The Horus Heresy

Book Nine



Crusade



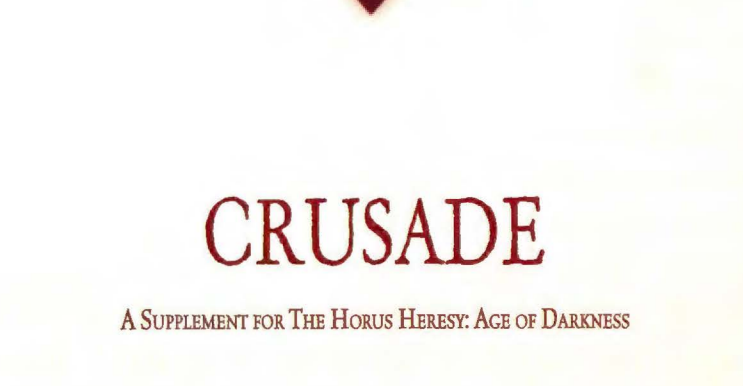




THE GALAXY BALANCES ON THE EDGE OF RUIN,
A DARK KING SET TO CLAIM A BLOODSTAINED CROWN,
AND A LION ROARS IN DEFIANCE.

THE HORUS HERESY®

BOOK NINE



CRUSADE

A Supplement for The Horus Heresy: Age of Darkness

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Preface

That fury which Horus had unleashed, that slumbering beast of arrogance and long nurtured hatred named in later days as the Horus Heresy. A bloody terror given life on the battlefields of the Thramas Crusade, a terror that had possessed the Night Haunter entire and swept across the stars sowing war and chaos in its wake, igniting old grudges and forgotten sins in even the furthest realms of Mankind. Thramas stood at its apex, a conflagration of hopes that recast heroes as devils and set them against the very realm they had once sworn to protect, to tear apart its foundations and topple it upon the uncaring bulwark of history. The Imperium could no longer be saved and those once its protectors fought on only for possession of its corpse and the empty joy of slaughter, for that beast which Horus had sought to chain had broken free and would not be bound again.

Mankind stood on the brink of the abyss, for the Dark Age had arrived at last and all the dreams of empire were rendered into ash and regret. A cold and hollow victory was all that remained, and among the dim stars set about Thramas, the Night Lords sought to carve such a grim trophy from the bones of the innocent to lay at the feet of their lord and master. For where once the Night Haunter had served justice, now he chained himself to his spite in the morbid desire to at least see those he pronounced his enemies burn before the oblivion he had long foreseen came for him. There, at the final guttering death of hope, the First of the broken kindred of Primarchs returned, a Lion loosed upon the hordes of infamy unexpected and terrible in his wrath. His defiant roar was to be the final call to arms for the Age of Darkness, his crusade at Thramas the final piece of tinder for a bonfire that would engulf the galaxy.

I saw with eyes then young, and this is my testament. I was there when Tallarn burned and Keoptis drowned in oceans of blood. I witnessed the skies of Terra riven with lightning on the day the Warmaster came and hell followed with him. I heard the funeral bell toll for the Emperor of Mankind and wept.

I remember.



The Edge of Ruin

'All empires must fall to ruin and despair, just as mine has done. Yet, when your own wars are won and you stand amid your triumphs, remember that the fate which has befallen me will in turn be your own. Look for me then, for at the edge of ruin I shall return to remind you of the fate of empires.'

Apocryphal, attributed to the Unspeakable King on the eve of his defeat during Old Night

The Warmaster's Rebellion

In the fifth year of the 31st Millennium Horus Lupercal, Warmaster, favoured son of the Emperor and hero of the Great Crusade, plunged the Imperium of Mankind into a war from which it would never truly recover. Amid the shattered cities of the lonely and distant world of Isstvan III, he set the warriors of the Legiones Astartes against their brothers, raising the banner of rebellion and drowned his oaths of loyalty in blood. Those of his brothers that held true to their oaths would come to face him at Isstvan V, only to find that Horus had laid well his plans of treason. Fully half of the Emperor's Primarchs and Space Marine Legions were already secretly sworn to Horus' side and they turned their guns upon their kin with abandon, leaving the pride of the Imperium broken upon the black sands of that once insignificant world. Worse yet, the Primarch Ferrus Manus would be slain outright, his head made a trophy for the traitor Warmaster, and Corvus Corax and Vulkan lost to their sons. At a stroke Horus had shattered the Legions that had all but conquered the galaxy, cleaved apart the heart of the Imperium and laid clear his path to the throne.

That would be his ultimate goal, Terra, the Throne World of the Imperium, that he might cast down his own father and take His place. In his way stood Rogal Dorn and the few remaining steadfast armies of the Imperium, the other loyal Primarchs scattered to the far corners of the Imperium and unable to come to the Emperor's aid. A narrow belt of worlds held the main route from the far north and Isstvan to Terra, the fortresses of Paramar, Beta-Garmon and Lorin Alpha. Here would be fought a desperate holding action, Rogal Dorn spending all his resources and committing all those warriors at his command to slowing the advance of the Traitor hordes. For two long years they would hold the line, keeping Horus at bay at the cost of millions of lives in a series of bitter sieges and desperate battles, a conflict that would spawn legends to last 10,000 years. Yet even as they fought, the flame of rebellion spread and took root in all the worlds of the wider Imperium, the war no longer a simple matter of overthrowing Terra and claiming the throne, but a sprawling morass of old grudges and feuds now ignited into open battle.

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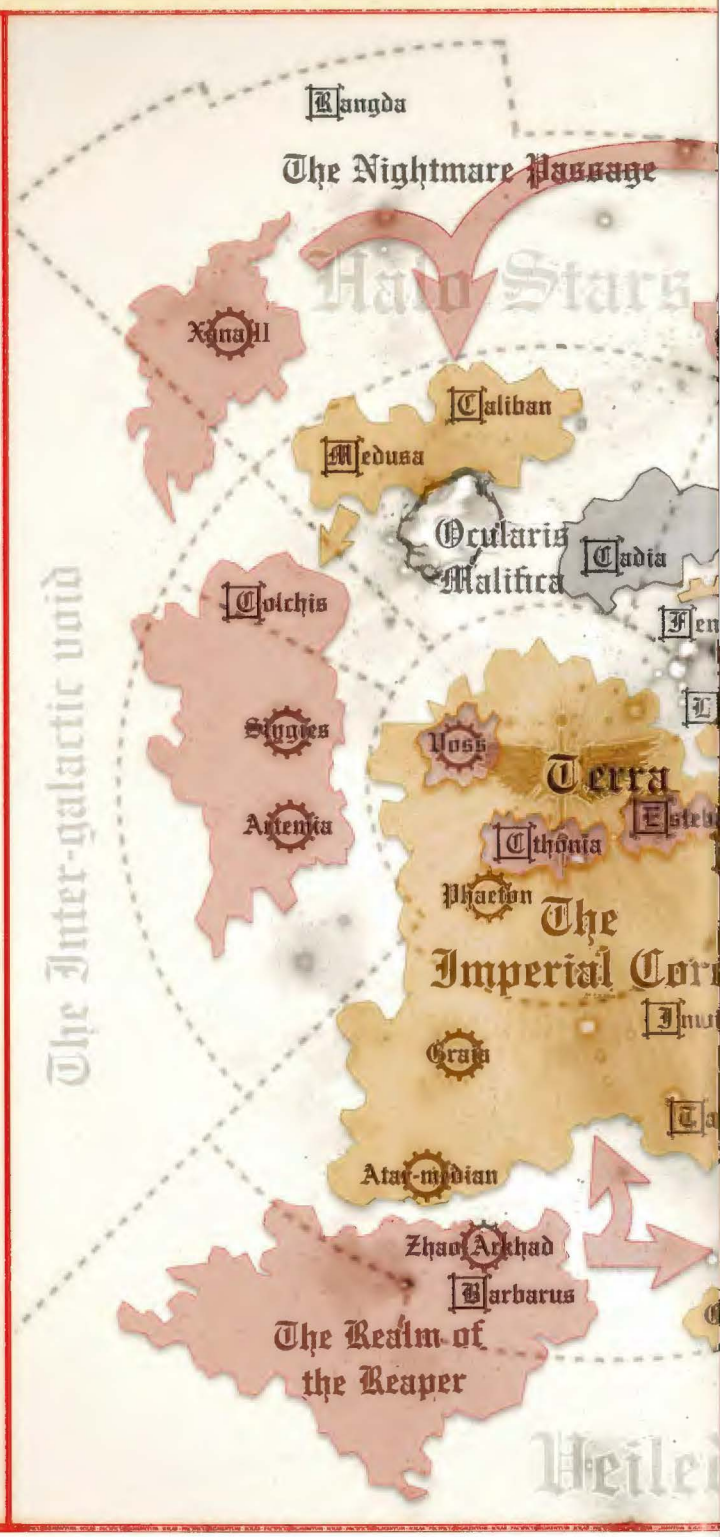
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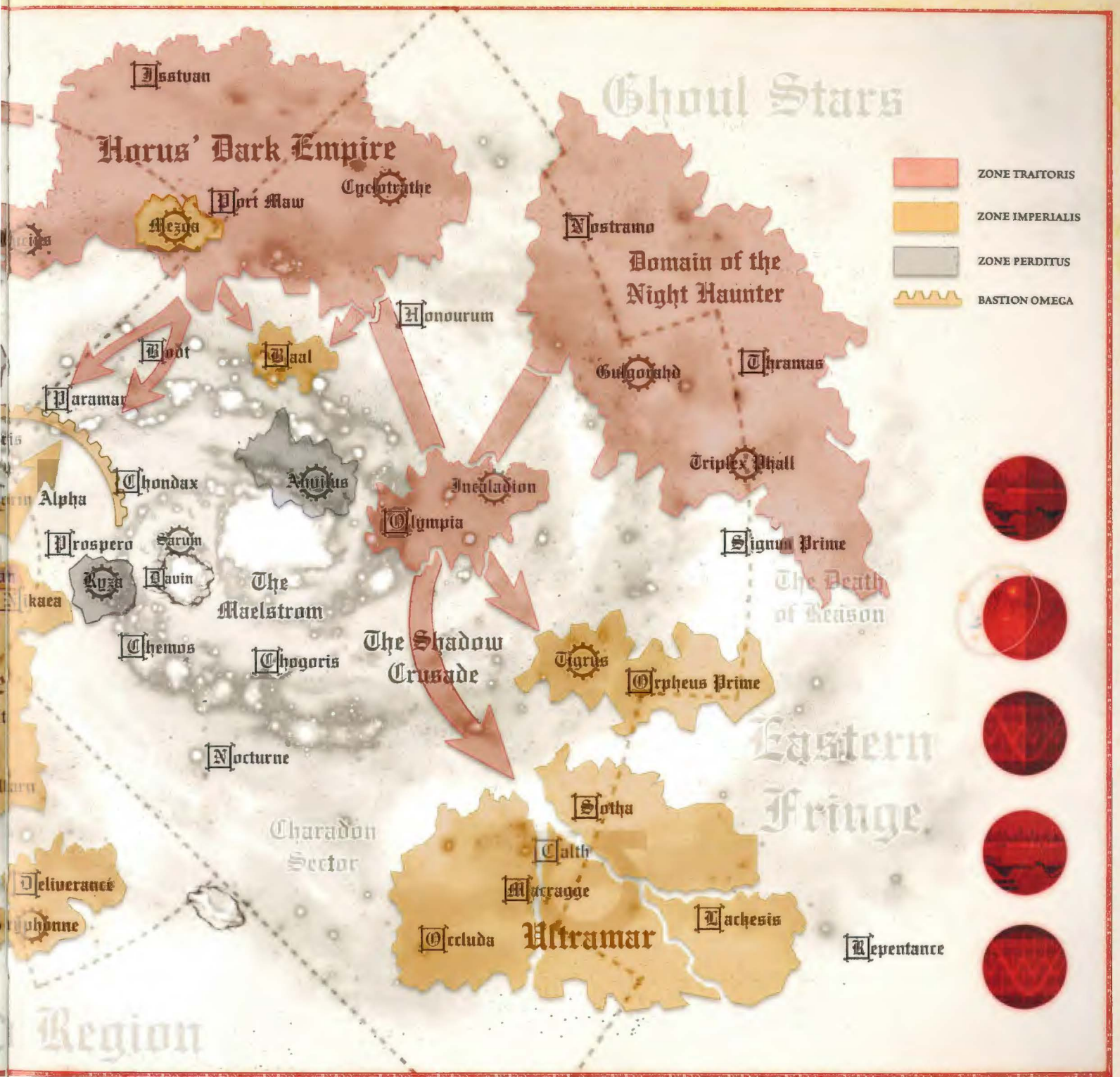
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The End of Empire

The short and decisive war that Horus had planned for had not come to pass, his triumphant advance on Terra stymied in years of grinding conflict, all while the Imperium bled and suffered. Those few loyal Legions that retained the force of arms to resist the Traitors in open war were penned in small enclaves, unable to halt the chaos that now spread to engulf the realm they had fought to create. The Imperial Fists were arrayed defiantly about Terra, their strength the only remaining bar to the Warmaster's onslaught. Distant Ultramar, the rich domain of the Ultramarines where the largest army in all the Imperium waited for the call to arms, was in ruins and cut off from all contact with Terra, which they presumed had now fallen to the enemy. Even the fortress system of Baal and the proud warriors of the Blood Angels sat within a cage of the Warmaster's making, paralysed by the absence of their master and inundated with the broken survivors of Isstvan V and the terrible doubt those broken warriors carried with them.



Yet, despite their hardships these disparate forces had managed to slow the Traitors with their stubborn refusal to fall before the might of their treasonous brothers, keeping alive the embers of the Loyalist cause as they fought.

Defeat loomed dark and grim on the horizon for the forces of the Emperor, for though they could delay the Warmaster and his hordes, they could strike no decisive blow to end his onslaught. It would simply be a matter of bitter time and gruesome sacrifice before Horus tightened his grip around Terra and took the throne for himself. Those that still remained loyal would not make this task easy, they would fight to their last drop of blood to oppose the Warmaster and those of their brothers that had forsaken their oaths in order to serve him, fighting a series of grim sieges and bitter raiding campaigns to hold them at bay. The fortress of Paramar would change hands many times, the three major assaults upon it consuming millions of lives and costing Horus many long months of battle, while the daring assaults of the Raven Guard and White Scars would slow the passage of men and munitions from Horus' northern strongholds to a crawl. Yet, even this bravery would last only so long, and in return Horus would claim dominion over all the northern worlds; from the dark machine-vaults of Xana to the shining spires of Angelis, the Eye of Horus flew triumphant and the isolated pockets of resistance were crushed beneath the heel of his vast army.

A Betrayal Long in the Making

Horus' betrayal was no sudden whim, nor forced entirely upon him by the intervention of outside forces. The preparation required to undertake a war on the scale of the Horus Heresy, involving millions of warriors across hundreds of star systems along with all the materials required to fuel their onslaught, is no small thing but rather a task to challenge even the greatest of military minds. To achieve such a feat in secret and in the space of a few short months is simply not possible, even for such a renowned strategic genius as Horus Lupercal. His grand rebellion, one that had suborned half of the Legiones Astartes, dozens of Forge Worlds and many millions of warriors in the Imperial Militia, was a work of logistical and strategic genius and one that had taken form over long years. The Horus Heresy was a dagger long prepared and sharpened before it was plunged into the Emperor's back.

That his intent was always open rebellion may be in doubt, but that Horus had long set plans and contingencies to allow him to quickly place large bodies of warriors into the field and that he worked to bind certain of his brothers in loyalty to him over the distant Emperor is beyond doubt. Perhaps he had at first rationalised his actions as a preventative measure should the Imperium face an overwhelming onslaught from beyond its borders. Indeed, it is likely that some of his preparations saw use during such crises as the Rangdan Crusades and the Sorthali Incursion, troops held in abeyance committed and old favours called due. Yet these would be but tests of the hidden network of warrior lodges, bound retainers and client Forge Worlds, a taste of the true power that Horus had accumulated over the long years of the Great Crusade. These hidden works were never disclosed to the Emperor or those Primarchs most loyal to him, but kept as Horus' last resort, the reflex of a deeply paranoid warrior and, in retrospect, an action that did not speak of loyalty but only of self-interest. It would take only a spark to ignite the flames of his ambition, to see these carefully prepared resources turned not to the cause of protecting the Imperium, but to that of its destruction.

Worlds that had once given their loyalty grudgingly to the Emperor now gleefully threw off those shackles to take up the cause of the Warmaster, eager to curry his favour in the hope they too could reap their share of the spoils of war. Even those worlds that had once freely bent the knee to the Emperor now forsook their vows in the face of His apparently inevitable defeat, fearing that Horus would wreak a terrible vengeance on those that did not join him once he had taken Terra. Worlds that stood strong in the face of the storm that was the Horus Heresy would find themselves alone amid a sea of foes, never knowing which of their once stalwart allies they could trust in the chaos. Human cultures that had survived all the terrors of Old Night would fall silent in the face of this new war, consumed not by the wrath of the xenos scourge that had once terrorised them but by those they had once called brother. Old allies who had gone to war under the eagle banner of the Emperor would fall upon each other in red abandon, while those that had once been rivals for glory in the Great Crusade now found themselves desperate allies against the traitorous hordes. All that had once seemed right and good, all the ceremonies of innocence and loyalty, were drowned in blood and none could see where the death would end.

The Razor's Edge

The galaxy-wide empire that had been built during the Great Crusade began to tear itself apart, a final fall of darkness upon the grand dreams of unity and empire that the Emperor had kindled in Mankind's collective soul. The fragile web of courier frigates and astropathic relays that bound its worlds together began to fray as war and madness took its toll, the remaining fragments singing a grim dirge of terror and destruction, word of the Warmaster's bloody march on Terra and the fall of Loyalist strongholds. Fear ruled in almost every sector of that wide realm that the Legiones Astartes had forged, a fickle master that goaded its subjects to unwise war and futile battle, to abandon their neighbour and offer up the weak in the hope of their own salvation. In those savage years there were but few lights in the darkness, a few fleeting tales of bravery and respite that passed like whispers through the tattered remnants of the astropathic network. They spoke of the return of Corvus Corax from



the grave of Isstvan V, of the valiant defence of Baal and the gathering might of Ultramar waiting to be unleashed. Few believed such tales, for all about them was now blood and ruin, death and terror. Such was the fragile nature of civilisation in those years that each rumour of doom held more power than any loudly broadcast litany of hope.

All it would take was one final blow to the structure of the Imperium, one more strike to the heart of that fragile empire and it would crumble to dust and ashes. Once again it would plunge into the abyss of chaos and isolation that had sought to swallow it once before, and Horus would be left with only the broken fragments of the Emperor's glorious vision. As the seventh year of the 31st Millennium began, the second year of the war for the Imperium, there were few parts of that wide realm that had not given themselves over to bloodshed and madness, few worlds of import not invested by the warriors of one side or another. Of those, lost amid the darkness at the far eastern fringe of the Imperium, Thramas seemed an unlikely fulcrum upon which to lever the course of history, but this oft-forgotten outpost of the Great Crusade was now to take its place in the annals of the Horus Heresy. Here would the fate of emperors and empires be sealed, here would the last of the great warlords of the Age of Darkness take their place upon the stage.

Broken, Blinded and Bound

Among the many plans set in place by Horus, before even the first bombs fell on the ruined worlds of Isstvan, were those intended to see the most potent threats to his supremacy removed from contention. For though the Warmaster would acknowledge no public rival, in private he held several of his brothers as objects of no little discomfort, warriors that he would prefer not to meet on the field of battle. For these paragons amongst the Primarchs would not bow to the skill at arms or the might of Horus' armies, but the subtle skills that had earned him his title of Warmaster would see them neutered and rendered powerless before they could even raise their hands against him.

There were three among the Primarchs that stood as the most dire threats to the Warmaster and his nascent schemes. Lion El'Jonson was a warrior without equal whose loyalty to the Imperium could not be subverted, Sanguinius held the awe and trust of all his brothers which Horus had long envied, and Guilliman possessed an army and strategic genius that could doom any rebellion if left unchecked. Horus laid plans to remove each of these from his path, the preparations in place long years before he would reveal his desire to rule and standing as the signposts to the Horus Heresy visible only to us now through the clarity of hindsight.

Once confirmed in his position as Warmaster, the ultimate authority barring only the Emperor Himself over the armies of the Great Crusade, Horus was granted the most effective of tools for dealing with these formidable threats. By official writ and warrant of the Warmaster, the Lion and the great majority of his forces were sent out beyond the borders of the Imperium, there to wage war in the darkness where little news of the Imperium could reach. Ever isolated from his peers, Lion El'Jonson made little complaint at such a task, accepting the grim duty as if it was his due and granted Horus the time he would need to set in motion his plans. Sanguinius and his Blood Angels would likewise see orders from their new Warmaster send them to the far corners of the Imperium, not simply led astray but trapped by secrets the Warmaster had long kept in readiness. Here he sought to dispose of the troublesome Angel and suborn his Legion to the service of his rebellion in a space where none could come to their aid. The system of Signus had been crafted into a killing ground in which the Blood Angels would fight and die alone or pledge their very souls to the Warmaster.

Guilliman and the serried ranks of his Ultramarines were more troublesome, for they were such a force that they could not be dispatched to chase after some petty threat on the edges of space. Instead, the Warmaster's orders would bring them to a battlefield of Horus' choosing, the industrial stronghold of Calth at the borders of Ultramar itself. There, lured by the promise of glory and put at ease by the seal of the Warmaster, the Ultramarines would fall to treachery and deceit, their numbers decimated by those they had thought to be allies. Last of those to be led astray by the Warmaster and his subtle strategies was the Khan and his White Scars, though unlike the others Horus would seek not to kill his old friend but rather to keep him isolated at Chondax by his order until he could be convinced of the justice of Horus' cause. It would only be the interference of the Alpha Legion that would set these plans awry and spoil the carefully set snare that the Khan had been lured into.





The Thramas Crusade

"The fires of Horus' war would bring death to every corner of the Imperium. All that would distinguish one sector from another in the eyes of history was how they chose to face their end, be they Loyalist or Traitor. For the hero could die but once, while the coward dies anew with each retelling of their infamy."

Aleks Niebuhr, Imperial Historiographer, 073.M31

"No. Give my answer to your master when you see him in hell!"

Mayvin Khelen, Last Regent of Thramas, to the Night Lords' emissary at his request for their surrender, 007.M31

To Rule among the Ashes of Empire

By the year 007.M31, the great rebellion of Horus Lupercal had spread to engulf much of the core sectors of the young Imperium, drowning the golden dreams of empire and dominion in the blood of martyrs. All across the northern reaches of the Imperium flew the banner of the Eye of Horus, the badge of the Traitor and, upon those strongholds held by the Loyalists, the Warmaster's fist had already descended, leaving Ultramar in ruins and scattering the hosts of the Emperor. Yet, thanks to the efforts of those brave warriors who remained true to their oaths of loyalty, Terra stood aware of its peril and Rogal Dorn had set those forces that remained to him to hold the road to the Imperial throne. Horus stood checked, with no swift path but only a long war of attrition against the Seneschal of Terra, a war that would require resources and bodies were it to succeed.

Here was the crux of history, for given sufficient resources and warriors, regardless of their fervour for the cause, there was no defence or stratagem that could bar the Warmaster from Terra. Thramas, which many have deemed a sideshow to the true battles of the Horus Heresy, to those gaudy massacres at Calth and Signus, would decide the course of the rebellion. Horus was no fool, he was well aware of the rapacious appetite of war and how vital it would be to capture the resources of the eastern sectors, and the vast majority of an entire Legion and its support troops were committed to the fight. The Night Lords were set loose upon the worlds of Thramas, unrestrained by any notion of duty to the people they sought to enslave and freed from the dictates of the Emperor and His *Principia Bellicosa*, His rules of war, to enforce the will of the Warmaster as they pleased. Horus cared little for the fate of distant Thramas so long as its riches in men and materials flowed into his war chest. If the Night Haunter and his blood-soaked kin chose to rule through fear and the edge of



a skinning knife, it was of no consequence when weighed against even the smallest advantage in the fight to seize Terra and topple the Emperor from His throne.

Those forces that remained loyal to the Emperor were ill-placed to oppose the conquest of Thramas and the jewel of the sector – the trio of Forge Worlds at Triplex – for the loyal Legions were either scattered and broken or penned within the borders of Ultramar and other small bastions of resistance. It was the midnight of the Imperium, the darkest point of this newly looming Dark Age. Yet, as with all nights, the dawn was inexorably approaching – for, unknown to those who fought so desperately on both sides, word of the rebellion and the betrayal of the Imperium had spread far further than any might have thought and set loose another terror.

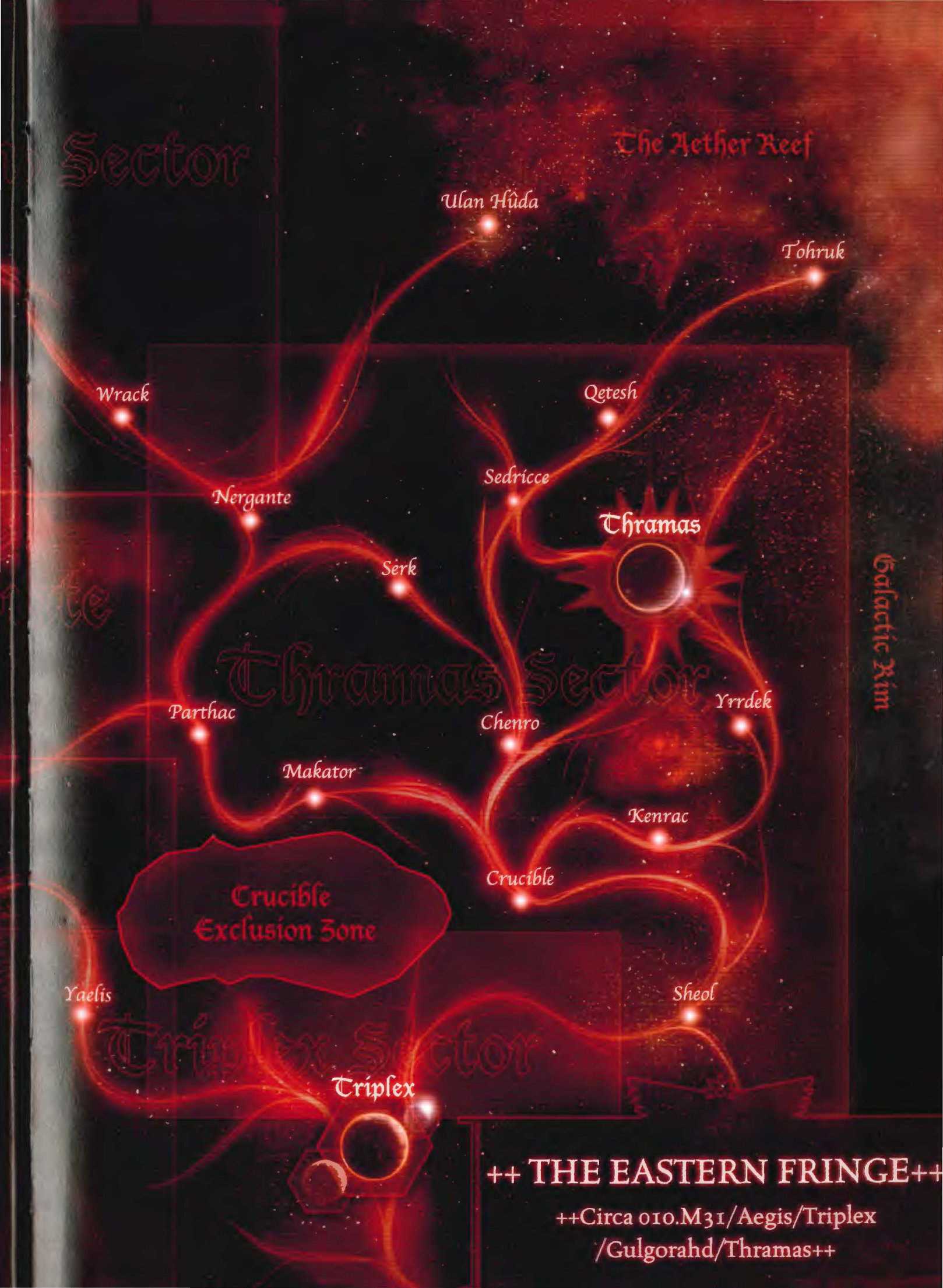
What approached the Imperium was no simple band of killers, for the Night Lords even with the gene-blessings of their Legiones Astartes heritage had become little more than that. No fractured remnant of a Legion all but beaten by the treachery of Horus, but a full army of the Legiones Astartes in all its furious glory come to exact a toll for the betrayal of the vows once sworn by the Warmaster and his conspirators.

If Thramas held, its defenders would behold the turning of the tide, the beginning of the war and the end of the rout that was the Horus Heresy. Once they had been first, greatest and most feared, but now they came last to the battlefield, diverted by the wiles of Horus and enraged by the betrayal of their kin.

The Lion made haste to properly greet his wayward brothers, and he who followed at his heels was Death.




Hale
Tsagualsa
Kruun
003
Gulgorahd
Taur
012
031
019
048
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Dominion of Storms
Gargour
Modrak
Heraclid Nebula
Kero-val
Memlok
Mortain
Aegis Sector
Heraldor
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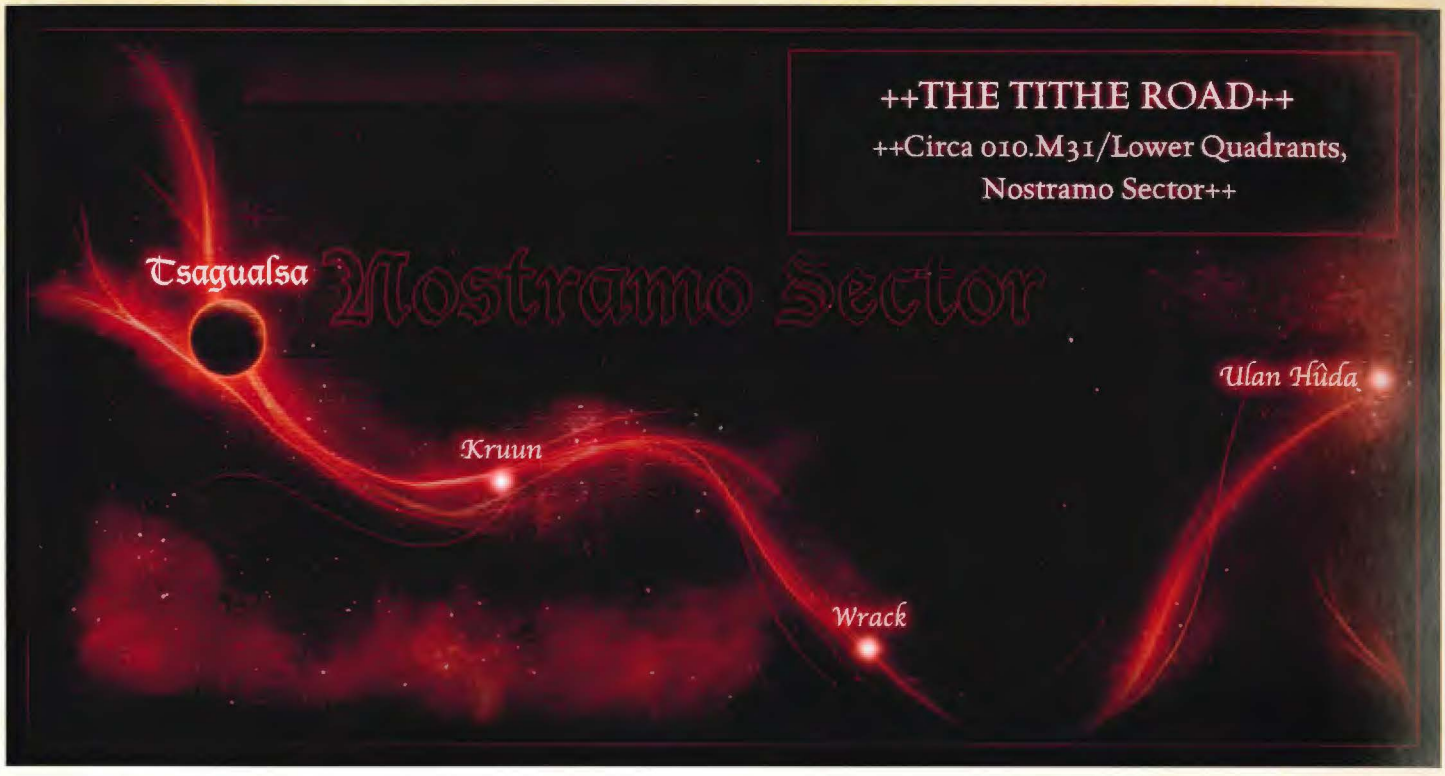

The Aether Reef
Ulan Hûda
Tohruk
Wrack
Qetesh
Sedricce
Nergante
Thramas
Serk
Galactic Rim
Thramas Sector
Parthac
Chenro
Yrrdek
Makator
Kenrac
Crucible
Crucible Exclusion Zone
Yaelis
Sheol
Triplex
++ THE EASTERN FRINGE++
++Circa 010.M31/Aegis/Triplex /Gulgorahd/Thramas++



Dusk's Bleak Shadow

'No great good has ever been accomplished by the hand of Mankind, save where driven by dire necessity. In this dark age of madness and war I am become that necessity, the bleak terror that shall drive this Imperium forcefully onto the path of righteousness.'

Inscription carved into the Night Haunter's sanctum walls aboard the Nightfall



To Shake the Pillars of Heaven

The war for the Eastern Fringe is often termed the Thramas Crusade by historiographers and scholars, a title that, while dramatic, serves only to trivialise what was a far more widespread conflict. The campaign Horus began when he unleashed the Night Lords would encompass most of the Eastern Fringe before its end, with major battles fought in four fully incorporated and warranted sectors of the Emperor's new Imperium and spilling out across the border territories at the very edge of the galaxy where the stars grew dim and distant. This was not to be a conflict limited to a single world or battlefield and fought by a single army, but a true crusade waged by millions upon millions of warriors across dozens of worlds that would leave a trail of death and destruction far worse than any of the famous massacres of the opening years of the Horus Heresy. Given free rein by the Warmaster and the fugue of nightmares and insanity that plagued the Night Haunter, the Night Lords would carve a bloody ruin across the stars of the Eastern Fringe, leaving few of its worlds unmarked by their rampage. It would be a legacy of terror that would linger in those benighted regions for millennia to come, far longer than the distant rumours of the destruction unleashed at Isstvan and later at Terra itself.

However, this was no unfocused war of annihilation, a campaign fought purely to revel in the slaughter it caused; rather, it had several fixed goals. Chief among these was the capture and domination of the three forges of Triplex. These three closely linked Forge Worlds: Galatia, Phall and Thule, produced a wealth of munitions and engines of war, enough to overwhelm the cordon Rogal Dorn had placed around Terra and swamp the planet with sheer numbers. Secondary, stood the capture of Thramas and the heavily-populated worlds that surrounded it, which would provide the Warmaster with a vast reserve of soldiers to sacrifice upon the altar of war. Armed with the output of Triplex and other Traitor Forge Worlds, the forcibly-recruited populations of these worlds would serve as the chaff Horus would require for his great rebellion. Those remaining worlds, the minor forges and small colonies that abounded at the edge of known space, served as little more than minor prizes and offerings to the bloodthirsty nature of the Night Lords.

This was to be a war unlike those seen before in the opening years of the Horus Heresy, a war that would shake the foundations of the Imperium. It had become more than a simple rebellion, more than a brief battle for the throne where the armies of the Great Crusade tore each other apart, but a confrontation in which the very fabric of human civilisation was rent asunder. Not only would brother be pitted against brother, but the warriors once lauded as the saviours of Mankind would turn upon that which they had created. The dream of a golden empire would die, murdered by those that had once sworn their lives to its creation. With its death would be sealed the fate of our Imperium – doomed to a slow and lingering demise. This would be the true legacy of the Thramas Crusade, a legacy written in the burned-out husks of once flourishing colonies and the broken remnants of proud Forge Worlds all across the border territories of the Imperium.

The Price of Defiance

It would begin quietly, almost unnoticed in the panic and uncertainty that swept the galaxy in the wake of the Isstvan atrocities. The Night Lords returned to their old places of power, to the ruins of Nostramo and the sprawling hive cities of Cairn and Kruun, replete with the plunder of Isstvan and hungry to claim a place of glory within Horus' new order. These worlds had long suffered under the stewardship of the Night Lords, the strict laws of the Night Haunter corrupted into a harsh system of honour killings and bribery by time and the degradation of his Legion. Having long since learned the terrible price of defiance, they offered up their sons and daughters to serve the Warmaster without hesitation, not out of loyalty but for fear of the punishment that any refusal would draw down upon them. But these were the last dregs of systems long since bled dry. In short order, the Night Lord turned towards Thramas, having replenished the ranks of their thralls and the munitions holds of their fleets with the lifeblood of the Nostramo sector, casting off the husk of Nostramo and the exhausted dominion once given into their care by the Emperor that the might claim a realm more fitting of their new station at the Warmaster's side.

The Madness of Konrad Curze

History has often seen the Night Haunter as the most obvious example of evil within the ranks of the Traitor Primarchs. After all, both his bloody proclivities and penchant for torture were well known among his brothers. Worse still was the matter of the brutal destruction of his home world of Nostramo, subsequent incarceration on Terra and assault on his brother Rogal Dorn, which had not yet become common knowledge in the last few years of the Great Crusade. Yet, this is but a small part of the tragedy of Konrad Curze, whose burden was to have been too much the son of his father.

Like several of his brothers, Curze had inherited a fragment of the Emperor's foresight, a tiny shard of His vision and flawed in its purpose. For where the Emperor could see all the many futures and chart a course through them, Curze saw only a single strand of the whole, a dark path of failure and death that would sour his mind and cloud his purpose. No matter his successes or achievements, no matter how far he rose from the ignominy and horror of his childhood on the foul streets of old Nostramo, his visions would never change, always showing him the same dark fate. It slowly drove him towards madness.

By the last years of the Great Crusade, he stood on the very edge of sanity and none can know his true reasons for joining Horus' rebellion. Was it a desire to make one final attempt to break free of the fate he saw for himself and the Imperium, or a simple need to wash away the visions with blood and death? All that is certain is that when he went to war in Thramas, he was but a shadow of the warrior and general he had once been. The purpose he had torn from the ruin of Nostramo overwhelmed by despair and anger, and his soul left empty. Even as the father of the VIII[th] Legion searched for a new purpose, so too did his sons, now bereft of any guidance but their own bloody natures and terrible pasts. Some yet remembered the days of the Great Crusade when they had stood as a Legion, an army of brothers, and sought to build a better realm than that which had spawned them, while others sought only the red release of death and slaughter, an empire of corpses and blood. With Curze lost to dark dreams and old obsessions, it would be his sons who charted the course of the Legion, some seeking to restore their lord to his former dark splendour and others to plunge him into madness forever. The war for Thramas and the worlds of the east would also be the war for the soul of a Legion and the destiny of a Primarch.

Thramas and its environs, situated but a short span of travel from the Nostramo sector, were no strangers to the Night Lords. The chain of inhabited worlds that linked the two sectors was known as the Tithe Road, or the Path of Tears, for along this route the Night Lords had long made annual pilgrimages to claim the toll for their protection and patronage, taking for their own those that survived their brutal trials of initiation. Ever the first stop upon this Tithe Road, Tsagualsa had endured the demands of the Night Lords for almost a century, giving up the finest of its meagre population to serve the whims of Konrad Curze and, when the Night Lords returned in the last months of 007.M31, they were prepared to offer what they could to the warriors that had conquered the galaxy in the Emperor's name. Yet, this time the Night Lords did not come bearing the golden seal of the Emperor but the grim terms of Horus' infamous Dark Compliance. Of Tsagualsa they demanded every citizen that could bear arms or serve as thrall for the VIII[th] Legion, and laid claim to those few resources possessed by that small and insignificant world. They asked for the death of Tsagualsa to slake the hunger of war and sustain the Night Lords, and offered only a short lifetime of blood and toil in exchange. The hardy border settlers of Tsagualsa balked at the surrender of their lives, families and homes for the glory of a renegade Warmaster and a distant battle for a planet they had never beheld, but with little more than a few regiments of militia to defend themselves, they could only beg the Night Lords to relent.

With casual indifference, the Night Lords fell upon Tsagualsa in the wake of their refusal of the Warmaster's terms, as eager to use the world as an object example as they were to accept its loyalty and small wealth. Tsagualsa burned; its few defenders slaughtered in a confrontation that could not be called a battle, for it was little more than a slaughter as the Night Lords crushed those who dared resist them with contemptuous ease and set about the grim practices for which they had become infamous. In a single night of blood and death, the population of Tsagualsa were herded into the flaying pits of Curze's sons and shown the price of defiance, with a few hundred allowed to escape on ancient and decrepit void ships that they might spread the word of the Night Lords' approach and the terrible toll they would exact on those who chose to oppose them. Upon the ruins of Tsagualsa's broken cities, the Night Lords set the foundations of a new citadel to replace their lost holdings on Nostramo, a statement to the worlds of the Eastern Fringe that the Night Lords had not come merely as raiders or messengers but as conquerors and overlords. Tsagualsa would be but the beginning of this campaign of terror, with individual bands of Night Lords – often little more than a lone cruiser and a few companies of the VIII[th] Legion – spreading throughout the isolated worlds along the Path of Tears and offering each world the same brutal choice: surrender themselves utterly to the will of the Night Lords and the Warmaster or watch their homes burn and people die. Within the space of a few short months, the borders of the adjoining Thramas sector and Gulgorahd Protectorate were thronging with overburdened refugee ships and dire tales of bloodshed and death.

Such atrocities were a common feature of the cruel style of war prosecuted by the Night Lords, a stratagem that the Legion had originally pursued with a cold logic, seeking to sap the will of the foe by fear and terror, but which many within the Legion now cleaved to with a savage joy for slaughter and death, regardless of whether it granted them any military advantage. Indeed, the Legion had long suffered from a slow decline in the character of its recruits, with the dregs of Nostramo and the surrounding squalid worlds coming to dominate many of its ranks. What had once been an army dedicated to the unfeeling application of justice and retribution had slowly become more akin to an unruly mob; the once strict order of the Legion becoming a loose association of warbands and gangs. Even its Primarch, Konrad Curze, had fallen into a strange malaise, foregoing more and more of his duties to his Legion to indulge bloody whims and morbid impulses while allowing the various warlords among the Night Lords to gather more power unto themselves. He grew more distant and morose with each passing day, haunted by visions of a future he refused to reveal to even the most trusted of his sons and a fate that stole from him any emotion other than hateful spite. By the early stages of the Legion's encroachment into the Thramas sector, the Night Lords were split between two informal factions: those few that still remembered the Legion that once was and strove to preserve it and its master, and those who sought only to indulge their bloodthirsty nature without the interference of the Night Haunter.

It was this latter faction that took the lead as the Night Lords stood on the borders of the Thramas sector, burning and killing for the simple pleasure of it. Chief among these warriors was the Nostraman Nakrid Thole, an outspoken critic of his Primarch and a charismatic warlord who had garnered a large following among the newer recruits. His warriors led the reaving of the Path of Tears and made a reality of its name, before turning their avaricious gaze upon the richer pickings of the Thramas sector. These worlds were the Imperium's final border with the unknown and were defended by the Thramassi Nightwatch regiments of the Solar Auxilia, men and women who had long fought to hold their homes safe far from the busy heart of the Imperium. Yet, the tales of woe brought by those refugees that fled to the safety of the throne world of Thramas told of the fate of those who resisted and, with the world of Thramas itself silent in the face of Horus' declaration of dominion over the Imperium, few among the people of that distant frontier wished to provoke the ire of Horus' bloody emissaries. Many of the border worlds fell to hysteria long before the arrival of the Night Lords, the warriors of Thramas now unwelcome on the worlds they had sworn to protect, judged a force just large enough to warrant destruction but not powerful enough to stand against the Night Lords' raiding companies alone. Rather than bring destruction down upon the people of the border marches, many Nightwatch regiments abandoned their bases and took to ships bound for Thramas, leaving behind nothing of use for the Night Lords and entrusting the fate of the worlds they had once stood sentinel over to the planetary militia and governors. A few accepted the mandate of the Warmaster and turned their coats in allegiance to him, deeming the mantle of rebel preferable to the bitter pride of the martyr, while others secreted their wargear in hidden caches and took refuge in plain sight among the populace, hoping to wait out this savage storm. Within the space of a few months, the Night Lords were the uncontested masters of nearly half the Thramas sector, from Tsagualsa to the galactic north to the key crossroads world of Crucible on the very doorstep of Thramas itself.

Here, Nakrid Thole and those that followed him paused to indulge once more in their bloody obsession, making gruesome examples of even the slightest sign of resistance and taking a terrible delight in the slow annihilation of those that offered open defiance. The wide plaza of Serk, once filled with statues dedicated to the heroes of the Great Crusade, was rendered into a gore-spattered charnel house when the governor refused to deface the monuments to those Legions that had remained loyal to the Emperor. Nakrid Thole himself draped the governor's flayed skin atop the statue of Dorn after a short and one-sided battle to take the many-spired palace of Serk, the planetary militia no match for his Night Lords. The Night Haunter himself took to the hive domes of Makator V, seeking to exact a tithe in blood for the wealth its merchants had long flaunted. It was a crude and debased re-enactment of his youth on Nostramo, a bloody release of the visions that tormented him, but one that could not dispel the malaise that drove him towards madness and despair.



The Keystone of Victory

Even as the most bloodthirsty of the Night Haunter's sons urged their master to ever greater feats of carnage, those who still remembered their duty drove on to the Triplex sector. This was the key to Horus' plans for the Eastern Fringe, the vast manufactoria and skilled forge wrights of the Triplex system more than capable of creating an army fit for the Warmaster's goals. With three full Forge Worlds to be found within the Triplex system, it boasted a force of arms more than capable of fending off an assault by anything less than the full VIIIth Legion, and even then such a battle would likely leave the valuable industrial infrastructure in broken ruin. Led by the lord of the Atramentar, Sevatar, and others of the Night Haunter's most veteran commanders, many of whom had origins on distant Terra, the Night Lords numbered four full Chapters, a force at once both too grand for simple raids and insufficient for a full scale assault. Breaching real space, the Night Lords' flotilla entered Triplex in full battle array, prepared for anything that might await them, except perhaps what they were to find.

Triplex did not stand ready to prosecute a war, but was instead amidst the work of recovery in the aftermath of one all but concluded. Triplex Thule, the smallest of the three forges of the system and long the most ardent in its support of the Emperor and His works, had been subjugated by its cousins in a short and bitter conflict. The system was littered with the signs of it; the hulks of broken starships and the corpses of fallen Titans on the plains of Thule, and above all the fortresses of the Mechanicum, the Eye of Horus flew alongside the banners of the Opus Machina. All that remained was the destruction of the last holdout bastions of the Thule Magi, a task to which the Night Lords took with relish, eager to cement their alliance with those of Triplex's rulers that sought to align themselves with the Traitors.

The final battle of the Triplex subjugation was fought on the outermost world of the system, barren Nehren. Here, the final fortress of the Magi of Thule was set deep into the frozen rock, guarded from above by the last few maniples of the Legio Victorum III, the Foe Breakers, as well as several batteries of orbital defence cannon and from within by the remains of the automata and thralls of that fallen forge. Until now, the defence cannon had kept the Traitor Mechanicum fleet at bay, the vast landers of the Legio Victorum I and II reluctant to risk their precious cargo in the face of the bombardment from the surface, but the arrival of the Night Lords broke the stalemate asunder. The Terminators of the Atramentar, with Sevatar at their head, risked a teleport assault into the heart of the underground fortress to strike at the cannon's reactors. With the majority of the defenders mustered at the gateways and entrances, the Night Lords faced but scant resistance and swiftly captured and deactivated the great cannon.

