission uses Variable Game Length as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

At the end of the game, the player who has scored the most Victory Points wins the game. If players have the same number of Victory Points, the game is a draw.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

At the end of the game, each player receives 1 Victory Point for each enemy unit that has been completely destroyed. Units that are Falling Back at the end of the game, and units that are not on the board at the end of the game, count as destroyed for the purposes of this mission. Remember that Independent Characters and Dedicated Transports are individual units and award Victory Points if they are destroyed.

Furthermore, the enemy player earns 3 additional Victory Points if he completely destroys the antiphoton engine before the end of the game (see the Mission Special Rules).

SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

First Blood, Linebreaker, Slay the Warlord.

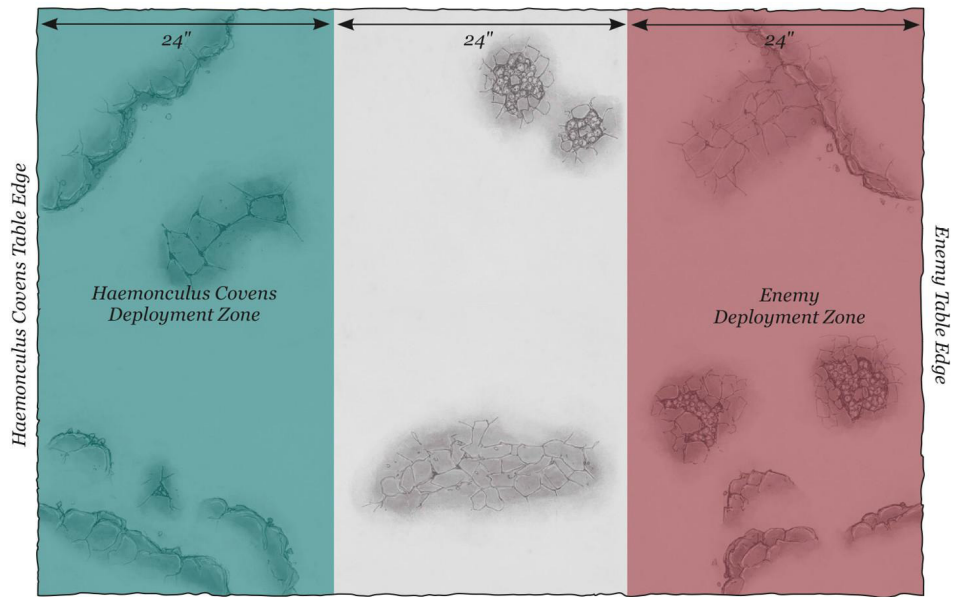
MISSION SPECIAL RULES

Reserves.

The Antiphoton Engine: The antiphoton engine is treated as an Immobile Vehicle with an Armour Value of 12 on all facings and 3 Hull Points. The engine's effects last until it has been completely destroyed.

Shadow War: The Night Fighting rules are in effect for the entire battle. Furthermore, as long as the antiphoton engine remains operational (see above), all units have the Shrouded special rule, and units belonging to the Haemonculus Covens player cannot be targeted if they are more than 12" away from the firing unit.

Terrors in the Dark: All of the Haemonculus Covens player's non-vehicle units have the Fear special rule.







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