With this last defence stripped away, the Titans of the Traitor Legio Victorum began the annihilation of their former brethren. On the surface of Nehren, the Foe Breakers, loyal to their last breath, advanced against five times their number, determined to exact a worthy toll for their extinction. Even as giants duelled to the death above, the Night Lords pressed deeper into the fortress to challenge the Archmagos of Thule. Sevatar himself defeated the automata sentinels that guarded the Archmagos and made a captive of him, a martial triumph for which he refused any reward, seemingly bemused by the offer. With Triplex now firmly in the hands of the Traitor archmagi of Galatia and Phall, they acceded to an alliance with the Warmaster and the Night Lords, offering the service of their armies and the labour of their manufactoria so that they might share in the glory of his victory over Mars and the Emperor.

Unsated by the slaughter in which he had indulged, Konrad Curze would arrive late to the victory in Triplex, having left the prosecution of Thramas' capture to Nakrid Thole. He had followed along the trail of his loyal sons, drawn to the death and destruction that had been wrought in Triplex. Just as his favoured son Sevatar had refused the largesse of the archmagi, so too did Curze shun their petty praise and flattery as they sought to ingratiate themselves with the Warmaster's representative. Instead, he took the captive Archmagos of Thule as a living trophy, plying the grim trade of torture upon the helpless potentate in the solitude of his sanctum aboard *Nightfall*, the flagship of his fleet. Despite the foundations of a new fortress for the Night Lords being laid on the distant world of Tsagualsa, it would be Triplex that played host to the Night Haunter and the core of his Legion for much of the campaign, though the Primarch himself was most often to be found sealed within his hidden sanctum, the reins of leadership left to the individual warlords of the VIIIth Legion. Despite this, it seemed that the Traitors had firmly seized the upper hand in the conflict, with no open opposition to their assault save for scattered massacres and short-lived rebellions.

Historia Terra Rejecta

The Hidden War

Triplex, though seen as unified by outsiders, had long been riven by dissent. Triplex Phall had grown strong off of the spoils of the Great Crusade, to which it had gifted the use of its fragment of the Legio Victorum at the behest of Horus Lupercal, and had outstripped its brother forges in terms of both power and influence. Triplex Galatia was content to sit at the right hand of its sibling, to receive in turn the rewards of the newly-crowned Warmaster and the resources of distant worlds captured by his armies, but Triplex Thule held little interest in third-hand glories and the cast-off bounty of its kin. Instead, even in the days before the Great Crusade crumbled into ruin, it waged a quiet war with its brother, seeking to suborn the loyalty of those worlds about Triplex while the warriors and magi of Phall travelled in distant systems and set shadow agents within its networks to corrupt and slow its works.

With time such efforts might have borne fruit, might have turned the tide of destiny to their favour and set Phall on the path to decline, but time is an asset that even the esoteric arts of the Tech-Priests cannot fully control. When Horus loosed the bonds of loyalty from those that saw themselves as his servants, first and foremost he granted Phall an opportunity that had long been denied them by the laws of the Emperor and Mars. They unleashed the full power of their armies on Thule and the few allies they had won to their side, armies whose deadly skills had been honed on a thousand battlefields across the stars. Shadows and subterfuge availed the magi of Thule little, those they had thought to call allies deserted them in the face of utter defeat and Galatia turned its face from the slaughter of its brother forge. As Horus had taught them during the Great Crusade, the magi of Phall made plain their right to rule over Triplex by force of arms.

Surrender is Death

Nakrid Thole, though no veteran of the centuries-long Great Crusade, knew well the worth of terror and how to best wield it. It was a lesson carved into the souls of the sons of Curze's Nostramo, a world that had been destroyed by the harsh laws and keen punishments of the Night Haunter. He and the other praetors and warlords of the malcontent faction of the Legion had sown the seeds of fear across the weakest sub-sectors of Thramassi space and now were set to reap the fruits of their labour, moving to seize the last keystones of the Eastern Fringe, the lesser Forge World of Gulgorahd and the hive world of Thramas, jewel of the border marches.
In their hubris, the warlords allied to Thole judged that those worlds that remained would offer no real resistance, cowed by fear and burdened by the throngs of refugees driven to them by the campaign of terror that had been wrought upon the border marches, and dispatched but token forces to take control of them. For with the Night Haunter diminished by the curse of foresight and secluded in Triplex, there was no force to unify the Night Lords and bind them to a goal other than simple butchery, none to keep them from dissolution and madness. Each of the warlords that had chosen not to follow Curze to Triplex chose a path for themselves, without care for the plans of Horus or their brothers, seeking only to sate the bloody urges of their followers and to seize a territory of their own.

A loose alliance of several Chapters moved on the closed borders of the Gulgorahd Protectorate, expecting the swift surrender of the lesser forge, just as the greater power of Triplex had bent the knee to the Night Haunter, while Thole claimed the honour of accepting Thramas' surrender for himself alone. With a force amounting to little more than a single Chapter of his kin and a squadron of three cruisers he translated into the Thramas system, his arrival delayed by a thirst for destruction that saw his fleet stop at a number of smaller worlds along their course. The Thramas system was unlike any of the lesser border worlds, for it served as a major way-station for those detachments of the Great Crusade that were headed for the eastern gulf, the dark space at the edge of the galaxy and, as such, boasted a constellation of planetary defences powerful enough to stand off any conventional fleet, as well as several small Expeditionary fleets which were awaiting orders at the orbital dry-docks and mustering stations at the zenith and nadir points of the local system.

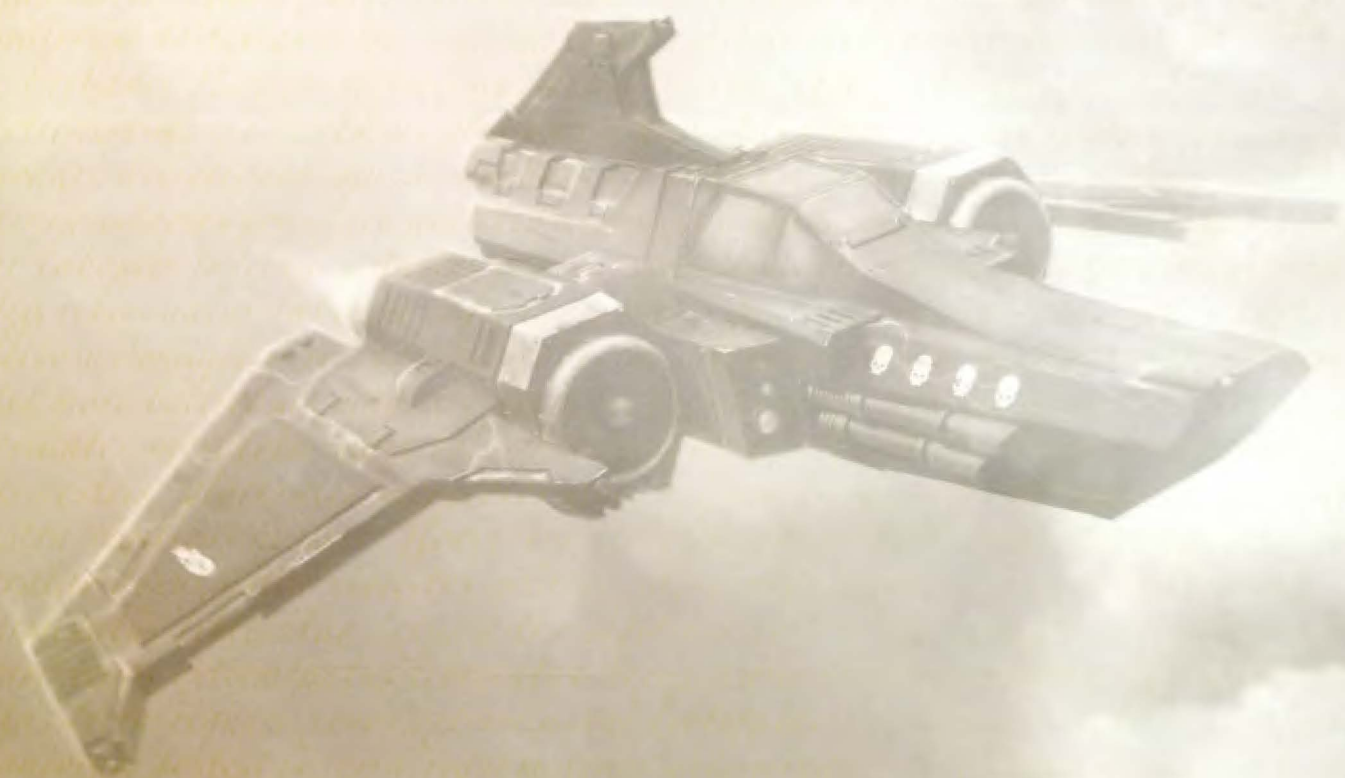
The Sheol Incident

Of all the records of this time, it is the fighting on Sheol III that best captures the madness that threatened to overwhelm the Night Lords. A modest hive world, only recently having reached its full growth, Sheol III was a rich prize for any warband that laid claim to it, its people were hardy and well-suited as recruiting stock and its factories operating at peak efficiency – but it was not one Night Lords warlord that came to Sheol, but two. The Dark Eyes and the Boneless were both new Chapters – constituted almost entirely from the last intake of Nostraman recruits and still understrength and lacking in heavy armour – both hungry for their share of the spoils of war. Meeting in the bowels of the hive, a setting comforting to the warriors of both camps, the two praetors attempted to settle the matter of who would reap the riches of Sheol, but only one would return alive having silenced his rival in the manner traditional to Nostraman gangers. Within days, the hives of Sheol played host neither to an invasion, nor even to a bloody purge but to a conflict so brutal it could not even be termed a civil war. The two Chapters of the Night Lords tore into each other with a violence more akin to animals than men, the Dark Eyes leaving only a tattered remnant of the Boneless, shattered and broken, to change their colours and join the victorious Dark Eyes. Without a lord to guide them or even an outside enemy to focus them, the Night Lords had turned upon themselves without a second thought; it was perhaps a vision of what was to come once Horus had won his war.



On the surface its defences were just as formidable, its vast hives more akin to fortresses than cities, enveloped in tiers of ferrocrete fortifications and crackling void shields, and defended by a host of regiments of the Imperial Army, both the Thramassi Nightwatch and those units intended for the Great Crusade but now trapped on Thramas. It was a veritable planetary citadel intended to stand off any incursion by xenos invaders or horrors from the outer void, but equally capable of keeping Thole's small fleet at bay were it pitted against them in open battle – but, as Thole and his ships approached, the guns lay cold and the warriors of the Great Crusade sat idle in their barracks.

Thramas, though armoured and buttressed against bomb and shell, had been laid low by a far more insidious weapon. Fear had taken hold of its people and the senate of Thramas; the hordes of broken refugees had sown their seeds of despair, with each successive wave bringing new tales of woe and word of more worlds ruined for the sin of resistance. Terra was silent and word of the massacre of the Loyalist Legions at Isstvan had been widely spread by Horus' agents. Thramas believed it stood alone against a storm that they could not hope to withstand. The Regent of Thramas, Mayvin Khelen, weighed the worth of loyalty and defiance against the value of her citizen's lives, for should Thramas rise in defence of the Imperium and the Emperor's dream of unity, it would pay with the blood of each of its sons and daughters. As the Night Lords cruisers loomed in orbit, it seemed to all those present that Thramas would fall without firing a shot and the wealth of the Eastern Fringe would be claimed by Horus. Nakrid Thole and his honour guard stepped from their transports into a city consumed by despair, its streets crowded with the warriors of the Nightwatch,



gathered from across the sector by the advance of the Traitors, angry and impotent in the face of the Night Lords' hegemony of the sector. Without allies they could do nothing but perish, any desire to avenge the atrocities committed by the sons of Curze tempered by the knowledge that it would cost those they had sworn to protect their very lives. Nakrid Thole wore the cloak of his victory with an arrogance that sparked the hatred of all that observed his slow approach to the palace, and with gauntlets still stained a dull brown with the blood of innocents and loyal servants of the Emperor, he took hold of the great brass gates of the Regent's palace and threw them open to receive his due.

Then, a single battered frigate, its hull fractured by weapons fire and lit by the dreadful flare of internal fires, breached realspace and blasted a high-gain vox transmission bearing the seal of the lesser forge of Gulgorahd across the Thramas system:

"War is a simple equation; its solution is victory or death.

Those who cannot triumph are ground to dust by the gears of history, for only in victory can there be found life. No matter the strength of the foe, to resist even in the face of annihilation is the only logical course of action. Surrender is but a slower resolution of the equation, a lingering and painful end to the struggle.

Gulgorahd will never surrender.

Surrender is death".



The Logic of Hate

Gulgorahd is a name spoken little in the great tomes of history. A minor Forge World on the edge of Imperium space, it had weathered the Long Night with a single-minded determination and brutal resilience, sacrificing what it must and fighting where it could. When the Imperium's fleets returned order to the Eastern Fringe, linked the scattered colonies and settled new worlds, Gulgorahd hoped for a resurgence of glory only to find that both the Imperium and Mars favoured mighty Triplex over battered Gulgorahd. Triplex, situated further from the turbulent warp storms of the so-called Ghoul Stars, had faced far less hardship while Gulgorahd stood strong against the xenos hordes that dwelt within, it was the bravery of Gulgorahd that had birthed the wealth of Triplex. This insult spawned a one-sided rivalry that would last a century – Triplex never deigning to notice the lesser Gulgorahd as it slowly dwindled into obscurity.

When the Night Lords arrived at the borders of Gulgorahd's barren territories, so sure of the strength of their fleets and the power of their new allies, they assumed that the magi of Gulgorahd would surrender in the face of insurmountable odds. They assumed that with Triplex now aligned with Horus, the practical-minded servants of the Mechanicum would follow suit. It was a fatal mistake. The Night Lords underestimated the true strength hidden below the rusted exterior of Gulgorahd's holdings, failed to note the strength of its bastion worlds and its utter, all-consuming hatred of Triplex. As the Night Lords sat in orbit of Bastion-019, the outermost of its fortress worlds, awaiting the answer they knew must come from the planet below, which had lain silent and sleeping since the end of Old Night, it woke once more. Automata armies shuddered to life and mustered in the subterranean halls, thralls more machine than man mounted their Knights and readied themselves for war, and cannon that had not spoken in anger for almost a century roared again. The Night Lords cruiser *Callow Flame* erupted in explosions, the answer of the lords of Gulgorahd to Horus: they cared not for the Emperor, but those who took Triplex as friends were ever the foes of Gulgorahd.

Nightfall

The ponderous gates of the Regent's palace on Thramas opened on a scene that Thole had not expected, the vast throne room was packed with the members of the Thramassi senate and with the warriors of the Nightwatch, but something had changed. No longer did fear hang heavy in the air, no longer did the veterans of the Solar Auxilia bow their heads and cower in the face of the Night Lords, but instead glared their hatred with a new determination. Yet, Thole was of the Legiones Astartes, the hatred of mortal warriors was nothing to him and victory more cherished than life. He advanced down the long hallway, its walls lined with the banners of the Great Crusade's victories and the proud history of Thramas as a stronghold of the Emperor and His dream of unity, past the warriors that had carved an empire at the edge of the galaxy alongside those heroes that now lay dead in the dust of distant Isstvan V, and gave a mocking bow before the Regent's throne. There, in the heart of his enemy's domain, he knew no fear, only a certainty in his own success and the power of the fear he had sown across the stars of the Eastern Fringe, and demanded the unconditional surrender of Thramas and all its domains, in the name of the Warmaster, Konrad Curze and the Night Lords. In return Mayvin Khelen, last Regent of Thramas, spoke a single word: "No".

At her side, Arcturus Morhde, Captain-general of the Nightwatch regiments and a Terran veteran of the Great Crusade, drew the archaeotech pistol once presented to him by the courts of Terra as reward for his loyalty and emptied its magazine into Thole's dumbfounded face. Around him the elite of the Nightwatch, the Midnight Host, activated their power axes and charged into the ranks of the Night Lords honour guard, which met them with roaring chainglaives. The throne room erupted into a chaos of flashing blades and gunfire, the Night Lords carving a path out of the palace, the crippled body of their lord carried amongst them, while the city took up arms in the name of the Emperor. All across the planet and on the stations in orbit, regiments scrambled to full battle readiness, some called to arms by defiant vox broadcasts from the palace, others by the orders of their own officers and some by simple instinct as the city descended into chaos. Those regiments that had shown loyalty to the Warmaster or argued for surrender to the Night Lords suddenly found themselves attacked by the loyal Nightwatch or Great Crusade units whose loyalty was to the Emperor, and mobs of citizens and vengeful refugees took up arms to seek revenge for the months of torment inflicted by the Night Lords. The small detachment of Night Lords Thole had left at the space port to secure their transports was overwhelmed by the onslaught of the Antikaan Hussars, whose banners bore the mark of the Imperial Fists whom they had long fought alongside, while other bands of Night Lords escaping from the palace were hunted and harried through the city by the light armour of the Midnight Host. Death stalked the city for the entirety of the long Thramassi night, with running battles and desperate sieges playing out all across the world in the wake of the Regent's sudden declaration of war.

In orbit, the surviving Night Lords of Thole's Terminator bodyguard and the horribly-wounded praetor himself had barely reached the safety of their cruiser, having captured a Thramassi shuttle from the palace's spire-top landing bays, when the macro-cannon and defence lasers on the planet below opened fire. Searing beams of energy and immense explosions turned the night sky of Thramas as bright as noon, the cruisers' shields flaring and buckling under the sustained barrage with little power to spare for any counter-assault. In the orbital stations around the embattled Night Lords ships, the various craft of the Great Crusade fleets at anchor woke to the sudden eruption of conflict, many having been sat at battle stations since the arrival of the Night Lords in the system. Some, such as the *Crimson Tyrant*, an ancient Visigoth class battle cruiser that had fought many times at the behest of Horus Lupercal, battered clear of docking restraints fixed by the Thramassi officers and blasted a path to the aid of the Night Lords. Others found themselves boarded at anchor by the warriors of the Nightwatch and taken as prizes by the Loyalist cause, their command crews executed and ratings forced into the service of the Regent and the Emperor. Most took up the cause of Thramas when the guns began to sound and advanced upon the small Traitor flotilla that hung in the sky above that embattled world, a wedge of vengeful ships more than enough to overwhelm the Night Lords and their allies.

With the pragmatism for which they were renowned, the Night Lords made no attempt to contest control of orbit, instead launching a spiteful volley of phage warheads at the planet and then abandoning their erstwhile allies in order to flee the system. However, their escape could not stop what was coming, word spread out from Thramas and

across the sector, borne by raiding frigates and Nightwatch battle squadrons; no longer would the loyal people of the Eastern Fringe stand idly by while Horus plundered their homes and enslaved their neighbours – now there would be war no matter the cost. The scattered warbands of the Night Lords dissidents, still each intent on their own private slaughter, found themselves hard pressed by sudden rebellions and unexpected assaults. Those soldiers of the Nightwatch that had gone into hiding became guerrillas and saboteurs, harrying the Night Lords' logistical bases and isolated garrisons, while the armies of Thramas and Gulgorahd went on the offensive on planets across the Thramas sector and beyond. Against any other foe, the counter-attack would have been overwhelming, but the Night Lords were no normal force, but a Legion of the finest warriors ever created. They returned the desperate assault of the Loyalists with a fury of their own and the sector fell into a nightmare of bloodshed and battle. On those worlds where the Night Lords were beset by insurgents, they slaughtered the populace indiscriminately to root out the warriors hidden among them, making bloody trophies of the slain and decorating the flanks of their war engines with the skins of those they captured. Where the enemy dared to make open war against them, they took to the cities to fight their battles, forcing the warriors of Thramas to bomb those they sought to save or face the Night Lords in the twisted steel canyons of hive and manufactoria where the Nightwatch's superior numbers meant nothing in the face of the skill of the Legiones Astartes.

Total war gripped the sector, fought in every theatre of combat and with every weapon available. There was no longer such a thing as a noncombatant, only Loyalist or Traitor – ally or enemy. Those few worlds that avoided the fires of open battle were wracked by starvation as trade ceased across the quadrant, and disease stalked the worlds of the Eastern Fringe with impunity and abandon. Thramas and the armies of the Regent, despite their initial advantage, made little headway against the superior skill of the Night Lords and soon found themselves bogged down in the desperate defence of those few worlds they had managed to secure. Qetesh Prime and Crucible were little more than charnel houses where the Night Lords committed an endless stream of slave-soldiers and thralls to weaken the Nightwatch's defences, while Thramas itself endured constant raids and spoiling attacks on the orders of the now hideously scarred and deranged Nakrid Thole. Gulgorahd, despite its fervour and bluster, was caught between the Night Lords and the Traitor worlds of the Aegis sector, barely able to hold the outer bastion worlds on the borders of its territory. Indeed, Bastion-019 endured such a ferocious assault that its surface was entirely scorched and irradiated, the thrall-Knights and automata legions taking refuge in a labyrinth of sub-surface tunnels and fortifications to continue their stubborn resistance.

The Loyalists could not defeat their foe, could not push the Night Lords from their homes, but nor could they be defeated without dealing a mortal blow to Horus' ambitions and crippling his plan to drain the Eastern Fringe of resources. The Thramas sector, and those territories adjoining it, stood on a knife edge but one slip away from annihilation. Yet they held the line and for a short, bittersweet moment of history, it seemed that they might be able to hold the foe in bloody stalemate till exhaustion sent him in search of less tenacious prey. Until the return of the Night Haunter that is, stirred from his dark and morbid dreams by the changing winds of fate and driven back into the eye of the storm.

Curze descended upon the worlds around Thramas like a thunderbolt, with the armies of Triplex at his back and the most loyal of his sons at his side, a concentration of force more than enough to break the stalemate that had taken hold of the Eastern Fringe.

Between the Titans of the Legio Victorum and the warriors of the Night Lords there were few defences to hold them back, and the first worlds in his path, the packed hives of Sheol III and Yaelis, fell within a week. Knowing full well the fate of those that fell into the hands of the Night Lords, the defenders of Sheol fought to the last, making no attempt to broker a surrender and instead mining the central hive spire around them with phosphex charges and detonating them once the final fortifications were breached. On Yaelis, so far largely intact despite having changed hands three times during the fighting, the ragged survivors of a dozen decimated Auxilia regiments fell back into the manufactoria in the hive's lower levels hoping the enemy would not dare engage them in a pitched battle, only to perish piecemeal as the Night Haunter himself descended to hunt them like animals as an example to others who might resist. Bastions 011 and 009 fell in some of the largest Titan battles of the entire Thramas Crusade, with the Traitor Legios Victorum I and II as well as the Legio Phasma, long bound to the Night Lords, engaging the bulk of Gulgorahd's Legio Adamantus and elements of the loyal Legios Atrox and Saevus. Near a hundred god-engines would fall in the course of a month's fighting, though the Legio Adamantus lived up to its cognomen, the Unbroken, with many maniples fighting to the last rather than retreating even in the face of overwhelming odds. It seemed that time had run out for the Loyalist cause, for now it was not a matter of if they would be defeated, but simply when. Night had fallen on the great dream of the Emperor, and it seemed that there was none that could avert its final and inexorable end.









Death's Swift Wings

'Though the brave face the onrushing storm without hesitation or reserve, it is the wise who seek shelter from its fury that survive to tell of that valour.'

Transliteration from an Ancient Terran text, known simply as the Analects

Midnight in the Kingdom of Ashes

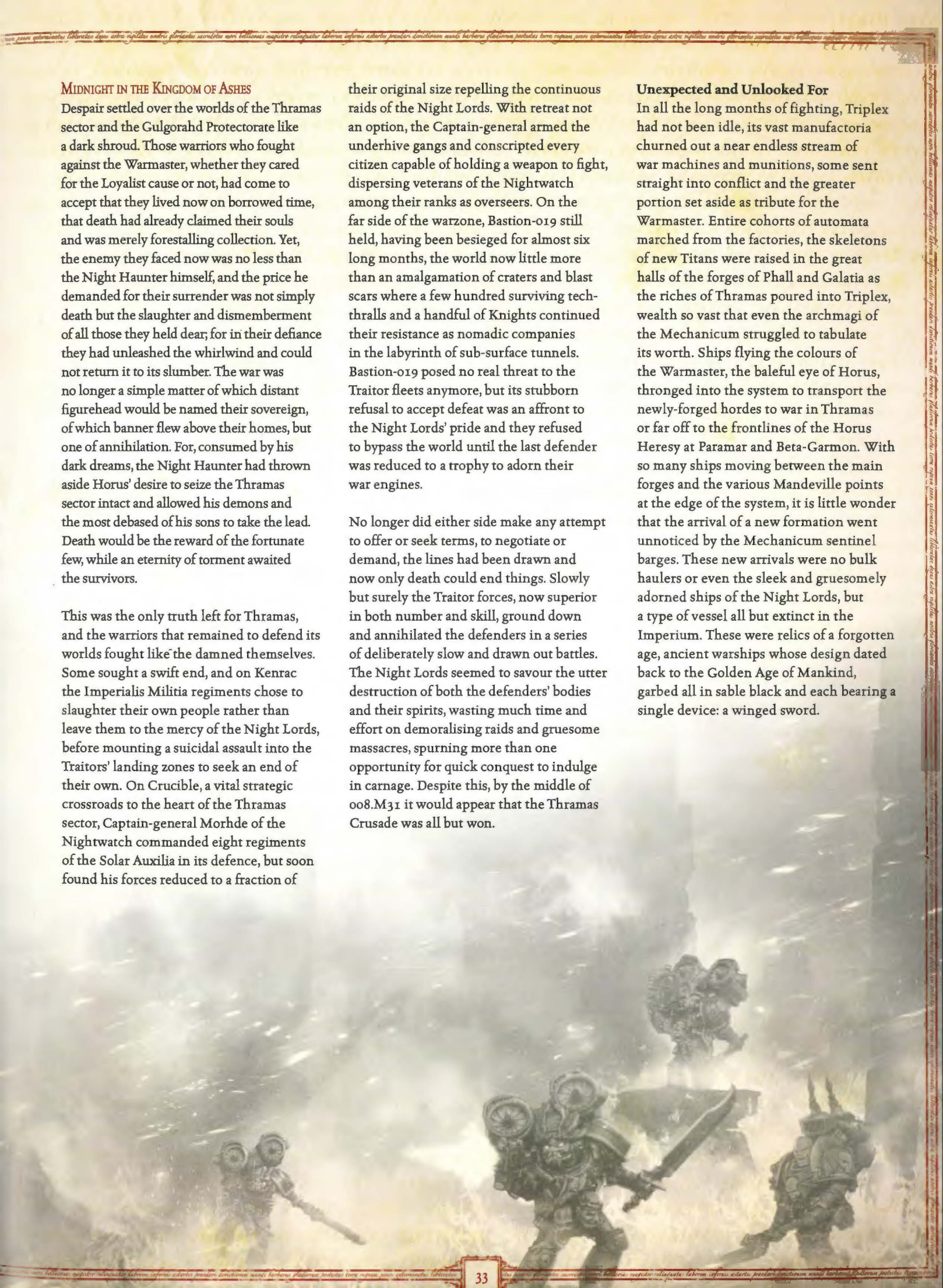
Despair settled over the worlds of the Thramas sector and the Gulgorahd Protectorate like a dark shroud. Those warriors who fought against the Warmaster, whether they cared for the Loyalist cause or not, had come to accept that they lived now on borrowed time, that death had already claimed their souls and was merely forestalling collection. Yet, the enemy they faced now was no less than the Night Haunter himself, and the price he demanded for their surrender was not simply death but the slaughter and dismemberment of all those they held dear; for in their defiance they had unleashed the whirlwind and could not return it to its slumber. The war was no longer a simple matter of which distant figurehead would be named their sovereign, of which banner flew above their homes, but one of annihilation. For, consumed by his dark dreams, the Night Haunter had thrown aside Horus' desire to seize the Thramas sector intact and allowed his demons and the most debased of his sons to take the lead. Death would be the reward of the fortunate few, while an eternity of torment awaited the survivors.

This was the only truth left for Thramas, and the warriors that remained to defend its worlds fought like the damned themselves. Some sought a swift end, and on Kenrac the Imperialis Militia regiments chose to slaughter their own people rather than leave them to the mercy of the Night Lords, before mounting a suicidal assault into the Traitors' landing zones to seek an end of their own. On Crucible, a vital strategic crossroads to the heart of the Thramas sector, Captain-general Morhde of the Nightwatch commanded eight regiments of the Solar Auxilia in its defence, but soon found his forces reduced to a fraction of their original size repelling the continuous raids of the Night Lords. With retreat not an option, the Captain-general armed the underhive gangs and conscripted every citizen capable of holding a weapon to fight, dispersing veterans of the Nightwatch among their ranks as overseers. On the far side of the warzone, Bastion-019 still held, having been besieged for almost six long months, the world now little more than an amalgamation of craters and blast scars where a few hundred surviving tech-thralls and a handful of Knights continued their resistance as nomadic companies in the labyrinth of sub-surface tunnels. Bastion-019 posed no real threat to the Traitor fleets anymore, but its stubborn refusal to accept defeat was an affront to the Night Lords' pride and they refused to bypass the world until the last defender was reduced to a trophy to adorn their war engines.

No longer did either side make any attempt to offer or seek terms, to negotiate or demand, the lines had been drawn and now only death could end things. Slowly but surely the Traitor forces, now superior in both number and skill, ground down and annihilated the defenders in a series of deliberately slow and drawn out battles. The Night Lords seemed to savour the utter destruction of both the defenders' bodies and their spirits, wasting much time and effort on demoralising raids and gruesome massacres, spurning more than one opportunity for quick conquest to indulge in carnage. Despite this, by the middle of 008.M31 it would appear that the Thramas Crusade was all but won.

Unexpected and Unlooked For

In all the long months of fighting, Triplex had not been idle, its vast manufactoria churned out a near endless stream of war machines and munitions, some sent straight into conflict and the greater portion set aside as tribute for the Warmaster. Entire cohorts of automata marched from the factories, the skeletons of new Titans were raised in the great halls of the forges of Phall and Galatia as the riches of Thramas poured into Triplex, wealth so vast that even the archmagi of the Mechanicum struggled to tabulate its worth. Ships flying the colours of the Warmaster, the baleful eye of Horus, thronged into the system to transport the newly-forged hordes to war in Thramas or far off to the frontlines of the Horus Heresy at Paramar and Beta-Garmon. With so many ships moving between the main forges and the various Mandeville points at the edge of the system, it is little wonder that the arrival of a new formation went unnoticed by the Mechanicum sentinel barges. These new arrivals were no bulk haulers or even the sleek and gruesomely adorned ships of the Night Lords, but a type of vessel all but extinct in the Imperium. These were relics of a forgotten age, ancient warships whose design dated back to the Golden Age of Mankind, garbed all in sable black and each bearing a single device: a winged sword.



Diamat Incursion

The Dark Angels had been dispatched by Horus to the distant Shield Worlds, an enclave of Mankind situated in the black between galaxies and bound in some fashion to a xenos breed unknown within our own realm. The war to subjugate this realm had kept the Lion absent from the Imperium while Horus made the first moves of his rebellion, but still rumours of unrest and tragedy would eventually reach him. His Legion fully engaged in the war with the Shield Worlds, the Lion could spare only a small force to investigate the situation within the Imperium, to verify the mad rumours of Horus turning traitor and gauge what measures should be taken by the First Legion in response.

The Lion chose 15 of his fastest capital ships and a small host of warriors, veterans all, to accompany him and charted a course to Tanagra. This system lay at the very edge of the Imperium's newly-laid borders and sat at the conflux of a number of stable warp corridors that would allow rapid redeployment to locations deeper in Imperial space. Furthermore, it hosted a Forge World of some size, Diamat, which could serve to re-equip and rearm the Dark Angels fleet and supply them with news of the Imperium. It was a well-laid plan, one that considered almost every possibility, but what the Lion could not know was that Diamat had long since given its loyalty to the Warmaster and had taken up arms in his cause. Almost immediately upon arrival, the Dark Angels came under fire from Traitor craft, swiftly verifying the rumours of civil war within the Imperium, and records discovered within the broken forge after the Lion had pacified it confirmed that Horus was at its head. Amid the ruins of the forge, the Lion would discover that these plans of rebellion were no sudden madness but a long-seated cancer. For stored in the depths of the Forge World's vaults was a trove of vast ordinatus built to a pattern unknown in the Imperium, based on a technology long since forbidden to the priests of Mars and commissioned in secret by Horus some 50 years before.

He was met in the ruins of Diamat by Perturabo, the lord of the Iron Warriors whom the Lion believed to still hold true to his oaths of loyalty to the Emperor. From Perturabo he learned of the Night Haunter's assault on the Eastern Fringe and the massacres at Isstvan, though the whole truth was concealed from him by the false Primarch. For Perturabo acted to divert the Lion on Horus' orders, keeping him from Terra and Isstvan by means of Konrad Curze – a lure to keep the First Legion occupied while the rebellion continued apace. When the Lion departed Diamat he did so just as the Warmaster had planned, throwing himself into a war that would keep his powerful Legion neutered while Horus pressed on to Terra – worse still, he left the recovered treasures of Diamat in the hands of the Iron Warriors, from whence they would pass to Horus himself. Little realising that his brother had played him false, the Lion departed for the nearby Forge World of Triplex with those forces he had brought to Diamat, hoping to reach it before his brother and called for all his Legion still fighting past the bounds of the galaxy to join him there. The Imperium stood on the brink of destruction and the Dark Angels would not permit such a tragedy to come to pass while they still drew breath.

The first of the Triplex defence barges to respond was annihilated before it could even issue a warning, a barrage of lance beams striking it from a range far beyond that which standard Imperial technology could reach. As if at a prearranged signal, the black-clad flotilla systematically reduced every ship within their astounding weapons' range to broken hulks and drifting wreckage. They struck at the Mechanicum's defence craft and transport ships alike and made no attempt to parley or issue warnings or demands. Every craft that bore the Eye of Horus in their path burned, those that attempted to fight fared no better than those that fled, save that their deaths found them faster. A single squadron of Night Lords heavy cruisers and frigates engaged the foe at extreme range, the Legiones Astartes craft managing at last to provide some real resistance to the newcomers, but even these formidable ships found themselves hard pressed in battle. Though almost equal in number to the black craft, the Night Lords attacked with uncharacteristic hesitancy, for unlike the Mechanicum craft they recognised the subtle heraldry of these ships. This was a small fragment of the First Legion – a single squadron of the relic cruisers gifted them by the Emperor Himself – moreover, it was a harbinger of something far more terrible. The Warmaster had plotted to send the First Legion far from his rebellion, all to have one warrior lost in the dark places of the galaxy while he stole the Emperor's throne, and now it seemed that the one man that Horus did not want to face had returned. The Lion had entered the war, and worse yet, the stoic Lord of Caliban had been driven to anger by the actions of his brother.

Within the space of a few silent moments the lead Night Lords cruiser, the *Shadow of Justice*, was raked with pinpoint lance fire and crippled, left alive but unable to fend off the squadrons of Dreadclaw boarding craft that set upon it. Rather than attempt to save their stricken brother, the other cruisers abandoned the fight, trading valour for pragmatism and withdrawing so that they might fight again. Aboard the *Shadow of Justice*, the survivors of the Night Lords crew braced themselves for their final battle, hoping perhaps to escape the inevitable fate that loomed over them, but the warriors that emerged from the boarding craft offered them no honourable death. Bearing the hourglass emblem of the Dreadwing, they seized key junctions and bulkheads before flooding entire sections of the craft with phosphex and bio-phages, slaughtering most of the Night Lords without even raising a blade. Only the bridge was spared annihilation, left isolated as the screams and gurgles of the dying echoed throughout the ship, and then once all had become silent, the Lion himself smashed aside the reinforced and shielded entry portal. Gunfire and blades struck the battered armour of the Primarch of the First Legion to little avail, its battle-tested surface proof against such paltry attacks, and the Lion cleared the chaff from his path with a few mighty sweeps of the Lion Sword. The praetor-commander of the *Shadow of Justice* lunged from concealment, having sacrificed his kin in exchange for a single strike at the Primarch's back, only to find himself caught in the vice-like grip of the Lion. His dying stroke foiled with casual indifference, the Night Lords praetor spat his curses at the Lion and prepared for his death, but this was not to be his end, and before dragging his reluctant guest to the depths of the *Invincible Reason*, the Lion spoke:

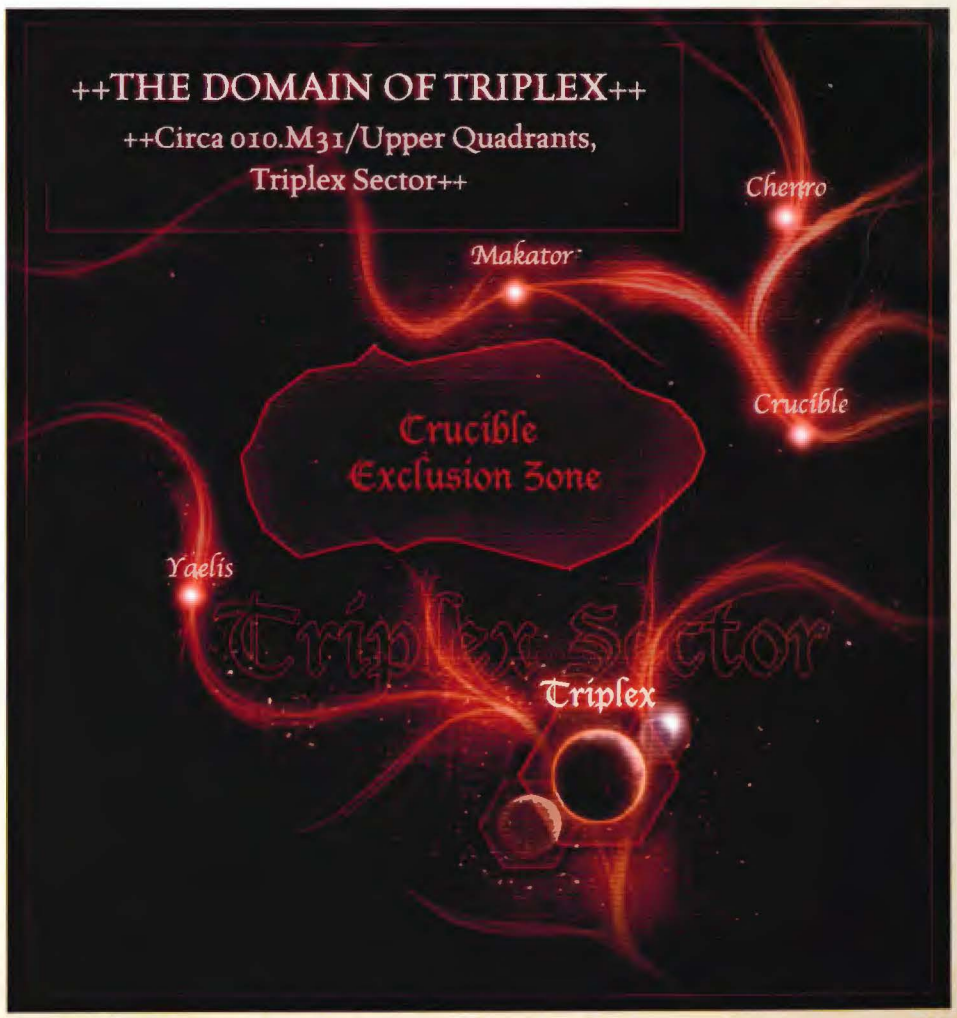
"I was content in the dark places of the galaxy, content to kill in the name of empire and be forgotten. But you have summoned me back with your pitiful flailings at rebellion, for you have endangered the empire my toil has built and for that there is a price to be paid. First we shall speak of my brothers, Curze and Horus, and then you shall learn what terror truly means for the brief remnants of your existence."

The Fall of Triplex

The Dark Angels flotilla, which numbered 18 capital class ships and no more than 100 frigates and lesser combat craft, took up station in the outer system as the lords of Triplex gathered all their might in orbit of Galatia, the closest of its remaining two intact Forge Worlds. More than 100 bulky Mechanicum gunships and defence barges, the remains of the Night Lords squadron and even those vessels still fresh from the great orbital shipyards of Galatia assembled but, still uncertain in the face of the might of the Dark Angels, did not immediately fall upon the smaller fleet. This was to be their undoing, for as the interrogator adepts of the Firewing wrung secrets from the mind of the captured Night Lords praetor, more of the Dark Angels responded to the summons from their lord. As though called forth from the blackest depths of space, warp apertures formed across the system and disgorged dozens of cruisers and other black-clad capital ships, for the fleet of the First Legion far exceeded in number many of their brethren and had now been brought to bear on Triplex en-masse by command of the Lion. It was to be an object lesson, not of fear of what might happen should the foe resist, as the Night Lords had attempted to teach Thramas, but of the certainty of destruction for those who dared oppose the Lion. The black-clad squadrons of the First fell upon the mighty fleet of Triplex and its allies as they huddled within the protective constellations of kill-sats, gun platforms and vast shipyards in orbit of Galatia and tore them to pieces.

It could not be called a battle. Striking from every vector nearly 100 First Legion capital ships fell upon the Traitor fleet, their relic weapons clawing the foe from the sky with terrifying efficiency. Outnumbered a paltry two-to-one, the Dark Angels eschewed any pretence of complex strategy and simply battered aside the lesser ships that opposed them, leaving a dense field of spinning debris in orbit to pour down upon Galatia like a rain of fire. As the Mechanicum gun-barges erupted in flames about them, the Night Lords squadron abandoned the defence and mounted a concerted assault on the Dark Angels battleship *Undying Will* and, in a ferocious exchange of fire, managed to cripple it with only the loss of two of their own. Having forced an opening in the encircling Dark Angels armada, the Night Lords, fighting with the ferocity of the doomed, tore free of the First Legion fleet, and the surviving three cruisers and their escorts disappeared into the dubious safety of the Warp. Those Mechanicum barges that remained died in defence of their forge, each continuing to fire even as the Dark Angels cut them to pieces, the servitor crews working to maintain the barrage even as they burned. Despite this enforced bravery, they could not stay the hand of death that hung over them, and within the space of a few short hours the Dark Angels had full control of the orbit of Galatia.

The destruction of their fleet did not lessen the resolve of the Magi of Triplex Galatia, the cold logic of the followers of the tech-cult having no place for fear or despair. They set their formidable surface defences and prepared to repel a planetary landing, assuming that no attacker would dare threaten the vast factories of their forge-fanes with an indiscriminate orbital bombardment and that they could hold the Dark Angels at bay until reinforcements from Phall or out-system arrived to lift the siege. However, the Dark Angels did not intend either a lengthy siege or conventional assault, instead assembling the massed ranks of the Deathwing to render a quick end to the fighting. Having sworn their oaths before the Lion himself, the Deathwing launched themselves into the heart of Galatia's main forge-fane, loosed from the orbiting cruisers as a storm of drop pods and landing craft thick enough to leave Galatia in shadow as they fell. Dozens of the packed pods were incinerated by the fire of volkite defence guns and the screaming beams of photon cannon, with hundreds of Deathwing veterans disgorged from the flaming wreckage as broken corpses, but many more reached the surface intact and stormed into the fray. The pride of the Deathwing met the Galatian Thallax cohorts and tech-thrall custodian regiments in the tangled metal canyons of the forge halls, Calibanite blades pitted against the arcane technology of the Mechanicum in a battle that raged for much of the first day of the conflict. True to their oaths, the Deathwing cleared and held a beachhead within the forge halls, spending their lives to secure a safe landing site for the warriors that followed in their wake.



The second wave of the Dark Angels assault was led by the initiates of the Dreadwing and the Eskaton Marduk Sedras in the ceremonial Terminator plate of the Order of the Shattered Sceptre, a warrior that had overseen the death of worlds beyond count in the name of the Emperor and their Primarch. Plasma flame scoured clean the ancient forge-fanes of Galatia, the Interemptors and Terminator-armoured Naufragia leaving no stone upon stone as they advanced, a desecration intended to draw out the Mechanicum and force them to commit the bulk of their forces into battle or face the slow annihilation of their sacred halls. Their plan would prove even more successful than they had hoped, though perhaps more than even the First Legion had been prepared for. Galatia, and its greater sibling Phall, had long experimented with forbidden technologies and dark theorem, subverting the rule of Mars to increase their own power unnoticed at the very edge of the Imperium, and now at the brink of destruction they unleashed that power openly. Towering automata of unknown design punched holes in reality with arcane beam weapons and unleashed raw warp energy upon the Dark Angels, while Harpax artificia swarmed in the sky above them, their intelligence growing with their numbers as they tore into the Space Marines below, forcing the Dark Angels to halt their advance and fortify the positions they had claimed. With automata forged by the twisted and forbidden technologies mastered by the fallen magi of Galatia rampaging through the landing zone and the Dreadwing hard pressed to hold them in check and their heavy armour neutered by the cybertheurgic arts of the tech-magi, Lion El'Jonson invoked the ancient Ikaros Contingency and instructed the Masters of the Armoury to wake the Excindio that slumbered in the deepest stasis vaults of the *Invincible Reason*.

Those Dark Angels still fighting on the surface withdrew to carefully prepared and fortified positions as the *Invincible Reason* detached a section of its lower hull, casting it into the churning atmosphere of Galatia like a crude drop pod where it blazed briefly in the grip of gravity before punching into the towering spires and halls around the Dark Angels' landing zone. The ruined slab of starship, embedded in the rubble of Galatia's once proud central fane, hinged and opened, revealing an interior studded with the telltale form of stasis projectors and power field generators, all rendered non-functional by the catastrophic impact and released its cargo. That cargo was truly terrible, 12 nightmares torn from the pages of history and the darkest horrors of Old Night on Terra, immense inhuman forms of sculpted ceramite and steel adorned with weapons long forbidden by edict of the Emperor Himself. These were the Excindio, the last of the silica anima that had once been the plague of the Golden Age of Mankind, mutilated and bound to serve the Lion should the Mechanicum be so foolish as to go to war with the Imperium. Their neural cores immune to the crude cybertheurgy of the Mechanicum, the Excindio tore into the creations of the fallen magi that would come to be known as the Dark Mechanicum, the forbidden arts that had forged them in aeons now long lost far superior to the stumbling efforts of Galatia's nascent cult. Into that hellish battlefield of screeching automata and whirling metal monsters strode the Lion, the one creature that even the Excindio, whose hatred for all organic life knew no bounds, refused to oppose, seeking the head of the serpent, the commander of Galatia's forces.



The Ikaros Contingency

The Mechanicum sat at the heart of the Emperor's new Imperium. It was the beating heart of its military and industrial base, supplying the industrial might by which the armies of the Great Crusade were forged and maintained, its far flung Forge Worlds were the cogs around which the campaign to liberate the galaxy turned. Without the Tech-Priests of Mars there could have been no Great Crusade, for the Mechanicum had become an essential part of the Emperor's plans. It was also the greatest threat to them in the years before Horus turned to treachery, for the Mechanicum stood apart from the careful order the Emperor had established. Of all the Imperium's institutions, they still worshipped a god openly, worked to their own rituals and creed that had little to do with the Imperial Truth. Worse, should they ever rise up against the Emperor, they could turn to their own formidable armies to prosecute a war against Him and turn the very technology of the Great Crusade against His servants. Such a war would be the end of the Imperium.

To counter such a threat, the Emperor had established a number of contingency plans, several of which remain shrouded in mystery to this day. Of those known to history, the Ikaros Contingency is perhaps the most dire. A directive issued only to Lion El'Jonson and the warriors of the First Legion, the Ikaros Contingency consisted of two distinct clauses. The first was an Imperial warrant empowering the Dark Angels to keep in their possession a number of relics from the period of history known as Old Night, technology that had long been forbidden to any other institution as dangerous and unstable. It was, however, a technology that shared few similarities with that of Mars and as such was resistant to the wiles of the techno-magi and anethematic to their machines of war. The second clause, had it become common knowledge, would have been cause enough to start the war the Emperor sought to avoid, for it empowered Lion El'Jonson and his warriors to conduct pre-emptive combat operations to neutralise elements of the Mechanicum deemed to have become *'contrary to the needs of the Imperium'*. This final clause is known to have been invoked eight times in the history of the Imperium, though details of most of these incidents remain sealed within the vaults of the Dark Angels, with the encounter at Triplex the only openly acknowledged occurrence at this time. It would not be the last, for the Lion would not stay his hand now that open war had consumed the Imperium, and would bring censure to many more Forge Worlds he deemed *'contrary to the needs of the Imperium'* before the end of the Horus Heresy.

Instead, as the nightmares he had unleashed hunted and killed as once they had done, the Lion faced the greatest of the fallen magi's creations as it stood warden over the sealed salvation-vaults of the Galatian archmagi. A huge multi-legged construct of brass and steel loomed over the Primarch, its tail primed with arcane weapons and scythe-bladed claws reaching for the lord of Caliban, a monster greater even than the beasts of that distant world. There are few tales of what would follow, for on this battlefield no mortal human could survive, it was the haunt of demons and gods alone. What is known is that when the Dark Angels returned to the field of battle as the sun grew dim and night fell on Galatia, Lion El'Jonson stood alone amongst a field of metal corpses and the dormant shells of the surviving seven Excindio, whose limited power reserves had run dry and plunged them back into a state of torpor. The deep salvation-vaults were unearthed by the Dreadwing and Eskaton Sardas himself oversaw the purging of those chambers with phosphex, slaughtering the surviving members of the Galatian leadership, and then proceeding to set magna charges throughout the forge halls and manufactoria. Over the course of the next few weeks, the Dark Angels systematically culled any surviving automata or Tech-Priests and destroyed all trace of the forbidden technology that had been unleashed against them. Only the orbital shipyards were left intact, that they might serve the Imperium in its war and aid in the repairs the Dark Angels fleet had incurred in seizing Galatia.

Once they had completed the final destruction of that world, leaving nothing but ruin and rubble, the Lion turned his gaze to Phall, the largest of the three Forge Worlds of Triplex and now the only one that remained intact. Phall had gathered about it all of the military force that remained in the system, a significant fleet and potent army stood ready to defend the world, though still no greater than the force that had been obliterated in orbit of Galatia. The slow destruction of Galatia had left the magi of Phall much time to consider the perils of their situation, with some choosing to gather their apprentices and chattels before fleeing the system, while others refused to leave the planet. When the Dark Angels left Galatia and approached Phall they did so in attack formation, fully expecting to find a world set in arms against them. However, the fighting on Phall, though brutal, was concluded long before their arrival as the more orthodox of the remaining magi put their renegade brethren to the sword and offered the Lion their unconditional surrender. The servants of the Omnissiah saw value only in their survival, and that seemed better assured by the sacrifice of the few rather than in stubborn defiance. Likewise, the Lion prized pragmatism over petty vengeance and knew well the value of a Forge World like Phall to the Imperium and to any campaign that would have to be fought in the Thramas sector. So he chose to accept their surrender, taking from Phall any and all remnants of the dark research of those that had been purged for his own and placing Eskaton Sardas and a garrison of the fearsome Dreadwing warriors that had brought proud Galatia to ruin to administer the world in his name and to feed the hunger of his Legion as it prosecuted a new kind of war in the Emperor's name.

The Siege of Thramas

Thramas, since it had raised its banner in defiance of the Night Lords, had endured a near constant state of siege. A costly endeavour that was both a symptom of the madness that consumed the VIII[th] Legion and the cause of much friction within it. It was the orders of Nakrid Thole that established and maintained the siege, with warriors of those warbands loyal to him heeding these orders over and above those issued by other commanders within the Legion and dividing its forces at a critical point in the campaign. The blockade thrown around the system, raids on shipping and on the surface provided little in terms of material gain and were a constant drain on the resources available to the Night Lords; the capture of Thramas would have alleviated such concerns but Thole lacked both the manpower and intent to prosecute such an action. He was instead determined to bleed and torment the world that had left him scarred and humiliated, ordering his troops to engage in murder raids against isolated civilian settlements and to deploy gene-phage munitions within packed spire-hubs. Those few prisoners of import that were taken during the fighting fell under Nakrid Thole's skinning knife rather than the excrutiators of the Night Lords' skilled interrogators, and what munitions and engines of war were seized during attacks on blockade runners were quickly consumed by the efforts to encircle and reduce the resistance of Thramas. It was a great folly, but one whose pure malevolence would long be remembered in the annals of the Horus Heresy.

A Bloody Equilibrium

From the unwilling confessions of his prisoners, the Lion knew two true facts: Horus had turned upon his father and was indeed leading a rebellion and the Night Haunter had followed him, charged with seizing the worlds of the Eastern Fringe for his new master. He knew that even now Horus must be pressing the defences of Terra, for while the Emperor's Throne World still stood so too did the Imperium, but also he knew that should Horus make a ruin of the rest of the Imperium then Terra itself would be worthless, an isolated throne in a sea of death. He was forced to balance his loyalty to the Emperor as a man and to the Imperium as a monument to that man, to decide which held the balance of significance in the eyes of history and the people who would write it. Lion El'Jonson, ever practical in the face of disaster, understood that he would be too late to forestall an assault on Terra, that the Emperor's fate was decided, but that the Imperium could still be saved by his actions.

The Night Haunter's goals he understood, though his methods escaped the pragmatic lord of the First Legion, his piecemeal ravaging of the Eastern Fringe a mad puzzle that Lion El'Jonson's ordered mind could not explain with military logic. As such his initial movements into the wider Thramas sector were cautious, designed to protect his warriors from ambush or other surprises. With some 70,000 warriors of the First Legion, over twice that in support troops and three demi-Legio forces drawn from different Titan Legions, the Lion possessed a significant force of arms. Though it was outnumbered by the Night Lords and those Traitor forces that had fled Triplex, those forces were dispersed across two whole sectors while his own host was concentrated in a single system. Planning to capitalise on this advantage, the Lion made his initial foray into just two systems, the key junctures of Sheol III and Yaelis. Both worlds had already changed hands several times in the fighting, being both vital links between the Aegis and Thramas sectors and key lines of transit around the Crucible exclusion zone, and few remained among the ruins but killers. Forewarned by those fleeing the death of Triplex Galatia, the defenders of Sheol and Yaelis knew who it was that came for them and yet they did not flee. The madness of war had taken full hold of those that yet dwelt in Thramas and its environs, and few that still fought would accept surrender as an option. The Night Lords and their slaves were too few to defeat the massed Dark Angels, but then that was not their intent, they sold their lives and those of the massed regiments of conscripts and slaves they threw at the Dark Angels simply to slow their advance.

The conquest of these two worlds would occupy the Dark Angels for almost a full month, for once the Night Lords exhausted the lives of their chattel in open battle they resorted to hit and run assaults and guerrilla warfare to harry the occupying forces. A few hundred midnight-clad warriors held tens of thousands in place by their savage skill at arms, buying time for the Night Haunter to prepare and reminding their cousins in the First Legion of the cost one must pay to vanquish the Legiones Astartes. Yet the assault on these first worlds also yielded something other than death and blood, for once the black banners of the First Legion were flown in battle, the survivors of those Loyalist regiments that had fought against the Night Lords rallied to them. At first, it was only small units that had managed to hide from the victorious Night Lords but, as word spread to nearby worlds, entire regiments began to arrive, battered and scarred but still not yet defeated.

Hope had returned to Thramas in the form of the Lion and his sons, and the flame of defiance that had almost been extinguished by the Night Haunter flared back into life and raced across the stars far faster than the Lion and his forces could ever hope to advance. Though delayed, the First Legion could not be stopped and, once Sheol and Yaelis were scoured clean of Night Lords cells, the Dark Angels pushed into the surrounding worlds, careful not to press too far or spread their numbers too thin. They left few openings for the Night Lords to take advantage of, made wary by the first battles against fellow Space Marines, and gathered to them all the allies they could find, bolstering their forces with each new victory. Within another month of hard fought planetary assaults and equally gruelling counter-insurgency campaigns, they reached Crucible, where Captain-general Morhde and the last desperate remnants of his Nightwatch still held out against the Night Lords.

This proved to be the extent of their reach, now spread too thin protecting the dozen worlds they held to advance further without becoming vulnerable to the Night Lords and their allies. The heart of the Eastern Fringe still lay under the Night Haunter's control, and the core of his Legion held an iron cordon around Thramas itself, while Gulgorahd's borders still burned with the fires of war. Newly-arrived detachments of the Dark Angels, rearmed and refitted at Triplex, mounted a second front with an attack through Verstun in the Aegis sector, only to find themselves bogged down fighting Traitor armies mustering from Memlock and the vast expanse of the Heraclid nebula. The fighting was now spread across four separate sectors, with tens of millions of warriors in arms on over a hundred active warzones. It was a bloody equilibrium of war, the Dark Angels not numerous enough to force a breakthrough without abandoning those worlds they had retaken and the Night Lords too widely spread to push back their Loyalist brethren. While it lasted neither could claim victory and both remained pinned in the Eastern Fringe, unable to retreat while their foe remained unbroken at their back and incapable of forcing a breach in the front lines to advance.

The Lost, the Fallen and the Broken

With the Imperium riven and broken by Horus' civil war, neither side could call upon the nearly unlimited resources that had fuelled the Great Crusade. They could rely on no reinforcements save those they could rally by their own schemes, and the war-torn worlds along the front lines of the war, the once-prosperous worlds of the Aegis, Thramas, Triplex and Gulgorahd sectors were all but exhausted. Both sides were forced to turn to other sources to procure the edge that would be needed to break the stubborn and bloody stalemate that had developed before what few resources that remained to them were spent. For, with fighting along the front showing no signs of abating, that end loomed ever closer.

The constant raids and assaults on the world of Thramas took a heavy toll on the Night Lords, for though combat losses were few, the munitions they expended were all but irreplaceable after the loss of Triplex. By order of the Faceless Prince, as Nakrid Thole had become known among his kin after his flight from Thramas, they had thrown a blockade around that system, attempting to stop all ships from entering or leaving while the siege continued. Yet swift frigates continued to brave the blockade to bring word of the battle to the Lion and to deliver vital supplies to the defenders of Thramas. Rather than simply obliterate these intruders with their heavy guns, Thole ordered his warriors to cripple and board them, clearing the ships with blades only to preserve ammunition and stripping them of all usable supplies before scuttling the captured craft.

Along the front lines of the war, the main body of the Night Lords struck again and again at the defences of the Dark Angels, seeking not to secure territory or attack the gathered host of their foe, but rather to destroy or capture his supply dumps and transport ships. The Night Haunter fought with a desperate fury, ever at the forefront of any attack and always searching for his brother, Lion El'Jonson, seeking perhaps to prove his nightmares wrong by seeking a death other than that which had haunted him for so long. The most loyal of his sons, the warriors Sevatar and Anrek Barbatos, struggled to rein in their master's mania and sought to avoid seeing the VIIIth Legion drawn into a disastrous confrontation with the main strength of the Dark Angels. By means of careful suggestion and outright subversion of his often contradictory decrees, they turned his lust for death into a means to both resupply their own troops and weaken the Dark Angels with constant raids.

Rather than allow the Night Haunter's unpredictable madness to draw the Legion into disaster, the veterans of the old Legion sought to make use of the Midnight Treaties. These hidden texts were bargains struck by Curze during the Great Crusade with certain factions along the fringes of human space, factions that did not fit within the tidy bounds of the Emperor's future, but that could still offer the Night Lords power: abhuman breeds that skirted the boundaries of humanity, reavers and madmen that preyed upon their fellows and Forge Worlds whose doctrines were unacceptable to Mars. All these and more had been concealed by the Night Haunter in return for their loyalty, unnoticed along the dark edges of the maps created by the Great Crusade. Small scout craft, crewed by the most loyal and captained by the most trusted of the Legion, were sent forth to distant and hidden stars. Many of these ships were lost, some crippled by the swelling warp storms that scoured the area, others intercepted and destroyed by the fast cutters of the Dark Angels or Thramassi cruisers, but some few would reach their destinations and issue the Night Lords' summons.

The brutish warriors of Tohruk, debased cousins of the more common Ogryn bred by a long-dead outpost of Mankind as shock troops and living weapons, bolstered the Night Lords assault companies in their attacks on the Dark Angels, fodder for the exhausted guns of the First Legion. Cannibal legions from Glabro, battle-psykers from the lost moons of Thex and a dozen more aberrations were set loose upon the front lines, each a further drain on Lion El'Jonson's strength and further slowing the progress of the First Legion.



The Midnight Treaties

Many have lamented the numerous small betrayals that would be discovered over the course of the war, the liberties taken by each Legion in order to gain some advantage over their kin. Horus built his own network of loyalty, Lorgar found new gods and Guilliman built an empire of his own. The Night Haunter was no different, his Legion had always lacked in the favour shown to others by the great Forge Worlds of the Mechanicum and the tithe fleets of the new Imperium. It chose to deal with limited supplies in its own fashion, a part of this solution was the Midnight Treaties. These were the bargains sealed by Konrad Curze with an uncounted spread of worlds hidden in the dark fringes of space over which his Legion had been set as warden, worlds that, much like the Night Lords themselves, found little acceptance from the strict lawmakers of the Great Crusade.

Rather than dispose of them in fire and blood, bleeding his Legion further while Dorn and Guilliman grew strong on the empires they had founded, Curze followed a different path. To those worlds that accepted his rule and tithed directly to the Night Lords a portion of their wealth, be it in bodies or in machines, he offered to keep them safe from the threat of annihilation. It is ironic that where the Emperor decreed only death for these worlds, the sin of their technology or genes unforgivable in His eyes, the Night Haunter would offer life, yet it is from the industry of hidden worlds like Ulan Hûda that the Night Lords grew in the last years of the Great Crusade. It is also through the taint of recruits from the debased populace of these hidden worlds that their stock was slowly corrupted and brought low – a curse that would weigh heavily on the Legion during the war for Thramas.

Yet worst of all the terrors unleashed from the darkness of the fringe was the predator-forge of Ulan Hûda. Long hidden in the storm that haunted the edge of the galaxy, that fallen Forge World had long devoted itself to the forbidden and had even developed a crude array of engines to move the entire Forge World through the Warp. By means of this, and other arcane obscenities, Ulan Hûda fed upon other worlds beyond the borders of the Imperium, tearing them apart to supply its forges and leaving only shattered systems in its wake.

Ulan Hûda had long been allied to the Night Lords in secret, supplying its Titans, the Legio Phasma, to them in exchange for their silence, and now they loosed it upon Thramas. At first only whispers reached Thramas of the destruction, of the silence and emptiness where border posts of isolated colonies should be, but there soon followed the harrowing accounts brought by the survivors. Entire worlds had been overrun by the monstrous automata hordes of Ulan Hûda and then shattered and consumed, the broken corpses of planets left lifeless and empty. With almost all of the Thramassi forces locked in the defence of Crucible and Thramas, there was little that could be done to curb the terrible appetite of the magi of Ulan Hûda, save to send word to the Lion and hope for the siege to be lifted.

Last of all the playing pieces to arrive was the Brotherhood of the Shattered Shield, a detachment of the Vth Legion, the White Scars, which had been wandering in far places when Horus declared his rebellion. They breached realspace at Nostramo hoping to find refit and resupply only to behold the ruin that the Night Haunter had made of his old home, with silence the only reply to their calls to Great Crusade bases and way stations. Zhenjin Khan and his warriors were soon made guests of the Night Lords, who informed them of the Warmaster's orders to pacify the rebellious Eastern Fringe and of the traitors that waited for them there. Though veterans of the Great Crusade, Zhenjin Khan and his Brotherhood had heard only tales of the First Legion, of their matchless pride and the many secrets they kept from the other Legions. Weighed against the loyalty they held to Horus, who had always been a friend and patron to the White Scars, it was a simple choice for Zhenjin Khan to offer his blade as thanks for the supplies they had been granted and set his ships on course to rendezvous with the Night Haunter. With this last addition, some 3,000 veterans of the Great Crusade and six capital class warships, the Night Lords controlled a force great enough to challenge the Dark Angels in open war, word was sent to all commands – the Night Haunter would go to meet his brother.

A Gathering of Malice

The balance of war was shifting, the tide of fate ever in motion seemed to have turned against the Loyalist cause. The ships sent by the Lion to seek aid at the old Great Crusade bases of Tigrus and Honourum had failed to return and the growing turbulence in the aether that was the Ruinstorm blocked any attempt to contact those of his brothers he hoped had remained true to their vows. Thramas, still besieged by the vengeful Night Lords, remained beyond the Lion's grasp and his Legion was effectively paralysed by the need to protect the vulnerable worlds they had liberated in the months after the fall of Crucible. There was no question of their retreat, for the First Legion would not accept defeat, but neither did it seem that they would be able to claim victory, all across the front the black-clad warriors of Caliban braced themselves for the storm they knew approached.

Its first stirrings were seen in a wave of attacks across the sector, howling mobs of slave soldiers and abhuman shock troops dropped on each of the worlds held by the Loyalists with only light support from the Traitor Space Marines. Against the warriors of the First Legion, these lesser troops stood little chance, sacrificed solely to allow Night Lords cruisers observing the landings from orbit to chart the strength of the foe and to drain their supplies. It was a cruel but effective stratagem, its malice carefully planned and as much for the amusement of the watching Night Lords as for its effectiveness on the battlefield. Such had always been the nature of the Night Haunter's twisted sons, but now severed from the constraints of Imperial law they made little attempt to conceal their relish for such bloody excess.

On Yrrdek, the drop sites chosen by the Night Lords were over a site known to have been mined by the Dark Angels months beforehand, the conscript militia blasted apart in a storm of explosions simply to test the extent of the field and to amuse their taskmasters. Amid the ice spires of Chenro IX, the VIIIth Legion overseers wagered on how long it would take the Dark Angels to slaughter the crude auxilia armour sent against their defences while they counted the emplaced guns hidden on the spires. The Thungaard volunteer regiments that had landed on Sedricce, the deepest point in the Dark Angels' defensive line, only survived to return to their dropships due to the actions of the White Scars of the Shattered Shield, whose warriors had chosen to allow the

retreat of the decimated Loyalists troops to evacuate those that had survived the abortive attack. This chivalrous effort earned Zhenjin a salute from the praetor commanding the First Legion brigade, but the bemused Night Lords began to style the White Scars khan 'The Saviour' in a joke peculiar to the sensibilities of the Nostraman warriors. The insult implicit in the title was not lost on the White Scars, nor was the callous nature of their new allies or the apparent honour of those they had been ordered to consider traitors.

Preparations complete, the Night Haunter himself, roused to some semblance of his old self by the presence of his brother and the promise of blood and death, called the Night Lords to battle. He summoned all of the disparate bands of his Legion to assemble, leaving only a skeleton force to attend to its battles elsewhere in the Eastern Fringe. Some 100,000 of the Night Lords took their places at 50 separate staging points along the front established by the Dark Angels, their warlords all present on Nergante where the Night Haunter held court. Caring only for the confrontation that was to come, Konrad Curze did little more than brood over the gathering of his sons, some a reminder of lost glories and others of the curse that had claimed the heart of the Legion, while it fell to others like Sevatar and Barbatos to set strategy for the assault. Plans were set and grudges settled in the bloody tradition of Nostramo, by hidden schemes and sharp blades, a scene that left the White Scars uneasy.

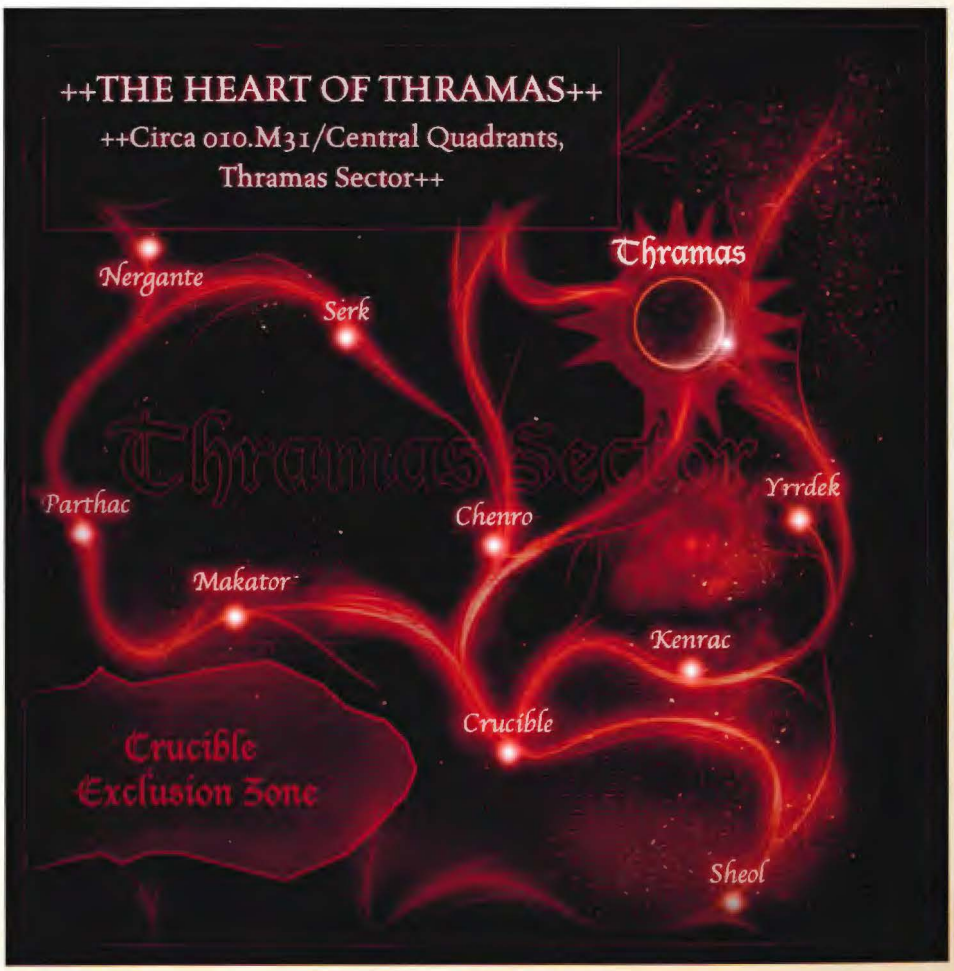
Of all the warlords of the VIIIth Legion, only one failed to heed the Night Haunter's call. The Faceless Prince, his hatred fixed on Thramas alone, would not abandon the siege of that battered world and kept those forces loyal first to him at their stations. By this time, Thramas had endured almost two years of siege, ravaged by constant raids and tormented by the phage warheads dropped on its surface at Thole's orders. Of its outer bodies, every last moon and asteroid in the Thramas system belonged to Thole, but Thramas itself still resisted. Now, with much of his strength stripped away by the Night Haunter's command, Thole lacked the numbers to do more than maintain his blockade around the system. Instead he turned to darker means for his final revenge, offering a tribute of those Thramassi prisoners he held in the bowels of his ship as thralls in order to bring the predator-forge Ulan Hûda to Thramas.

His call answered, the metal mass of Ulan Hûda sundered the veil of the Warp and tore into realspace trailing balefire like a cloak, and began to feast upon the outermost planets of that system. Cutting beams with a calibre measured in kilometres and fleets of servitor drones made short work of the great rocks orbiting far from Thramas' sun and the predator-forge turned its gaze upon the prey promised it by Nakrid Thole. Death had come for Thramas and the last few Loyalist ships in the system broke from orbit of the doomed world hoping to bring word of its plight to the Lion, whose troops fought for their lives half a sector away.

The Weight of their Choices

In the final days of 008.M31 the assault began in earnest, with massed Night Lords attacks falling on a half dozen worlds. These were unlike the raids that the Dark Angels had repelled before, but the total war as practised by the Legiones Astartes, an assault of fury and overwhelming firepower whose goal was simple annihilation. Three whole Chapters of the Night Lords landed on Chenro, using the data gathered in their previous attacks to precisely target the First Legion redoubts and forcing them onto the defensive. The single Chapter of the Dark Angels was overwhelmed, the last detachments calling in fire support from cruisers engaged in orbit onto their own positions to hold back the Night Lords as they struggled to evacuate. At Sedricce, the Night Lords battleship *Tenebrous Will* and its attendant cruisers drove off the Dark Angels craft in orbit and subjected the surface to a sustained bombardment, flattening every identified defensive position and devastating the planet's surface. The Night Lords that landed in the bombardment's wake found a few intact bunkers that had weathered the firestorms, taking a vicious glee in the slow manner they chose to breach and clear them, much to the dismay of their White Scars allies.

The last of these bunkers held the Dark Angels commander in charge of the world's defence, who demanded the Night Lords praetor meet him in single combat to answer for his betrayal of the oaths made to the Emperor. The defiant Dark Angels commander, badly wounded during the bombardment, stood little chance against the fresh Night Lords praetor, who toyed



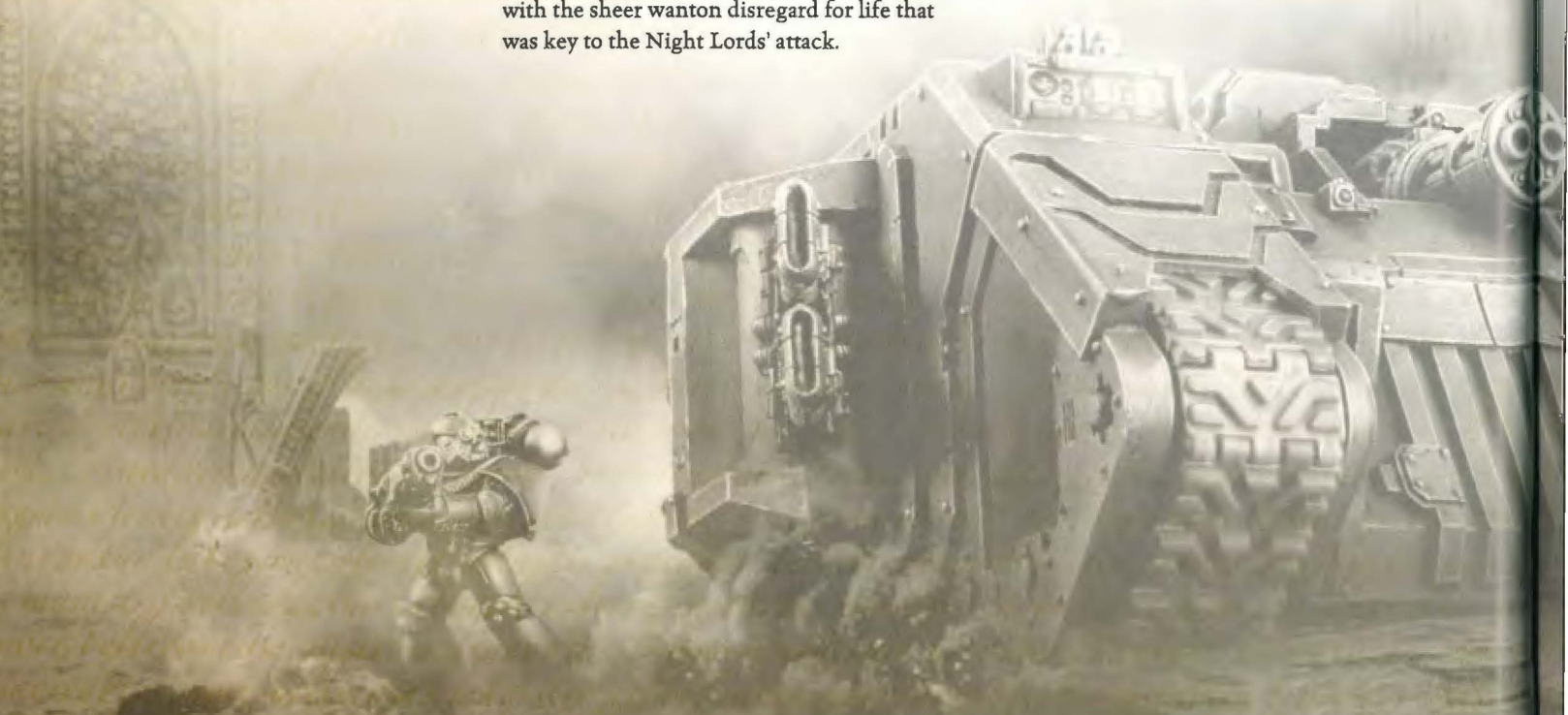
cruelly with his opponent in front of the gathered warriors before killing him and taking his Calibanite warblade and the survivors of his force as trophies. Only the intervention of Zhenjin Khan and his White Scars force preserved the Loyalist warriors from a grim fate in the skinning pits, 'the Saviour' fighting a duel of his own to claim their lives and the warblade of the fallen Dark Angels commander, bringing them aboard his own ships though it bought him no respect in the eyes of the Night Lords. The White Scars made little effort to join the fighting after Sedricce, Zhenjin spending an increasing amount of time sequestered with his 'captives', an obsession whose intent the Night Lords assumed was malign.

In total, four worlds fell into the hands of the Night Lords, though they made no attempt to consolidate these victories and swiftly moved on to their next targets. Only the Night Haunter lingered, searching every world obsessively for his brother and letting no chance for battle pass him by, throwing himself into every engagement with a desperate fury. The main target of the second wave was the now barren wasteland of Crucible, a planetscape covered in the ruins of previous battles and dominated by hastily assembled fortifications and redoubts. Here the Dark Angels had drawn up much of their strength, for it was the gateway to Triplex, the sole source of their supplies and munitions, and they were determined to hold it no matter the cost. In orbit, a pair of formidable Gloriana class battleships formed the core of the defences, supported by two dozen cruisers and scores of frigates, while on the surface were nine rebuilt regiments of the Nightwatch, ordinatus from the workshops of Triplex and four full Chapters of the First Legion. Ranged against them were six Chapters of the Night Lords, a sub-Legio deployment of the renegade Legio Victorum II and some 50,000 conscripts, abhumans and other auxilia troops pressed into service, with the Night Haunter himself at their head.

The formidable ships of the First Legion's fleet were swamped as the Night Lords armada burst from the Warp, their sheer numbers too great for them to be kept from orbit of Crucible. Unable to swiftly eliminate the powerful relic cruisers of the First Legion, the Night Lords instead began a combat drop even as their forward fleet elements engaged the Dark Angels ships, raining drop pods and landing craft into the skies. Only the ships of the White Scars hung back from the chaotic battle that erupted in orbit, perhaps worried that in the mass of duelling starships their unfamiliar markings would see them made targets by both of the other two Legions, or hesitant to sacrifice themselves as pawns for the Night Haunter's strategy. Descending through the storm of cannonfire that had erupted in orbit, the Night Lords entered the carefully-prepared defences of the First Legion, all arranged around the ruins of Crucible's fallen hive. Ingenious interlinked patterns of trenches and barricades funnelled attackers into killing zones pre-sighted for heavy weapons and artillery, while detachments of the Ravenwing stood by as a reserve force to plug gaps in the line. It was a flawless plan, but one that could not cope with the sheer wanton disregard for life that was key to the Night Lords' attack.

Made up of the entirety of the conscripted militia assets, the first wave of the assault was thrown directly into the strongest parts of the Dark Angels' lines, purposefully sacrificed to drain ammunition and distract the defenders. While these expendable assets were torn apart by the Dark Angels, the Night Lords landed and consolidated the bulk of their forces unmolested, a vast horde that thronged around the feet of the Battle Titans and far outnumbered the defenders. Even as the Traitor host began to marshal and divide as directed by the plan devised at Nergante, the Night Haunter broke from the main body, forcing ever-loyal Sevatar and his Atramentar to follow in his wake. The Night Haunter struck the Dark Angels' line like a thunderbolt, scattering resistance but failing to secure the breaches he created, each sealed by Dark Angels reserves as he roved the expanse of the battlefield in search of his brother, while Sevatar strove futilely to clear his path.

The chaos caused by the Night Haunter's unpredictable assault paved the way for the Night Lords' onslaught, with the Titans of the Legio Victorum II taking the lead, their great cannon blasting holes in the line and obliterating fortified bunkers with a single blast. At their feet, abhuman brutes and Night Lords heavy assault infantry surged forwards, met in turn by the swordsmen of the Deathwing, who refused to retreat despite the vast numbers of the foe. The line infantry of the First Legion made a disciplined withdrawal, firing by ranks as they moved to a second line of defence,



while Sagittar Ordinatus targeted the lead Titans. The Dark Angels were precise and immovable on defence, exploiting every opening in the disjointed attacks of their opponents, mounting counter-attacks to break the Night Lords' momentum at a moment's notice. Against any other foe, it would have been enough to stop them in their tracks, but against the Night Lords and the sheer numbers of their host it merely delayed the inevitable.

Even with the Night Haunter cutting a path through the Dark Angels' lines the Lion had not shown himself, and though they had demanded a high toll in lives it seemed that the First Legion would be broken that day. The Night Lords commanders exulted in their apparent victory. Leaving the Night Haunter to the fringes of the battle, they gathered for the final assault on the broken stub of the fallen spire's central pillar, where much of the surviving Dark Angels host had fallen back to. Each jealous of the others, they fell to bickering on the battlefield over the shares of the spoils and their retinues turned to fighting their own battles for the glory of their individual lords rather than that of the entire host. It was at this point that the Lion played his final trump card, the last strategy that offered him a hope of victory in the face of such odds: he unleashed the Excindio once more.

Yet, rather than set them loose upon the battlefield haphazardly, he had a specific task for the terrors of Old Night, he set them upon his brother, on Konrad Curze himself. Even seven such monsters could not defeat the Night Haunter, but they were enough to keep him at bay and occupied on the edge of the fighting, a flailing storm of destruction whose manic hate was a match for that of the Night Haunter. As those two forces of destruction met, the Lion finally revealed himself, striding forth at the head of the Deathwing Companions in their distinct bone-white armour. He fell upon the disorganised commanders of the Night Lords and set them to flight, those foolish enough to stand against the Lion fell before his blade and those that fled threw their warriors into confusion. It was a grand opening in the horde, one which the Dark Angels committed themselves to in their entirety, abandoning the fortification to the Nightwatch and surging forwards in the attack. The two sides met in a furious clash of arms, the Dark Angels few in number but focused and led by their Primarch, the Night Lords ill-disciplined but ferocious and many. For a moment the battle hung in the balance, victory but a hair's breadth away for both sides and neither willing to give an inch of ground. Then the White Scars committed themselves to the battle at last.

The ships of the Vth Legion moved into orbit, the hard-pressed craft of the Dark Angels could not oppose them and the Night Lords gave way before their advance, granting them access to dropzones over the heart of the fighting. At this point in the battle even a single Brotherhood would turn the tide in its favour, as was announced by the triumphant vox signals of the Night Lords captains in orbit, and the launch of their drop pods would mark the end of the battle and the start of the rout. The pale white pods smashed into the centre of the battle line, but what issued forth was a mix of white and black, all led by a warrior wielding a long Calibanite warblade. Zhenjin Khan led the Brotherhood of the Shattered Shield and the survivors of Sedricce into battle against the Night Lords and in orbit his cruisers opened fire on their erstwhile allies at point blank range. The battle ended, the sudden onslaught of the Saviour and his warriors throwing the Night Lords into chaos, followed by the renewed attack of the Lion, cutting down any that opposed him. The Night Lords abandoned their auxiliaries as they scrambled to evacuate, with Sevatar and Barbatos all but dragging the Night Haunter from the field as he screamed for his brother to face him. They chose to flee rather than seek a pyrrhic victory, abandoning the hope that had sustained the Dark Angels, saving the greater part of their numbers but ceding victory to the First Legion.

In the aftermath, amid a field of corpses and fire, Zhenjin Khan bent the knee before the Lion and offered him the Calibanite blade he bore and his life to atone for the mistake he had made. The Lion, ever pragmatic, looked down upon the warrior of the Vth, at his loyal warriors and the Dark Angels mixed in amongst them, each one on his knees, and uttered a simple judgement:

"Here in this moment I see neither Traitor nor Loyalist, only the living and the dead. The dead can beg neither mercy nor forgiveness, for now only history can judge them. The living must bear the weight of their choices and fight for them, and there is much fighting still to be done."





When Dreams Become Nightmares

"On Caliban we hunted honest monsters, foul of both heart and hue, and we learned to show them no mercy or respite. While we now hunt monsters of a more treacherous breed, whose familiar guise hides the foulness of their hearts, those lessons we learned on Caliban still hold true and our blades remain sharp."

Corswain of the Dark Angels at the Battle of Crucible

The Slow March to Victory

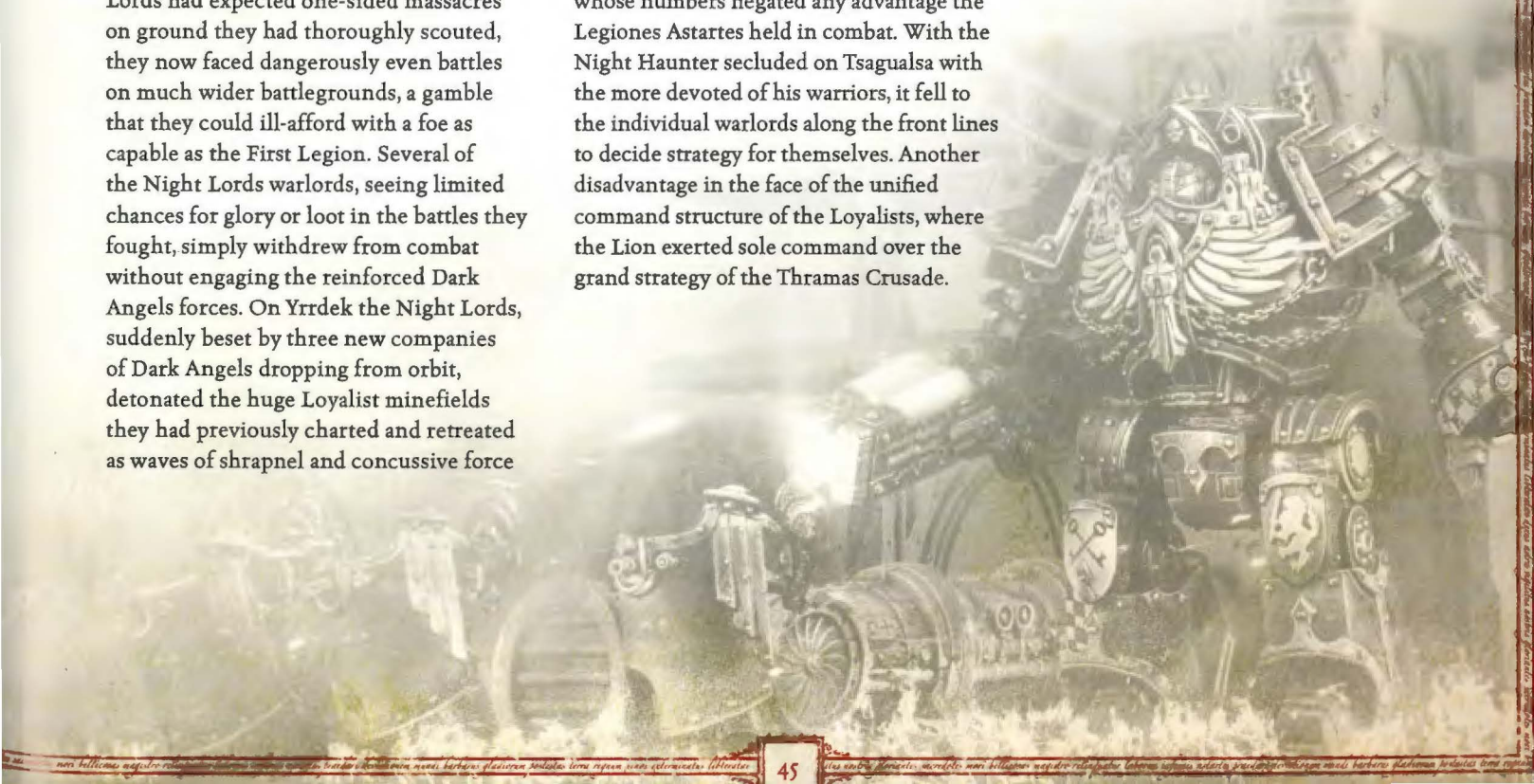
The retreat from Crucible cost the Night Lords dearly, with only a quarter of those warriors sent into combat returning to their dropships. With both numbers and surprise now on the side of the Loyalists, and with the Night Haunter unable to intercede, the Dark Angels repaid the Traitors for the massacre at Isstvan V with a cold fury that the Night Lords could not match. There would be only one fate for those of the Traitors that did not flee the surface, for the Dark Angels had little mercy for unrepentant traitors, though many of those that failed to reach the escaping dropships took to the wild places of Crucible, forcing the Dark Angels to waste precious days hunting the last of them down. Despite this small boon granted by their comrades' bitter defiance, the Night Lords had few options left to them with so many of their number lying dead amid the rubble of Crucible's once-great hive spire. Where once they had been the supreme power, their numbers enough to counter the renowned skill at arms of the First Legion, now they found themselves reduced to the point where that advantage disappeared.

With the crucial confrontation on Crucible turned into a rout, those of the Night Lords engaged on other worlds along the front line quickly found themselves threatened. Their own reinforcements lay dead on Crucible and the main Dark Angels host was quick to dispatch warriors to those planets under attack. Where the Night Lords had expected one-sided massacres on ground they had thoroughly scouted, they now faced dangerously even battles on much wider battlegrounds, a gamble that they could ill-afford with a foe as capable as the First Legion. Several of the Night Lords warlords, seeing limited chances for glory or loot in the battles they fought, simply withdrew from combat without engaging the reinforced Dark Angels forces. On Yrrdek the Night Lords, suddenly beset by three new companies of Dark Angels dropping from orbit, detonated the huge Loyalist minefields they had previously charted and retreated as waves of shrapnel and concussive force spread like storms across the battlefield, but preserved the full combat strength of the forces still available to them. Some have seen the Night Lords' tactics as dishonourable or even cowardly, but seen in hindsight their actions kept the VIIIth Legion combat-capable amid what might well have been a complete disaster.

The Night Lords would succeed at withdrawing from their failed offensive and retain enough of their combat assets to continue to pose a threat to the Lion, with even the Night Haunter evading the vengeful First Legion fleet and returning to the half-built fortress on Tsagualsa where he fell once again into a morose fugue. However, freed from the constraints of fighting a foe whose skill at arms equalled their own, the Dark Angels and their allies switched flawlessly from staunch defence to all-out assault. The forces from the nearby Forge World of Tigrus opened a new front, attacking through the world of Verstun in the Aegis sector, whose conquest had slowed their arrival at Crucible. This assault on the Traitor worlds of the Aegis sector was a dire blow to the Traitor war effort, stripping them of yet another source of resources as the lords of Heraldor and Memlock turned the armies and the output of their factories to the defence of their own domain. The main force of the Lion's armies pressed further into the Thramas sector, the Night Lords fighting only where they could muster an advantage over their foes in the local system and abandoning their position to fall back when confronted by a force whose numbers negated any advantage the Legiones Astartes held in combat. With the Night Haunter secluded on Tsagualsa with the more devoted of his warriors, it fell to the individual warlords along the front lines to decide strategy for themselves. Another disadvantage in the face of the unified command structure of the Loyalists, where the Lion exerted sole command over the grand strategy of the Thramas Crusade.

The Witch of Thramas

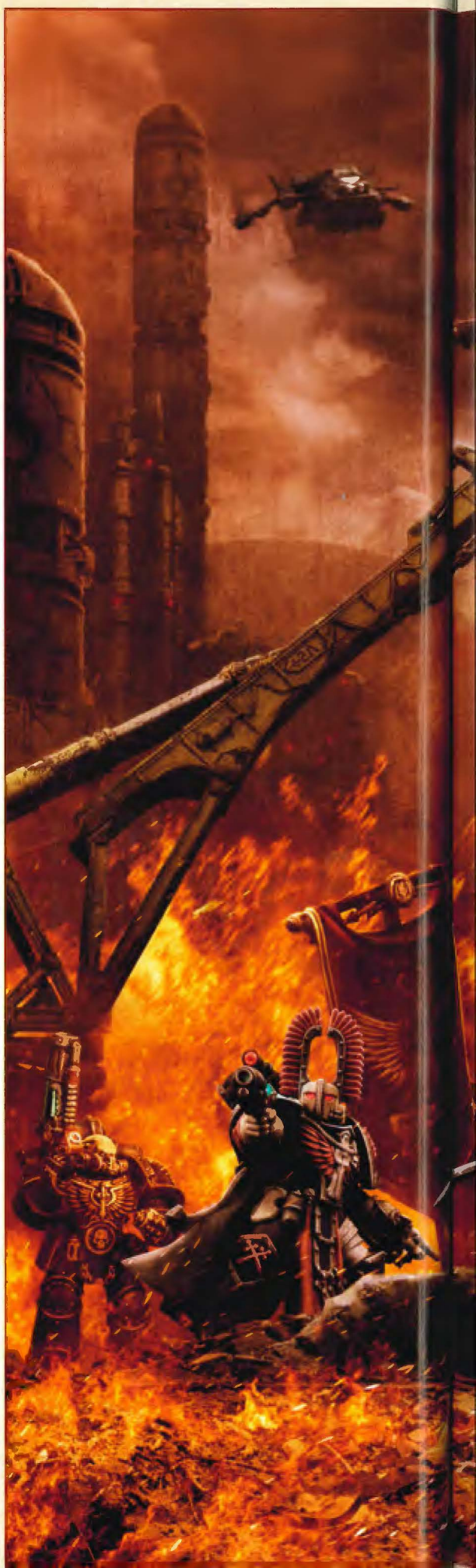
The arrival of a badly damaged frigate from Thramas would instigate the next major confrontation, bringing news of Ulan Hûda's arrival at that vital Loyalist stronghold and the doom that had fallen upon it. Thramas itself still lay beyond the advancing lines of the Loyalist armies and within territory controlled by the Night Lords, mainly those warbands loyal to the Faceless Prince that had not been reduced in strength by the fighting at Crucible. The Lion refused to overextend his forces by committing to a major assault to break the lines and seize Thramas and, even were he willing, such an arduous struggle would never be resolved in time to aid that besieged world. Yet the Lion was unwilling to allow such an important resource to be destroyed without a fight, and so he gathered to him a select group of warriors to undertake an attack, bypassing the main lines to strike directly at Thramas. A full 1,000 Deathwing veterans, sworn to safeguard their Primarch no matter the cost and taken from the remains of several companies shattered during the fighting on Crucible, formed the core of his force, augmented by the remaining strength of the Crimson Lion Chapter and Praetor Corswain, who won a place at the Lion's side by means of his singular valour and skill at arms. Added to this strength were the surviving warriors of the White Scars, volunteered by Zhenjin Khan who had sworn a mighty and binding oath that he and his Brotherhood would redeem themselves in battle or in death, and



expunge the taint of the Traitor from their record. A wedge of black and white cruisers headed by the battleship, *Invincible Reason*, they plunged into the Warp, a perilous course set through the warp storms that surrounded Thramas, a risk dictated by need, for they had not the time to avoid the vast morass of aetheric eddies and vortices that plagued that area of space.

Two ships, the *Pale Horseman* and the *Azure Bolt*, were destroyed during this treacherous passage through the depths of the Warp. The first torn apart by the tumultuous storms that sprang up without warning and the other simply lost, vanished into the endless vaults of aetheric space without a trace. The remaining ships, though most sustained at least minor damage during the crossing, survived to breach the Warp less than a week after they had departed, a fractured but determined stone cast into a pool already in turmoil. For Thramas now stood on the very edge of destruction, the vast shadow of Ulan Hûda lay upon the ancient capital of the Eastern Fringe and the loathsome mass of the predator-forge alone caused untold damage to Thramas' surface as it crept into position to begin its feast. The various orbital planes of Thramas were crowded with the floating hulks of broken ships and the battered squadrons of those that still fought; the surviving ships of the Thramassi fleet and armed chartist craft matched against the warships of Nostramo and the scrap-barques of Ulan Hûda. It was a vision of madness, a hell of spinning debris dominated by the bloated terror of the predator-forge and lit by the actinic flare of hundreds of lance batteries and the death throes of great cruisers, a battlefield devoid of tactics or strategy where only slaughter and death remained. No subtle trick or clever ploy could avert the doom poised in high orbit over Thramas, only an act of suicidal valour would stay the advance of Ulan Hûda.

The Lion did not hesitate and the *Invincible Reason*'s cannon roared their defiance as the ancient ship powered forward into the fray, the other ships of the squadron taking up positions at its side. Sweeping through the battlefield the Lion made no attempt to engage the Night Lords or Dark Mechanicum craft in protracted battle, but instead used the combined firepower of his ships to blast open a path to the looming bulk of the moon of Ulan Hûda. The moon, though small when compared to a planet like Thramas, was still vast beyond imagining to the ships that now challenged it, the layers of manufactoria, forge halls and engine-vaults a skin of armour many kilometres thick and all studded with innumerable



Historia Terra Regnum

The Price of Failure

Six reinforced Chapters of the Night Lords, perhaps 12,000 warriors in all, dropped on the surface of Crucible alongside 50,000 auxillia and 18 Titans of the Legio Victorum I. Only a fraction of these forces would escape the surface intact, and of those that escaped many would not be able to fight free of the system. For the conscripts and abhuman troops, whose bulk landers were woefully incapable of rapid exfiltration under combat conditions, almost none survived. Most perished in battle or whilst attempting to flee the Dark Angels' counter-attack, with less than 5,000 leaving the system alive, and most of these being reserve troops not yet deployed from their landing craft. Of the Legio Victorum I, the Foe Slayers, none of the Titans deployed into combat would leave Crucible, several falling to concentrated fire from Loyalist ordinatus platforms and the others to the Titans of the Legio Solaria. The princeps of the Imperial Hunters rushed headlong into combat, taking serious damage in their determination to reach and engage the Traitor Titans, their zeal ensuring that none of the Traitors left the surface alive. The Night Lords fared better than their allies, their drop craft well capable of retrieving them even under heavy fire, and with some elite formations even able to evacuate by means of teleportarium chambers on the orbiting ships. Even so, one-in-three of those committed to the battle would not return, with particularly heavy casualties among the Atramentar and the retinue of Barbatos as they struggled to shield their Primarch as he was convinced to withdraw.

When added to the casualties incurred on other battlefields that would collapse in the wake of the defeat on Crucible, the defection of the White Scars and the arrival of new troops from Tigrus, the campaign in Thramas underwent a dramatic shift. Where once the Traitors had dominated the battles through sheer numbers, now they found themselves on the receiving end of this same disparity.



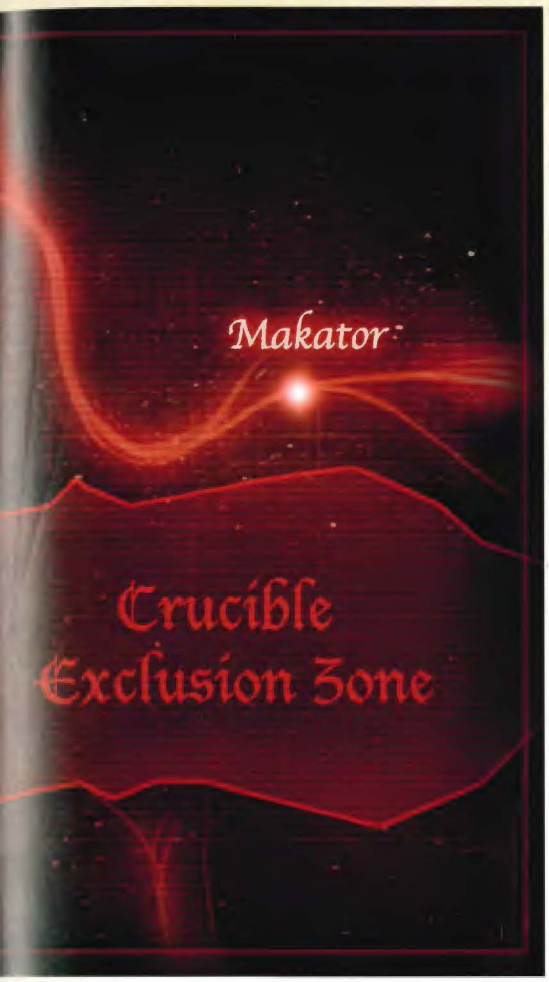


weapons emplacements. The Lion could not hope to destroy or deter it with a simple bombardment, and instead, as was his wont, forsook any attempt at subtlety and took to the field in person to press the attack.

Rather than a storm of las beams and shells, it was one of drop pods and assault craft that fell upon the surface of Ulan Hûda, while the capital ships held their distance and lent their firepower to the orbital battle around them under the command of Corswain. Impacting on the surface, the forces of the Dark Angels and White Scars found themselves immediately under assault by the hideous flesh-drones and lacrymosan thralls that composed Ulan Hûda's foul armies, a tidal wave of debased and befouled flesh wedded to forbidden technology. Led by the Lion, the Loyalist forces pressed into the thick of it, leaving the White Scars and Zhenjin Khan to guard their extraction zone. They waged a vicious war amid the tangled confines of Ulan Hûda's forge works, its halls and passageways arranged in a maddeningly labyrinthine pattern. Here they would come face-to-face with the architect of the insane creation that was Ulan Hûda, the creature that history would come to call the 'Witch of Thramas' – a dark magos of the Mechanicum ancient beyond easy reckoning and now little more than desiccated organs held within a huge and terrifying metal shell. This creature, caught in a mechanical purgatory that was neither truly alive nor fully deceased, controlled the hordes of flesh-thralls with a chilling and dispassionate logic, sacrificing dozens of her constructs to bring down a single Dark Angels veteran without compunction.

The grim neural-impulses of the Witch of Thramas drove her thralls and servant magi into a frenzy, thousands upon thousands of them descending on the isolated Legiones Astartes landing force in an endless throng of blades. Even led by the Lion, the Space Marines found themselves mired in a frantic melee that stretched across the vast surface of Ulan Hûda. Separating into smaller forces to capitalise on their skills and split the enemy horde, the Legiones Astartes stormed cannon-bunkers and forge halls, destroying them with melta charges and moving on to new objectives. Yet, despite the damage they inflicted, it was little more than a pinprick to the vast predator-moon, a trifling matter that would not slow its advance or stay its assault on Thramas. For though the Lion and his sons demolished dozens of the huge cutting beam emitters, hundreds more remained and were slowly building charge to slice open the planet below and render its cities and stony flesh into food for the forges of Ulan Hûda. In orbit, the Faceless Prince, Nakrid Thole, set his ships against those commanded by Corswain, determined that nothing should stay his revenge on Thramas and denying the Dark Angels commander the chance to aid his comrades on the surface.

Every moment of fighting saw the death of hundreds of the Dark Mechanicum drones, but also of a handful of the Legiones Astartes, and the warriors that followed the Lion could ill-afford casualties. Sensing weakness, the Witch of Thramas let loose the most powerful of her minions, hoarded and preserved for just such an opening. Led by the Witch herself, a mass of hulking Errax automata, debased and ferocious killing machines with claws that could shear through power armour, threw themselves into the battle. Met head on by the Lion and the warriors of the Deathwing Companions the assault was blunted, scything steel claws countered by Calibanite blades, but it had immobilised the Dark Angels, pinning them in place and leaving them unable to continue their campaign of sabotage. Yet Zhenjin Khan had not been idle while the Lion battled, for the renowned scouts of the White



Scars had discovered a series of unstable generators buried deep beneath the surface and heavily guarded by massive automata sentinels. A single short vox message announced the intention of the Saviour, transmitted in the clear to the Dark Angels as they fought for their lives, "*Evacuate now, our debts are paid in full*".

The White Scars abandoned the landing zones to assault the deep generators in full force, tearing into the ranks of its automata defenders with a suicidal fury. They made no attempt to clear out the foe or capture ground, trading their lives to close upon the vast underground reactors in vicious firefights in the pitch-black labyrinth beneath Ulan Hûda. None can know what feats of bravery and skill were wrought in that assault, a battered handful of desperate warriors clad in the white of the Great Khan's Legion pitted against a seething horde of machine horrors, but it is a feat not many could have equalled even amongst the Legiones Astartes. Those few survivors that managed to reach the central generator cores, ragged and bloody from battle, detonated the melta-charges they had borne through that dark hell, setting off a chain of devastating explosions within Ulan Hûda's hidden heart. Several of the Dark Angels that fought far above on the surface claim to have caught fragments of a last transmission bearing the code-stamp of the Saviour himself and badly distorted by the radiation of the blast. All that could be deciphered after the battle was a short segment that read, '*Tell the Khan we…*'

On the surface above, systems began to cut out all across the moon as its surface bucked and shook from the force of the Saviour's fury; the Witch and her minions were thrown into chaos by the failure of key noosphere interlinks while the Dark Angels cut a path through the horde towards one of the vast spires that sprouted from its surface. More than a match for any ordinary warrior, the Witch of Thramas tore apart those of the First Legion that challenged her, the huge claws of her war-armature strong enough to shear apart ceramite with ease and its armour proof against all but the most powerful of weapons. The swordsmanship of the Dark Angels champions was meaningless in the face of such brute strength and their bolter fire futile despite the marksmanship of the warriors of the First Legion. Even the firepower of the Dark Angels Dreadnoughts and specialist fire teams was in vain, tearing holes in the baroque chassis of the Witch but unable to strike any critical components concealed at the heart of that huge bio-mechanical terror. It seemed that here at the moment of their victory the First Legion would be denied escape, trapped upon the failing forge-moon as it tore itself apart and granted only an ignominious death as reward for their heroism.

There, at the edge of disaster, the Lion joined the battle, his ire awoken by the slaughter of his sons and the sacrifice of loyal warriors of the Emperor. He fell upon the Witch of Thramas with the implacable force of an avalanche and met the inhuman strength of her war-throne with the faultless skill of his sword arm. For a span of long moments they stood matched at the heart of the battle, neither giving ground as the perverted artifice of the Mechanicum strained against the gene-craft of the Emperor, claws shearing chips from the Lion's armour even as the Primarch's blade cut new wounds in her adamantium hide.

Yet, in the end the Witch could not stand against the Lion, and he cut her in two with a sweep of his blade, severing the upper torso which scuttled away like a great spider of metal and spite. Freed from the stalemate of battle, the Dark Angels stormed the tower and scattered the metal hordes of Ulan Hûda that stood in their path. The surviving Loyalists summoned their shuttles and gunships and fled the surface, trusting to the last sacrifice of Zhenjin Khan. As they boosted towards their ships, the metal skin of Ulan Hûda behind them buckled and shifted then erupted in a huge gout of flame that tore a hole kilometres across from the surface of the moon, scattering debris across orbital space and consuming the brave warriors of the White Scars in an instant. The grievously-wounded moon, trailing burning gas and the broken shards of its halls, was enveloped in a pall of crawling lightning as it clawed upon the veil of realspace, opening a portal to the Warp and fleeing Thramas, leaving the shattered and blasted planet in the hands of the Loyalists.

Yet, the victory would prove cold comfort for the broken denizens of Thramas and the Dark Angels alike. For between the hunger of Ulan Hûda and the fury of the Dark Angels' counter-assault, there was little left of that proud world but ruins, few of its towering hive spires still capable of sheltering the surviving people from the harsh weather of Thramas and the storms of fiery debris that would rain down upon its surface for months. Despite their salvation from the forces of the Warmaster and the clutches of the predator-forge, there remained little for the people of Thramas to celebrate, for the price of their salvation was almost as grim as the fate they had avoided. Some amongst them even whispered that perhaps the mercy of the Lion was as terrible as the anger of the Night Haunter, that neither of those towering lords of battle cared for the carnage they caused – only for the war itself, the never-ending conflict for which the Primarchs had been bred.

Savage Weapons

The battle at Thramas marked the beginning of the second year of the Thramas Crusade, and while the Dark Angels had seized the initiative, they had yet to completely eliminate the foe. The Traitors still controlled many worlds within the Thramas sector and almost the entirety of the Aegis sector. Only the area of space around Gulgorahd remained largely clear of their influence, many of the Bastion worlds still holding on in grim defiance of the enormous destruction wrought upon them by the Traitors' long siege. Indeed, with the Night Lords now under heavy pressure from the Dark Angels along the Thramas front and the slow but steady advance of the forces from Tigrus along the Verstun front, the vast armies that had once surrounded Gulgorahd had fallen back to engage the Dark Angels. The sudden appearance of fresh forces allowed the Night Lords to retake Yaelis, but in turn the advance of the legions of Gulgorahd saw the fall of Parthac, whose surface would be stripped clean of resources to fuel the depleted forges of Gulgorahd.

Both sides were approaching exhaustion, with much of the once-powerful industrial base of the Eastern Fringe in ruins and its population centres decimated, and the pace of the fighting began to slow. Governors, militia commanders and petty warlords across the Eastern Fringe looked upon the ruin that had been wrought about them by the warring Legiones Astartes and by their own hands, wondering what would remain when one side finally declared victory. The citizens of the Imperium looked upon the post-human warriors they had once thought of as heroes and liberators and saw only weapons bereft of a strong hand to guide their impact. True panic began to take its grip upon the worlds of the Eastern Fringe, with many of those on the border worlds taking to the desolate places of their homes and hoping to hide, and those on the populous hubs of the sector taking to ships so that they might flee. Order began to break down, many planets falling silent as food shipments failed to arrive or as xenos raiders fell upon them. The empire that was being so fiercely fought for was slowly unravelling.

On Tsagualsa, where the bones of a new fortress and stronghold for his Legion had begun to take shape, the Night Haunter brooded and plotted. His interest in the strategic goals of Horus' campaign was long forgotten, replaced by an insane desire to face his brother, the Lion, and force a confrontation that might alter his fate. He paid no heed to the disposition of his Legion or that of his allies, but instead set into motion a plan of his own, born from the fevered imaginings of his nightmares. He summoned Sevatar, Sheng, Barbatos and those others of his Legion that he favoured and bid them send out a message in his name, a message for his brother and his Dark Angels. He called upon them to meet him at Tsagualsa, a world that had remained hidden from the Dark Angels prior to this point, baiting the Lion with the hope of settling the war between the two Primarchs and sparing their Legions the slow death of unending warfare among the stars of the Eastern Fringe. A war that had already spanned two long years, where to hold a handful of worlds had cost the lives of many thousands of his own sons and uncounted millions of unaugmented soldiers and civilians. If the war continued, the tally of the dead would only grow until the First Legion no longer had the numbers to aid in the final battle for Terra. So, when Curze called upon his brother it was a call the Lion could not refuse, even though he knew that it must be a trap, but it was a trap that he must spring for the sake of his Legion and the Imperium.

The war remained balanced on the edge of a blade, with the recent victory at Thramas finally offering the advantage to the Loyalist forces, an advantage that could be easily snatched from them by ill fortune. As such, the Lion could not afford to pull a large force from the line to accompany him without risking the fall of more worlds, which he may have assumed was the goal of Curze's plan all along. Instead he selected a single Chapter to stand at his side, a force large enough to fight free of a trap, but not so large as to endanger the wider war that still raged unabated across the Eastern Fringe. The co-ordinates provided by the message placed Tsagualsa at the southernmost edge of the Nostramo sector, well within the bounds of territory controlled by the Traitor forces; here anything less than the entire First Legion fleet would not be enough to break through by force and such a major confrontation was ill-advised. Just as he had elected to bring but a single Chapter as his honour guard, the Lion took with him a squadron of his swiftest ships, rigged for a long journey in the depths of the Warp, leaving behind the battleship *Invincible Reason*. Speed and subtlety would stand the Dark Angels in better stead than bluster or brute force, and, unlike some of their brother Legions, the First Legion was more than capable of adopting a tactical stance appropriate to the needs of the moment.

With the Warp stirred to restless turmoil by the rituals of the Word Bearers at Calth, even the expert navigators of the First Legion had difficulty plotting a course full across the sector. While they managed

Historia Terra Regum

The Knight and the Warlord

While the Lion fought upon the surface of Ulan Hûda, Corswain confronted the Faceless Prince in orbit. Commanding the *Invincible Reason* in his master's stead, Corswain and a handful of supporting cruisers held off the massed frigates and assault craft of the Night Lords, sworn to protect the Dark Angels on the surface at any cost. Over the course of the battle, his few ships would amass a dozen ship-kills for a loss of only three of their own number: the *Ardent Knight* falling to the torpedoes of the Night Lords bombardment cruiser *Eldritch Sign*, the *Pride of Gramarye* destroyed as it rammed the grand cruiser *Endless Night* and the *Warspite* crippled after being struck by debris from the wounding of Ulan Hûda.

At the height of the battle, the *Invincible Reason* was boarded by the Faceless Prince himself, and the two commanders met in combat. The duel they fought was brief, for while Thole was a skilled swordsman he could not match the honed skill of Corswain, resorting instead to foul play to even the odds between them. Severing a nearby conduit, the Night Lords commander bathed the hallway in which they fought in searing plasma, killing a number of his own warriors, breaching Corswain's ornate battle plate and leaving his sword arm burned and useless. Despite his wounds, Corswain, trained to fight with either hand to equal ability, held off the Faceless Prince until Ulan Hûda's fall, forcing him to retreat in shame once again.



to avoid the loss of any ships, the entire squadron was scattered and dispersed. Aboard the strike cruiser *Vehemence*, the Lion was the first to breach the Warp at the edge of the system where Tsagualsa could be found, an otherwise unremarkable world whose drab and lifeless terrain made no impression of strategic value. Yet on the surface could be seen the beginnings of the Night Haunter's baroque new fortress and in orbit on the far side of the planet lurked a small fleet of Night Lords craft. Waiting on the outskirts of the system the Dark Angels ships slowly regrouped, the remaining craft dropping from the Warp one by one until they matched the numbers of the foe. Hours had passed as the Lion's fleet assembled, yet the Night Lords neither approached nor targeted the Loyalist ships. Indeed, as they approached the barren world in combat formation they received a brief hail, inviting the Lion to meet his brother on the surface.

His warriors in standby aboard the cruisers above, waiting at their gunships and drop pods for the ambush they all knew must be coming, the Lion teleported to the surface with only two warriors as his honour guard. Alajos, Praetor of the Ninth, and Corswain would bear witness to the meeting of the two brothers on the surface of Tsagualsa, the first time they had come face to face since the beginning of the Horus Heresy. There, amid the foundations of his new, macabre stronghold, Curze taunted his brother with the fragments of truth his dreams had made known to him, with the plans of Horus and the lies he knew would wound the Lion's pride the most deeply. He baited and cursed all in order to coax his brother to violence, to force his future onto a new path that would avoid the fate he feared was his destiny. He fought with the one weapon he knew that the Lion would not expect from his dark brother: the truth.

"We are savage weapons, one and all, too dangerous to be wielded without cost. That is all history will see of us. Even you Lion. Even you."

All those present had expected the meeting to end in violence, that it would see the two Primarchs cross blades and draw their Legions into the fight, but only Curze had expected that it would be the Lion who would strike first. With the Lion's sudden fury the battle was begun, and once started it quickly spread. At first the two Primarchs struggled alone then their honour guards drew blood and within the space of a few short minutes, drop pods and attack ships rained down upon the planet as full scale conflict erupted.

This would be no ordered and composed battle, no carefully planned engagement with objectives and strategies, but a sprawling brawl. A mindless melee powered by blind hatred and fury where neither side made any attempt at formations or battle lines, but simply charged forwards to grapple and blast at the foe at point blank range. At its heart the two Primarchs fought until they were awash in each other's blood, both screaming curses and exchanging blows with equal viciousness, their differences masked with gore and the rage that twisted their features. The only cause or objective on Tsagualsa was death and the fighting did not relent, continuing long past the exhaustion of munitions and long past any rational casualty level.

In the end, the sons of Konrad Curze dragged him bodily from the field, the Night Haunter's wounds were so grave he could do little more than scream insults as the Night Lords struggled to hold back the Lion, for even cut to the bone the Primarch of the First Legion was a fearsome opponent. This was no victory for the Dark Angels though, for the Chapter that had followed the enraged Lion into battle was a shadow of its former numbers, and as more Night Lords ships arrived in the system they in turn were forced to flee. It had been a savage battle fought by savage weapons, Curze's insults lodged now in the mind of the Lion like cruel barbs, for in the end they had been proven more similar than they were different, the titles Loyalist and Traitor had counted for nothing.

The Spite of Devils

While the battle at Tsagualsa had driven a splinter of doubt into the Lion's mind, it had altered neither the state of the war nor the destruction being wrought upon the Eastern Fringe. Worse, with his final gambit wasted and failed, the Night Haunter could now see only one path ahead of him, a future he dreaded more than anything else, but one he now saw no way to avoid. The demons he had struggled with since he had left Nostramo took hold of him and the last vestiges of honour and reason fell away from the Night Lords. While the Traitor lords of Heraldor, Memlock and other strongholds across the Eastern Fringe still fought a war to claim these stars for the Warmaster, the Night Haunter and the most debased of his warriors fought only for the brief distraction that death and blood brought them. There would be no more attempts to take or hold ground for them, just killing and destruction and the Warmaster be damned.

By contrast, the Loyalists found their ranks swelled with those regiments of the Nightwatch once pinned in place by the siege of Thramas, and with its relief they gained the ability to control a far larger spread of territory. Captain-general Morhde set the serried regiments of Thramas on the attack, leaving the defence of many planets to the ranks of the Imperialis Militia in order to press the conscript armies of the Traitor Aegis sector, desperate to put an end to the war before it utterly ruined the home he fought for. Catching that wide expanse of worlds between Tigrus to the south-west, Gulgorahd to the north and the Thramassi Nightwatch to the east, the Loyalist regiments pressed home



their attack. The Dark Angels were the tip of the spear that struck the Traitors in their open flank, striking at the strongest opposition and the most fortified strongholds, ever searching for the sons of the Night Haunter that they might settle their grudge in honest and open battle. Yet even as they conquered and bled, the Dark Angels found little trace of the Night Lords, encountering only scattered bands and small groups of reavers that gave them little satisfaction in battle.

The fall of Memlock, one of the chief strongholds of the Traitor forces in the Aegis sector, preserved against the chaos overtaking the Eastern Fringe, saw one of the few confrontations between the two Legions in this last stage of the crusade. There a full Chapter of the Night Lords, under Anrek Barbatos, stood sentinel over the nine-tiered fortress of Memlock, overseeing the transfer of materials and conscripts to Tsagualsa and the new stronghold of the Night Lords that was being built. Ever a stalwart of the old Legion and its Terran origins, Barbatos had resisted the madness that gripped much of his Legion and deplored the long decline of his Primarch. To Barbatos and those that still followed him, it seemed right that they make a stand in the ruins of the empire they had sought to build, and when the Dark Angels came they did not run. For seven weeks Barbatos, his warriors and a dozen conscript regiments held the massed might of the Thramassi Nightwatch and three Chapters of the Dark Angels at bay, falling only when the Lion himself brought another 1,000 of his black-armoured killers to the fray. It is a legend of the First Legion that one of the scars on the Lion's armour is from Barbatos' blade, a last memento of a warrior that chose to face his end bravely.

The remainder of the Night Lords had no intention of granting the First Legion any satisfaction, to the Nostraman warriors there was little value in a brave but futile death when they could hurt their opponent in other ways. The scattered warbands of the VIIIth Legion moved from world to world, burning and killing where they found only the weak or the vulnerable, and poisoning worlds from orbit where their defences were too strong for a traditional assault. Unlike their previous onslaught this was no attempt to build small empires or to spread that favoured weapon of the Night Lords, fear, but instead a scorched earth campaign was undertaken. What they could not keep they would destroy, the Eastern Fringe would burn to satisfy their spite and anger. Where they encountered the First Legion in numbers enough to trouble them they withdrew, whenever the Lion managed to corner them they withdrew. They gave the First Legion no chance for a decisive battle and no pause to regroup. Denied an escape from his nightmares, Curze granted the Eastern Fringe a chance to see what it was that haunted him, to bring despair to his noble brother and work upon the doubt that had lodged within him at Tsagualsa. No longer was the Thramas Crusade a battle to control the Eastern Fringe, it had become its death.

Regret and Desolation

The once-rich worlds of the Eastern Fringe, already devastated by more than two years of constant war and battle, were ruined by the new pace of the conflict. The last semblances of stellar civilisation fell away and left only barbarism and madness behind, and such small concepts as Loyalist and Traitor began to lose their meaning. The Night Lords descended wherever they could find weakness or the smallest gap in the Loyalists' lines, their ships apparently uninhibited by the worsening warp storms that spread out from Ultramar to encompass Thramas. Where they appeared, there were no glorious battles or defiant last stands, only a brutal slaughter of anyone that the Legion chose not to enslave. Everything of worth on those worlds they marked was taken aboard the dark ships of the VIIIth Legion, and what they could not claim they destroyed, burning cities and herding entire populations into the skinning pits. When they left, there remained nothing of value, only scorched ruins and the bleached bones of those deemed unworthy to slave in the bowels of the Night Lords fleet until they died. It was a policy that hurt the Night Lords almost as much as it crippled the Dark Angels, denying both sides any safe port in the madness of war and leaving them few havens to repair and resupply the battered Legions that prosecuted the crusade.

Still tormented by the Night Haunter's words on Tsagualsa and barely recovered from the grievous injuries inflicted upon him, the Lion began a grim new strategy of his own. On his orders, those worlds that could not be fully safeguarded from the Night Lords' depredations were razed to the ground to ensure that no succour or profit could be gleaned from them. Those few of the lesser worlds that had escaped the ravages of the Night Lords fell to the Dark Angels, whose own rampage caused as much destruction as that of the Night Lords. Munitions and warriors were spared the scorched earth policy and consolidated on those major worlds deemed worth defending by the First Legion. Those smaller colonies or minor forges whose resources were too meagre to warrant a garrison – for to defend every single outpost was beyond the manpower that remained to the Loyalists – were stripped bare and their people forced to relocate as their old homes burned. It was as pragmatically logical as it was cruel, and the inhabitants of Thramas watched as those they once hailed as the heroes of the Great Crusade tore the Eastern Fringe apart.

For all its spite, the Dark Angels' new strategy proved only marginally effective. For while the larger strongholds of the Loyalists were now all but impregnable to the Night Haunter's legions, heavily guarded and fortified, the Night Lords remained a threat that could not be pinned down or brought to battle where they might be broken. Worse still, they had completed what the Night Lords had begun, the systematic destruction of the communication and infrastructure links that had held the Eastern Fringe together. The warp storms that had engulfed the Imperium grew steadily worse, the name '*Ruinstorm*' spreading across the sectors with every tale of a ship lost in transit, but such woes seemed not to affect those sworn to the Warmaster. Moving slowly and in great numbers, the Loyalists weathered the storms, striking at Traitor strongholds where they found them and bringing much of the Aegis sector to heel at last, but always the Night Lords evaded them. Though they wielded superior numbers and resources, the Dark Angels could not end the war while the Night Lords still roamed free.

In the midst of this turmoil, with the Eastern Fringe crumbling around him, Lion El'Jonson suddenly gathered 30,000 of his warriors and without explanation departed the Eastern Fringe for an unknown location. With such a large portion of the Dark Angels' strength and many of its greatest leaders absent, the Night Lords went on the offensive for the first time in months. All across the Eastern Fringe they struck at the remaining Dark Angels garrisons,

largely ignoring the less well-defended worlds held by the Solar Auxilia and Imperialis Militia, bleeding them and taking many trophies but failing to unseat the well-entrenched defenders. Only one Loyalist stronghold would fall to the talons of the Night Haunter's sons and then only briefly, but it was a bitter loss for the Dark Angels to bear. Thramas, stripped of its Dark Angels garrison when the Lion vanished, was unprepared for the onslaught of Nakrid Thole and the 10,000 warriors at his back. The defences ruined in the onslaught of Ulan Hûda had never been fully repaired and many of the regiments once pledged to its defence were spread across the stars prosecuting the Lion's crusade, the Star of the East fell within hours of bitter but one-sided battle. Only the palace of the Regent held, the Midnight Host and their power axes kept the Night Lords at bay in the close confines of the palace, spending their lives to guard not the throne room but the sanctum of the world's Astropathic choir.

Obsessed with the complete destruction of Thramas, Nakrid Thole refused to withdraw until its last fastnesses had been overthrown and its surface utterly razed. His warriors spent days tormenting and butchering the few people of Thramas that still clung to their home world, parading their broken corpses before the Regent's palace where the Regent and the Midnight Host still held. In his arrogance, Thole gave little thought to anything but his revenge, and when the Warp opened again after seven long days spent tormenting the Regent and her bodyguards, he found himself in a trap of his own making.

Emerging from the Warp was a Dark Angels fleet gathered over the long days of Thramas' torment so they might be able to strike a blow against the Legion that had so far avoided their fury. Commanded by the Eskaton Marduk Sedras, their goal was not the relief of Thramas or the rescue of its people, but the utter destruction of the Night Lords host present on that world. In the face of the far larger Dark Angels fleet, its relic void craft more than a match in open battle for the Night Lords craft, the Faceless Prince's vessel stood little chance of victory, but their warlord refused to order a withdrawal while the Regent of Thramas still lived. Even as the ships above staged a short battle for orbital supremacy before abandoning the hopeless struggle, Nakrid Thole led his men in an assault on the palace.

Having seized orbital space above Thramas, the ships of the Dark Angels rained fire down upon it, the Eskaton concluding that what little remained after the Night Lords, rampage was little worth risking the lives of his warriors to save. Phosphex and lance beam reduced the once proud spires of Thramas to rubble, killing many of the Night Lords that still hunted through the hive city and obliterating the few surviving citizens. When the Eskaton and the grim warriors of the Dreadwing finally set foot upon the surface after three hours of bombardment they found little that still resembled a city, just twisted metal and melted ferrocrete warped into shapes that seemed alien and strange. There, among the burning rain and bleached bones of a loyal world, they hunted the last of the Night Lords, the dark blue plate once worn so proudly by the Night Haunter's warriors twisted into something demonic by the heat and destruction. Thole himself, found alone in the Regent's heavily-shielded palace, died in battle with Eskaton Marduk, and a legend within the First Legion claims that he died with the Regent's bleached skull fixed on his armour and a bitter smile on his face.

The Dark Angels declared the battle a victory, for the Night Lords had suffered a major loss of troops as a result of their actions, but it was a victory that rang hollow. Thramas had been the capital of the Eastern Fringe, one of its most prosperous worlds and a bastion of the Great Crusade, and now it was ruins. Brought low not by the hand of the Warmaster or the madness of Curze but by the pragmatic logic of the First Legion, the warriors that represented the Emperor and the Imperium He had built. This was the first glimpse of the true face of the Horus Heresy, a war of hatred and brutality that was no longer about who would control the ruins of the Imperium, but which had become an exercise in genocide. Thramas was a symbol of what the Horus Heresy held in store for the Eastern Fringe, a quiet death in the shadow of grappling post-human siblings with neither hero nor villain to be found. The death of Thramas did not tilt the balance of the war, the Night Lords remained a dire threat to the Loyalists despite their losses, and it seemed the killing would go on until nothing remained in the segmentum but corpses and ruins. Then, the Lion returned from Perditus.

Desperation cuts Keenly

From the moment of the Lion's return, the war began to change. Where before the Dark Angels had groped blindly through the Warp, travelling only with difficulty and unable to pin down their foe, now they moved with a speed that the Night Lords had ill-expected. The First Legion had been granted a weapon that allowed them to bypass the storms that isolated much of the Eastern Fringe. This new weapon, added to their arsenal at Perditus by the hand of the Lion himself, would be the key to victory in the Thramas Crusade. For that key to work there would need to be a lock, a critical point where it could be wielded to maximum effect. The Dark Angels were running out of time, they could ill-afford another three years of war in the east with Horus pressing on Terra and disturbing rumours seeping out of war-torn Ultramar. They needed a decisive battle, a field on which to break the Night Lords and end the war once and for all.

Historica Terra Regnum

The Forbidden Battle

Almost nothing is known of the Lion's expedition to the system referred to only as Perditus, 'Forbidden' – 30,000 Dark Angels left alongside their Primarch, but far fewer would return. Who it was that the Lion fought is not known, though rumours would have us believe that his was not the only Legion present in that remote system, and what his objective might have been is a secret still held close by the Dark Angels long after the end of the Horus Heresy. The only thing that is known for certain is that the Lion brought something back with him from that forbidden place.

Referred to within the First Legion simply as the '*Gatekeeper*' or the '*Key*', the prize that Lion El'Jonson brought back from Perditus allowed him to circumvent the great storms that had swept across much of the galaxy. It was the key to winning the Thramas Crusade once and for all, and none questioned such a tool nor the secrecy that surrounded it. The great and the mighty that oversaw the war agreed that such a prize was worth the sacrifice of Thramas and any number of other worlds, for it allowed them to punish the Traitors and strike at their fleets with impunity. The Lion, when he spoke of such things at all, named it a necessary evil, a tool that was to be wielded as was required and then put aside. One single record, hidden deep within the vaults of Terra, in the warded racks that maintain those tomes dedicated to the study of the psyarkane, gives this tool a name, one that bears a grim aspect. It calls it 'Tuchulcha, the servant of the Deadly Seas'. It names it 'Daemon'.



Dark Angels Terminator Cenobite

Cenobite Astilaeus, the Order of the Empty Sky, Second Battle of Thramas

Deployed as part of the landing force that would eradicate the Night Lords' presence in the ruins of Thramas, Cenobite Astilaeus and the other members of his cenobium made the specialised skills of the Order of the Empty Sky available to the Dark Angels' spearhead and were experts in the prosecution of close-quarters battle in conjunction with lethalis category artillery support, exploiting the chaos of lethalis category fire support as shells burst in the very midst of their assault. It was a tradition that had begun on Caliban, with the heavily armoured knights fighting even while their serfs and armsmen showered the field with shafts and shot from primitive projectile weaponry, and many of its adherents were of Calibanite stock. The heavy Cataphracti Terminator armour granted them by the Lion as part of his vaunted First Legion, allowed them to weather the storm of shrapnel and flame produced by the terrible weapons of the Great Crusade with limited risk and bring the fury of their assault into the heart of enemy formations that were cowering in the face of the artillery's fury.





Creating such a field would be the challenge, for the Night Lords operated in scattered raiding fleets and rarely gathered in force. Their anchorage point had been discovered in data retrieved from the wrecks of ships destroyed over Thramas, a hidden facility above one of the outer worlds of the ruined Sheol system, which had been abandoned almost a year ago and deemed dead by the Loyalists. Yet, to act on this information would render it useless, for once the Night Lords realised their base was compromised, they would abandon it as they had done others and the war would go on. For there to be a single great battle, the Dark Angels would need to create it whole cloth. The first stage in the Lion's plan to achieve this was the destruction and harrying of the Night Lords fleets, leaving the conduct of the wider war to the surviving Nightwatch regiments and the lords of Gulgorahd. Gathering the might of his Legion's vessels to him, the Lion waited and watched. When his allies reported the appearance of a Night Lords fleet in-system, he used his new weapon to bring his entire fleet to bear upon them, crushing those that tried to fight and letting flee those that choose to run. Within the space of a few months, after eight separate Night Lords flotillas had been scattered, the Night Lords had all but withdrawn from combat, choosing to hide and wait for the tide to turn once again.

The second stage of the Lion's plan was to provide the lords of Gulgorahd with the location of the remnants of the renegade Legio Victorum, that most hated of their foes, deliberately provoking an immediate response from the belligerent magi of Gulgorahd who emptied their garrisons to strike at the traitors. This sudden weakness along the Loyalist lines opened by the ill-advised assault of the lords of Gulgorahd, was an opportunity the Traitors could not ignore.

Even as the Taghma of Gulgorahd began their own battle and called for his aid, the Lion was already marshalling the bulk of his Legion to attack Sheol IX, where he knew that the Night Haunter must be doing the same in preparation to take advantage of what seemed like another strategic blunder by the Gulgorahd forces. Here at last would be the decisive battle the Lion desired, arranged at the cost of the warriors of Gulgorahd, who would be expended in a futile assault on the renegade elements of the Legio Victorum in exchange for the chance to cripple the Night Lords.

Due to the nature of his new weapon, the Lion could not resort to more traditional naval tactics; there would be no advance squadrons to scout their approach and no slow consolidation of disparate armadas at the edge of the system. Instead, the gathered might of the Dark Angels, some 300 capital class ships and twice that of strike craft and smaller ships, appeared less than one AU from the outer planets of the Sheol system, drawn up in tight formation around the ancient battleship *Invincible Reason*. The Night Lords fleet, perhaps 200 capital ships and three times that of lighter torpedo boats and hunter-killer frigates, was caught completely unprepared, with many of its ships still at anchor in orbital stations above Sheol IX and the vast majority of its warriors on the planet's surface awaiting embarkation. Those squadrons ready for action moved to oppose the lead elements of the Dark Angels fleet, but could do little more than delay the massed heavy cruisers of the First Legion. A dozen Night Lords ships of the line were destroyed in the opening moments of the attack, but the precious few minutes they bought for their kin allowed the rest of their fleet to prepare. Some moved to form a cohesive defence, others tried in vain to shuttle the troops trapped on Sheol IX, including the Primarch Konrad Curze himself, to the relative safety of orbit and a few turned tail and slipped into the Warp.

The Dark Angels advanced, their ships so numerous that, from the surface of Sheol IX, they blocked out the light of the stars, and those Night Lords that remained were given little choice but to stand against the black-hulled tide that descended upon them. Here was the climactic battle they had sought, the apex of the long crusade in which they had fought and the final dispensation of justice for those that had foresworn their oaths. Yet despite this, there was no gallant charge, no moving speeches or heroic end to the long struggle for the Eastern Fringe. Instead, the Dark Angels took up firing positions and began a systematic bombardment of the Night Lords, many of their ancient relic cruisers capable of engaging the foe accurately at a far greater range than that at which their opponents could easily reply. It was a slaughter conducted with cold and dispassionate precision, with entire squadrons of Night Lords craft torn apart before they could even reply in kind to the onslaught, and the foe they had cornered refused to die an ignominious death as traitors should and responded with the determination and stubborn dignity expected of heroes of the Great Crusade.

The greater part of those ships that remained to the VIIIth Legion conducted a massed charge, while the lesser remained in orbit of Sheol IX, still struggling to bring the warriors of the Legion aboard. The sleek attack cruisers of the Night Lords stormed forwards, those in the lead taking horrific damage from the accurate Dark Angels fire, acting as a shield for those behind them to reach firing range. Splitting like a shoal of deadly and ravenous aquatic predators, the Night Lords divided into a dozen smaller formations and struck the Dark Angels line as they unleashed a furious close range storm of fire. The Dark Angels lines split, with a number of their ships aflame and listing out of formation, but did not break and the Night Lords ships threw themselves at the openings they had forced, leaving just as many of their own craft as broken hulks in the attempt. Of the 100 or more capital craft that had gone forth to give battle, barely 50 survived to breach the lines of the First Legion fleet, with many of their number having been purposefully crippled and left helpless in the void and then boarded by the Lion's warriors to be taken as prizes for the ongoing war. The survivors did not turn for a second assault or to save their wounded brethren, instead making best speed for the outskirts of the system and the safety of deep space, unwilling to allow the Dark Angels a comprehensive slaughter, for in their survival there was to be found a bitter victory.

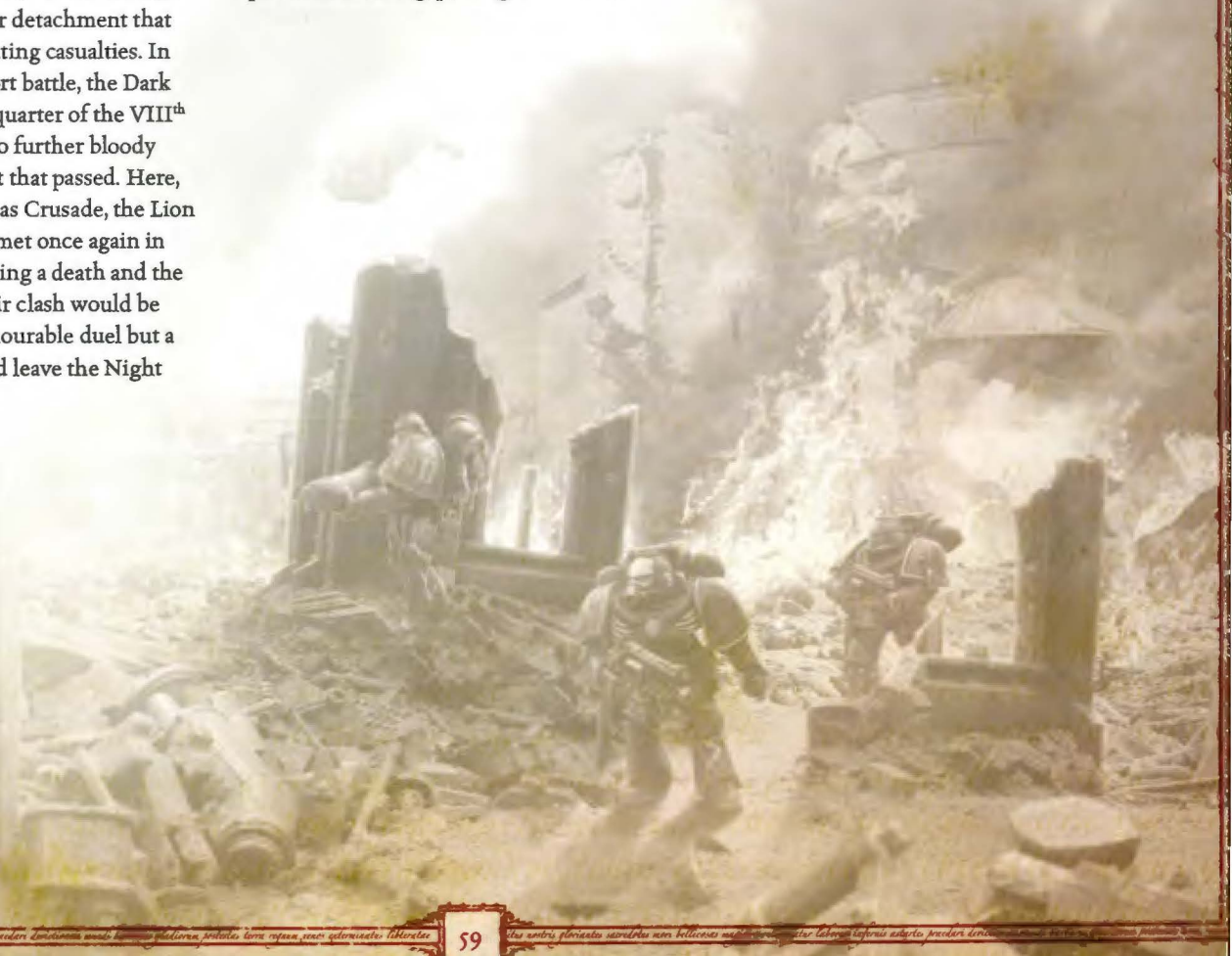
The First Legion fleet did not pursue, instead choosing to close on those ships that still lurked in orbit of Sheol IX, having chosen to save the Night Lords as a combat force. With deliberate malice, the Dark Angels encircled Sheol IX, a small and otherwise insignificant world, and began to dismember the Night Lords that had bravely elected to remain and attempt to rescue their stranded brethren on the surface below. The main force of the Dark Angels fleet concentrated on the lead ships of the enemies' defence: the hulking Gloriana class battleship *Nightfall* that was Curze's flagship and the heavy cruisers *Shroud of Eventide* and *Feral Heart* that made a desperate attempt to shield the flagship, taking almost as much damage as they inflicted in their eagerness to end the Night Haunter. Curze, however, was not aboard the *Nightfall*, but on the surface, a fact that was revealed only as the Dark Angels began to land their own troops, seeking to end the Night Lords in detail, both in orbit and on the ground. The battle for Sheol IX quickly fell into madness and chaos, with both armies hard-pressed to follow the events in detail and chained to the small battles they found themselves caught in.

Across orbital space, the ships of the two fleets began to intermingle, caught in desperate duels and brutal boarding actions while broken hulks and the detonations of the dying proved as deadly as live foes, while the landing craft and shuttles of the Night Lords fought a separate battle to bring their troops to those few ships still capable of taking them aboard as the Dark Angels interceptors and frigates hunted them without mercy. Below, on the barren grey rock of Sheol IX, the Night Lords struggled to hold the line around the few fortified stations where they could safely embark, some detachments conducting raids against the First Legion's own landing points and others fought to destroy their own hidden armoury-vaults before the First Legion captured the heavy armour and equipment that could not be evacuated. The Night Haunter prowled the battlefield, killing in a wild frenzy and screaming for his brother to face him, leaving his Legion leaderless and divided in the face of the First Legion's onslaught.

For two long hours, the Night Lords held their ground, both in orbit and on the surface, keeping the overwhelming numbers of the Dark Angels at bay with sheer bloody spite and a tally of fallen warriors and destroyed ships that beggared belief. In orbit the number of operational Night Lords ships was outnumbered by floating hulks of the dead and crippled, while on the surface there was no company or detachment that had not suffered debilitating casualties. In the space of this one short battle, the Dark Angels had destroyed a quarter of the VIIIth Legion and threatened to further bloody them with each moment that passed. Here, at the apex of the Thramas Crusade, the Lion and the Night Haunter met once again in mortal combat, one seeking a death and the other a vindication. Their clash would be brief but vicious, no honourable duel but a spiteful brawl that would leave the Night Haunter broken and bleeding. The Lion would have finished his fallen brother, his ire raised by the destruction he had been forced to unleash upon the Eastern Fringe, had the captains of the Night Lords not committed the last of their reserves to hold him back. A full company of the Night Lords sacrificed themselves to cover those warriors that dragged the comatose Night Haunter to the last of the Stormbirds, giving their lives to thwart the Lion's revenge.

The *Nightfall* and its companions remained pinned in orbit while the Night Haunter escaped aboard the *Excoriator*. Battered by the unceasing assault of the Dark Angels' ships that surrounded them, the *Nightfall* was infested with boarding pods and brutally efficient cadres of Firewing saboteurs. Even with their Primarch saved, though his injuries might yet prove fatal, the Night Lords would have been doomed but for the destruction of the *Feral Heart*. The badly damaged assault cruiser, only the bridge still under the control of the Night Lords and with Firewing veterans cutting through the last bulkheads, detonated its warp core rather than allow the ship to be captured. The dying ship tore apart realspace over a vast area, annihilating those ships caught within the event horizon and carving chunks from the flanks of those on its edge, blasting an opening in the closing net of the Dark Angels fleet. The *Nightfall* powered into the gap, using its sheer bulk to smash aside the cruiser *Unyielding Duty* and the remaining ships of the fleet followed. The Night Lords cruisers *Absolute* and *Crown of Ashes*, last in the fleeing fleet, turned at bay to buy their brothers time to get clear of the Dark Angels, overloading their power relays to deliver salvo after salvo of fire as the Dark Angels cut them to pieces. The surviving Night Lords did not wait to reach the outer extents of the system and the Mandeville point, but instead activated their warp drives just outside of Sheol IX's weak gravitic pull. Three more ships died there as their warp drives suffered catastrophic failures, the result of such a desperate gambit, and the rest fell into the dubious safety of the Warp, the Dark Angels remaining on-station over Sheol IX to eradicate those left behind. The battle for the Sheol system was over, and on the surface of its ninth planet, amid the ashes of the latest in so many worlds broken by his hands, the Lion brooded over the words of Konrad Curze:

"We are savage weapons, one and all, too dangerous to be wielded without cost. That is all history will see of us. Even you Lion. Even you."





The Heavy Toll of Victory

'What prospers the Imperium if we cut out its beating heart in order to claim the ephemeral blessings of victory in war? I fear that what the Night Haunter has unleashed will not end with his defeat, but haunt us to our graves and beyond.'

Captain-general Morhde of the Thramassi Nightwatch

A Legion Rent Asunder

Written in the vast clouds of debris that spun in orbit of Sheol IX and with the drifts of corpses on its surface was the final end of the Thramas Crusade. More than three years of blood and death had brought both Loyalist and Traitor to this dark place. There was no victory parade or laurels granted to its heroes, only the empty places in their ranks. For the Night Lords, it seemed the death knell of their Legion, for near a quarter of those that had survived the war to that point now lay dead on the surface of Sheol IX and the once-great fleet of the VIIIth Legion was reduced to a shadow of its former self. The Night Haunter stood as the very emblem of his Legion, for though he lived, his wounds were so grave that all who beheld him spoke of him as dead. One half of his shattered Legion feared he would never rise again, and the other half, blaming his mania for their own humiliation, hoped that this was true. In the aftermath of Sheol, little remained of the once-proud VIIIth Legion that would be recognised by those that had known them in the long-passed days of the Unification Wars.

In imitation of their Primarch, the Night Lords Legion was wounded unto death, and its warriors stood on the very edge of their own civil war. Without the threat of the Night Haunter's wrath there seemed little reason to many of the warlords within the Legion for them to continue Horus' war when they could instead see to their own amusement. Had this been left to fester, it is likely that the Night Lords would have ceased to exist as a cohesive army, bound to disintegrate into roving warbands of pirates and reavers, instead it would be bled of its sickness. Sevatar and the Atramentar brought death to their own, fighting a short and brutal war to restore a sense of unity and purpose to the broken Legion. Taking power and setting up a new council to lead the Legion, Sevatar let those who could not serve in his new Night Lords slip into the shadows of the Thramas sector while he gathered the last survivors to him at the small and insignificant star of Qetesh.

Here, the Night Lords would meet with the final humiliation of their long battle with the Dark Angels. Having gathered the survivors of the fleet, calling ships from the rally points at Yrrkesh, Taur and other stars, the Night Lords had thought to gain a brief respite, but this was not to be. Even as the Night Lords prepared to depart the Eastern Fringe, the Dark Angels fell upon them once more. This could not be called a battle, for the First Legion outnumbered their prey so greatly and had surprised them so completely that it was not a matter of whether they would claim victory, but rather one of how many Traitor ships would be able to escape the slaughter. Once again, the deciding factor would be the unpredictable actions of Konrad Curze, who, awakening from his torpor aboard the *Excoriator* as the Night Lords fought to escape, ordered a final boarding assault upon the Dark Angels' flagship. It was a futile and doomed effort, the manifestation of the Night Haunter's bitter and suicidal spite, and it would cost his Legion dearly. Of the more than 100,000 warriors of the VIIIth Legion that had entered the conflict, less than 60,000 would escape the ambush at Sheol IX, with the Night Haunter himself counted amongst those lost, last seen battling the Lion aboard the *Invincible Reason* alongside Sevatar and the Atramentar. It was the end of the VIIIth Legion, the last gasp of the warriors that had won the Great Crusade only to be cut loose from the constraints of its strictures, and the beginning of something far darker.

A Resolve Tarnished

Even for the Legion that history records as the victor, the savour of their triumph was ashen and the laurels they wore fashioned of the scorched bones of empire. Though the Dark Angels had taken only a fraction of the losses inflicted upon the Night Lords, with no more than 10,000 of its warriors slain in combat, they had expended a different collateral in order to secure the final destruction of their foe. The resolve of the First Legion and its Primarch had been tested, their desire for victory matched against their willingness to tear down the Imperium to grasp it. It was a test that Lion El'Jonson had stood many times in the past, the death of a world considered a small cost to pay for the future of the Imperium entire, but this war would be different. It would demand sacrifice on a scale that dwarfed even that of the Great Crusade, with hundreds of worlds either left to burn so that battles elsewhere might be won, or entire populations put to the sword so that they could not be pressed to the service of the Traitor. Had it been any other than the Lion they might have wavered. Sanguinius would have deplored the cost in innocent lives and Guilliman would have abhorred the ruin of productive worlds, but Lion El'Jonson had long since hardened his heart to such trials.

There was but a single tiny chink in the armour that the Lion had forged around his soul, a sole weakness that pained him greatly in the final days of the Thramas campaign. It was a wound inflicted by the Night Haunter, not a wound carved in his flesh, for the Primarchs had ever been quick to heal from even the most grievous wounds, but a darkness on his heart. Konrad Curze's words haunted him, "*Even you Lion, even you*". He did not care that others might hold him in contempt for his choices, for he believed that history would redeem him, but that his methods made him no different from Curze, from the Night Haunter, was a blade held against his heart. All of the sacrifices that had been made to build the Imperium and preserve the Emperor's dream of unity were his pride, his duty, paid for with his own blood and that of his sons. That they would be seen as equal to the butchery perpetrated by brute-killers like Curze or Angron set him closer to anger, to blind rage, than any other insult or wound had ever done. The Lion wondered whether, in the final days of war in the Eastern Fringe, he had acted from cruel necessity or at the impulse of his own hatred for Curze.

For Thramas and its broken worlds he could do nothing, remorse of any kind was akin to foolishness to the Lion. It had been ruined in the cause of the Imperium, yet one more sacrifice offered up for a future the Emperor had promised to His sons, and it was of no further value in the war against Horus. So the Lion left, neither in triumph nor defeat, but with a fragile sense of pride that once again the First Legion had stormed into the jaws of hell and emerged bloodied but unbroken. If this rebellion was to be the final test of his resolve he would meet it head-on, he would prove himself better than those of his brothers that had fallen to their own selfish needs and hatreds. By his hand would the Imperium be saved, and he would tolerate none that sought to see it ended, for the sake of his own sacrifices and the duty that had been given him by the Emperor Himself. From broken Thramas the Lion turned his ships, not towards distant Terra, still shrouded in warp storms, but towards Ultramar and his brother Guilliman, for dire rumours had reached him from Tigrus. They spoke of destruction and death, of the treachery of the World Eaters and Word Bearers, and of a new banner raised amongst the ruins of his Imperium. One rebel had already risen and would fall at the Lion's hand, and if another had dared to rise, they would meet the same fate. The Dark Angels departed Thramas in full battle order, guns readied and blades sharp; they set their courses by a new beacon and to a singular destination.

To Imperium Secundus.

Heraldry of the Night Lords



These banners are typical of the later heraldry of the Night Lords, and heavily influenced by the hive gangs of Nostramo, Cairn and other benighted worlds of that distant sector. Much of the ordered heraldry of the old Terran Legion has been replaced by the more haphazard icons of individual warlords, displaying favoured trophies and sobriquets to intimidate and terrorise a foe.





This MkIII pauldron shows a traditional Nostraman command insignia. The red field indicates the owner was under official sanction.



An older example of Legion heraldry, borne by a Terran veteran of the old Legion. It features the newer icon favoured by the Night Haunter.



A MkVI pauldron from Nostramo. The insinia is that of the Grave Lords street gang, which supplied a large number of Night Lords recruits.



The Screaming Skull insignia, shown here in crimson on a MkIV pauldron, is often associated with those of the Night Lords that favoured the Warmaster.



The Cross 'o Bones that served to identify the Faceless Prince. The inscription translates roughly to '*The strong prosper, the weak suffer*'.



Another depiction of the Screaming Skull. The accompanying inscription features the Nostraman runes for 'empire' and 'destroy'.



The Red Gauntlet, displayed here on a MkIII pauldron, had come to indicate a loyalty to Jago Sevatarion and the restoration of the Night Haunter.



A traditional Night Lords emblem. Likely this is intended to serve during rare Imperium parades when the more macabre battle plate would be frowned upon.



VIII[TH] Legion Veteran Legionary

Headsman Rehk Nahmris, 9[th] Decimation Brigade, Yaelis Expanse Campaign

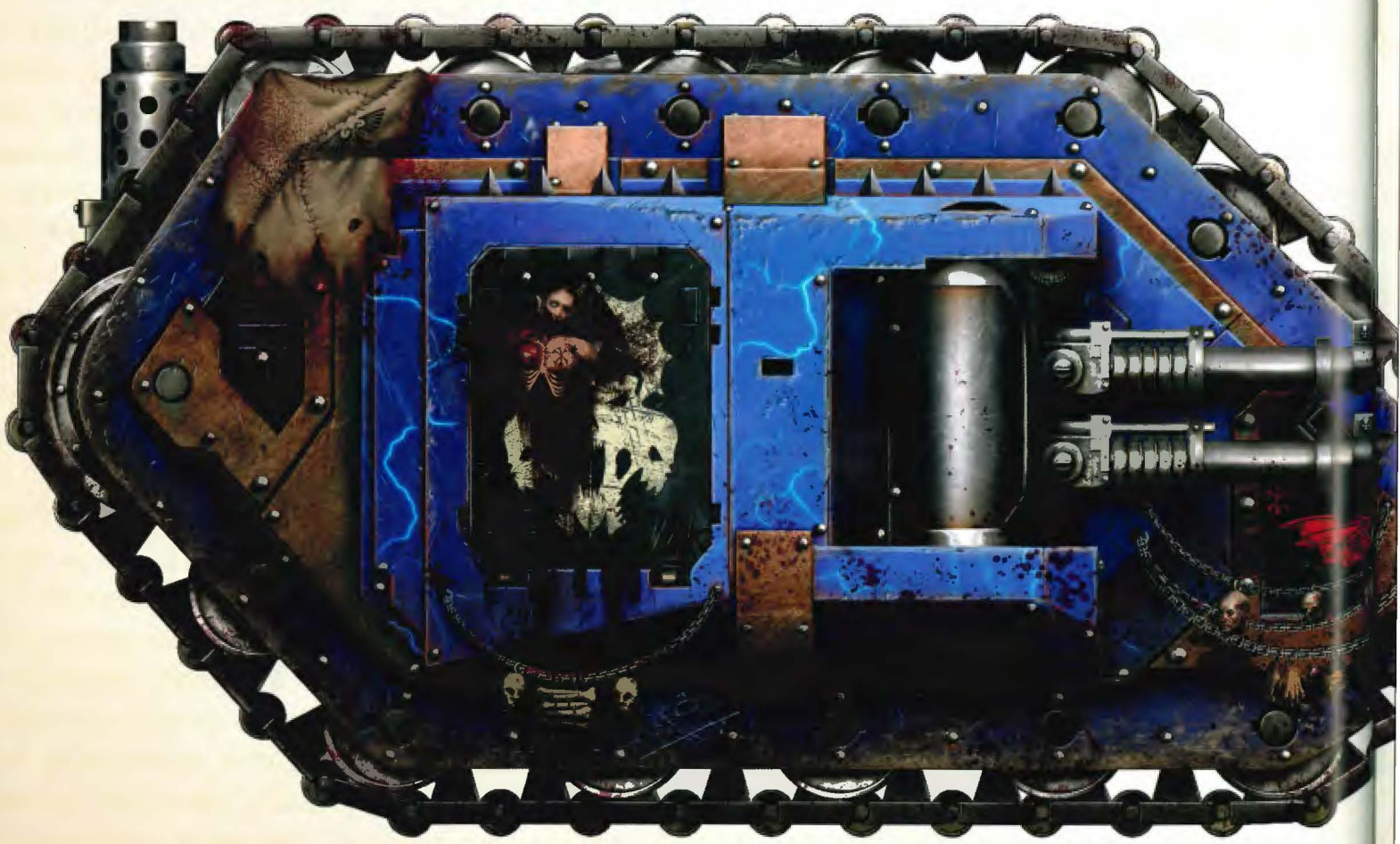
Operating as part of a deployment of three separate Chapters of the Night Lords, Headsman Nahmris and the Assault squads assigned to his command participated in the cleansing of three worlds, a campaign lasting nearly three months. In each case they faced only light opposition, most often in the form of Solar Auxilia detachments of the Thramassi Nightwatch, and were easily able to slaughter those that openly opposed them. The majority of the campaign would be spent in the systematic and brutal annihilation of the main planetary population centres, driving the inhabitants into the wilderness to starve. Such campaigns served as an object lesson to those who would oppose the Night Haunter and were key in forcing a number of surrenders by more heavily-fortified worlds. Headsman Nahmris himself was hailed for his zeal in such operations and would end the Thramas Crusade at the rank of Centurion thanks to his efforts.

Pacification Battalions

Among the Night Lords' order of battle for the Thramas Crusade were a number of divisions, innocuously named 'Pacification Battalions'. Despite the title borne by these forces, they were primarily constituted of heavy armour and shock assault infantry, most often from the infamous Terror Squads that were a unique feature of the VIIIth Legion. In action these forces were deployed to isolated Loyalist worlds with the sole goal of breaking whatever limited defences they might possess and then ravaging the planet and its population, making of them a visceral example to others of the price of defiance.

Upon arriving at its target, a Pacification Battalion first deploys its heavy armour en-masse, with most worlds targeted for attack unable to muster more than token resistance to such a hammerblow of military might. Once the defenders were broken and scattered, infantry assets and swift speeders and bikes are deployed to hunt them down, both military and civilian assets alike. Such operations are focused not on the reduction of enemy military force, but on collateral damage and a brutal culling of the population, making certain that those few who might evade their hunt would have secured little more than a slower death for themselves.

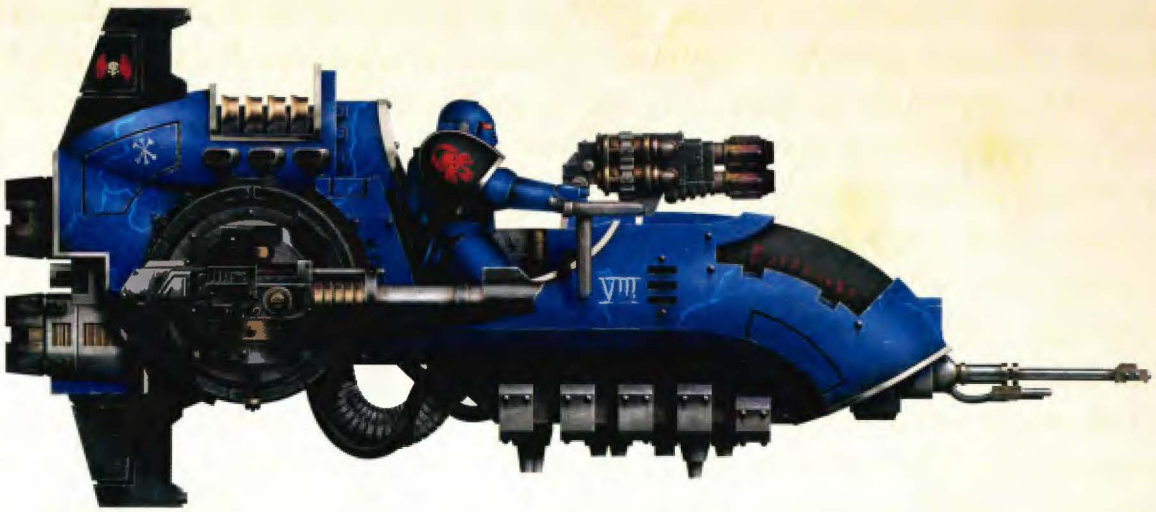
A Pacification Battalion rarely made any attempt to hold its ground, most often departing after a brief onslaught intended to inflict maximum destruction. In their wake would be left a scene of utter devastation – the desecrated corpses of the fallen and the gutted remains of cities, not merely wanton destruction, but a weapon more potent than any cannon or tank. Fear was the goal of these operations and it was such fear that tormented the Thramas sector during the long years of the Night Haunter's crusade.



Night Lords Land Raider

Mercy-killer

Named ironically, as was the wont of the Night Lords, this vehicle is known to have participated in some 18 pacification operations, with a potential tally of kills in the thousands. Its crew were known for their propensity for using the vehicle's lascannon to collapse hab-blocks upon those civilians attempting to take shelter within or to cut apart fortifications, turning them into traps for the troops now entombed within.



Night Lords Javelin Land Speeder

Flay-Theta/nine

Part of the large Land Speeder formations used by the Night Lords to harry retreating foes or to drive civilian forces into pre-arranged ambushes. Such vehicles were a favoured tool of the VIII[th] Legion for their ability to engage the enemy on their own terms and withdraw before being outmanoeuvred, earning them the nickname '*Skathra Nar*', a hilt-less knife from Nostramo used for sudden strikes and unexpected attacks.



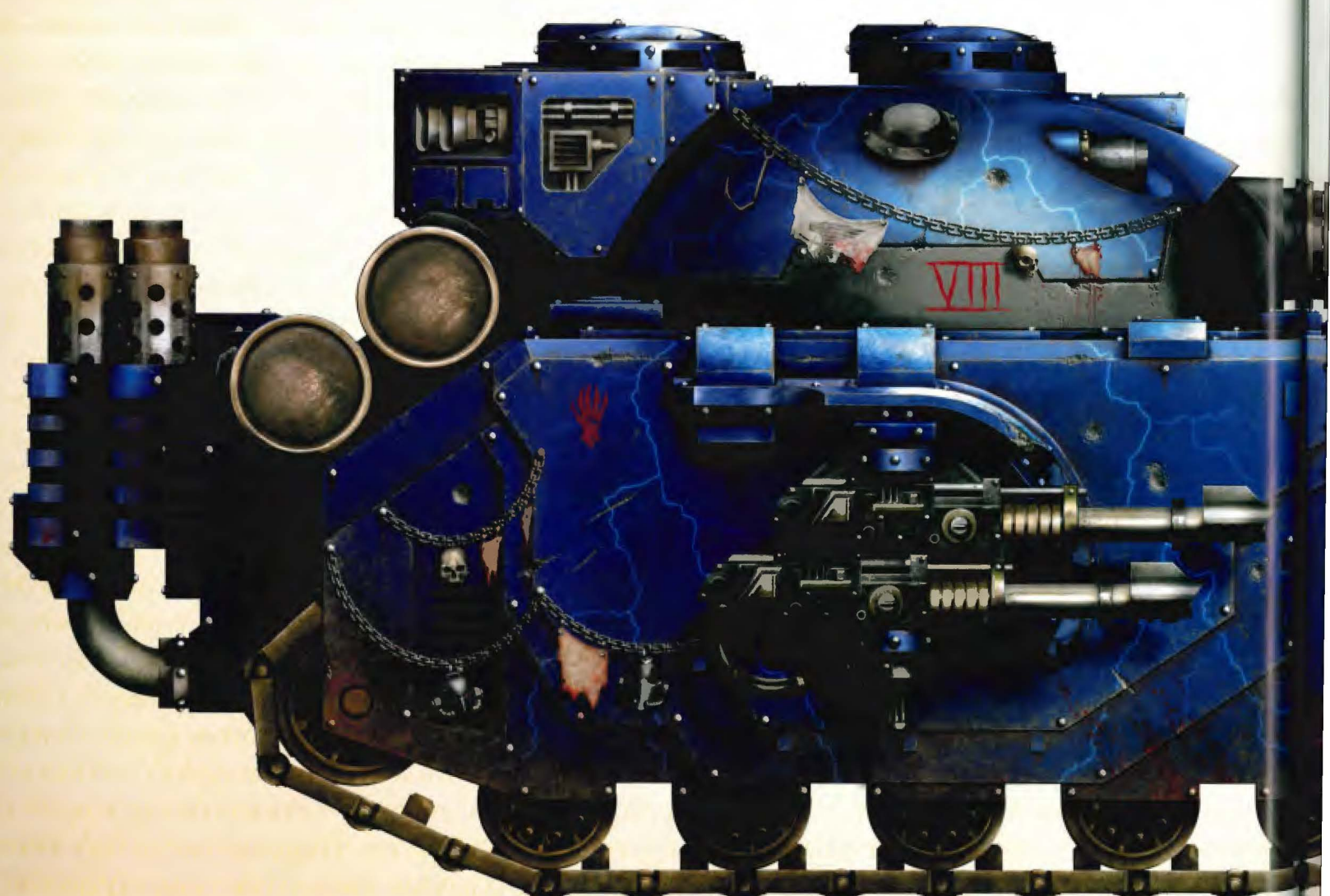
VIII[th] Legion Iconography

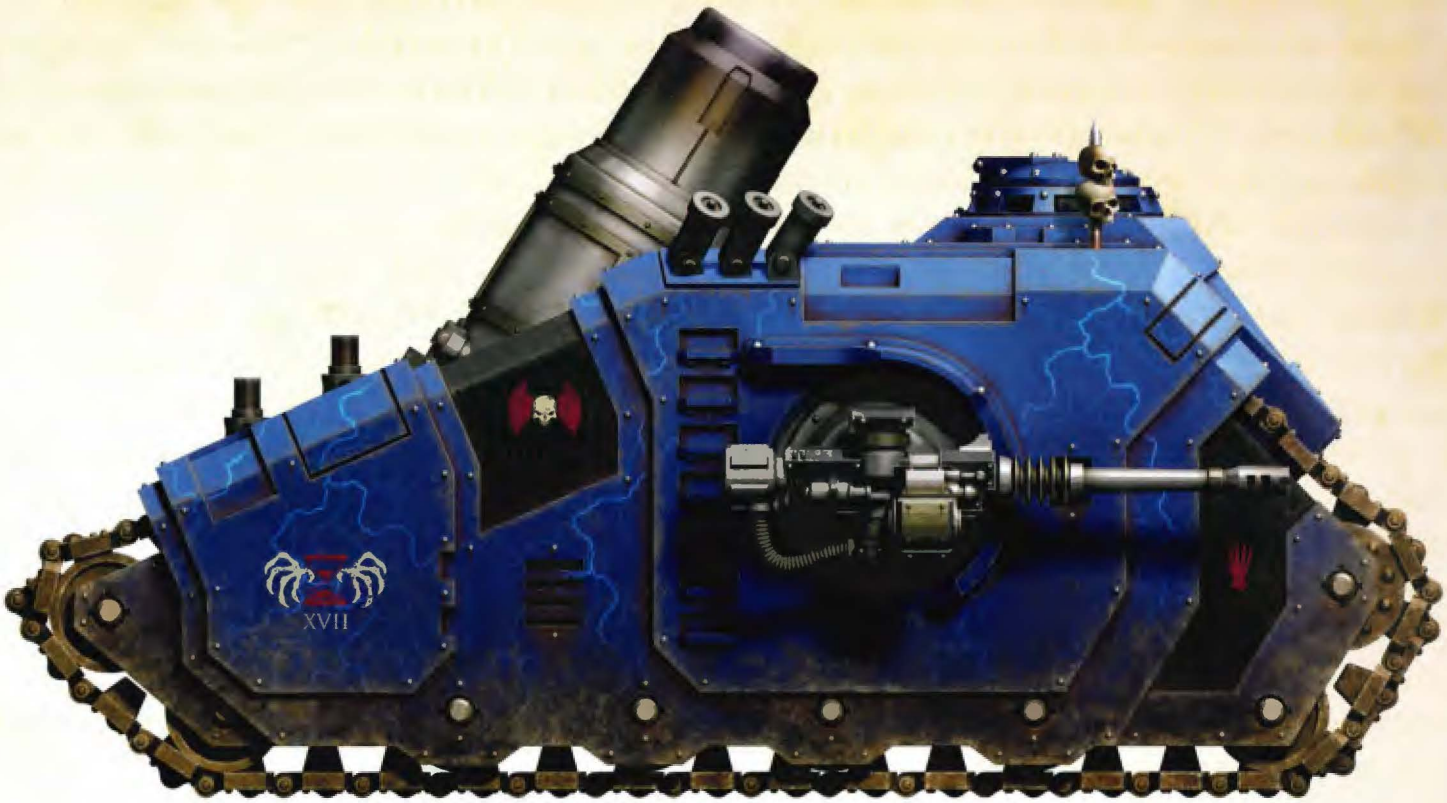
Seen here on the *Mercy-killer*'s rear/side embarkation port is another variation of the Screaming Skull emblem associated with the Warmaster's advocates within the Legion, though it is largely obscured by the grisly trophies secured to the hull of the Land Raider. Such gruesome decorations were far from uncommon amongst the Night Haunter's warriors.

The Bleak Cohort

The Night Lords 17th Chapter, often known within the Legion as the Bleak Cohort, was one of the few fully-mechanised detachments of the Night Haunter's Legion. Its ranks included a large proportion of armoured vehicles, including several squadrons of Kratos heavy tanks whose design had fallen out of favour with many Legions. When the Legion went openly to war, once terror had done its job and weakened the enemy's resolve, the Bleak Cohort was often to be found in the vanguard.

In a unique variation on the Legion's philosophy, the Bleak Cohort deployed in a manner that sought to set fear in the heart of the foe. Before the onset of battle, the full panoply of the cohort would be drawn up before the enemy, the serried ranks of its armoured vehicles an unbroken line of steel and ceramite, engines roaring loud enough to drown out all other noise. Many a foe has broken and run in the face of such an onslaught, the Bleak Cohort leading the Night Lords to many a victory. Yet during the Thramas Crusade, the 17th would face its most fearsome challenge in the Dark Angels Ironwing. On Sheol IX, the gathered might of the Bleak Cohort would be pitted against those elements of the Ironwing assembled from the host of the First Legion that assaulted that world, a battle that saw several hundred armoured vehicles thrown against each other as the Bleak Cohort strove to hold the Dark Angels at bay while their brethren evacuated. Despite their pride and long-honed skill, the Bleak Cohort found themselves put to shame by the deft tactics and relic war machines of the Ironwing, forced to commit their heaviest and most treasured vehicles to desperate ambushes and holding actions to keep from being overrun. Indeed, such was the carnage they endured that of the eight super-heavy vehicles attached to the Bleak Cohort, only two would survive the battle and be successfully evacuated, and both of those had sustained such severe damage that neither would be combat ready for several months after the fighting.





Night Lords Bombard

Vanguard

Attached to the 17th Chapter, this is a rare example of an artillery vehicle in the Night Lords' service. The Night Lords showed little favour to artillery and the more static tactics that required its massed deployment. The Bombard, with its slow speed and blunt aspect, was most often assigned rear echelon roles, typically used to eradicate enemy positions that had been isolated and bypassed by the Night Lords frontlines.





Night Lords Fellblade

Midnight Terminus

The command vehicle of the 17th Chapter, and often commanded by Praetor Cynvaer in person. Its tally of victories during the Great Crusade was a matter of some pride amongst the warriors of the Bleak Cohort, and earned much honour for its commander. During the fighting on Sheol IX, the *Midnight Terminus* would score kills on four Dark Angels vehicles, including a Mastodon super-heavy transport, before its destruction at the hands of a squadron of Firewing Sabre strike tanks.

Night Lords Veteran Legionary

Legionary Endros Shek
Thramas Crusade
9th Terror Company, 18th Chapter

One of many Night Lords warriors but recently raised to the Legion from the ruined world of Nostramo, Shek is typical of that malicious breed. Raised among the street gangs of Nostramo, he and his brethren paid more heed to the barbaric honour codes that had governed those fractious clans than to the dictates of the *Principia Bellicosa*, the doctrines of war that were the basis of the old Legiones Astartes. By the beginning of the Thramas Crusade, the 18th Chapter of the Night Lords had become little more than a warped mirror of Nostramo's dark side, more piratical marauders than soldiers of the Imperial Truth and little given to the discipline that had once characterised their breed.

During the Thramas Crusade, the 18th Chapter was one of many involved in the reduction of morale in the Thramas sector, striking at isolated and vulnerable targets on Loyalist worlds with the utmost ferocity. Such raiding forces left behind little but gruesome trophies of their conquests, seeking to break the foe's will to fight and spread fear throughout the Loyalist defenders of the sector. The 18th Chapter would see some early success but falter when confronted by elements of the Dark Angels during later battles, the First Legion's fury stoked by the tales of the atrocities committed by the Night Lords.





The Bloody Hand was the unofficial emblem of the Night Lords terror battalions.



The standard heraldry in use by the Night Lords at the time of the Thramas Crusade.



Night Lords Contemptor Dreadnought

Harbinger Malthax Thule, Dreadnought of the 8th Chapter

As a Terran veteran of the old VIIIth Legion, Harbinger Thule was viewed with a mix of wary respect and amused disdain by his Nostraman cohorts. Prone to falling into a fugue where visions of past battles and glories replaced the gore and slaughter of the Night Lords battles in the Thramas sector, the warrior within the Dreadnought found himself branded with the mark of the outcast, the Red Gauntlet. The Night Haunter himself held the veterans of his father's wars, entombed now in coffins of ceramite, as distasteful reminders of a past he chose to shun and often assigned them to the most gruelling battlefields and deadly campaigns. Harbinger Thule would find the end of his long campaign at Sheol IX, believing himself once more at the side of the Emperor and His hosts, and bellowing the old warcries of Unity even as the Dark Angels cut him apart.



The Principal Worlds of the Eastern Fringe

The following cartographical information gives a precis of the most strategically important locations within the newly-created and conquered Eastern Fringe of the galaxy in the early years of the Horus Heresy, around 008.M31, with specific attention paid to those areas that would become the focus of the fighting.

The Path of Tears

A chain of stars strung between the bottom of the Nostramo sector and leading inexorably to the heart of the Thramas sector, named the Tithe Road on official Imperium star charts, but more often as the Path of Tears by those who dwell along its length. The Tithe Road was one of several recruiting areas for the Night Lords – so-called for the tithe of its population they took in exchange for their protection – comprising some 50 or more worlds with few boasting more than small and isolated outposts of humanity. These small colonies were the only riches to be found in this region, their settlers proving to be both resilient and strong but without any great wealth of weapons or resources to draw the attention of the mighty.

Tsagualsa

Classification: Barren world [*Legiones Astartes stronghold*]

Little more than a vast black rock, Tsagualsa is set far from the weak sun at the heart of its system, only a feeble light reaching the massive deserts of bleak mica that cover much of its surface, broken only by drifts of huge, glassy boulders of midnight rock. Its only wealth is in the stark black rock that forms its crust and its position along the strategic Tithe Road between Nostramo and Thramas. The small cities and quarries that had once marred its barren surface were annihilated by the Night Lords at the very start of the Thramas Crusade. Utterly destroyed, the settlements were razed and the few survivors herded into their flaying pits and slave corrals, it was the end of Tsagualsa as an Imperium colony and the beginning of the war to control Thramas. The corpse-strewn world would rise to prominence when the Night Haunter selected it as the site of his new fortress, intended to replace Nostramo, which the Primarch had ruined by his own hand as punishment for its fall into corruption.

By the time the war for Thramas was begun, there were little more than the barest of foundations laid upon the dark sands of Tsagualsa, but as the war progressed so too would the construction of Curze's black fortress. Raised by vast hordes of slave labourers and based on the twisted visions of the Night Haunter, it would be an edifice of nightmare and horror.

In the wake of the Lion's incursion on Tsagualsa during the final stages of the Thramas Crusade, it is rumoured that those of the First Legion who fell and were not recovered had their bodies incorporated into the very walls of the growing fortress, and that many other far more foul decorations graced the fortifications of Konrad Curze's new lair.

With the end of the fighting and the disappearance of Curze aboard the *Invincible Reason*, the many halls of this new stronghold would stand empty for a time, avoided by those that still dwelt upon the broken worlds of the Path of Tears. Few dared to trespass in the nightmare precincts of the Night Haunter's realm, even when many claimed that he had fallen and drew breath no more. Yet, within the space of a year, grim tales began to spread that it was once again occupied by dark figures in the midnight armour of the Night Lords. As the Horus Heresy closed upon its brutal climax, Tsagualsa would again rise to dark prominence; not as a fortress of Horus' rebels, but as the centre of a new petty kingdom, one that could have threatened the recovery of the Imperium had it not mysteriously fallen into ruin during the Scouring.



Name: Tsagualsa
Classification: Barren/Fringe Colony [Marginal habitation/Wilderness]

System Data: BB/0097//1223/NX
Stellar Grid: 99-YNO/NE-88
Segmentum: Ultima/Extremis

Notation: [Site of VIII[th] Legion fortress]

Wrack

Classification: Mining World [*minimal population*]

Typical of the small colonies that were to be found throughout the region, Wrack is a small moon whose atmosphere is considered barely capable of supporting human habitation, with little endemic life and meagre seams of ore. Cold, wracked by violent storms without reprieve, and preyed upon by pirates, renegades and xenos marauders, only the most stubborn colonists chose to eke out a life there, people who welcomed the absence of the Imperium's fledgling bureaucracy. Its inhabitants were a coarse breed of humanity; tough and indomitable and bred to survive in one of the harshest of the sector's worlds, they were the true wealth of this benighted stretch of space. The Night Lords and several regiments of the Nightwatch came to Wrack and the other isolated worlds of the Tithe Road to claim this resource, taking the best of their youth to serve in the Emperor's distant wars and leaving behind a people made bitter to the dreams of Unity by the price they paid for its realisation.

As with so many of the isolated worlds of the Tithe Road, Wrack would not survive the Thramas Crusade. When the Night Lords came at the outset of their new crusade, they claimed every able-bodied inhabitant, either as recruits for the Legion or as slave-fodder for the work gangs. Those who resisted died in torment at the hands of those who had once born the title heroes of the Great Crusade, some of whom had likely once called Wrack home before the blood of the Night Haunter changed them. Wrack, and so many other worlds, would be rendered into a corpse, with only mute and empty colonies standing as a monument to their existence.

Other Minor Worlds of Note

- Cairn [*Hive world*]
- Kruun [*Colonised world, now destroyed*]



Name: Wrack
Classification: Fringe Colony
[Marginal habitation/Limited mining]

System Data: BD/0053//1223/NX
Stellar Grid: 99-YNP/NE-89
Segmentum: Ultima/Extremis

Notation: [Abandoned post Horus Heresy]



The Thramas Sector

The last bastion of the Imperium on the outer edge of the galaxy, the Thramas sector was one of the great way-stations for those fleets of the Great Crusade working to bring the Eastern Fringe to Compliance. During the peak of the Great Crusade, it thronged with vast fleets and the wealth of the Imperium flowed into it to fuel its factories and shipyards, and the great and the mighty walked its worlds and set their marks upon its monuments. Its ancient hive worlds had yielded willingly to the armies of the Emperor, for they had long stood upon the edge of the vast wilderness of space and knew well the terror of that which dwelt beyond. By the last years of M30, the sector was past the years of its great glory, the armies and fleets moved on to other warzones, but it remained a seat of much military power, a prize that neither side could ignore as the Horus Heresy blossomed into war.

Thramas

Classification: Hive world
[*Spire sub-type/Imperialis Armada Port Majoris*]
Often known as the Jewel of the East, Thramas has been the seat of empires for millennia, having first been settled long before the fall of Old Night during the glory days of Mankind's first rush to colonise the galaxy. Its vast hive spires chart its history, long-abandoned structures buried in their depths displaying the heraldry of the Centauran Republic, the Tenebris Freehold, the Barony of Thrame and other forgotten dynasties long since lost to history. When the Imperium arrived at the edge of the galaxy they would find it under the control of the Regents of Thramas, a lonely bastion of humankind besieged by all the horrors of the far rim. The Regents of Thramas would freely and willingly accept the rule of the Emperor, joining their armies to His in the fight against the multitude of debased human marauders and ravenous xenos domains that existed beyond the edge of the map. Revitalised by the influx of trade and resources that followed in the wake of the Great Crusade, Thramas would become one of the most staunch supporters of the Imperium in the Eastern Fringe and the centre of innumerable campaigns launched into the dark void beyond the galaxy's edge. Such was its importance to the Great Crusade that the Emperor Himself once set foot upon the world, pausing briefly during the prosecution of the Eighth extra-galactic expedition and the assault on the ancient Khrave mega-nest on Gorgorron, where no light had ever shone.

By the outbreak of the Horus Heresy, Thramas was one of the most fortified systems in the Imperium. The sentinel moons in its outer reaches bristled with macro cannon and laser lances, fleets of warships based at the massive orbital shipyards at the Thramas nadir point patrolled the void, ever watchful for attacks from past the bounds of the Imperium. Thramas itself boasted eight hive cities whose thick armour was studded with gun turrets and guarded by a dozen regiments of the Thramassi Nightwatch, the greatest fortress to be found in those distant, eastern stars. Yet, it was a fortress that looked only outwards, ever prepared for an assault by those that stood outside the Emperor's domain but utterly unready for the onslaught of any enemy from within. No gate within the domain of Thramas was barred to the Legiones Astartes, for those heroes of the Great Crusade had the utmost respect of the people of Thramas, and when Horus sent the Night Lords to claim the east for him, this trust was brutally abused and the defences of Thramas laid bare despite their power.

What had drawn both the Emperor and Horus to Thramas was not its power as a fortress or the wealth of its factories, but rather the strength of its people. Thramas was among the most populous of the border worlds, and host to a strain of humanity well-suited to the rigours of war in the void. It had been the birthplace of many of the Imperium's armies and had tithed recruits to four of the Legiones Astartes. To any warlord who sought to raise a host of warriors, it was a prize beyond compare, for if the Horus Heresy extended beyond a short strike at Terra and became a long war of attrition then victory would be decided by numbers and not by skill. Where the wealth of Triplex might command the greatest short term-advantage to the warring factions that sought control of the Imperium, it was Thramas that held the key to long-term triumph.



Name: Thramas
Classification: Sector Capital
[Thramas Sector]
[Hive city/Significant orbital infrastructure]

System Data: FG/0102//1245/EA
Stellar Grid: 101-IKX/FE-01
Segmentum: Ultima/Extremis

Notation: [Sector Fleet berth/Solar Auxilia tithe world]
[All assets rendered unviable at Crusade close]

Crucible

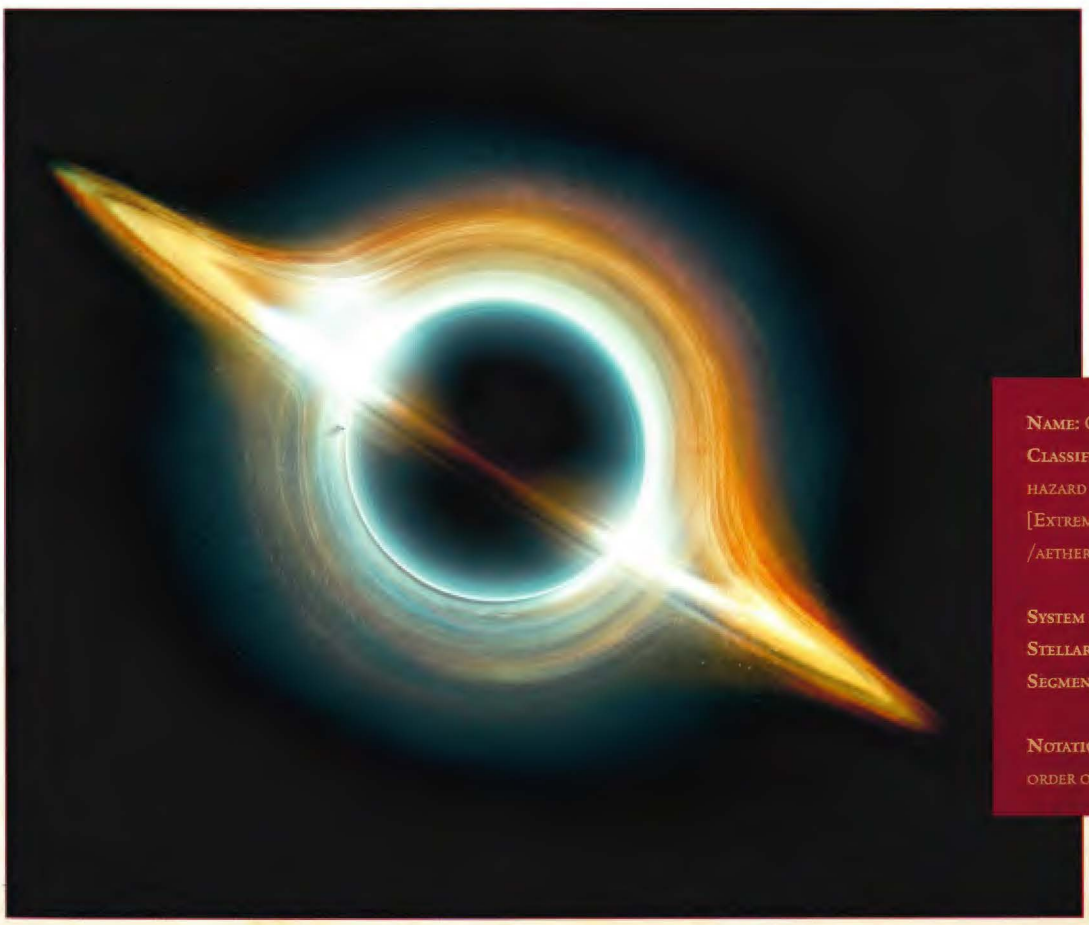
Classification: Stellar phenomenon
[*Category-Omega: Carmine/Mechanicum Fief*]
The name Crucible refers to both the eighth planet of the Gharn system and a section of space along the border between the Thramas and Triplex sectors where ships cannot pass. This area, listed on proper star charts as the Thramas Exclusion Zone, and better known to the chartist captains of the Eastern Fringe as the Crucible Field or the Graveyard of Stars, hosts nearly a dozen black holes of varying sizes all clustered within the space of only a few dozen light years. The sheer power of these disruptive stellar phenomenon is felt even in aetheric space, forming a huge vortex in the Warp from which few human craft have ever emerged and blocking all passage between the Thramas and Triplex sectors along this vector. It is the Exclusion Zone that forces all merchant and military traffic to travel via the slower stable warp channels that lead to the hive world of Sheol III, creating a strategic bottleneck in warp travel to and from the lower regions of the Eastern Fringe and bringing great wealth to Sheol III.

The Exclusion Zone itself has long fallen under the purview of obscure taghma from the Forge World of Triplex Phall, who maintain a research station on its periphery. This taghma, the Ketriox, ostensibly involved in the development of exotic particle weaponry, would avoid the fall of Phall and remain a potent renegade force for much of the Thramas Crusade. Lurking within the depths of the Crucible Field, Taghma Ketriox would emerge to fall upon isolated Loyalist garrisons and transport convoys, wielding weapons capable of tearing apart the fabric of realspace and breaching even the thickest armour. It would take an entire Chapter of the First Legion to finally end the threat of the Ketriox, waging a month-long campaign of traps, feints and decoys to lure them into a decisive battle that saw only a few ragged survivors escape back into the Exclusion Zone.

Qetesh

Classification: Hive World [*Border outpost*]
Sitting at the very edge of the Thramas Sector, Desperation, fifth planet of the Qetesh system, was of little strategic importance and warranted a garrison of the Thramassi Nightwatch only due to its proximity to the Hûda Gulf. Other than its role as a minor sentinel fortress along the Imperium's furthest border, it served as little more than a minor hive world populated by those courageous enough to make a home so far from Terra. When it fell out of contact in the earliest stages of the Thramas Crusade, as the Night Lords began to rampage and murder a path across the sector, few of the powerful noted its absence. Yet, its capture by the Night Lords was a critical move in the Night Haunter's initial plan for the fall of Thramas, serving as a secure point for his fleets to marshal and a crucial link in the flow of supplies from Ulan Hûda to the Night Lords. The 128th Regiment of the Nightwatch made a brave stand, holding the main hive for eight days as the Night Lords toyed with them, capturing the bravest of their warriors for the creation of bloody trophies of war and terrorising the colonists. However, when the defences finally fell, the Night Lords left none alive, decorating the city with the bones of the fallen and converting its facilities into one of a number of hidden shipyards.

Other Minor Worlds of Note
- Moritane [*Knight world*]
- Sheol III [*Hive world*]
- Kodan [*Hive world*]
- Serk [*Hive world*]
- Sedraan [*Colonised world*]
- Aeolay [*Colonised world*]



Name: Crucible Field ['Graveyard of Stars']
Classification: Stellar anomaly/shipping hazard
[Extreme gravitational disturbance /aetheric vortex]

System Data: N/A
Stellar Grid: 100-UHL/FE-33
Segmentum: Ultima/Extremis

Notation: [Zone Perditas – all data sealed by order of Archmagos Prime, Triplex]

The Triplex Sector

The Triplex sector was dominated by swathes of barren systems, largely uninhabitable and empty. A wasteland of ore rich rocks, old dying stars and a few scattered clans of abhuman miners and prospectors, which was far from any established trade route and cut off from the more populous sections of the region by fierce warp storms. Sat at its heart was the system of Triplex, its triple Forge Worlds the centre of all industry in the sector and the greatest prize in the Eastern Fringe. With Triplex, a general might control the entirety of the eastern half of the Imperium, for it rivalled great Anvillus in power, and many aspiring warlords cast their gaze upon this prize as the Horus Heresy erupted.

Triplex

Classification: Mega-industrial complex and sector capital

The beating heart of the Eastern Fringe was the system of Triplex, one of the greatest industrial hubs in the entire Imperium, rivalling even great Mars and Anvilus in the capacity of its forges. By its labour had the Great Crusade won the distant stars of the east, and it was by the products of their manufactoria that civilisation was sustained in those hostile systems that sat at the very edge of the galaxy. Home to the three-fold Titan Legio Victorum and several hundred militant taghma, the system was also one of the greatest concentrations of military force in the east. The few inhabited worlds and scattered mining colonies in the sector were held in thrall to Triplex by the threat of its anger and the necessity of its protection in the face of the terrors that lurked in unknown space. It was a nascent power that strained at the bonds of the Emperor's law and the dictates of distant Mars, one that saw in Horus' rebellion a chance for their own ascent even as they professed their loyalty to the newly founded Imperium.

Triplex Galatia

Classification: Forge World [*Grade Primaris*-I]

The Forge World of Galatia was the first of the triple forges to be established, its birth long since lost to history in those ancient days when the Explorator fleets of the Mechanicum set forth blindly into the void, seeking fertile new lands in which to grow and expand. For long centuries, it would reign as the overlord of local space, its dominion assured by the strength of the Legio Victorum I, the Foe Slayers, and the sheer proclivity of its Tech-Priests. It would only be with the arrival of the Emperor that it would stumble and fall behind its sibling forges, for Mars took a hand to curb the power of this new rival and petitioned the Emperor to take only the Legio Victorum II for His Great Crusade, sealing the remaining two slivers of the Legio to the defence of Triplex. This would see Galatia cut off from the riches of the Great Crusade, which would flow instead into the hands of Phall. Denied the glory of war and the spoils of victory, Galatia turned inwards and its tech-adepts began to walk forbidden paths in search of power, paths long forbidden by the decree of both Mars and Terra.

So it was that when the representatives of the Warmaster and of its brother forge, Phall, sought to turn them to their cause they found a ready ally, one more than prepared to throw off the shackles of the Imperium. With the promise of rich rewards from the Warmaster himself, Galatia began to slowly stockpile weapons of war built to new and fearsome specifications, shipping the more orthodox examples of their craft to the Imperium in order to keep up the pretence of loyalty that had been thrown across the system like a shroud. History has often suggested that Galatia, despite its new hidden allegiance, did not take a hand in the death of Thule and kept its warriors and Titans absent from the fratricidal conflict. Yet, it remains guilty of the lesser sin of standing by as the Legio Victorum III and the warriors of Thule died, and of stripping bare the corpse that remained of its brother forge, unleashing at last its heretechnical hosts once the battle had been decided in order to seal its pact with the Traitors.

Galatia's triumph would be short lived. For though the bones of Thule would nourish its industry and fuel the construction of new armies and void craft in anticipation of the Traitor conquest of the Eastern Fringe, the arrival of the Lion and his Dark Angels would seal the fate of the darkened forge of Galatia. Utterly destroyed by the Dreadwing, it would stand as a warning of the fate of Traitors and a token of the First Legion's wrath that Phall could neither forget nor ignore. Even by the end of the Horus Heresy, it remained largely unvisited, for few wished to risk calling down the First Legion's censure upon themselves despite the riches and secrets that lay buried in the ruin of Galatia's pride and ambition.

Triplex Phall

Classification: Forge World [*Grade Primaris*-I]

Phall was the second of Triplex's great forges, and the only one that would survive the ravages of war in the Eastern Fringe. Though it had begun as little more than an adjunct to Galatia, its parent forge, Phall, had grown swiftly during the years of Old Night, developing both an impressive industrial base and a significant martial tradition. Driven by a stubborn pride and a desire for greatness, Phall had long stood at the forefront of Triplex' wars, defending it from the threat of xenos invasion and expanding its small domain across the sector. By the time of the Emperor's arrival, the Legio Victorum II, the Foe Hammers, had grown to rival that of Galatia and would win the honour of representing Triplex among the armies of the Great Crusade. The spoils of their victories as part of the Emperor's vanguard would see Phall grow to eclipse its erstwhile brethren, gaining resources and glory from across the galaxy and catching the eye of the Warmaster himself. Indeed, Phall would become one of the main shipyards for the vast fleets of the Great Crusade outside of Sol itself.

Under Horus' patronage they would become the foremost power in Triplex and the Eastern Fringe, assuming a belligerent and prideful air in their dealing that brought about the ire of Mars, which had once favoured them. The archmagi of Sol's red world would work to isolate Phall and Triplex, denying them access to technology and influence within the strange network of the Omnissiah's servants as they sought to ensure that none could challenge their dominion amongst the ranks of the many Forge Worlds. It was this quiet campaign waged against them that would set Phall to the research of technologies forbidden to them by the dictates of Mars, aided by Horus and representatives of those scattered forges that had struck bargains with the Warmaster, as the magi of Phall sought advantage in their struggle against the Martian ascendancy. In retrospect, this seems one more gambit orchestrated by Horus, seeding rebellion and dissent across the Imperium that he might later wield as a weapon. What might have become of it had it been left to fester we can only guess but, with their research incomplete and ambitions not fully realised, Phall and Triplex would be brought to heel by the Dark Angels.

Phall was spared the full extent of Lion El'Jonson's wrath only so that it might repay the hurt it had done the Imperium with the labour of its manufactoria and the life-blood of its warriors; a price it was bound to pay were it to avoid the fate meted out upon fallen Galatia.

Its vast wealth and grand armies were bled dry in the prosecution of the Lion's campaign against his brother, the once-magnificent halls bedecked with trophies of the Great Crusade reduced to soot-stained assembly lines for the Loyalist cause. The proud archmagi of Phall were humbled and set to labour under the oversight of Dark Angels forge masters, their work examined for any sign of treachery or deviance, while the princeps and Titans of the Foe Hammers were sent into the most dangerous warzones of the war to pay their penance in death. By the end of the Thramas Crusade, Phall was much reduced in power and strength, its mere survival such a struggle that it posed no further threat to distant Mars.

Triplex Thule

Classification: Forge World [*Grade Primaris-III*]

The smallest of Triplex's three Forge Worlds, the tale of Thule is born and ended in tragedy. It was founded by tech-magi cast out of Galatia in its early days for the practise of an extreme branch of Mars' orthodox doctrine that abhorred and condemned even the primitive servo-automata still in production amongst the Mechanicum's scattered worlds. Their obsession with the purity of mechanical devices and the subtle blending of man and machine in the form of servitors and MIU links put them at odds with the rulers of Galatia, who trod an increasingly deviant path in their research and lust for power. Thule would grow only slowly, starved of resources and shunned by their siblings, having reached the lowest grade of primaris ranking by the time of the Imperium's arrival at Triplex.

Driven to struggle against their brethren for every last shipment of ore and batch of new subjects, Thule had long engaged in a hidden war with the other forges of Triplex, one fought by a small taghma of heavily-modified servitors and the agents of the Malagra sect rather than by the Titans of the Legio Victorum III, the Foe Breakers.

It was a conflict that would only intensify after the Emperor inducted the warriors of Phall into His crusade and gave it access to all the riches of the wider Imperium. As it had always done, Phall held its newfound wealth at arm's reach from the tech-magi of Thule, both a taunting reminder of the power Phall held and a mocking promise of what they might enjoy should they bow before Phall as Galatia had chosen to do.

Stubborn and convinced of the rightfulness of their cause, the rulers of Thule refused to buckle beneath the growing influence of Phall. When the Warmaster's emissaries came in secret to offer them Horus' favour for their loyalty, the archmagi of Thule spurned them as servants of Phall and its sneering hereteks. The hidden war then took a more savage turn, with bombs and data-phage infections wreaking havoc on outposts of both Forge Worlds as well as upon Thule itself. It would be Thule's retaliation, the assassination of a Phallian archmagus by a trio of Malagra adepts, which would set the pyre for the final tragedy of Thule's tale. In the opening months of Horus' rebellion, open war would arrive in Triplex as Phall took up arms against its least sibling, setting the Legios Victorum I and III to open battle. As with any war between brothers it was fought with a vicious and unrelenting spite, with no mercy offered or expected, and by the time of the Night Lords' arrival in the system, there would be little but ruins left of the once-proud Forge World of Thule.

Other Minor Worlds of Note

- Shan Mor [*Knight world*]
- Yaelis [*Hive world*]
- Catarra [*Mining world*]



Name: Triplex [Galatia/Phall/Thule]
Classification: Mechanicum Sovereign Forge Worlds
[Each Forge World governed as a separate sovereign domain]

System Data: AA/2203//0012/AQ
Stellar Grid: 99-NZZ/ME-02
Segmentum: Ultima/Majoris

Notation: [Triplex Thule/Triplex Galatia rendered unviable as assets by enemy action]

The Aegis Sector

Dominated by the twin worlds of Memlock and Heraldor, the populous worlds of the Aegis sector were the bread basket of the Eastern Fringe. The fertile agri-worlds that abounded in this otherwise calm sector had not ceded their independence easily to the Imperium, having fought a short but bitter war before reluctantly accepting the Emperor. Though sworn to the Imperium, they had long begrudged the tithes they sent to distant Thramas to fuel the Great Crusade, and remained Compliant only by the constant vigilance of the Imperial Army regiments set over them as sentinels.

Heraldor

Classification: Hive World [*Sub-surface sub-type*]

Chief among the worlds of the Aegis sector, Heraldor had once grown fat and strong on the trade of slaves taken from the isolated worlds of the Yaelic nebula and the outer colonies of Gulgorahd. Its marauders had been the terror of the Eastern Fringe, clashing with the ships of Thramas and Gulgorahd in the years before the Emperor's arrival in an effort to forge a petty kingdom of its own. Allied with the clan-lords of Memlock, the Hierarchs of Heraldor would not surrender their dreams of conquest in the face of the Emperor's arrival and fought a brief war against His Legions. Ironically, it would be the Night Lords that led the assault on Heraldor, decorating the deeply buried halls of its hives with the Hierarchs' skins and forcing a bitter surrender to the will of the Emperor. It was a submission that would fester among the surviving nobles of Heraldor, emerging many years later as a foul and spiteful hate that would lead them to the side of Horus as the rebellion against the Emperor reached the Eastern Fringe.

Heraldor itself was a small world whose wealth was found in the fertile soil sited at the feet of the immense volcanoes that dominated the surface of the planet, farmed by legions of slave-workers that were easily replaced after each new eruption replenished the fertile volcanic soil. Even after the coming of the Emperor, Heraldor would be worked by unwilling hands, for the Great Crusade could not do without its produce. Prisoners and the condemned from a hundred worlds would be shipped to Heraldor to slave in its burning air and produce harvests to feed the armies of the Imperium. The Hierarchs dwelt in labyrinthine hive cities buried deep beneath the most stable parts of Heraldor, an insular and corpulent breed of humanity dedicated to its own pleasure above all else; the emissaries of Horus found them easy to turn to his cause and open to the most simple of bribes. They would meet their end in those same cthonic halls, cornered by the advancing warriors of the Thramassi Nightwatch and the Ultramarines and besieged for 18 long weeks, though the Emperor's warriors would accept no second surrender and left Heraldor a broken and empty world.

Memlock

Classification: Agri-world [*Grand Terrestrial sub-type*]

Memlock is an aberration, a world nine times the size of distant Terra and yet possessed of eerily calm and stable seasons, its three identical moons each fixed in optimal orbits to promote beneficial tides and winds. Ancient ruins that dot the surface hint at an artificial origin at the hands of some unknown xenos clade, though the tech-nomad clans that dwell there forbid outsiders from investigating the ruins for fear of ancient curses. As with bitter Heraldor, Memlock resisted the Emperor's peace in battle but, in contrast to its old ally, held few grudges in the victory of the Legiones Astartes, for they had no great dreams of conquest, only a desire to remain isolated and uncontaminated by the wider host of humanity. Once the battles were over they returned to the vast harvest-crawlers that were their homes and continued the unending harvest, the produce of Memlock surety against any violation of their sovereignty, for the newly-forged Imperium was a hungry creation.

When the Horus Heresy arrived in the Eastern Fringe, Memlock seemed at first bound to remain loyal, the majority of its clan-lords unwilling to set themselves to a war that they had no part of. Yet the emissaries of the Warmaster were cunning, and found among the clan-lords those that sought power over their peers, those unhappy with their isolation and ignominy. These they armed and prepared, setting them upon those that favoured the Emperor in a brief and vicious civil war. Memlock would join the Warmaster, its clans bound to him now by the blood of their kin and a determination to claim a new glory in exchange for the death they had wrought on their own. Rather than surrender or die in bitter defiance when the war in the east turned against them, many of the renegade clan-lords abandoned Memlock and fled to the Warmaster's side. Some are thought to have even fought as part of the horde that landed on Terra itself, though their dedication to the Warmaster's dark patrons would warp them into something terrible to behold.

Verstun

Classification: Colonised World [*Aero-stat colony*]

An otherwise unimportant way-station on the long and unstable warp canals that lead from Ultramar to the Eastern Fringe, Verstun is a collection of loosely-allied colony stations set in orbit of a vast gas giant. Its immense orbital refineries mine the surface of the giant's atmosphere; the fuel they produce earning a meagre living for the hardy colonists. When fighting broke out between Loyalists and Traitors within the Eastern Fringe, Verstun stood apart, seeking to remain neutral in a war that seemed outside of their interests. Neutrality lasted until the first of Heraldor's war barges arrived in orbit, their guns enough to see the pledge of Verstun's colonists to the cause of the Warmaster – for the alternative was a slow death in chains. The fuel produced at Verstun would feed the fleets of the Night Lords and their allies, allowing them to maintain a mobile stance, keeping ahead of the Dark Angels and their superior firepower.

It would not be the vengeful ships of the Dark Angels that saw to its fall, but rather those of another Legion. Survivors of the scattered Ultramarines fleet, drawn to nearby Tigrus, broke free of the Warp to drive out the Night Lords and burn the barges of Heraldor in a naval battle lasting three days and culminating in a series of savage boarding actions on the colony-stations. Rather than surrender the wealth of Verstun, the Night Lords detonated the atomantic reactors at the core of the largest refineries, the nuclear death of those platforms igniting the gas giant's atmosphere, denying the Loyalists any comfort from their victory and putting an end to the colony. Yet, despite this act of wilful spite, the opening of a second front on the far side of the Aegis sector was a turning point in the war for the Eastern Fringe, one from which the Night Lords would not recover.

Other Minor Worlds of Note

- Mennis Rho [*Agri-world*]
- Subere [*Agri-world*]
- Kerro-Val [*Knight world*]

The Gulgorahd Protectorate

In the time before Old Night, this sector was a thriving centre of human expansion, but little of that glory survived the millennia of isolation. Battered and broken by endless waves of xenos invasions and human renegades, its people had taken refuge in grim strongholds and made war the sole focus of their industry. Though they survived Old Night, they became isolationist and distrustful, envious of the wealth of Triplex and the glory of Terra, a people brought to Compliance only through struggle and hardship. As the Horus Heresy returned the galaxy to strife and terror, Gulgorahd looked once more to its ancient feud with Triplex and the glory of its lost power.

Gulgorahd

Classification: Forge World [*Grade Secundus-I*]

Once a mighty and proud bastion of the Mechanicum with outposts and thrall-forges across the sector, Gulgorahd could lay claim to an ancient and vast dominion. Yet it would suffer harshly for this glory during the years of Old Night, where terrible warp storms swept across the galaxy and tore apart the old realms of humanity's golden age. Gulgorahd and its many holdings bore the brunt of xenos invasions and debased human marauders. Gulgorahd's old strongholds fell one by one in a series of brutal conflicts that would slowly bleed its armies to a fraction of their former size and break its once-immense manufacturing capacity. When the Emperor and His Great Crusade finally arrived in that distant sector of space, mighty Gulgorahd was reduced to a single forge and a handful of client worlds.

Gulgorahd eagerly accepted its new allies and a place within the ranks of the Mechanicum, eager to regain its lost glory, only to find that many of its old places of power were either ruined beyond any return or claimed now by others. Of all their new rivals, the lords of Gulgorahd found that the triple forges of Triplex had benefitted most from their fall, claiming many of their old mines and fortresses as their own and refusing all overtures for their return. It was the beginning of a bitter feud, one that Gulgorahd was ill-equipped to win – for the Emperor forbade open war among His servants. Instead, it would simmer and grow to obsess the lords of Gulgorahd, who schemed incessantly for the overthrow of Triplex and the reclamation of lost glories.

Many in the Eastern Fringe beheld the approach of war and the rebellion of Horus with fear and trepidation, but not the lords of Gulgorahd. This was the chance they had awaited, a last chance to humble Triplex and seize that which had been taken from them by force. They cared not for the greater politics of the Horus Heresy and threw in their lot with the Loyalists not because they wished to preserve the Emperor and His dominion, but rather only because Triplex had backed the Traitor Warmaster.

The Legio Adamantus and all the armies of Gulgorahd were loosed into the fray without reserve and, despite the hardship that awaited them, the cold greed of Gulgorahd would be rewarded by fate far more generously than the purer motives of others. For, when the Legiones Astartes left the Eastern Fringe, Gulgorahd stood triumphant in the ashes of its domain.

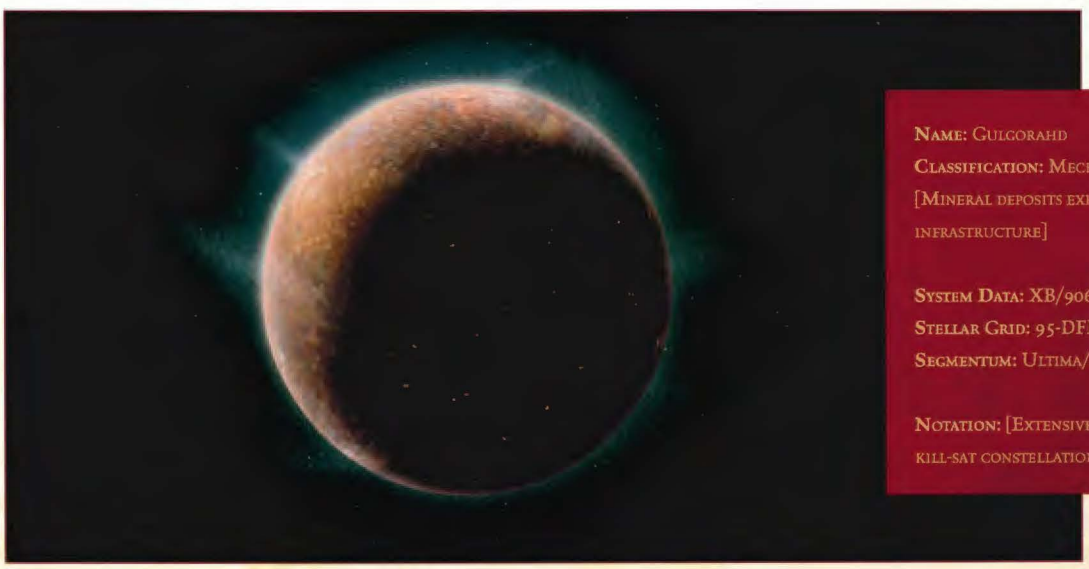
Bastion-019

Classification: Knight World [*Subterranean fortifications*]

One of many small outposts of the broken empire of Gulgorahd, Bastion-019 served as both a vast network of mines and a formidable fortress. Here, one of several Knight houses sworn to Gulgorahd sat sentinel over the borders of that shrunken realm, its warriors reduced to little more than servitor drones and Houses reduced to simple numbers in order to best serve the ruthless masters of Gulgorahd. Shorn of their limiting human needs and desires, they could serve as unsleeping guardians and untiring defenders of Gulgorahd, so reduced was that empire in power that it must marshal what few assets remained as efficiently as possible. The efficacy of this policy was to be proven during the Thramas Crusade, for the warriors of House-019 would fight the invading forces of the Night Lords and Triplex long past the point of mortal endurance. Within the endless labyrinth of fortified bunkers and tunnels that lay below the surface of Bastion-019 they fought without pause, rest or fear and held back a force many times their number for many months. Their dedication, measured in the devastated ruins of their home and the vast number of their fallen, received little reward from their masters – though rumour holds that among the broken fortifications of Bastion-019 stands a legion of hidden shrines, each dedicated to a fallen warrior now freed from an eternity of servitude.

Other Minor Worlds of Note

- Bastions 001-101 [*Fortress worlds*]
- Caldari [*Mining world*]
- Sedonis [*Mining world*]



Name: Gulgorahd
Classification: Mechanicum Sovereign Forge World [Mineral deposits exhausted/Extensive sub-surface infrastructure]

System Data: XB/9065//0045/XT
Stellar Grid: 95-DFL/ME-25
Segmentum: Ultima/Majoris

Notation: [Extensive orbital minefields and automated kill-sat constellations, approach with caution]

The Hûda Gulf and the Outer Void

Beyond the edges of the maps of the Imperium was to be found a great stretch of wild and dangerous space. Here, xenos terrors and lost enclaves of debased human cultures still held sway and preyed upon each other, even raiding into the Thramas sector and testing the defences of the Nightwatch. VIII[th] Legion fleets had listed the region as of negligible value to the Imperium, discouraging committing the resources of the Great Crusade into conquering the barren worlds of the gulf, mounting occasional punitive expeditions of their own into unknown space. Yet, as M31 began, the region remained as chaotic as ever, its secrets still hidden at the outbreak of the Horus Heresy.

Ulan Hûda

Classification: Rogue Forge World [*Grade Extremis-I*]

In the years before the Thramas Crusade, Ulan Hûda was little more than a rumour, a dark legend spoken of by the most adventurous of chartist captains in hushed tones. Known as the predator-forge, it was a monstrous creation of heinous and twisted technology that prowled the systems beyond the edge of the Imperium and devoured entire worlds to sate its hunger. The truth later made plain was to be no less terrifying than the legends, for if anything it would prove more unbelievable than any fabricated tale. Ulan Hûda had begun as a minor Forge World, stranded within the isolated systems later known as the Ghoul Stars. There, cut off from all aid and succour and surrounded by hordes of foul xenos, its archmagos perceived only one route to survival – they would make themselves more terrifying than those that opposed them.

Forced by direst need, the first tech-magi of Ulan Hûda refashioned their home by means of technology long deemed utterly forbidden by Mars, for in its use they risked harm to the very fabric of space. Buried deep within the core of Ulan Hûda, a series of arcane engines were created that would allow it to breach realspace and sojourn within the Warp itself. Moving from system to system, Ulan Hûda became a scourge, overwhelming those weaker than it and fleeing those that were strong. Those they overthrew were subsumed by the predator-forge, their worlds reduced to a slurry of broken earth and the people that once dwelt upon them reforged as servitors and cogitator cores. Technology, both human and xenos, was incorporated into the refashioned shell of Ulan Hûda until it little resembled anything known to Mankind and its rulers could no longer be called sane.

Such a horrific creation could not be welcomed openly within the Imperium, indeed such were its transgressions that, by Imperial law, it would be destroyed for the taint of the forbidden and xenos that it had taken into itself, and yet it escaped all sanction as the Imperium reached the fringe. Records found amongst the ruins of Tsagualsa during the Scouring indicate that factions within the Night Lords purposefully concealed the predator-forge from Imperial scrutiny. In return, they received a share of its forbidden spoils, strange technologies and exotic slaves, as well as the services of its misbegotten Titans, the Legio Phasma or the Void Spectres. In the last years of the Thramas Crusade, this alliance would be openly revealed as the Night Lords unleashed Ulan Hûda upon the Imperium in an attempt to turn the tide of a conflict that seemed to have gone against them.

Ulan Hûda would suffer grievous hurt during the fighting, wounded by the sacrifice of the warrior known as the Saviour and harried by the fleets of the Dark Angels, but no report from any Loyalist force speaks of its final destruction. Indeed, a number of records from the Scouring speak of sightings of strange and misshapen forges in the farthest reaches of the Imperium, only for such worlds to vanish when later forces arrive to investigate, only the broken remains of border posts left behind. Ulan Hûda, it seems, has retreated into the realm of legend once more, a dark tale made all the more terrifying for the fact that it likely still lurks somewhere in the darkness beyond the galactic rim.



Name: Ulan Hûda
Classification: Rogue Forge World
[Minoris class]
[Artificial moon, no natural biome]
++[Planataephage: predator-forge]++

System Data: ZX/0001//0001/XX
Stellar Grid: Variable/
no current data
Segmentum: Incognito

Notation: [Macro scale plasma drive and warp drive enables limited stellar mobility]
++[Driven from Imperial domains, but not destroyed with the conclusion of the Thramas Crusade]++

The Dominion of Storms

Though within the borders of the Imperium, this long and sparsely inhabited stretch of space that linked Ultramar, the Eastern Fringe and the Northern Rim was largely unmapped. Known as the Dominion of Storms for the warp storms and aberrant stellar phenomenon that plagued it, this region was not part of the Eastern Fringe, nor part of any of the Legiones Astartes-sworn territories, yet it would prove vital to the war fought within the Eastern Fringe. It would be this region that saw the procession of Word Bearers and World Eaters forces that would sack Ultramar while the Night Lords fought in the Thramas sector, and it was also here that the Ultramarines and their allies would stage a stubborn resistance. The successes of these Legions within the Dominion of Storms would have a dire impact on the war for Thramas.

Tigrus

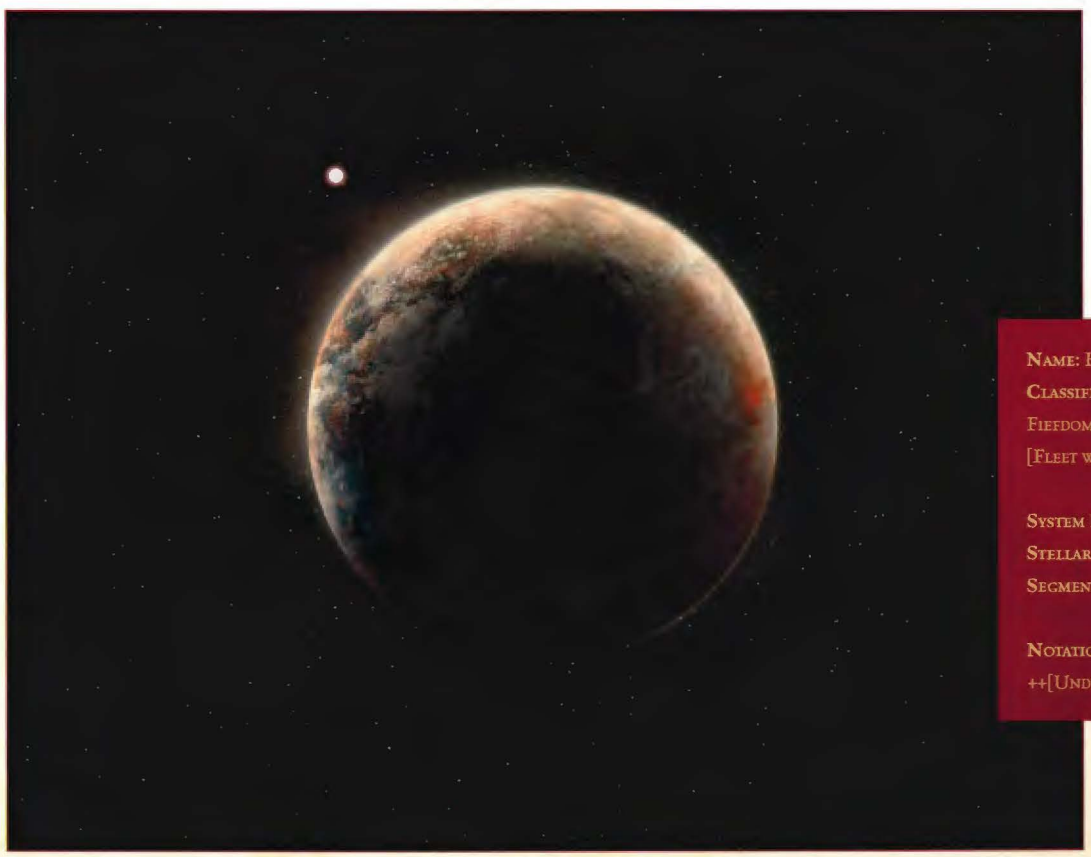
Classification: Forge World [*Grade Primaris-III*]

Situated inbetween the distant Eastern Fringe and the growing empire of Ultramar, the Forge World of Tigrus had long been a stout supporter of the Great Crusade, its warriors ever eager to display their fervour in battle. Few would doubt its loyalty to the Imperium and the design of the Emperor, and this loyalty would seal its fate. Horus had his servants, the lords of the Word Bearers and World Eaters, dispatch forces to isolate and destroy Tigrus before it could move to support either Ultramar or the worlds of the Eastern Fringe. Fortunately for the Imperium, the carnage of the assault on Calth and the ongoing Shadow Crusade in Ultramar meant that only a small force of Traitor warriors could be spared to assault Tigrus, a force that the loyal magi of that world met and scattered in battle. It would be forces dispatched from the bastion of Tigrus that would aid in turning the tide of both the war in the Eastern Fringe and the Shadow Crusade, the warriors of Tigrus ever willing to face death and hardship in the name of loyalty and valour. The lords of Tigrus would be honoured by many for their steadfast bravery and the sacrifice of so many of their own in the name of victory.

Hale

Classification: Legiones Astartes Outpost [*Ruined/depopulated*]

Hale was little more than an isolated outpost of the Ultramarines Legion, home to a single company of warriors set as sentinels over the shipping routes between Ultramar and the wider Imperium. In the early months of 007.M31 the garrison would be scattered by three Chapters of the World Eaters, part of the vast armada that was headed to the battlefields of distant Calth, and to the commanders of the Traitor host it seemed a matter now ended. However, the rebels had underestimated the tenacity of the Ultramarines, leaving only a single Chapter of their own to secure the warp channels of the region before departing. Within a month, the survivors of the Ultramarines force had returned, along with stragglers from the Loyalist forces fleeing the Isstvan system and other garrison forces, and set upon the World Eaters, their numbers greater than the Traitors but not as unified a force. It was a battle that seemed as though it could only end in bitter stalemate and mutual annihilation until a single battle cruiser broke from the Warp and lent its firepower to the Loyalist cause. That ship was the *Fifth Horseman*, one of the Dark Angels craft sent by the Lion to seek allies for the battle unfolding around Thramas. The Loyalist forces, numbering almost 3,000, were quick to volunteer their aid in the war against the Night Haunter. In reward for their stalwart bravery, the Lion would later decree that they could bear the symbol of his Legion, for those that fought by his side with honour would ever be truest sons. Even in these latter days, with the Ultramarines scattered by the edict of the Second Founding, there remain a few that still carry a vambrace or pauldron in the stark black of the Lion's heraldry.



Name: Hale
Classification: Legiones Astartes [XIII^th^]
Fiefdom
[Fleet way-station/Legion Fortress]

System Data: ED/4502/0037/HE
Stellar Grid: 88-EDO/UC-19
Segmentum: Ultima/Centralis

Notation: [Ruined/Depopulated 007.M31]
++[Under Loyalist control as of 010.M31]++



The Dark Angels

Numeration: The I[st] Legion

Primogenitor: Lion El'Jonson

Cognomen (Prior): The Angels of Death, The Uncrowned Princes (archaic)

Observed Strategic Tendencies: None; within the Legion there was at least one Host or Order dedicated to each discipline of war.

Noteworthy Domains: Caliban, Gramarye, Terran Enclaves

Allegiance: Fedelitas Constantus

"Empires, monuments and legends are built by those who are merely victorious. We were born to kill not to build. We are not idle long enough to leave monuments and we leave no work of the enemy intact to spawn legends. We are the First Legion, and he that follows in our wake is death."

Attr. Hector Thrane, Keeper of the Black Gate and First Master of the First Legion, 828.M30

Stark and uncompromising, the Dark Angels were the first of the Emperor's Legions and the truest to the mould from which the Legiones Astartes had been struck. They were killers of the purest and most refined kind, for whom there could be no other destiny but a lifetime of war and death in the name of the Imperium and Mankind. They did not build empires, made no attempt to master the ways of peace or the subtle skills of the artist, craftsman or diplomat. They offered no excuses for their nature and made no compromises in the pursuit of their assigned duty, shirking neither the price they paid in blood nor the price paid in infamy and solitude. Their greatest battles are to be found in no catalogue of Compliance or roll of honour, no scholars or poets sing of these glories or remember those fallen in their prosecution, for they were fought against foes so monstrous that it was deemed necessary that all mention of them be erased from history. Such was the nature of their service, not only to be prosecutors of the Great Crusade, but also to serve as the Imperium's most potent bulwark against the unknown terrors that lurked in the dark between the stars.

The Unbegotten Father

Of all the tens of thousands of subjects that bled and died within the hidden laboratories of the Emperor, the names of all but a handful are unknown. Most were, and remain, anonymous vessels used to nurture the first crude batches of gene-seed distilled from the Primarchs' blood, test subjects for the earliest organs cultured from that seed and all were considered disposable in the cause of the Space Marines' genesis. Some few, however, served as something more: functional prototypes of the new breed of warrior the Emperor had envisaged for His conquest of not just Old Earth but the entire galaxy. They were likely not quite as their modern cousins – unrefined and ill-favoured but potent nonetheless – and served as the bridge between the unique power of the Primarchs and their sons; a formula by which the process could be repeated and perfected. The vast majority of these were born of the strain of gene-seed extracted from the first of the Primarchs, noted as it was for its stability, with a single warrior listed by name in the oldest of records salvaged from the depths of the Imperial Palace Archives: Abrasax, of the fourteenth Ghent intake.

No mention of this figure is to be found again in Imperial records, nor in the order of battle of any of the Legiones Astartes, save in one obscure text. A brief account, written by one of the councillors attending the Emperor during the Siege of the Imperial Palace, notes a warrior by the name of Abraxus Ghent, clad in unadorned power armour, who had served as one of the many guardians of that venerated building's vast halls and who fought as part of the rear guard that held the inner precincts against the Traitor hordes while the Emperor and his Primarchs led the assault on Horus' flagship. His death is not noted in the account, nor does he appear on the lengthy rolls of honour naming the veterans of that climactic battle, either living or dead.

Origins: Forged of Secrets and Darkness

The heraldry of the Dark Angels proclaims their lineage, the first of the Emperor's Legiones Astartes, but other than that simple fact little is known of the origins of the Legion and its initial gene-stock. The genesis of the Legiones Astartes as a whole is a subject shrouded in much secrecy. It is perhaps the greatest and most enduring of the Emperor's many works and a subject scholars have been warned away from in the latter days of His Imperium. What is known with some certainty is that, of all the many breeds of these post-human warriors, the Dark Angels were conceived by the Emperor as a template for those that would follow, distilled from the gene-code of the most stable of all His Primarchs and without any attempt to foster specific traits or curb the eccentricities of the stock from which they sprang. Even so, the process by which these first samples were produced was long and laborious, initiated perhaps a century or more before the end of the wars of Unity and consuming a vast number of test subjects to produce but a handful of stable proto-Astartes. Of these initial creations, referenced in fragmentary records unearthed in the Imperial Archives as the *Primordial Strain*, almost none are known to have survived initial combat trials and surgical testing, but they form the basis for the initial cultures of the First Legion and, by merit of the refined process formulated with their creation, the other Legions as well.

This grand experiment exacted a bloody toll upon those territories controlled by the Emperor, for its most critical components were untainted human subjects, all within a specific range of age and physical fitness. Given the state of Terra in the wake of the wars of Old Night, its surface polluted by the twin scourges of atomic bombardment and genetic phage, such subjects were limited. The initial experiments were conducted with the youth of the Emperor's conquered foes and those purchased from the nomadic clans of slavers that abounded in the wastes of pre-Unity Terra, and later the toll was borne by flesh-tithes exacted on those territories brought, willingly or not, into the fold of the Imperium. As such, the Dark Angels did not bear the stamp of any single gene-stock, unlike some of the other Legions during their earliest years whose character had been moulded by the nature of their initial intake. Their first recruits, selected from the best of the stock available to the Emperor, were diverse in origin and shared no single cultural heritage that would shape the way in which they made war. Indeed, the diversity of their origins brought a wealth of disparate martial traditions into the fledgling Legion. The dour infantry of the Francish plains and islands of Albia brought with them the brutal coda that had conquered half the ruined lands of Europa, the warriors of the far Anatolic steppes a skill at cavalry warfare, the berserkers of frozen Skandia a murderous efficiency, and from a dozen other cultures yet more of the arts of war. The First Legion was the crucible in which all the savage lore of Old Night, all the bitter knowledge and red-handed wisdom accumulated in millennia of war was to be distilled and fashioned into a weapon of rare potency.

In those first faltering years of the grand experiment that was the Legiones Astartes, the proto-warriors of the First Legion, barely a few hundred strong, were encouraged to eschew the names of their own people and embrace a new unity unmarked by old loyalties, often taking instead the names of heroes from the old tales that had survived the Age of Strife. In the first rolls of honour of the Legion can be found Gilgamesh, Heracles, Tarchon, Hengist and other names imbued by time with the power of legend. Combined with the grim aspect granted them by the gene-seed of the first Primarch, these warriors quickly gained a reputation among the disparate throng that was at that time the army of the Emperor, for they seemed as a band of gods all cast from a singular and potent mould. Fighting at first as small groups within the ranks of the Emperor's host, plying both the skills of their origins and of the drill masters of the Imperial Laboratories, they would come to be known as the *Uncrowned Princes* or simply *Crowns*. This was a homage both to their place in the line of battle and the destiny bestowed upon them by their creator; a title that would inspire both a sense of unity and a certain arrogance in the first Space Marines and spur them to lead the way amongst the growing brotherhood of the Legiones Astartes.

This, in the Legion's earliest moments, was the genesis of the Hosts of the First Legion, which would later be refined by the Primarch, Lion El'Jonson, into the Wings of his Dark Angels; a myriad of informal groups within the early companies of the Legion that worked to adapt the doctrines of battle brought from those disparate origins and create a coda of battle fit for the post-human armies of the Emperor. The Hosts were not bound by company or commander and existed throughout the Legion, at any given battle or engagement at least some small number of a given Host would be present to advise and lead should their expertise be required. In the early years of the First Legion's existence there were many more Hosts than now exist, with as many as 18 such formations noted by their distinct heraldry in the earliest records of the wars of Unity. The third siege of Antioch in 603.M30 saw the participation of nine distinct 'Hosts' across four separate Companies of the Legion, though at this point they numbered less than 30 warriors each and displayed significant tactical overlap in the methods they employed to breach the walls of that ancient enclave.

Time would see the many Hosts of those chaotic years quickly resolved into a smaller number of more focused Hosts, but in those early years, with their brother Legions still but handfuls of warriors newly-cast from a rough mould, the First Legion became the testbed for the various tactics and doctrines that would later become the *Principia Bellicosa*. As the other Legions grew to a size large enough to engage in small scale combat actions, some of the more specialised Hosts became obsolete, unnecessary in the face of warriors more adept at that style of warfare, while others were made extinct by the inadequacies of their methods and the brutal nature of war in the 30th Millennium. Far from harming the Legion, this process of bloody evolution left it strong; a weapon well-honed by the fighting on Terra. It also forged a bond between the disparate warriors who made up that early Legion; a bond based upon the sense of superiority and distinction instilled in them by the servants of the Emperor that trained them and the awe they inspired in those they fought beside.



The First Legion

As with all the Legiones Astartes, the First Legion was intended as a replacement for the Thunder Warriors brigades, that unstable experiment which by the mid years of the Unification Wars had run its course. The Thunder Warriors regiments had been the tool needed for their time, an unrefined and savage weapon to match the grim tyrants and debauched potentates that had inherited the Ancient Terra. Yet, in comparison to the Legiones Astartes they were a rough breed, powerful to be sure, perhaps even individually more so than their new kin, but unable to quell their fury to work in unison. They were a mob, a storm of fury and blades that rolled over its foes, while the Legiones Astartes were a true army and in their unity could withstand any onslaught.

The First Legion would demonstrate that potential, for they were a true Legion, numbering nearly 10,000 while their kin were but a few hundred each. It was at Samerkend in 668.M30 that the First Legion took to the field en masse for the first time, assembled with the Emperor Himself at their head. Here, the Legiones Astartes faced their first true test, not a test of individual strength or genetic purity, but a test of their worth as an army. 10,000 of the First, flanked by contingents of four other Legions took the field against 200,000 gene-forged Udug Hul, the elite slave-soldiers of the King of Akkad. The Udug Hul, whose blood was poison and whose strength was greater than 10 un-enhanced warriors, were the terror of the Upper Asiatic Basin and a foe that had so far resisted the advance of the Emperor's armies.

Ten hours after battle was joined Samerkend was in ruins, the Udug Hul scattered and broken and the Great King of Akkad's head a trophy on the belt of the newly-appointed Grandmaster of the First Legion. This warrior, Hector Thrane, was lauded by the princes of Terra for his victory and granted the title Sinestra of the Emperor, the left hand of the Warlord of Terra, His most fearsome instrument of conquest. By order of the Emperor, the First Legion left no stone upon stone, and almost every record of the terrors encountered in that battle was destroyed. In the wake of the victory the rate of recruitment and processing of the new Legions was accelerated, their potential proven in triumph, and the First Legion gained a dark renown among the ranks of the armies of Unity. They had walked into the mouth of hell, and not only had they returned, but they had left hell shattered in their passage. This first victory was to set the pattern of the First Legion's battles during the battle for Old Earth and the Sol System, pitting them against the most horrific of foes with only one objective – to eradicate them completely.

From Fortress Thirty-one in the Thulean wastes of Ancient Terra, to the Battle of Karnakon amid the cryo-volcanic mountains of Sedna, the First Legion would meet the worst threats that faced the armies of Unity and lay them low. So horrific were many of the threats they faced – xenos terrors beyond the pale of sanity and psychic phenomena that threatened to tear reality asunder – that little more than the battle honours remain, the details erased even from the data-stacks of the Emperor's library. To prosecute these impossible battles the Emperor would grant them access to the armoury vaults of the Imperial Palace, to every forbidden weapon entombed within, and they would be the only Legion trusted to wield the worst of Mankind's creations freely. The orders of Grandmaster Hector Thrane would see the obliteration of the warped cities of Khadun and Molay in the eastern reaches of Ancient Terra and the deployment of gene-phage munitions to purge Enceladus clean of Khrave infestation. These were victories that left an indelible stain on both the course of the war and the identity of the warriors who prosecuted them, forging Thrane's reputation as a ruthless and prideful warlord.

Among the armies of Unification, the First Legion had become synonymous with death, for where they walked it seemed as though that pale rider followed after them with an inevitability that spawned many long-held superstitions regarding the reclusive warriors of the First. They were treated with an awe that sat somewhere between respect and terror by those who served alongside them, for it was said that to offend them was to bring the scrutiny of their patron, Death himself, upon the offender. Among the host gathered by the Emperor they were not heroes, but rather a breed of monster made loyal by the will of their master. They were not to be lauded for their bravery but rather placated to assuage their wrath. Despite the dictates of the Imperial Truth, the common soldiery of the Imperial armies often set small wards and charms at the edges of their camps when the First Legion arrived to avert the ill-luck that many felt followed the Emperor's firstborn Legion. Such superstition was not without cause, for of those Imperial formations attached to support the First Legion in combat most came to bloody ends. Some were savaged by the monsters that the newly-dubbed Angels of Death had come to slay, and others would simply vanish, purported to have been silenced by the First Legion themselves, lest word of some dread enemy return to the camps with the survivors.

The warriors of the First Legion, ever of pragmatic mind, soon began to assume the guise in which they had been cast, adopting the skeletal icon of Death as their own and adorning their armour with funerary symbols. This self-imposed exile from the camaraderie of the Emperor's lesser servants was a point of pride among the First Legion. It was a sacrifice made to protect the mortal army from the terrors only the First Legion were fit to bear, though to some of those they fought beside, most especially the other Legiones Astartes, it seemed more vainglory and arrogance than humble sacrifice. The Masters of the First showed no interest in such slights, content to remain wreathed in malign rumour as they fought the battles that could never be lauded lest they break the minds of those who bore witness to the battle honours. For while the younger Legions were granted the lesser honour of standing triumphant at the mundane victories of conquest, the First Legion would be awarded the greater honour of acting as the Emperor's left hand; a brutally efficient weapon of grim aspect hidden behind the bright pageantry of the Imperial Army.

Branded All As One

Tales and theories beyond count surround the Thunder Warriors and their sudden disappearance from the Imperium's history, most being fabrications and sophistry of the worst kind, though a few warrant further regard. One such tale in particular is of note, a tale told among the nomadic tribes that inhabit the wastelands around Mount Ararat, and speaks not only of the Thunder Warriors but also of an army *'clad all in grey, dark as the clouds of a storm, and branded all as one'*.

These warriors, so say the hill nomads, awaited the return of the few surviving Thunder Warriors, exhausted by their victory, and rather than giving salute to their valour cut them down in a thunderous volley of bolt and plasma. This tale is far different from the heroic tale told by remembrancers to mark the end of the wars of Unity, but in keeping with the brutal necessities of the Emperor's far reaching plans. It is possible that the warriors *'branded all as one'* could be the First Legion, who all bore the sigil of their numeration bold upon their plate, for battles of that Legion were oft removed from Imperial record, the details expunged and forgotten.

Actual proof, however, does not exist, not even in the archives of the Imperial Palace. Yet, several anecdotes from the latter years of the Great Crusade do seem to support the theory, all related to a near-obsessive preoccupation with the hunting down and destruction of those few renegade Thunder Warriors that survived and fled Terra, over and above the standing orders of the Imperial Court to suppress all such renegades. On at least three occasions, fleets of the First Legion have altered course in order to engage and destroy Thunder Warrior survivors, often making wide detours based on simple rumours of such activity. Such an obsession is notable for an otherwise stoic Legion, and would seem to hint at a more personal interest in the resolution of any encounter with surviving Thunder Warriors, perhaps even a sense of shame in having allowed any to escape some previous engagement. Given the renowned secrecy of the First Legion and the frequency with which their campaigns and deeds are obfuscated by Imperial decree, it is unlikely that the truth of this matter will ever be known.

The Emperor's Own Angels of Death

This was an honour they would bear throughout the war to unify Sol and beyond, a duty that kept them separate from the other Legions created in their image. As the younger Legions slowly began to reach the nominal strength required for the beginning of the Emperor's Great Crusade, the First Legion conducted a lonely vigil far from the light of Sol, scouring clean the Oort Cloud and keeping watch along the heliopause border for those terrors that sought to slip unnoticed into the Emperor's newly-claimed domain. This duty they accepted without complaint, taking pride in the role selected for them by the Emperor, for they were His Angels of Death – a name which, at that time, belonged to them alone. For nearly a decade they would dwell in the lightless depths of the system, burning clean the frozen moons of the outer system and freeing the few lost outposts of Mankind that still survived at the very outermost edges of the Sol System.

Here, the informal network of specialists within the Legion became the first of the Orders, dedicated to a singular focus of war beyond the wider scope of the Hosts; their craft honed in the battles at the dark edge of Sol, and the complex ciphers and rituals by which they recorded it entrenched over the long years of isolation. It was by the hard-won knowledge of these warriors that the Legion would prevail again and again in the most gruelling and hazardous battles faced by the warriors of the Emperor, the weaknesses of each foe exposed by sacrifice and encoded in the traditions of the Orders and the secrets of war in any environment catalogued in their archives. The Legion would return to the inner worlds purged of weakness and hardened by adversity, their armour no longer the flat grey of the other Legions, but a deep and impassive black. There would be no fanfare on their return to the Emperor's side, no parades of victory, merely the silent approval of the Emperor of Mankind and a place at the vanguard of the host that mustered ready to make war upon a hostile galaxy. Despite the hardships that would await them and the mighty foes they would face, none could doubt victory having witnessed the grim resolve and stoic pride in the faces of the black-clad warriors as they took their place at the head of the host.

There, amid the vast muster that took place around the shipyards of Saturn, the fleet granted to the First Legion stood out among the newly-built Saturnine pattern vessels and the ancient ships re-awakened from the macro-vaults of Mars, for the First Legion were granted the honour of a tithe of those few remaining Terran vessels. These ancient craft almost all dated back to the years before Old Night, relics of forgotten technologies and lost aspirations of grandeur. Among them were to be found massive Gloriana class battleships, Promethean class cruisers clad in dense layers of void shields and weapon-studded Tiamat class destroyers, all far surpassing more modern designs in potency and made available to few other than the Emperor's own guards. To each of His other Legions He bequeathed but a handful of such ships, while to the First Legion He granted a fleet.

This gift was not a simple reward for the heroics they had displayed in the fighting on Old Earth and beyond, but rather a necessary tool for those actions yet to come. For as the armies of the Emperor set forth on the Great Crusade and pushed beyond the edges of those few star charts that had survived Old Night, they encountered such terrors that the battles on Terra were made to seem inconsequential by comparison. In these dark places among the stars, the First Legion would find the reason for their reward, for in order to fight the monsters the Emperor had foreseen in His path, they would need monstrous weapons. Alone among the Legiones Astartes, they would make common use of the forbidden weaponry of Old Night, of gene-phage and rad wave, employed to wipe clean the nests of those enemies deemed too terrible to be faced in open battle. The First Legion were the fulcrum of the Emperor's wrath, the agency of His hate, for they brought not simple destruction but the all-encompassing oblivion of utter annihilation. They were the Angels of Death, a title that would one day encompass all of the Emperor's Space Marines but, in those brutal days of conquest and blood, it was theirs alone.

Even as other Legions fought to bring those human colonies discovered by the Expeditionary fleets to Compliance, the First Legion fought to hold back the hate of a galaxy filled with terrors. They took war to the dens of monsters and legends without fear or hesitation, shattering the hold of nightmares on the future of Mankind; though only in the most secure vaults of the Imperial Archives do any records of these battles remain. They speak of Behtelgen IV, where the 3rd Chapter, formed mainly of warriors from the Hosts of Stone and Iron, assaulted a world whose mountains and crust had been hollowed out to form a fortress for a swarm-creature of protoplasmic and hyper-acidic slime, the nucleus of an infection that had spread through the void to infest a dozen worlds and seen millions rendered into little more than a nutrient slurry for the beasts. Scattered picts show the shattered husks of the once verdant worlds of the Osiryne Cluster where the First Legion's 19th Expeditionary Fleet engaged a vast, sentient planet-killer – a technological abomination spawned by some long-forgotten empire and left to wreak havoc upon an uncaring universe – the records of the battle itself sealed by Grandmaster Thrane. These horrors, and a thousand more, were exterminated by the warriors of the First Legion, and all trace of the campaigns erased from records to protect the sanity of those unprepared for the raw mindless hate of the universe laid bare.

To those outside the ranks of the First, their record in the early years of the Great Crusade seems at best lacking in comparison to their brother Legions and at worst a fabrication. With many of their greatest triumphs shrouded in secrecy, they had less conventional triumphs to their name: merely a handful of worlds brought to Compliance where hundreds had burned in silence. What few knew was that it was in the sacrifice and valour of the First Legion that many of the Legiones Astartes' key doctrines were forged, with such tomes as the *Principia Bellicosa* formed, in part, from the strategies and tactics perfected by them as each Host strove to refine their own brand of warfare upon the most vile battlefields of the Great Crusade. Those that thrived on the field of battle would grow and pass their knowledge on, not only to their battle brothers within the Legion but to those without through the doctrines created in their wake. While those that struggled would fade from the roster of the Legion, ground to extinction by the inexorable hunger of war.

The Hosts of the First Legion

In the days before the coming of their Primarch, the Hosts of the First Legion were named and organised differently to the Wings that were the later creation of Lion El'Jonson. The foundation of the doctrine that would lead to the formation of the Hosts is often credited to the Emperor Himself in the histories of the Legion, a strand of the great plan that He had formed for the first of His Legions. The list that follows is reconstructed from the records from 753.M30, a median point in the early history of the First Legion, and shows the main Hosts still known to history, which would later be reconfigured into the six Wings of the Hexagrammaton:



The Host of Crowns: Among the oldest of those Hosts still known in the records of the First Legion, being the original core of the First Legion's warriors who had served as champions among the vast hosts of the pre-Unity armies on Terra. The Host of Crowns specialised as linebreakers and vanguard warriors, experts in the honour-duels that had once been a key feature of Mankind's wars and icons of victory as much as they were fighters.



The Host of Blades: The core of the Legion as its numbers grew and it took to the field as a true army. The Host of Blades were the infantry cohorts that formed the ranks and held against the assault of the foe, the gun line that threw back their warriors and the bold columns that shattered their lines. They were masters of the close order infantry tactics that were the crux of the early Legiones Astartes order of battle, formed around the primacy of the Legion Tactical squad and the principal agent in the development of the first volumes of the *Principia Bellicosa*.



The Host of Pentacles: Now little more than a forgotten legend to most, the Host of Pentacles was the earliest attempt to incorporate the war-witches of Old Earth into the line of battle, to bring the might of the psyker to bear upon the foes of Mankind. It was a Host oft-maligned by those its adepts fought alongside, for in its early days there were as many calamities as triumphs for the battle psykers of the First Legion, and in time it would be an experiment that was brought to a close by the Grandmaster of the Legion.



The Host of Iron: Drawn at first from the hardy nomads of the Thulic tribes on Old Terra, adapting their ancient traditions to the modern battlefield, the Host of Iron was expert in the employment of armoured vehicles on the field of battle. From the lumbering gun-crawlers of Old Earth's pre-Unity armies, to the war engines designed and built for use by the Emperor's Legiones Astartes, the Host of Iron would pioneer many of the strategies that underpinned their use on the battlefield.



The Host of Fire: Among the most secretive of the early Hosts, the ranks of the Host of Fire were filled with spies, assassins and all the subtle tools of war. In war it was the eyes and bloody left hand of the Legion, the first to take to the field in the form of infiltrators and lone invigilators and the last to draw blood, and its interrogator consuls were widely feared for their talent.



The Host of Bone: Sometimes known as the Skandic Host, both for the wild and bloodthirsty tactics that were its preference as well as the primary recruiting ground of its warriors. The Host of Bone fought not to break the lines of a single army, but to crush the spirit of the foe entirely, seeking to find the weakness that almost all enemies hid and then cut it apart. Reavers without equal, they gave little credence to the noble ideals of civilised warfare and brought the most terrible weapons and tactics to the field of battle.



The Host of Stone: Experts in the static arts of war, of siege and the destruction of fortifications. The grim demeanour of these warriors is a key feature of many of the most bitter defences and bloody assaults in the early years of the Great Crusade, for to the adepts of the Host of Stone all war was a simple matter of determination. Those that did not yield to the foe, who stood impassive in the face of utter destruction, would find victory and those who gave way would be crushed underfoot.



The Host of Wind: Skirmishers and cavalry warriors, the Host of Wind excelled where warfare moved at the speed of the storm that was their namesake. Experts in the use of light armour and jetbikes, as well as swift assault troops, the Host of the Wind enjoyed a reputation as one of the most glorious in the First Legion, though it also bore one of the highest tallies of the dead for its reckless valour.



The Host of the Void: One of the last Hosts to emerge as a major force within the First Legion, the adepts of the Void were masters in the use of teleport assaults from low orbit as well as war amongst the heavens themselves. Shock assault infantry equipped with teleport displacement beacons, shipboard assault cadres and aircraft pilots were all to be found within the Host once the First Legion reached the stars in the wake of the wars on Old Earth.

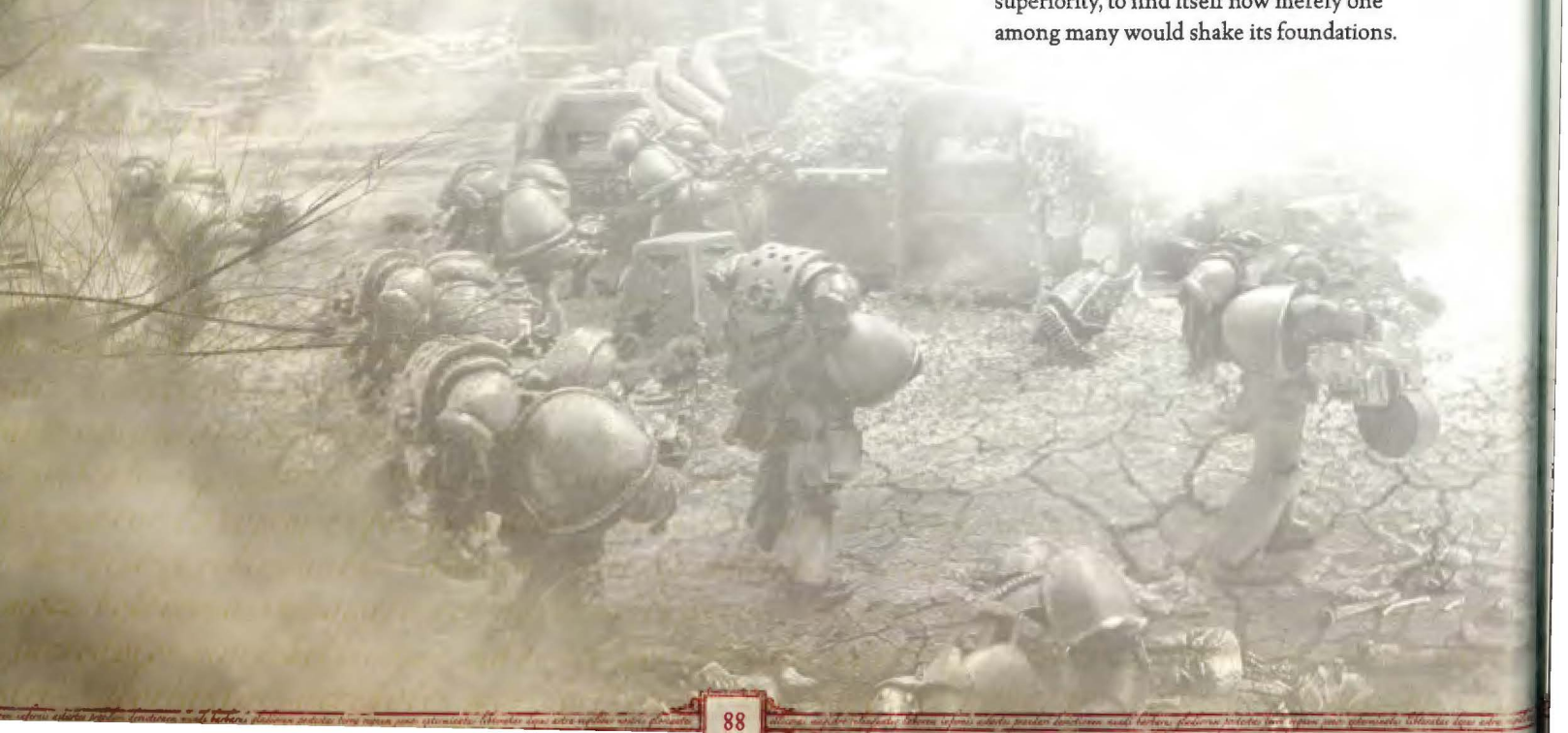
A Fortress of Pride

These trials would shape the Legion into a fearsome weapon, the largest and most heavily armed of all of the Legiones Astartes during the early years of the Great Crusade. They fielded more warriors under arms, maintained a larger fleet and had access to weaponry more powerful than any of their brother Legions at that time, even those such as the Luna Wolves and Space Wolves which had already been reunited with their Primarchs. The Grandmaster of the First Legion stood at the left hand of the Emperor, one of the most influential personages in the early Imperial Court whose counsel was second only to that of Malcador and Horus Lupercal. Despite the hidden nature of many of their triumphs, they were acknowledged by all as pre-eminent among their post-human kin; the most powerful force-at-arms in the serried ranks of the Imperial armies. In those heady years of conquest and victory the First Legion stood true to their name at the apex of Imperial might, feared by those who stood against the Emperor and his dream of unity and respected by all those who fought at their side.

Yet, as with all things, the glory of the First Legion would be a fragile thing and one that could endure only for a short time before becoming something less than it once was. For the First Legion, in those days before the return of their Primarch, the great foe that would topple them from their place of honour would not be any terror from the outer dark, but rather their own hubris. For, though the black cruisers of the Legion were ever to be found at the edges of the map, hunting for monsters in the dark between the stars, they now took a perverse pride in pitting themselves against only the most powerful of foes, those that wielded a power equal to that of their own, those in whom they saw the possibility of defeat. Other threats – deemed too insignificant for the First Legion, too weak to pose a real challenge, foes that would not test their strategies or mettle – would often be bypassed and left to the Imperial Army regiments and other Legion fleets that followed in their wake. Yet with each encounter they grew only stronger; no enemy, no matter how powerful or destructive, could stop them and each triumph only added to the shield of arrogance they had built about themselves.

The stubborn pride that had sustained them through hardships unnumbered now became a double-edged blade. The Hexagrammaton, once an ever-shifting body of knowledge that changed to match each challenge, had become fixed in place; the warriors of the First assuming that they had reached the apex of skill and could learn no more. Recruitment from outside their ancient enclaves on Terra and a few other worlds slowed to but a trickle, with those from outside the traditional recruiting grounds considered less valuable. Each battle led them further down the path of wilful arrogance, each victory hailed as a triumph of their skill and each defeat dismissed as the folly of lesser breeds of warrior and leaders rightfully culled from the Legion by their failure. Tradition and ritual became more valued than innovation, with each Order and Host jealously guarding their own small fragments of the Legion's battle-lore, certain that it was this scrap of knowledge that was the true heart of the Legion's success.

The Legion began to turn in upon itself, the openness and inquisitive nature of their early years slowly being replaced by a secretive and tradition-bound approach. They had begun the Great Crusade as mentors and guides for the other Legions, seeking out the stratagems and tactics through which the potential of the Legiones Astartes might be fully realised, but now came more and more to resent those they had once guided. The other Legions claimed world after world for the Emperor, easy victories in the eyes of the First Legion, trivial conquests against unworthy foes, yet ones for which they received laurels and praise equal to that of the First Legion's hard-won battles. Some also came to rival the power of the First: the Ultramarines, now re-united with their Primarch, could claim more warriors under arms, and the Imperial Fists, under Dorn, boasted the firepower of immense relics such as the *Phalanx* in their fleets. To a Legion that had built its pride upon a sense of authority, some might say superiority, to find itself now merely one among many would shake its foundations.



Perhaps the final blow to their fragile pride was to come at Canis-Balor, where simple conquest and stubborn complacency became ignominy and disaster. Here, in an otherwise insignificant system home to a xenos breed as yet uncatalogued by the sage-brothers of the Orders of Extinction and Annihilation, the First Legion and its Grandmaster committed a small force to the assault, confident in their ability to prevail and secure in the tested strategies of the Hosts and Orders. Yet the xenos of Canis-Balor, their identity long since purged from records, proved a threat unlike any faced before, fighting without regard for sane tactics and with a technology that defied rational explanation. The First Legion's initial attack was repulsed with heavy losses, an indignity that the First Legion had not known for decades. Defeat was a foe they thought they had conquered and pride began to cloud their wisdom. A second assault followed and then a third, each repulsed in turn with mounting losses.

With his faultless record now tainted and his pride sorely wounded, Grandmaster Thrane led one final assault, refusing to accept that any might equal his own warriors in skill and tenacity. This assault, even weakened by the losses already sustained, cut a swathe through the xenos forces defending the planet, but could not overcome the sheer numerical superiority of the foe. Overwhelmed, it teetered on the brink of annihilation. Grandmaster Thrane, realising the folly of pride that had driven him into battle, chose to remain behind with his lifeguard, sacrificing himself to allow the retrieval of valuable combat assets. Canis-Balor was reduced to ashes from orbit, all trace of life on its surface incinerated in nucleonic fire, a measure that many argued should have been taken earlier had pride not forced their hand. All records of the foe they had fought were sealed away, though they would later be recovered by the Order of Broken Claws before being sealed once again for reasons equally lost to history.

The loss, both of the battle and of Grandmaster Thrane, proved a catalyst for turmoil among the ranks of the Legion. Each of the Masters of the Hosts and the Preceptors of the Orders were sure that had their doctrines been given primacy, they could have turned the tide of battle. A subtle struggle for power erupted among the complex tiers of authority within the Legion, a struggle that slowed the pace of their conquests and threatened to unseat the Legion from its pre-eminent position of honour once and for all.

The Ill-made Knight

This struggle was fought most fiercely upon the floor of the First Legion's great Hall of Council at Gramarye, at the heart of the Legion. There, where once the Masters and Preceptors of the Legion had created much of the wisdom that now guided the Legiones Astartes as a whole, a storm of vitriol and admonition had erupted. Each of the Masters of the Legion, unable or unwilling to see fault in their own wisdom, sought to attach it to that of their fellows so that it might be excised from the First Legion. Most contentious of all was the selection of a new Grandmaster, for few would countenance the selection of a warrior from a Host other than their own. As the pace of the First Legion's conquests slowed and the deliberations of the Council of Masters stagnated, it would be the intercession of Malcador, first among the Emperor's confidants, to break the deadlock. Rather than present some censure on behalf of the Emperor, he chose instead to sponsor a candidate of his own, seeking to stir the Legion from its doldrums and return them wholeheartedly to war. His words to the Council of Masters were carved upon the lintel of the chamber, such was their impact: *"A fortress can be held upright by many pillars, alone they are nothing but together they are mighty. Yet, a fortress must have a master or else all its strength is for nothing"*.

The warrior nominated by the Sigillite was elected by unanimous vote of the Council; he was neither Master of Hosts nor Preceptor of the Orders, but a war-worn captain from among the vast ranks of the First Legion. Malcador's logic was impeccable, for such a candidate stood for no one branch of the Legion's arts alone, but rather for all as one. Where any of the venerable masters would find nothing but opposition from their peers, a simple warrior found acceptance from all. The warrior chosen was Urian Vendraig, once captain of the 14th Company of the 8th Chapter, a Terran taken into the Legion after the Emperor had united that war-torn world, and with a grand record of victory as his banner and as yet uninitiated into the inner mysteries of any one Host or Order. His was a legacy of bloodshed in battle, of rousing speeches and glorious last stands. He had stood shoulder-to-shoulder with his battle-brothers through all his service and spent but little time in ritual or doctrinal debate.

His new task was to unify a divided Legion and return them to the Great Crusade and the purpose laid out for them by the Emperor unburdened by doubt and division. As a warrior first and foremost, Vendraig saw the value of bringing the Legion fully into the Emperor's Great Crusade, taking its rightful place at the head of their brothers rather than only serving at the fringes of history. For the first time in the Great Crusade, a small contingent of carefully-selected remembrancers was allowed to join the Grandmaster's entourage, attached to his personal guard and given strictly limited access to the Legion's records, so that they might bear witness to the First Legion's ascension. All that remained was to find a challenge worthy of the Legion, some terrible foe to bind them once again in hatred of the enemy and, as though gifted to them by the Emperor, word arrived of a new terror encountered on the far rim of the Great Crusade: a race known to history as the Rangda.

Encountered by the 105th Pioneer Company of the Vth Legion on an isolated world along the northern rim of the galaxy, the Rangda were considered a grave threat to the expanding Imperium. Though at that time their territory was thought to encompass only a single system, they possessed a vile technology and fearsome aspect that warranted the most extreme of responses. Mustering a fleet numbering hundreds of capital class warships the new Grandmaster descended upon the isolated system of Advex-mors, where the Rangda had created a vast artificial war-moon, an immense engine of war that had cost millions of slave labourers from a hundred worlds their lives. This monstrous weapon was defended by a fleet of lumpen and ugly Rangdan war-barques, each bristling with weapons and crewed by slaves whose neural collars enforced their unflinching obedience. The battle that ensued would leave the system of Advex-mors as little more than ashes and rubble, all six worlds claimed by the Rangda were rendered uninhabitable, their fleets reduced to drifting fields of wreckage and their vast slave armies utterly annihilated. The campaign lasted for four months and cost the lives of some 5,000 of the First Legion, but as the banner of the Imperium was raised over those broken fragments of the Rangdan war-moon that had rained down upon the burned husk of Advex-mors beneath, the Imperium was reminded of the sheer power of the First Legion.

The Rangdan Campaigns

The Imperium is a fragile sliver of sanity in the void, besieged upon all sides by forces of monstrous dread that are held at bay only by the blood and sacrifice of millions of forgotten heroes. For every crusade trumpeted to the masses as a safe legacy of triumph and glory, like the much lauded victory at Ullanor, there are a hundred dire tales of desperate stalemate with forces malignant beyond mortal ken. Were the populous of the Imperium to realise the dire peril in which they existed in the tenuous days of the Great Crusade then it is likely that the terror would have kept them prisoner on Old Earth, never to reach out for the stars. Of all these hidden threats and dire wars against the unknown, the most infamous among scholars of the forbidden is that of the Rangdan Campaigns.

These campaigns have long been relegated to the footnotes of history, little understood by the common historian save as an obscure reference to a forgotten evil. In reality the wars against the Rangda threatened the utter destruction of all the realms of Mankind, the destruction of His dominion and the butchery of its subjects. More than 80,000 of the Legiones Astartes and uncounted millions of the Imperial Army gave their lives to hold back the hordes of the Rangda and their cohorts, over wars fought across some two decades of the Great Crusade. The Dark Angels stand prominent in the telling of this tale, and it is by their hand that so few details are known, for it was deemed by the First Legion that all knowledge of the Rangda and the wars fought against them should be purged for the good of the Imperium.

Much of the fact surrounding those battles has long since been obscured by rumour and invention, with even the true form of the Rangda forgotten. All that remains are a few blurred and indistinct picts of fallen Rangdan warriors and ancient horror stories speaking of towering xenos of monstrous appearance and terrifying intellect. They were conquerors and destroyers whose seat of power lay along the very edges of the galaxy, a race whose foul technology and cruel ambition were a match for that of the Imperium and whose determination to rule over all others threatened to drown the Emperor's dream of empire in blood.

It is beyond the scope of this volume to address the full impact and devastation wrought during the campaigns that would see the eventual extinction of the Rangda, though perhaps future works may address this omission. However, considering the integral role of the First Legion in the events of all three Rangdan Campaigns, it seems appropriate that the base facts of the fighting be presented here, at least in brief.

The wars fought against the Rangda number three in total. The first of these campaigns, the assault and destruction of Advex-mors in 839.M30, is most probably the first encounter between the forces of the Emperor and the Rangda, and has been covered elsewhere in this treatise in some detail. Advex-mors would later be discovered to be little more than a small outpost of the Rangdan empire, a minor station at the edge of their domains. In the aftermath of the Imperium's assault, the Rangda paused in their conquests elsewhere to turn their eye back upon Advex-mors and the surrounding systems, now swarming with the Imperium's colonies and fleets. The victory at Advex-mors, despite the steep price paid to secure it, would prove to be little more than the prelude to the true assault.

In 862.M30 the Rangda returned to Imperium space, marking the start of the second Rangdan war. They came not with a single small fleet, but with a vast armada comprising thousands of vessels as well as over a dozen war-moons, a force of might far exceeding that of the small garrisons and Expeditionary fleets in the area. They struck the northern fringe of the Imperium like a thunderbolt, annihilating the fleets set in defence over the fledgling colonies and forcing their colonists into neural shackles. It was only by the efforts of Expeditionary fleets under the banner of the Vth and XIXth Legions that the tide was delayed long enough for Imperial forces to rally, and the price they would pay to buy this respite was staggering. Making a stand at the isolated Forge World of Xana, the combined forces of the Vth and XIXth Legions fought a bitter holding action for eight months at a cost of 3,000 of the Legiones Astartes and many hundreds of thousands of Mechanicum thralls. The siege of Xana would be broken by the furious onslaught of the Dark Angels and Death Guard, shattering the Rangdan blockade and cutting a path through the slave cohorts on the surface to once again open up the forge as a beachhead for the Imperium's counter-attacks.

What would follow was more than two decades of war, millions upon millions of deaths, 19 inhabited systems laid waste and a ban on further expeditions past the exclusion posts on Endyris and Morox. Before the crisis was declared ended, contingents from nine separate Legions would become embroiled in the fighting, with more than 300,000 Space Marines being deployed at the height of the conflict during the climactic assault on Taxal. Due to the widespread nature of the campaign, the battle honour goes to no single warlord, though three of the Primarchs were known to have led their troops into battle against the Rangda. Despite this, the Primarch of the Dark Angels is widely held to be the foremost commander of the war.

The last known battle of the second Rangdan campaign is thought to have occurred in 882.M30, a chance encounter with a battered Rangdan fleet, a broken remnant of the vast armada that had challenged the Imperium and lost. At the time the truth of the Rangdan campaign, of the slaughter endured and how the Imperium had teetered on the brink of ruin, was concealed. Those worlds tainted beyond recovery were abandoned and the surviving veterans sworn to silence or eliminated, for it was deemed necessary that the Rangda must vanish if the Imperium was to rebuild. Much of its legend would come later, the invention of Remembrancers and ideologues eager to promote the glory of the Great Crusade, and was composed of as much fiction as fact. For most this marked the end of the wars with the Rangda, an end to one threat among thousands. A simple, if bloody, way marker in the Great Crusade's inexorable path.

The third and final Rangdan war, more commonly known as The Rangdan Xenocide, is little known and in many histories completely absent. It was conducted under the orders of the Divisio Militaris by the combined forces of the Dark Angels and Space Wolves, the final and irrevocable solution to the threat of the Rangda. That great and terrible race had been sorely wounded by their losses in the second war with the Imperium, but not vanquished. They had returned to their ancient home worlds, and there, nourished by hate and a dark hunger, they had grown strong once again. By chance those nests were discovered by a roving Company of White Scars after the lifting of the edict of exclusion in 887.M30, news the sons of Jaghatai brought to the courts of the Lion and the Wolf. Those two, often antagonistic, warlords were united by the same bleak purpose, for if the Rangda still lived, they must be swiftly and utterly destroyed lest they rise again and ignite another great war. Together they and their Legions visited hell upon the remaining Rangda, scouring their last worlds clean from orbit and then descending to verify the termination of every hive and fortress with blade and flame.

This last campaign was no war, but a brutal and one-sided extermination. Neither Russ nor the Lion held any illusions of tawdry chivalry to stay their hands, and they took a savage and final satisfaction in the utter annihilation of every last warrior and worker of the Rangdan breed. In the space of a year the galaxy was wiped clean of the Rangda, their last fastnesses torn down and all traces of their works brought to ruin. The world of Rangda, once a vast and hideous city, was left as little more than plains of fractured glass formed from atomic fire, and became the site of a chantry house of the First Legion, home of the Order of Broken Claws, the keepers of the last set of codices that detail the Rangda and their weaknesses. This was the end of both the Rangda and the campaigns against them, a quiet and undignified slaughter undertaken with the stoic determination that was the hallmark of the two rival Primarchs of Caliban and Fenris. If any of the xenos breed known to the Imperium as the Rangda survive, in some far flung outpost beyond the edge of the galaxy then they have not returned to seek their vengeance, but the sentinels placed by the First Legion still watch and wait, and should they falter in some distant future where the Legions have ceased to be, I fear for the Imperium.



The epic poems and depictions of the Advex-mors campaign were spread across the Imperium by the Remembrancers that had accompanied the fleet. The First Legion had taken one of the direst threats to emerge from beyond the borders of the Imperium head-on in their place of power and crushed them utterly and without mercy, leaving no stone upon stone. Yet, it was but one great victory among a thousand others, with each of the Legions able to boast of achievements just as impressive, their returned Primarchs forging legends that would resound across the galaxy for thousands of years. Far from ending the strife within the Legion, it seemed only to deepen the malaise that gripped its heart, a sickness that sought to corrupt that once unparalleled force. Pride had taken hold of the warriors and masters of the Legion, and only blood would assuage its hunger.

In the wake of the campaign at Advex-mors, the newly-anointed Grandmaster sought other badges of glory for his Legion. A dozen victories were claimed for the First, each more reckless than the last, and yet it was still considered nothing more than what was expected by the Divisio Militaris on distant Terra. Driven on by a hunger for glory that grew with each and every campaign honour, the Grandmaster and his warriors arrived at the non-Compliant stronghold of Karkasarn, a fortress-world that had resisted Guilliman and the storied ranks of his elite for almost a month. The patient warlord of the Ultramarines had set his strategies, intending to besiege the fortress in detail and save his Legion the unwarranted casualties a foolhardy frontal assault would bring. The arrival of Grandmaster Vendraig and his warriors did not change this strategy, and the Lord of Ultramar expected them to heed his counsel and join his camp. The warriors of the First, seeing before them a chance to humble the great Primarch, formed ranks before the great kilometres-high gates of the world-fortress of Karkasarn and charged.

A wedge of black armoured warriors and engines of war, 10,000 strong and preceded by the same great banners that had once gone to war at the side of the Emperor Himself, descended upon the city-sized gatehouse. Hundreds fell in the initial assault, blasted apart by rampart cannon and immolated by plasma-gouts issued forth from hidden murder holes in the fortifications. They forced a breach at the cost of their own lives, opening a path for the heavy guns to burn a hole in the vast gates and into the maze of fortified boulevards beyond. His hand forced by the actions of the First, Guilliman and his own troops advanced, but slowly, cautiously, taking each objective methodically and with minimal losses. The vanguard of the First Legion soon outpaced them, making for the central plaza and the citadel at its heart. Though they would reach it long before the Ultramarines, a final act of treachery by the desperate overlords of Karkasarn would undermine the First Legion's victory: a hidden atomic mine detonating under the keep's tower and killing the second Grandmaster of the First Legion as he stood upon the threshold of triumph, burying both Vendraig and his lifeguard cadre from the Host of Death.

Though their losses had been grievous, both in number and in significance, victory had been seized in the Legion's bloodied grasp, its savour all the more sweet for the price paid to earn it. Yet the Lord of Ultramar, his blue-clad warriors last to the battle and last to the victory, offered them no words of congratulations. He did not acknowledge the skills or the fortitude of the First Legion, gave no salute to their bravery or their fallen. Instead, he offered only these words to the battered ranks of the victorious First as they stood about the bodies of their fallen champions: "*Vainglory is a poor strategist, for he renders triumph a bitter trophy and an empty prize. Today you have proven the strength of your Legion, but not its wisdom*".

Along a Knife's Edge

It would be in death that Grandmaster Vendraig would finally achieve his aim, for it was the first stirrings of hate that would unite his Legion, an animosity that was born with his death and festered in the ignominious victory of Karkasarn. That world was abandoned by the First Legion and left to the warriors of Ultramar, its battle honour

Historia Terra Regnum

Of Pentacles and Whispers

Not all of the lost Hosts of the early First Legion would simply vanish, leaving no legacy for the blood shed in their name. Of those doctrines that would fall to the vicissitudes of battle, being found impractical for general deployment among the Legions, there were some whose merit would remain to be explored in other forms and adapted to serve the Emperor even in death. Foremost among these 'failed' Hosts was the Host of Pentacles, a gathering of those among the First Legion who showed aptitude for, or noted resistance to, the fickle and perverse powers of the occult; a discipline held in favour by a number of the most profane warlords defeated by the Emperor on Ancient Terra. Utilising the knowledge taken from the fallen sanctums of those tyrants of Old Earth, the First Legion had attempted to create their own sorcerous cabal, warrior-adepts spread among the Legion to enhance the psychic template granted them by the Emperor with the esoteric arts and to advise its commanders when they must fight a foe armed with such knowledge and abilities.

The zenith and nadir of the Host's brief existence would come at the Sealing of the Black Gate in 810.M30, a battle which has long been kept secret, known only to those with access to the deepest vaults of the Imperial Archive. There, in that dark realm which Mankind had trespassed upon unannounced and uninvited, would the adepts of the Host – known then as Quaesitors – serve both as the Legion's greatest weapon and most dangerous weakness. The weakest of will, lacking any formal training in defensive techniques, would succumb to the control of entities beyond the ken of mortal man and wreak havoc among the battle lines of their own brothers before being put down. The battle was only won by the strength of mind and blood of the Master of the Host of Pentacles and the finest Quaesitors of the Host, who sealed the breach and barred the gates into this realm of reality by means of their psychic powers.

In the wake of this cataclysmic struggle the Host of Pentacles was disbanded, its Quaesitors returned to the ranks of the Legion and given over to other Hosts, their potent but unrefined skills deemed too dangerous and unpredictable to be of use. Of the once Master of the Host of Pentacles, Idrik Kybalos, all reference disappears in the records of the Dark Angels and he does not return to another position within the Legion. He reappears almost a century later, listed on the founding charter of the Librarius alongside such luminaries as Magnus the Red and Jaghatai Khan, his work no doubt preserved by order of the Emperor until it would be needed once again. Indeed, much of the early training program of the Librarius incorporates the techniques pioneered by the adepts of the Host of Pentacles mixed with the traditions of Prospero and Chogoris, a tribute to the sacrifice and skills of those warriors that history has forgotten.



NAME: CALIBAN
CLASSIFICATION: LEGIONES ASTARTES
HOME WORLD [FEUDAL/DEATH WORLD]
SYSTEM DATA: [CLASSIFIED AGEISINE/BLACK]
STELLAR GRID: 04-DE-7751/THETA
SEGMENTUM: OBSCURUS/PROXIME
NOTATION: HAZARDOUS [FAUNA]/FEUDAL, TEMPERATE/HEAVILY FORESTED, [CLASSIFIED AGEISINE/BLACK]

++[FIEFDOM OF THE DARK ANGELS LEGION]++
++[DISPENSATION IN THE PURVIEW OF THE 1ST LEGION]++
++[CURRENT STATUS/LOCATION [016.M31] CLASSIFIED AGEISINE/BLACK]++

excised from Legion records and marked on banners only by an empty laurel. The only thing that the Angels of Death would take with them from Karkasarn was a subtle taint, a lingering sense of ignominy that soured their conquests and achievements and drove them to even greater feats to prove their valour. For despite the deeds of their past and the victory at Karkasarn, the Ultramarines saw them simply as equals – brothers rather than mentors. To the First Legion, whom the Emperor had created first and kept close at His side, this seemed more of an insult than the harsh words of Guilliman.

Once more the Council of Masters took the reins of the First Legion, that most potent weapon of war, and split it across the stars to seek vindication in the most deadly contests of arms they could find, each eager to prove the worth of their Legion and their Host. They gave battle without remorse and grasped at triumphs without regard for the cost attached to their trophies. The 9th and 14th Chapters took the coral citadels of Melnoch from the Fra'al in a single night of brutal close quarters slaughter, at a cost of a tenth of their own strength, in order to outpace the onslaught of the Luna Wolves elsewhere in the cluster. Upon the rust deserts of Vorsingun a force of 1,000 initiates of the Host of Iron, gathered from 11 companies and crewing over 400 engines of war, took the field against a throng of brutish orkoid hulks over three times their number, running ahead of the main assault force to claim victory for themselves at a fearful price. Yet for each victory, each battle honour claimed by the blood of its warriors, the First Legion came no closer to regaining the glory of its inception.

All across the galaxy the Legiones Astartes had each become a unique weapon of war, having taken the doctrines of the *Principia Bellicosa* developed from the trials of the First Legion's campaigns and surpassed them, adapting them to their own needs. In Ultramar, the grand kingdom of the Ultramarines forged by the hand of Guilliman, the Primarch of the XIIIth Legion had gone so far as to pen a new treatise of war to improve upon the scheme by which the Legions had organised themselves since they had left Terra. The golden age of the First Legion, those halcyon days when it had stood as sole guardian of the fledgling Imperium, had all but ended. The nature of those hidden battles meant that they would live on only in the memories of the oldest warriors of the Legion and in the secret histories of the Imperial Archives, a bitter price to pay for the first of all the Emperor's Legions that their own honour would ever hold their greatest achievements captive. Pride, which had sustained the Legion through all of the horrors of its past, all of its solitary crusades and valiant last stands, would not allow them to accept a lesser place in the Imperium's order of battle. Pride would see the Legion ground to dust before it would let the younger Legions eclipse them.

As the Great Crusade drew to its mid-point, the turning of the tide in the Emperor's war to conquer the galaxy, the First Legion stood at a precipice of their own. The years since the death of Grandmaster Vendraig had seen them reduced in number, but not in spirit. Where the other Legions had prospered and grown stronger, the Angels of Death had seen their power squandered in suicidal assaults and campaigns gruelling beyond the ken of mortal soldiers. Those wars had cost them warriors and war engines, more perhaps than was wise, but had honed the fighting skills of its warriors to a keen, but brittle edge. To their allies they were grim death-seekers, ever searching for the mightiest foes against which to match their skills and never retreating from battle, even in the face of annihilation. Its leadership divided among the Council of Masters and its warriors taken by a fever of battle-lust, the Legion was spread across the galaxy and engaged in wars beyond count, each Chapter, Host and Order seeking to regain what had been lost. Had it continued down that path it is likely that the First Legion would have fallen, slowly and inevitably cut to pieces on the double-edged blade of its pride. Yet this was not to be, for a small fleet of Jaghatai's roving hunters, the White Scars, would discover a world known as Caliban and the Emperor would bring forth from its dark forests the First Legion's salvation.

The Son of the Forest

As with much knowledge regarding the First Legion and its master, there was a vast body of rumour and little fact regarding the earliest years of the Primarch Lion El'Jonson. It is known that he, along with the other Primarchs, vanished from the Emperor's laboratories on Terra before the beginning of the Great Crusade, removed from the hidden facilities at the heart of His secret fortress by means unknown. Over 150 years later, the young Lion would be discovered by a hunting party of the Knights of the Order in the depths of Caliban's forests. Within these forests dwelt a breed of creature now unknown in the galaxy, monstrous chimaeric weapons left over from the Age of Strife, driven by a hunger that could not be slaked and fully capable of rendering an armoured warrior into a ruin of blood and flesh in seconds. How long the young Primarch had survived alone in the green deeps cannot be known for certain, for the Lion himself has seldom spoken of those times. The knights that found him assumed from his stature and bearing that he could not have spent more than a decade alone, but the growth and development of the Primarchs does not follow the pattern of mortal man, they do not age as do those untouched by the Emperor's genius. The span of years in which the Lion prowled the sea of trees may well have been far longer than can be easily comprehended. Indeed, the legends of those fortified towns that bordered the stretch of forest where the Primarch was discovered spoke of a forest spirit that haunted the depths, a spirit of small stature but whose form was that of a man who was known only by the mysterious marks he left in his wake and had existed for nearly a century before the discovery of El'Jonson.

Regardless of whether the Lion had stalked the forest of Caliban for a decade or a century, that time had left its mark upon him. The lightless depths beneath the canopy teemed with horrors, rapacious killers that often emerged from the deeps to hunt among the towns and villages of Caliban's dwindling human population. There, amongst the most foul monstrosities imaginable, the Lion spent his childhood. He learned to keep silent, lest he grant advantage to those that stalked him, he learned to fight only when he could win, lest he be wounded too gravely to survive, and he learned that once battle was joined it could end only in death, that the strong would survive and the weak would fall. He fought for his life with nothing but his bare hands and a determination so inhumanly strong that it served him better than any iron-forged blade. No feral berserker, but rather a calculating hunter ruled by logic and not simple rage. When he was discovered at last by men, he was judged so dangerous that it might be best to have him slain, treated as one of the beasts of the forest, so akin to them was he. It was the judgement of one man that would see him brought into the realm of Mankind and away from that of beasts, that man was named Luther.

As a champion among the warriors that had defended Caliban through the long years of Old Night, Luther named his new charge Lion El'Jonson, the Son of the Forest, and raised him as a knight of one of the many Orders of Caliban. He taught him the laws and strictures of the Order, to mete justice as a man rather than as a beast, and gave him something that the young Primarch had never before had – a reason to fight beyond simple survival. Caliban was a dying world, its people besieged by the beasts that thronged in the hidden depths of the forest and slowly driven to extinction. The Order, which built and manned the great fortresses at the borders of the wild, had vainly tried to stem the tide but had succeeded only at slowing the pace of their destruction, for they were too few to do more than defend their fastnesses from the constant assaults. Growing and learning faster than any normal man, El'Jonson would quickly prove not only a superlative warrior and strategist, but also a leader whose quiet confidence and iron will drew recruits to the Order in numbers never before seen. With each victory against the beasts of the forest, each fell head planted upon the walls of the Order's fortresses, more warriors took up arms with hope in more than simple survival. Lion El'Jonson stood at the forefront of this new movement, not by choice, for he had ever been taciturn and prone to seek solitude, but by action, always to be found at the fore of any battle and unafraid to speak his mind or act when others might hesitate. By his order the old traditions that allowed only the nobility to fight were dropped, swelling the Order's ranks further at the cost of some dissent within the ranks of the more traditional knights.

Within the space of a decade, the Order's ranks had grown to the point that they were able to take the war for their survival into the forest itself. With Lion El'Jonson and Luther at their head, they began a crusade to rid their world of its curse, bringing flame and steel to the lair of the monsters that had hunted them for generations beyond count. The war was long and bloody, with hundreds slain for each monstrous nest put to the torch, and many grew weary of the slaughter – all save the grim knight, El'Jonson. The Lion knew that mercy had no place in war, to leave with their task unfinished and with any of the foe yet alive would be to waste all of the lives spent in its pursuit. There could be only one end and that was the total annihilation of the enemy by whatever means was needed. He set the knights to ambush the beasts as they came to feed, poisoned the pools at which the creatures drank and set ablaze vast tracts of the forest to set them to flight. He gave the foe no respite and hunted them till no more could be found, and when his warriors spoke of his prowess and victories, it was fear that coloured their words as much as awe. Some feared his new methods and determination enough to declare open rebellion, some fearing the changes he had wrought upon the tradition-bound people of Caliban and others simply seeking to claim the power Lion El'Jonson had come to wield. These traitors to the cause of Caliban's salvation were put down without mercy, the ranks of their soldiers culled in their entirety and their fastnesses torn down as a warning to others.

At the end of the crusade, with both the Lion and Luther exhausted by the terrible cost the fighting had exacted, it was El'Jonson that received the battle honours and the title of Grand Master of the Order. He accepted the accolade without fanfare, for such human eccentricities still seemed less worthwhile to the youth that had grown to manhood among monsters. He understood little the value some men placed upon titles and rewards, for his grim and solitary habits had always kept him distant from others, and he saw not the change his rise had wrought in Luther. For where they had once competed as equals for honour and victory, the Primarch had now eclipsed his mentor and brother, leaving him behind as he grudgingly accepted the people's adulation. It was a wound dealt in ignorance, for El'Jonson did not see the spark of pride that burned within his brother ignite to jealousy in the face of his triumphs, a wound that would fester in the years to follow.

Had the Emperor not arrived shortly after this victory, descending from the heavens to claim His lost son, then perhaps this wound might have healed in Caliban's new peace, but this was not to be. The Emperor came to heap new glories upon the Lion, granting him command of the First Legion, whom He renamed the Dark Angels for an ancient Calibanite myth that spoke to their grim mien, and making him a general within the vast army that sought to conquer

the galaxy. Lion El'Jonson would soon leave for distant Terra and his new destiny, bringing his uncompromising and remorseless style of war to the ranks of the Emperor's forces. To him would fall the role of watchman at the edge of the Emperor's domain, the bane of monsters and beasts and the bearer of weapons too terrible to entrust to any other. He would be the cold and inevitable destroyer, the doom that once unleashed could not be recalled, subverted or delayed; taught by the black depths of the forest the value of cold, ruthless tenacity. He was the first of all the Primarchs, war distilled into its rawest and most fundamental essence, death that walked like a man, and the galaxy would be forever changed by his return.



A Blade Reforged

Only a small honour guard of the First Legion would accompany the Emperor to Caliban, for the Legion was still scattered to war zones across the front lines of the Great Crusade. A mere 500, mostly veterans of the Host of Death, would precede the Lord of Mankind as He journeyed to greet His lost son, the Knight of Caliban known as 'The Lion'. Arrayed in the jet black armour and mortuary symbols that had come to be their mark, it seemed as if the old tales of Calibanite legend had come to life, a host of Dark Angels mustering before the stronghold of the Order and kneeling before the Lion. In that initial, fateful encounter the Legion would earn a new title from the first of the Primarchs, for he saw fit to test the mettle of his new followers by personally duelling the captain of the Company. He stood against the Cataphractii-armoured warrior and matched his Calibanite steel to the power field-wreathed blade of his opponent and left him wounded in the dust; he took their measure and they his and both learned a respect for the other. From that day forth the Primarch would call them his Dark Angels, a title that soon spread throughout the Legion. Within a short span of time, the Emperor arrived to reclaim His lost son and induct Caliban formally into the Imperium of Mankind, its vast forests cleared for industry and the first tithes of recruits claimed from among its population to replenish the depleted ranks of the First Legion.

The Council of Masters on distant Gramarye would soon hear of Lion El'Jonson, the man who was their Primarch, and once more they were riven by dissension. Though none would doubt the word of the Emperor that this knight of Caliban was their lord, they were split by shame and pride. Some were stricken by remorse at the state of the Legion he would inherit, while others wished to set forth and bring a suitable victory as a trophy to set at the feet of their new master. All across the galaxy, the First Legion reacted much the same, some detachments redoubling their efforts and throwing themselves into combat with renewed zeal to bring honour to the Legion, while others sought to extricate themselves from their campaigns so they might travel to Caliban and ask forgiveness of their returned Primarch. The Lion himself was brought to Terra by the Emperor, that he might learn of the war He wished him to prosecute and of the role he would play in the years yet to come.

His brother Primarchs would come to call him dour and morose, given to dark moods and heedless of the counsel of others, but he saw things simply and starkly. He learned on Terra that the war he had fought in Caliban's monster-haunted forests had not been ended, but only begun – for the galaxy teemed with monsters to be slain. He dedicated himself to one task: killing. He had no time for Sanguinius' chivalric ideals, for Mortarion's arbitrary hatred or Fulgrim's obsession with beauty, such passion only obfuscated the true goal: that the enemies of Mankind should be destroyed. As the first of all the Primarchs created by the Emperor, he was both more and less than his brothers: a primal force of destruction whose single-minded focus wrought him more inhuman than Magnus. He could stand against any of his kin, match blades with Fulgrim and stalemate the strategies of Guilliman and, though some might exceed him in the details of some tasks there were none that were his equal in the grander scope of battle, none whose will could match the bloody-minded determination of the Lion. His talents and resolute confidence, which some might have called arrogance, won him few friends but saw him placed at the head of his Legion faster than any of the Primarchs to be rediscovered before him.

The Legion he inherited was in sore need of its Primarch and in need of a new beginning. Scattered and fractured, the First Legion remained a powerful fighting force but one whose purpose had become lost in the long years of the Great Crusade. Before the coming of the Primarch they had been mentors and guides for the younger Legions, but their students had long since found their own wisdom. Now Lion El'Jonson would grant them a new purpose, one in keeping with the Primarch's own methods and the vision he had for the Emperor's Great Crusade. His first acts were to merge many of the teachings of Caliban's techno-feudal aristocracy with those of the First Legion's Hexagrammaton, taking the best of Terra and Caliban to create something new and more refined, and to gather the scattered fragments of his Legion together. With the first generations of recruits taken from the ranks of the worthy among the knights of Caliban still undergoing implantation of gene-seed, hypnogogic indoctrination and live-fire training, the Lion prepared to embark on a crusade of his own. With him were to be found the original 500 warriors that had first arrived at Caliban as well as those Chapters and battle groups that had sought him out to pledge their allegiance, as well as auxilia companies raised from the stock of Caliban to serve the Imperial Army, and a small retinue of tech-magi from the Forge of Xana, eager to court favour with the new Primarch. In full they numbered 20,000 warriors, perhaps a third of the Legion, each marked by the new beginning they were pledged to, adorned with the winged sword of Lion El'Jonson's Dark Angels instead of the grim marks of an age now ended.

Lion El'Jonson led his host forth, seeking out those Companies of his sons that had not yet found their way to his side. To find those scattered warriors amid the chaos of the Great Crusade, a war waged across a galaxy by ten billion warriors under arms, was no small feat and made possible only by the genius of the Lion himself and the arts of the adepts of Xana, who quickly parsed the data banks of the Divisio Militaris to discern in which campaigns the First Legion bled and died. For any other Legion the arrival of their newly-rediscovered Primarch might have been the cause for raucous celebration or ostentatious parades, but not so for the grim First. News of Lion El'Jonson's approach most often spurred the warriors of the First to redouble their efforts in battle, throwing themselves upon the foe without care for their survival so that when they stood before their father they might offer him the blood-soaked laurels of victory. Each battle-worn Company received their new lord with the same stoic reserve, with silent courtesy and brief but solemn vows of allegiance, and each was tested in battle by the Primarch himself before they joined the ranks of his growing entourage. As was the way of the Lion, he demonstrated his worth by his actions and skill rather than with words and vague promises, allowing those who might doubt him to match their blades against his in honest combat. None among the Legion could question his right to lead after such a trial, though some few within the Legion harboured misgivings at the sudden changes the Primarch brought to the centuries-old doctrines of the Legion and the shift in authority he represented.

Within a few short years, the Lion had gathered the vast majority of his Legion together, near 100,000 warriors, and led them to the ancient stronghold of the First Legion on Gramarye. There the gathered Council of Masters and Preceptor's Conclave awaited him amid the many glories of the First Legion's long and glorious history and the amassed wisdom distilled from its battles. Here, surrounded by the dusty trophies of the past, Lion El'Jonson made his Legion whole once again; he faced the ceremonial champion of the Council in the ring of honour, battling Pyrhus Calagat, the Master of the Host of Fire, in an hour-long duel that has since become legend. This final trial ended, the Primarch accepted the titles of Grandmaster of the First Legion, the six Wings of the Hexagrammaton and High Preceptor of the Orders Militant of the First Legion,



NAME: GRAMARYE
CLASSIFICATION: LEGIONES ASTARTES FORTRESS WORLD
[INDUSTRIAL/PRIMITIVE WORLD]

SYSTEM DATA: [CLASSIFIED AGEISINE/BLACK]
STELLAR GRID: 11-GU-4903/SIGMA
SEGMENTUM: SOLAR/SINESTRE

NOTATION: [CLASSIFIED AGEISINE/BLACK]
++[FIEFDOM OF THE DARK ANGELS LEGION]++
++[PRIOR 846.M30 SERVED AS LEGION HOME WORLD]++
++[DISPENSATION IN THE PURVIEW OF THE 1ST LEGION]++

the first warrior to consolidate the leadership of the entire Legion under one banner. To the gathered warriors of the Dark Angels, whose oaths had now been sworn in blood and sacrifice, the new Primarch swore an oath of his own, an oath to seal the pact between them. This oath is recorded in the books of the Council of Masters: "*We are the Angels of Darkness, for us there is no peace, no end but war and death. We shall not walk in the golden halls of Mankind's future, but stand resolute in the shadows beyond. While we yet draw breath, this Imperium will not fall, and we will not know defeat, for I pledge every warrior, every drop of blood in the Legion in the name of victory, no matter the cost*".

A Duty of Sacrifice and Shadows

His oath sworn, Lion El'Jonson saw the rise of his Dark Angels, placing new Masters over each of the Wings he had created from the bones of the old Hosts and formalising the various informal Orders in the style of Caliban's knightly Orders. With the first influx of new recruits from Caliban now ready to join the Legion, comprising those older warriors that had opted to undergo the painful and unreliable augmetic enhancement process that allowed them to reach levels of ability comparable to true Space Marines, Lion El'Jonson swiftly incorporated them within this new structure, taking care to assign posts and commands based only on merit and not due to origin or the simple virtue of time in service. A number of his old companions found positions within his inner circle, and despite the stringent trials the Lion insisted upon, some of the oldest veterans were less than pleased to yield their authority to these comparative newcomers. The old grand chantry on Gramarye was torn down, replaced with a more modest fortress to secure the industrial sprawl of that world, for though the Legion would maintain a great fortress on Caliban, its true heart and seat of power would be the sanctum of the Primarch aboard his flagship, the ancient Glorianna class battleship, *Invincible Reason*. For many, this reinvigoration of the Legion served to dispel the malaise that had lain over the First, discarding the vainglory that had sapped the worth from victory and embracing the purity of the Primarch's vision; though for a silent minority of veterans the sudden and jarring dissolution of old traditions and the introduction of new Calibanite blood left a lingering sense of doubt.

The Lion chose to confront any intransigence with the stoic indifference that was his hallmark, choosing to immerse the Legion in war and trust that his example would dispel any doubt. Dispersed under the Masters and knight-commanders of the Legion he set the Dark Angels to their task, while the Primarch led his own fleet to answer a call for aid received only recently by the newly-installed astropathic choir at Caliban. His destination was the distant world of Karkasarn, where the Ultramarines garrison there had resisted siege for over eight months after a sudden uprising among the population living within the ruined halls of the shattered world-fortress. The desperate rebels had opened hidden vaults deep beneath the surface of the planet and set loose a biogenic phage that had reshaped the broken people of their world into twisted, blood-hungry ghouls whose minds were burned clean of all thought except the need to hunt and kill. These monstrous creations then fell upon the unsuspecting warriors of the XIIIth Legion with a ferocity that gave pause to even the warriors of the Legiones Astartes. With much of the Great Crusade's strength concentrated to the galactic east, there were few forces available to relieve the beleaguered Ultramarines and, given the history of Karkasarn, few expected the Dark Angels to return. So, when the *Invincible Reason* broke through the immaterium and entered realspace, its drop bays already open and primed for launch, Praetor Artaeon of the XIIIth, the commander of the all but overrun garrison, lost for a moment the famous stoic reserve of the Ultramarines and cried out for joy at the sight.

The Lion himself was at the forefront of the relief force, cutting a path through the teeming hordes of flesh-ghola that threatened to overrun the Ultramarines. At the head of 1,000 ebon-armoured veterans of the Dreadwing, the new lord of the First made swift work of the foe, a curtain of superheated plasma scouring clean the walls and bunkers of the fortress. At his heels came the full force of the fleet, 10,000 warriors of the Dark Angels, and by their blades was the enemy put to rout and then annihilated as they cowered in their boltholes. When the Ultramarines sallied forth from their fortifications to meet them among the sea of corpses and ash they did so with some trepidation, perhaps expecting some measure of retribution for the last meeting between their Legions at Karkasarn or a demand to cede the world to the First Legion in return for their aid. Yet the Lion had no interest in old grudges or the tawdry business of accolades and honours, and with the killing complete he left without fanfare, leaving behind only an empty banner to mark the debt paid. That this was among his first battles was no accident, but a statement of his intent. His was not to play at politics, not to build empires nor monuments, he was pledged to war and death – to kill the enemies of the Emperor and nothing else.

As though in answer to his call, war was to descend on the Imperium. The Rangda, that terror long thought extinguished, fell upon the northern reaches of the Imperium in numbers that defied belief. For almost a decade the veterans of the First Legion, now the Dark Angels, fought to hold at bay an enemy that threatened to consume all the worlds of Mankind. The Lion wrought his own legend in those dark times, a grim figure of death and vengeance that descended upon the Rangda in a cold fury. In the first dire years of the conflict, when the Imperium seemed lost in a tide of xenos fiends and their slaves, the Lion stood tall amid the carnage. He was no golden hero like his brother Sanguinius, nor a black-humoured figurehead like Horus Lupercal, but rather a silent rock, unyielding in the storm. He did not inspire loyalty, nor any other virtue. Rather, he went forth where the foe was strongest, armoured by his pride and confidence and drew others along with him for the simple honour of standing by his side.

For near a decade the battles would rage, some nine Legions taking part in the fighting, and ravaging colonies across the northern sectors of the Imperium. Of those Legions caught up in the fighting many would suffer serious losses, the Space Wolves marking the loss of some 5,000 breaking the siege of Xana alone and the Dark Angels, gathered once again in almost their full number, bore a toll of their own. The breaking of the great citadel of Vorksag, the vast clash of void ships over Morcar and the seven-week battle of Morro, where three Companies of the Dark Angels held against more than a million Rangdan neuro-shackled servitors, victory was bought at the cost of their lives, and with the blood of the old Legion, for when victory was at last proclaimed and the Rangdan menace vanquished, the Dark Angels were but a tenth of their old number. Some say the old Legion fought to prove themselves worthy of their new lord, others that they bled to make right their failure to destroy the Rangda when first they met, and a few whispered that the Lion sent them into slaughter so he might replace them with more tractable, Calibanite warriors.

Whether true or not, it was to Caliban that the Lion turned to replenish the ranks of his Legion. With the Rangdan plague driven back, the first new influx of true Calibanite Space Marines entered the ranks of the Legion, where once they had been but the few older companions of the Primarch, now they were dispersed across all the Wings and Orders of the Legion. They were a new breed of warrior for the First Legion, guided more by tradition and ritual than their forebears and unburdened by the weight of pride that had been the lodestone of the Terran veterans. In the wake of the second Rangdan war, it was this changed Legion that went forth to continue its works and to bring war to the most fell of foes. From Caliban they spread out across the stars, for unlike many of their brethren they took few strongholds, save for the lonely chantry-holds that held the knowledge of the Legion. Each of their fleets was bound to a different corner of the Imperium, to patrol the dark places where monsters were still to be found. The Lion took command of one such fleet, no larger or more grand than any other for he expected each to be an engine of death capable of defeating any foe, and set course for the world known to Imperial cartographers as Sarosh.

Historia Terra Regnum

An Inevitable Treachery

Of all the sons of Caliban the fate of the warrior known to history as Luther remains a mystery. A knight whose only wish had been to free his world and sit alongside the man he once considered brother, he is acknowledged as key to the early successes of Lion El'Jonson's sons. Yet how could a mere mortal, even be he a knight of the finest calibre, sit alongside a god of war and commander of legions? Luther, who had plucked the Lion from the black depths of Caliban's forests and raised him up as a knight and a brother, was destined to be abandoned by history and fate, to be left behind by the man he had called friend and ally. His name would not be spoken in the same breath as that of Lion El'Jonson, save as a footnote in his rise to glory, and none among the ranks of the First Legion now speak of his deeds. That this decorated warrior would suddenly disappear from the Legion's order of battle after the Battle of Sarosh, subjected to a subtle exile within the walls of Caliban's fortresses, is but the least of the mysteries that surround him.

Given the events that would follow the Horus Heresy's climactic battles on Terra, the sudden withdrawal of the Dark Angels and subsequent demise of so many of their number, as well as the quarantine of the Legion's home system, it would seem that some cataclysm befell the Dark Angels. That this event somehow connected to the mystery of Luther seems most likely, for in its aftermath the Dark Angels flatly refuse to speak of his fate. Indeed, following the trail of Luther's prior actions we can see a number of connections to the wider Horus Heresy and the plots begun by Horus to fuel it. From the spread of the Order of the Black Key, an Order Militant founded by Luther ostensibly to further cooperation with other Legions, most specifically the Sons of Horus, to the odd disposition of certain elements of the First Legion in the final years of Horus' rebellion, leaving Caliban isolated and known favourites of the Primarch sent far from its halls.

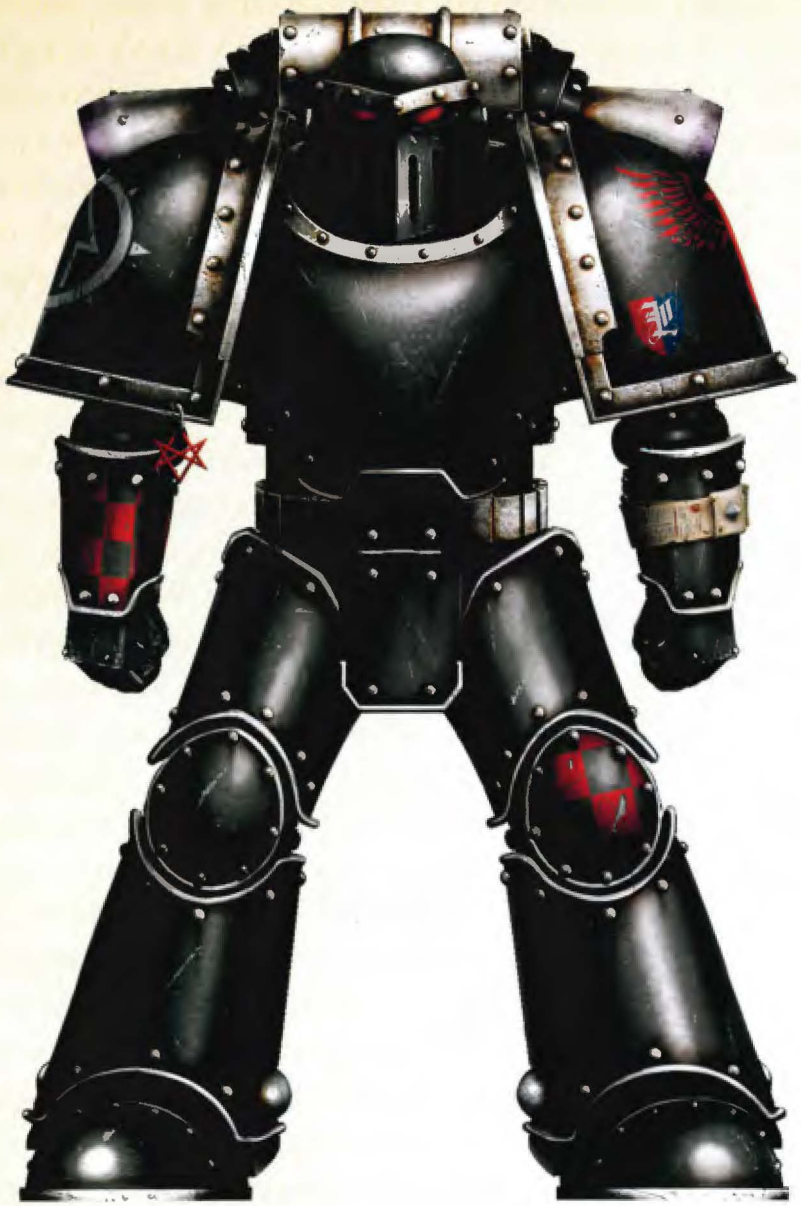
These separate facts all point towards a betrayal that befell Caliban in the final days of the Horus Heresy and has been carefully obscured from the eyes of history. Some long arranged plot, matured and yet brought only to a failure that would see the Legion close ranks and turn in upon itself. What exact role Luther played in such events and to what degree the influence of the Warmaster lay upon this tragedy, we cannot know for certain. Only rumours and half-truths abound in the face of the Dark Angel's intransigence, and so such a question must wait for its proper time, and for a treatise more appropriate than this.



Dark Angels Leviathan Dreadnought

Venerable-Praefectus Coriolanus, Archon of Stone

Venerable Coriolanus once served as the Marshal of the Host of Stone, a warrior whose dedication to the cause of the Imperium had stretched for more than two centuries. He would be declared lost on Nadress III, leading the defence of the outer bastions when the Night Lords began their final assault on that world. Yet, his armour does not grace any Night Lords champion's trophy rack, for in the final moments of the assault the venerable warrior used his grav-flux bombard to collapse the fortress around him, entombing both himself and the Night Lords vanguard in rubble.



Dark Angel Legionary

Legionary Zediel Ardaral of the 42nd Order

Though a simple Legionary of the line, an ordinary warrior within the host, Legionary Ardaral also bears the rank of Proctor within the Stormwing, and that of cenobite within the Order of the Crimson Field. Within his unit he held a higher rank within the Stormwing than any other and was often called upon to advise the sergeant of his squad on appropriate tactics and organisation, as well as serving outside his squad in a cenobium of the Crimson Field during two separate engagements. Overall, he serves as an excellent example of the distributed command structure utilised by the Dark Angels, one designed to put skills and experience before simple rank and too complex to be made easy use of by those not well-versed in its intricacies. Of particular note in this pict-record is the Edict of Incorporation attached to his left vambrace, the left hand being that associated with the Orders Militant, and signifying a warrior honoured by selection to stand as part of a cenobium in battle.

Legionary Ardaral would survive the Thramas Crusade to great honour, fighting in the vanguard of the assault on Sheol IX. There he and his unit formed a vital part of the force that cut the Night Lords off from their ships, allowing the Lion and the secondary waves of the attack to catch their elusive foe off-guard and vulnerable. By the end of the battle, his company had been rendered almost combat ineffective, with casualties near halving their numbers, though the tally of their own kills more than proved their valour and skill in the face of such a fierce foe.

The Keenest Blade

Lion El'Jonson went in answer to a call for aid from his brother, Jaghatai Khan. Of all the Primarchs, the Khan stood closest to the Lion, for despite their differences each appreciated the honest and forthright nature of the other, and so the Lion was ill-disposed to ignore his call. With the arrival of the White Scars, Sarosh had chosen to join the Imperium rather than fight it, but now belaboured at the shackles that were to be placed upon it. Once the Dark Angels took charge and the implacable nature of the Lion was brought to bear upon their intransigence, the Saroshi turned to treachery. By means of a hidden nucleonic charge they even sought to take the life of the Lion himself and, though their schemes came to nothing, they served to bring the whispers of dissension within the Legion to the ear of the Lion. They would deal a blow more deadly to the First Legion than they could know, though it would fester for many years before its true toll was known.

The rebels on Sarosh would be crushed, brought to heel swiftly by the might of the Dark Angels and the Imperium's armies, but the victory would bear a bitter taste for many. In the aftermath of the fighting, some questioned the ease with which the Sarosh had infiltrated the First Legion's defences, and though none would call what had occurred treachery, there were those whose devotion to the Legion's new path was questioned. Luther and a number of others among the veterans of both Terra and Caliban were to find themselves returned to Caliban, not in exile, but neither in triumph. There they were to serve as garrison and overseers of the Lion's sanctuary and leave the Great Crusade behind, regardless of the legacy of years in service in either the forest or the stars. This was the determination of the Lion, that he would set aside those whom he held dearest in the name of duty. Some would name it arrogance and others, with the benefit of hindsight, would call it foolhardy, but it was ever the way of the Lion. It was not the cold logic of battle favoured by some among the Primarchs, but the proud imperative of duty and excellence – that those who faltered be set aside, no matter how justified or small the failing, and the worthy grow stronger through the trials they faced.

By this creed the First Legion, the Dark Angels, lived and died, continuing the work of the Emperor in the last days of the Great Crusade. Wherever the tide of conquest slowed they were to be found, bright swords and grim resolve against the worst horrors of the galaxy. The Lion, now long parted from the forests of Caliban and a staunch believer in the dream of empire, fought with every moment given to him. He spent no time on parades, fortress building or in petty squabbles with his kin, but went stoically from battle to battle. He and his Legion began to shun the gatherings of the Great Crusade and the fellowship of their brothers, scorning those who would fret over such frivolities while there remained enemies of power and strength to test their mettle against. As years and wars wore on, a distance grew between the Dark Angels and the other Legions of the Imperium; few of the Primarchs cared to take the time to seek out their reclusive brother as he and his Legion continued to whet their blades to a keen edge. They began to forget the deeds he and his warriors had performed, for he rarely spoke of them. All except one.

Horus Lupercal, ever watchful, paid much heed to his brother and the actions of his Legion. Once he had tried to bind the First Legion to him, only to find the cipher of their ways a shield against his influence and their pride a foil to his manipulation. His lodges would find no purchase within their ranks, shunned by the preceptors of the Orders Militant and the proctors of the Wings of the Hexagrammaton as worthless and beneath them. They were not and never could be his to command. Their master was as his Legion, a rock in which Horus Lupercal could find no crack or chink in which to fix his barbs, no leash by which he could lead him along paths of his own choosing. The Lion was not well-liked among the brotherhood of Primarchs, but he had the respect of each and every one of his brothers, and more than that he had the trust of his father, the Emperor, and the keys to the hidden arsenals of Terra. Were the Emperor to choose a single one among his Primarchs to lead, to stand at the head of the Great Crusade then Lion El'Jonson was a choice easily understood, and this troubled the master of the Luna Wolves. So, when the conquest of Ullanor loomed before Horus, he was sure to see the Lion and the First diverted to far battlefields and tendered him no invitation to the great Triumph that followed.

So it was that when Horus was crowned Warmaster the Lion was not present, a victory to the covetous mind of the new Warmaster. Yet this was one of the few miscalculations made by the shrewd intellect of the Warmaster. He counted all men of power to think as he did, yet while the Lion and the Wolf of Luna shared many traits, they were not the same. When news of Horus' new rank reached the Lion he did not pause in his campaigns, did not offer congratulations or lament his own fortune and this, more than the reaction of any of his other brothers, gave the Warmaster pause. When Horus' thoughts turned to rebellion and treachery we cannot know, but it is likely that when they did it was the Lion he marked as among the greatest of threats to his plans. The Dark Angels were both numerous and skilled in all the arts of war, with access to the armouries of Terra and psyarkana forbidden to all others, and their Primarch was as inflexible as iron, loyal beyond doubt and resolute enough to rise up against any threat.

As with all of the Primarchs, the Warmaster did not feel fear as did lesser men, but the thought of facing Lion El'Jonson in open battle gave him pause, and if he would not be turned then he must be removed. There were three Legions Horus sought to remove from the path of his heresy before it began. The White Scars he hoped to preserve for his own use, the Blood Angels he hoped to destroy – but the Dark Angels he hoped to banish, to send far enough away that by the time they could return, his grim business would be complete. This was not to be, the Lion would return to the Imperium as the sun returns to the horizon each morning, blinding and implacable, and he would reach for the heart of his fallen brother. Horus had loosed a beast the equal of any that lurked in the dark between the stars, one that would tear apart the Imperium to grasp a victory of ashes and blood.

Unit Organisation and Structure within the Legion

The organisation and structure of the Dark Angels predates the standard patterns laid out by the *Principia Bellicosa*, indeed many of the doctrines and formations in common use throughout the Legiones Astartes find their origins in the early practises of the First Legion. In fact, this would seem to have been one of the prime missions gifted to the First Legion by the Emperor – to discover, refine and perfect those strategies and patterns that would allow His new gene-crafted warriors to perform at peak efficiency. When we speak of the 'standard' form of a Space Marine Legion we speak of the Dark Angels, for it is in the sacrifice of the First that these structures were born. While Roboute Guilliman would later add to and adapt this structure, even that superlative general built upon the foundation that had been defined by the wars of the First Legion before the return of the Lion. Even Lion El'Jonson, upon resuming command of his Legion, would bow before the wisdom of these founders of the First Legion, content to bind this structure to a single vision and authority, and it has remained largely unchanged in form since that day if not in function.

In the earliest years of its existence, the First Legion would experiment with every form of war, every style of organisation and formation, with a host of warriors dedicated to almost any tactical or strategic ploy. This meant that the Legion contained specialists suited to every opponent and battlefield, but it lacked a cohesive structure to organise those warriors. It was by its very nature chaotic and fluid, ever changing as certain tactics fell out of favour and new ones rose to prominence, and as such it lacked an easily defined sense of organisation. This chaos was a necessary tool for its purpose, and in time it would resolve into order, into a system of supporting formations that allowed the Dark Angels to confront any foe on any battlefield and overcome them. This system of specialised formations stood at the very heart of the First Legion, the core around which it was built.

Of Hosts and Orders

The First Legion was composed of Chapters, Companies and squads as was any other, this was the shape of its overt structure, the uncloaked face it showed to its brother Legions and the Imperium at large. Yet each of the warriors of the Legion also held a position in a second, covert layer of organisation, one they kept hidden from those not of the Legion.

This secret strata of organisation was composed primarily of two distinct bodies: the great Hosts and the Orders of Battle. Both of these bodies served to allow the collection and codification of knowledge by the warriors of the Legion and to see that this knowledge was available on the battlefield when it was needed most by the generals of the Great Crusade.

The great Hosts were the larger of the two, numbering at first in the dozens, with each individual force claiming the loyalty of hundreds of individual warriors. The Hosts were each dedicated to the perfection of one art of war, some specialised in siege warfare, others in the art of skirmish and yet more in the brutal discipline of shock assault and many others besides. They did not fight as cohesive formations in most situations, being spread across the various Chapters and Companies of the Legion. Any given unit might comprise members from a variety of different Hosts all working together, lending their experience and skills to their battle-brothers so that the whole had a value far greater than any individual piece. No matter the challenge faced by even the least unit of the First Legion it would find at least one expert in its ranks, a distinct advantage when compared to many of the younger Legions, each of which was dedicated to a single brand of conquest and ill-equipped to fight outside its preferred sphere. Only in the most dire of situations did a Host assemble en masse, its acolytes called out from the ranks to form a single body of those most skilled in their chosen art. Be it the siege-wrights of the Host of Stone or the breaching clades of the Host of Void, such a body could be a potent force in its chosen element, more than capable of turning the tide of even the direst battle.

Each Host followed the same organisational structure, each with its own master, marshals and initiates organised into cells scattered across the Chapters of the Legion. These cells were embedded at the very heart of the Legion's core, operating alongside the Companies and squads of its open face. Any given squad might very well include members from several cells, each bound in service to different Hosts – they were at once brothers, sealed by the oaths made to Legion and sergeant, and made strangers by the secret ties and mysteries of their Host. A warrior owed his obedience to both his commander in the ranks of open battle and his superior in the hidden society of his Host, with only the subtle context of tradition to tell when one held authority over the other.

It is a testament to the fortitude of the minds and the enduring loyalty of these warriors that such a system not only functioned on the field of battle, but excelled in bringing triumph to the First Legion.

The great Hosts of the First Legion recruited openly and widely among the uninitiated warriors of the Legion. When new intakes of recruits reached front line Companies they would find themselves under constant scrutiny from the appointed procurators of the Hosts, each seeking signs of the aspirant's worthiness to join their Host in their conduct on the field of battle. Those selected by the procurators, having already faced their trials upon the battlefield and in the subtle tests conducted by their battle-brothers and commanders, would be swiftly inducted into the most basic tenants of the Host and granted the right to bear its mark. Those warriors initiated into a Host met freely within the precincts of the Legion's holdings and encampments to debate strategy and the proper use of arms, with those of the higher ranks responsible for the training of those below them. These gatherings, though not secret, were considered a private matter of the Host, a forum where a warrior's standing within his Host stood greater than that of his rank within the Legion. Members could speak on the business of the Host, the practise and protection of their unique rites of battle and tradition, without fear of censure, for it was considered the duty of the Hosts to preserve the Legion through their unstinting pursuit of excellence.

The Orders of Battle, though more numerous, boasted far fewer adherents than the Hosts. Of the hundreds of individual Orders, most could count no more than a few dozen initiates, a mere handful of warriors by comparison to the vast Hosts and Chapters of the greater Legion. Such warrior-fraternities could not disseminate their knowledge across an entire Legion in the same manner as the Hosts, and harboured a skill set ill-disposed towards such a use. The Orders of Battle were experts in a single bloody aspect of war, the destruction of a singular foe or the mastery of some aberrant field of conflict. When a battlegroup of the First Legion encountered a foe worthy of their hatred or a field of battle whose nature defied their contempt it was to the Orders of Battle that they turned, forming a cenobium, a cadre of the warriors from an Order trained to negate the foe, to lead the assault and to turn all their secret knowledge into a weapon to smite the enemies of Mankind.



The Hexagrammaton



The Hexagrammaton, a phrase in ancient Terran that loosely translates as '*The Six Divine Ways*', is the title given to the modern form of the Dark Angels' great Hosts. It came into use throughout the Legion at some point around 830.M30, when the Legion first reached a nominal strength of 100,000 warriors and had excised many of the early Hosts by means of attrition in battle and the failure of their doctrines. Those Hosts that remained were regarded as the purest and most efficacious expression of the tactics and strategies forged by the First Legion over its long history, worthy of a permanent place within their order of battle. So successful were they that, when he took command of the Legion, Lion El'Jonson retained the Hexagrammaton virtually unchanged. The Primarch took steps only to re-organise their hierarchies and to structure the Hosts to more closely echo the Calibanite knightly cohorts with which he had conquered the dark forests of his adopted home world, symbolically changing the title of those forces to 'Wings' to mark his ascension to the position of Grandmaster.

These six sub-strata of organisation within the Legion, the six Wings of the Hexagrammaton, would remain unchanged until the end of the wars ushered in by the Horus Heresy; the wide-spread destruction wrought by that era would see the near-annihilation of some of those bodies. At the time of the Dark Angels' return during the Thramas Crusade, the Wings of the Hexagrammaton took the following form:

The Stormwing



The largest of all the Wings, the Stormwing incorporated the majority of the Dark Angels line infantry, training battalions and mobile ordnance batteries within its ranks. The members of this Wing were drilled in the disciplined and stalwart arts of close order warfare and set-piece battles, unshakable on defence and resolute on attack. Its veteran warriors were the core of the Legion's infantry companies, capable of executing complex manoeuvres and formations under the heaviest enemy fire. When the Legion took to the field of battle en masse the veterans of the Stormwing stood in the front ranks, serving to steel the resolve of their brethren and to oversee the execution of orders in the chaos of battle; valued more for their attunement to the subtle shift of war as the massed ranks of friend and foe collided than their vaunted skill-at-arms. The inner circles of the Stormwing were notoriously difficult for initiates to gain admittance to, with rigorous trials for those seeking to assume the mantle of Marshal of the Stormwing. Only veterans of the largest engagements were honoured with titles in the Wing, including both senior officers and grizzled warriors of the line; for among their number the scars of war were the most treasured badges of honour. This inner circle also included a surprising number of the Legion's Apothecarion, who were often at the centre of the battle's fury and integral to the massed infantry assaults for which the Stormwing was famous. Indeed, at first the Master of the Stormwing had also held the title of Master of the Apothecarion for the First Legion. In contrast to the inner circle, whose ranks rarely changed and were accounted one of the most conservative and tradition bound groups within the Legion, the outer circles were in constant flux.

The Deathwing



Formed from the shattered remains of the Host of Crowns, the formation once famed for its line breaker squadrons and marksmen. Those of the inner circle who survived that infamous incident swore mighty oaths that no member of the Wing would ever leave the field of battle in the hands of the enemy, accepting death over dishonour or retreat. The Deathwing excels in special operations alongside other units of the Legion, especially as a counterpart to the more numerous Stormwing, with a multitude of sub-disciplines within its ranks. Most renowned among its specialists are those dedicated to the role of line breakers, elite veteran infantry that serve to shatter the enemy's formations and create openings for other units or Wings, and the lifeguard cadre deployed to protect officers during battle. These lifeguard cadre are especially prominent, with few high ranking officers in the Legion lacking a small force of Deathwing veterans sworn to give their lives to ensure their safety. Indeed, it is a detachment of the Deathwing that provides a garrison force for the inner citadels on both Caliban and Gramarye, charged with the safety of the Primarch himself. Given the stringent requirements for entry into even the outer circles of this Wing, its membership remains small but garners much respect within the Legion, often acting as force commanders in situations where the authority of other factions within the Legion is unclear. As the Horus Heresy wore on and casualties began to take a toll on the Dark Angels' officer corps, the veterans of the Deathwing came to assume a greater responsibility over their brethren, slowly taking a dominant position within the Legion and on the Council of Masters.

The Ravenwing



The Wing most changed by the return of Lion El'Jonson, the Ravenwing was named for the Calibanite Order of the Raven which had trained the most fearsome mounted warriors to be found on that savage world. Combining those warriors of the Order of the Raven inducted into the Dark Angels with the remnants of the Hosts of Wind and Void, the Lion created a formation that would carve a legend for itself on the battlefields of the Great Crusade and beyond. Based around the principles of mobile attacks, of strike and fade tactics and skirmish warfare, the Ravenwing excelled at the use of light skimmers and aircraft, but also incorporated significant infantry assets. These were mostly reconnaissance squadrons, though among those infantry units specialised in the use of drop pods and other orbital assault doctrines, there were many initiates of the Ravenwing marked by the symbol of a white corvid. When the Legion gave battle to a foe that sought to evade or confuse them, or one whose overwhelming power compelled them to counter it with speed, it was the initiates of the Ravenwing that took to the fore. These initiates were often considered mavericks and glory-hounds by the more hidebound veterans of the other Wings, for the Ravenwing retained a number of more barbaric customs associated with its recruits, many of which hailed from remote feudal worlds. As such, those Calibanite warriors who gained admission to its ranks were often those out of favour with the Masters of the more prestigious Wings or those eager to forge their own legend.

The Dreadwing



Perhaps the most feared of all the branches of the Hexagrammaton, garnering a reputation that far outweighed the Wing's influence within the Legion, the Dreadwing was composed of those whose role was the utter annihilation of the enemy, the salting of the earth, and breaking of worlds. When called out from the ranks, the initiates of the Dreadwing were experts in the brutal tactics of massacre, purge, and the deployment of Exterminatus class weaponry, though many also specialised in the use of terror as a weapon. It was an evolution of the Host of Bone, its brutal tactics refined and temperamental nature dulled by the influx of Calibanite recruits, though it retained many of the Skandic ceremonies and titles that had marked its origins. Its initiates were, however, far from dim brutes, for the Dreadwing saw to the duty of caretaking some of the most dangerous technologies that existed anywhere within the Imperium. Its ranks included not only the vast majority of the Legion's Destroyer and Moritat cohorts but also a large number of Techmarines, forge adepts and no few Apothecaries, those considered among the least orthodox of their kind and often of morbid disposition. In the sealed vaults of the Dreadwing rested the least stable of the Dreadnoughts maintained by the Legion, those whose minds were trapped within the horrors of wars long since ended, as well as artificial warriors of a more fearsome nature. In the years after the initial outbreak of the Horus Heresy, as attrition and despair cut at the prohibitions of the Great Crusade, it would also play host to those warriors given dispensation by their Primarch to resume use of their psychic powers. For the Lion would not see his Legion plunged into the greatest war in recorded history barred the use of one of its most powerful weapons. To choose between victory or the sanctity of the dictats of Nikaea was no choice at all, for the Lion would always choose victory, no matter the cost to be paid in the aftermath.

The Ironwing



The Ironwing was dedicated to the use of overwhelming firepower on the field of battle, to confound the foe by means of barrage and conflagration, to defy their riposte with inviolate armour and carry the day by means of force alone. It was not a subtle Wing, composed as it was of the majority of the Legion's armoured vehicles, heavy Dreadnoughts and field artillery batteries, a force ill-equipped for operations reliant on stealth or subterfuge. Yet, they excelled at the breaking of fortresses by superior firepower and the rapid onslaught of massed war engines to overrun and annihilate an unprepared foe in the open field. Its marshals were experts on the engagement and destruction of enemy war machines and heavy guns, often called upon to see to the destruction of those apocalyptic engines of destruction encountered by the Legion in its lonely crusade. Though this deployment of massed war engines was by far the most renowned aspect of the Ironwing, it was not the only facet to their doctrine of overwhelming strength. As a merging of the old Hosts of Iron and Stone, the Ironwing also included a substantial number of initiates from the infantry arms of the Legion, mostly those attached to heavy weapon support units, breacher cadres and Terminator squadrons. Indeed, during the last years of the Great Crusade, the Ironwing fielded the largest concentration of Terminators not only in the Dark Angels but in any of the Legions, including a number of experimental patterns of armour unknown in the panoply of other forces. Often employed en masse to storm fortresses or repel the onslaught of the enemy, these warriors earned a fearsome reputation within the Legion, many retaining the old emblem of the Host of Stone and assuming the title of Stoneborn. The brutal attrition of the early years of the Horus Heresy would decimate the ranks of these valiant warriors, ever first in attack or defence of the Legion, and by the end of the rebellion they were a shadow of their former strength. Given the wealth of technology fielded by the Ironwing, its inner circle was dominated by the forge lords of the Legion, but of all the Wings only the Dreadwing was more despised by the Mechanicum, for the Ironwing and its masters paid little heed to the creed of Mars and employed much technology that was forbidden to the adepts of the Mechanicum.

The Firewing



The smallest of the six Wings of the Hexagrammaton, the Firewing was dedicated to all the bloody subtleties of warfare. It was the hidden blade of the Legion, the knife in the dark and the blade against the throat of the foes' commanders. Within its ranks were to be found an eclectic mix of stalkers, champions and Moritat killers, all bound by their shared expertise in the arts of blade and knife, duellists and assassins without peer. The Firewing sought the destruction of the enemy through the violent depletion of their command structure, whether in honourable duels at the heart of a battle or at the hands of subtle killers far from the battlefield. When given free rein upon the field of battle, the initiates of the Firewing chose to wage a war of wills against the enemy, seeking to break their resolve rather than slaughter their ranks. They counted knowledge among the keenest of their weapons, allowing them to strike at the enemy's weakest points where their limited numbers would be most effective. As such they possessed the most extensive library of any of the Wings, a vault that contained the detailed accounting of thousands upon thousands of xenos and sub-human empires, and which was guarded by a sub-sect of the Firewing dedicated to the cataloguing of those records. Of all the Wings, they remained least changed from their origins in the wars of Unity on Terra, with many of the eldest marshals of the Firewing being veterans of that conflict and steeped in the culture of Terra and its nearest colonies. The Calibanite influence had little impact on the entrenched and complex systems of ritual within the veteran ranks of the Firewing, whose marshals had long made a tradition of recruiting only from Terra and the densely-populated colonies that surrounded it. It was also notable for its strong links to the Sons of Horus, who recruited from a number of the same worlds, a connection that turned to the bitterest hatred with the outbreak of the Horus Heresy, for it would pit those once sworn to eternal loyalty against each other. During the second Rangdan Xenocide, the Firewing would sustain severe casualties, reducing it to a fraction of its former size as its initiates stood toe-to-toe against Rangdan warmasters and reavers.

The Five Hundred Companions

The first 500 warriors of the Dark Angels to stand alongside their Primarch on Caliban would come to be known simply as the Five Hundred, an honourary Company embedded within the Legion's system of Orders Militant. Each of the Five Hundred were sworn to a unique duty, bound to gather information and to keep it hidden for the benefit of the Legion just as the other Orders Militant, save that the subject of their scrutiny was the Primarch himself. For among all the doctrines of the Hosts, each carefully crafted and honed by centuries of war, they had never accounted for such a manifest icon of war and death. Study was required that they might learn how best to fight at his side, which weapons were best suited to be deployed alongside the Primarch and how the Legion would need to be re-shaped to serve his will. The Lion himself would prove no more forthcoming to his sons than he had been to his brother Primarchs, prone to silence and self-reliance. He offered his new Legion the chance to prove itself in battle, but gave them no guidance on the means by which they would best earn his respect.

The Five Hundred would serve as his life guard, to fight and die ever in his shadow, that the Legion might learn that which their new master was reticent to speak of and earn his favour in war. Their hard-won secrets, the *Lion Codex*, is among the most cleverly and completely ciphered records within the Legion, for it contains the sum of their knowledge of Lion El'Jonson – his fighting style and strategies. Such secrets would be valuable beyond reckoning to any foe of the Legion, and just as priceless to his sons, for with the guidance of the codex the Council of Masters has sought to reshape their Legion in his image. As such, the Five Hundred are its only keepers and they accept no new initiates, ensuring that the secrets within will live or die with them. The Lion himself has never mentioned this enterprise, never uttered one word of praise for the ever-present guard at his side even as their numbers dwindle over time. Yet, nor has he forbade them their study and on the eve of battle he waits patiently for those of the Five Hundred present to assemble at his side before he sets forth. This silent acceptance is counted by the Dark Angels as the ultimate mark of recognition, worth more to them than any honour marking or gaudy token of victory.

Each Order of Battle maintains a strict hierarchy, though no two are exactly the same, with each organised to best serve the aims and lore kept by that Order. For, unlike the Hosts, which openly recruited and shared much of their knowledge when called to battle, the Orders were of a more secretive nature. The true position and nature of the ranks within a given Order were only truly understood by the inducted initiates of that Order, with a system of ciphers and cryptic signs unique to each Order used to mark them out to those who had been inducted into their ranks. Each tier of the Order granted an initiate greater understanding of the mysteries it had been created to preserve and placed upon them a greater burden of responsibility to keep that knowledge ever ready to be called upon at need. The Order would meet to affirm their knowledge in the form of rituals and tradition as well as to train in more practical ways – to keep ready blade and bolt for the day when their knowledge would be required in the name of the Legion and the Imperium.

Most Orders maintained a sanctum chamber aboard any void ship to which a cell of their members was posted, a private space in to which entry was only granted to ordained members of the Order and where ritual training and study could be pursued in seclusion. Some of the largest Orders controlled space stations, most often based in and around warzones that supported or required their unique skills. The Order of Broken Spears operated an orbital stronghold capable of hosting all 138 known members, set in place above the broken mesas and twisting canyons of Argyel III, a death world whose rock was laced with traces of heavy metals that countered most active sensor systems. Given that the Broken Spears were masters in the art of ambush and the silent war of wits that prevailed in such dense and confusing terrain, this served as the perfect location for the training of its initiates and as a retreat for those veterans seeking to contemplate the teachings of the Order without distraction.

These sanctum, whether grand strongholds or spartan chambers aboard a ship of war, also served a crucial role in the recruitment of new members. Such prospective acolytes were identified by the senior members of a cell by the record of their achievements and skill, and were subject to much debate within the cell before any decision was made. Once summoned by the cell a warrior could expect to face a series of gruelling physical and mental trials, administered in the seclusion of the Order's domain where these candidates were granted limited rights of entry, though often under binding oaths to hold secret all that was witnessed. Such trials varied widely between Orders, though often presented the very real possibility of serious injury or even death for those that accepted the challenge. The exact nature of these rituals was kept secret and even those that failed were bound by the honour of the Legion not to speak of that which they had faced, such was the respect given to the Orders by the rank and file warriors of the Legion. Only once fully inducted would they receive the freedom of the Order's domains and the right to begin study of the first tier of the hidden lore of their new warrior-brotherhood and to bear the mark of acolyte upon the ceramite of their war plate.

To hold a position even in the outer circles of one of the Orders Militant was considered a great honour, and of the entire Legion less than half could claim such an achievement. Though few outside of the ranks of a given Order knew the full import of the insignia borne by its adepts, all of the Legion's warriors granted the bearer of such a sigil due respect and few even amongst the most senior of commanders would fail to heed their advice, no matter what rank they might hold outside the Order. Though it is a rare occurrence, some particularly skilled warriors within the Legion bear the insignia of more than one of the Orders Militant upon their armour. In some cases such warriors have formally departed one Order to take up a position in a new brotherhood, sworn to keep the secrets of their old association, while in the most exceptional of cases they may hold rank in two or more Orders at the same time. There are only a handful of examples of this, the most well-known being Lion El'Jonson himself, who holds the rank of High Preceptor of every Order within the Legion, and Knight-captain Atreus Deucalion, bearer of the sword *Chrysaor*. Knight-captain Atreus, who was also a Marshal of the Firewing, was counted one of the finest swordsman in the Legion and held station within three separate Orders, blending the blade-techniques of each to form a unique and deadly style of his own.

The Hekatonystika

The Hekatonystika is the hidden counterpart of the Dark Angels Legion's infamous Hexagrammaton. Transliterated roughly as '*The Hundred Esoteric Arts*' in the language of the broken lands of Mykene on Old Earth, the term used to refer to the body of secretive military Orders embedded within the structure of Wings and Chapters. Each Order was an autonomous body of warriors dedicated to the protection of one portion of the Legion's hard-won secret lore, most often regarding the weakness of some specific foe or mastery of a certain terrain or weapon. They were equal parts scholars and warriors, both researchers and practitioners, and as deadly on the field of battle as they were enigmatic in the halls of the Legion. Though rarely gathered all in one place, small cells of these warriors were often assembled prior to battles that would benefit from their skills, forming a temporary unit known within the Dark Angels as a Cenobium to lead the charge and advise the officers in command.

In addition to the Orders Militant there also existed the Orders Civilis, organisations dedicated to non-battlefield tasks requiring specialist knowledge and vital to the success of the Legion. These Orders rarely counted any full battle-brothers among their ranks, but instead were a means of honouring those Legion serfs and failed aspirants who dedicated themselves to the support of the frontline warriors. Among their number were counted armourers, quartermasters, cargo pilots and maintenance crew, the unseen backbone of the Legion's operations. Yet, as these lesser Orders were given no representation among the Conclave of Preceptors, there are few records of their structure and history available to outsiders.

Many hundreds of Orders Militant have been recorded during the history of the First Legion – many of which have long since been forgotten or destroyed in battle. Of those that remained active at the outbreak of the Horus Heresy, the following presents a brief sample:



The Order of Shattered Crowns: One of the oldest Orders still active within the Legion, with its origins to be found during the Unification Wars on Old Terra, the Shattered Crowns are unparalleled experts in the identification and open execution of the enemy's leaders. Not assassins or silent killers, but proud champions that seek out the heart of the foe's defiance and cut it from the body of their army, they practise a number of secret duelling arts, once commonplace in Terra's forgotten duelling cults, but now all but forgotten. Most are also initiates in the Deathwing and Firewing, whose doctrines mesh well with the Order's teachings, though the Preceptor of the Order is rumoured to stand in the Inner Circle of the Dreadwing.



The Order of Broken Wings: Almost entirely represented within the ranks of the Ironwing, the adepts of the Order of Broken Wings are masters in the art of anti-aircraft work. Dedicated to both the arts of deflection targeting and the craftsmanship of superior weaponry, most often heavy calibre autocannon, the Order are considered experts in the placement and operation of ordnance to defeat enemy airborne incursions. Commanders will often summon their adepts from the ranks to oversee such deployments or to man particularly important defensive emplacements during battle.



The Order of Santales: An Order dedicated to the detection and destruction of certain dire clades of xenos, specifically those that thrive by means of psychic or physical parasitism. Once spread widely throughout the Legion, the Order of Santales had access to a large arsenal of psyarkana weaponry collected from a hundred fallen realms. The hidden battle-honours of the Order include such battlefields as Rangda, Nemodiae and Muspel – fields of blood and terror that rival even the legendary battles at Ullanor. In the aftermath of the Council of Nikaea, the Order of Santales was much reduced in number and influence, as those of its number that had once held positions within the now-defunct Librarius found themselves stripped of title by order of the Emperor.



The Order of the Argent Spire: An Order whose doctrines are specialised in the mastery of battle upon the frozen wastes of winter-worlds and other ice bound landscapes. Its adepts practise a number of rituals based around enduring extremes of cold that would sap even the strength of the Legiones Astartes, and several unique blade-kata intended to provide stability amid the shifting floes of ice and snow. Its adepts are most commonly found among the ranks of the Stormwing, where small cells are often summoned from the ranks to take the lead in campaigns upon frozen death worlds, though the veterans of the Firewing have also shown some admiration of the specialised sword-skill practised by the Order's Inner Circle knights.



The Order of Broken Claws: Formed in the wake of the Second Rangdan Xenocide, this small Order holds the only full and complete accounting of that war and the xenos strain known as the Rangda. With access to the detailed catalogue of anatomical data compiled by Firewing operators and Dreadwing cheirophages, the adepts of this Order are trained to stand against the worst Rangdan bio-forms in combat and emerge victorious. During the bloody sieges of the Third Rangdan Xenocide they won much renowned for their prowess, both in combat and in anticipating and countering the strategies of the Rangdan warmasters, but in the wake of the Rangdan's apparent annihilation they have dwindled in number. By the time of the Horus Heresy few members of the Order remain, with only a single chantry station still in service over the ruined world of Advex-Mors where the relics of the dread Rangda are entombed.

Legion Command Hierarchy

Given the multitude of layers of structure to be found in the organisation of the Dark Angels, the Legion's command hierarchy can seem impossibly confused to outsiders. The three strands of authority woven into the form of the Legion, that of Wing, Chapter and Order, would seem to compete to claim each warrior's allegiance and attention upon the field of battle, as well as presenting complex schemes of heraldry that defy easy identification by those unfamiliar with their intricacies. However, for the warriors of the First Legion it has proven to be not only effective but also capable of quickly adapting to the flow of battle and the ever changing vicissitudes of war, allowing it to not only overcome the challenges of the Great Crusade but to thrive as one of the most dangerous of all the Legiones Astartes.

Taken separately, each of these chains of command is actually quite traditional in form, based upon the precepts of the *Principia Bellicosa* which the First Legion helped define, with authority invested in a single chain of command, from the highest ranks down to each individual of the Companies, Orders and Wings that made up the Legion. This allowed commanders to efficiently maintain control of large bodies of troops by dividing the responsibility among a multitude of lesser officers while staying true to the vision and strategy of a single general.

What complicated this arrangement was that to outsiders it seemed that the three different strands of authority within the Legion were not linked, and left no standing and fixed method by which one could tell when the authority of one commander outstripped that of another. To the warriors of the Dark Angels it came down to a simple matter of battlefield context and a deep-seated trust and respect for the abilities of the warriors that stood alongside them. In battle, authority was seeded to the warriors of the highest rank in whichever branch of the Legion was best suited to exploit the situation around them. Where the specialised knowledge and skills of a given Wing or Order officer would provide the Legion an advantage, their authority superseded that of the more traditional commanders, with both the rank and file and the line officers implicitly trusting them to lead the fight. When the veterans of Wing and Order moved to implement the overall strategies of the Chapter commanders, the warriors around them followed.

Such a disregard for strict and unchanging lines of command and control frustrated some Legions and Primarchs, with Guilliman in particular making many attempts to convince the Lion to reform his Legion along the lines of his own codex. Some attempts by other Legions were made to emulate the success of the Dark Angels pattern, with the Raven Guard applying a similar structure to separate certain strata of their Legion, however, none of the other Legions retained the solid core of long standing veterans required to fully implement the complex organisational doctrines of the First Legion. Just as it had been intended, they took from the example of the First those elements of their tactics that meshed with the direction of their own Legion and adapted them to their own purposes. It was only the superb skills and long-term indoctrination and familiarity of the warriors of the Dark Angels that could fully utilise such a complex arrangement to its fullest potential. It allowed them to adapt and evolve from moment to moment on the battlefield, claiming victory without the grinding attrition that marked the conquests of other, more inflexible, Legions.

Lords of the Inner and Outer Circles

Given their unique structure of organisation, it is not surprising that the Dark Angels also employed a number of variant titles for their officers. The line officers of the Legion retained a standard pattern of identification prior to the Calibanite influence that the Lion brought to the Legion, though in the years after the Primarch's return, a variant system based on the titles of the knights of Caliban found favour with many. By the outbreak of the Horus Heresy, only the most intransigent veterans of the old Legion, those of Terra, Gramarye and beyond, still used the older, more plain titles of praetor, centurion and consul.

The warriors of the Hexagrammaton adhered to their own system of titles, denoting both the bearer's authority and skill within the Wing to which he belonged. This system was in use with all six of the modern Wings with few variances between them. Some employed distinct honourary titles to distinguish warriors of particular renown, such as the title Eskaton, which is used within the Dreadwing to denote a warrior that has overseen the final death of an entire race or world.

By contrast, the secretive Orders of the Hekatonystika maintained few set titles across the hundreds of individual Orders. Of the few titles used by almost every Order the most well-known were that of Preceptor, used to indicate the leader of an Order, and Seneschal, which was granted to high ranking members that oversaw the hidden chambers of the halls of an Order. When openly garbed in the full panoply of the Order and bound to open war in the name of the Legion, members would also use the honourary title Cenobite to illustrate the temporary supremacy of their standing in the Order over that within the Legion.

What follows is a brief summary of the more commonly known and used titles and ranks for the three chambers of the First Legion:

Of the Hekatonystika	Of the Principia Bellicosa	Of the Hexagrammaton
(Corpus Sinister)	(Corpus Nobilis)	(Corpus Dextera)
Preceptor	Knight-praetor	Master
Seneschal	Knight-commander	Marshal
Cenobite	Knight-captain	Proctor
Adept	Knight	Initiate

Heraldry of the First Legion



These banners show both the original winged reaper insignia of the old Terran First Legion, and the later banner of the Lion's Dark Angels. Of particular note is the emblem of the Hexagrammaton in conjunction with the winged sword, while the facing banner shows the original symbol of the old Hosts of the First.





The Reaper is an honour mark often associated with the Legion's Terran veterans, those who had served during the conquest of the Sol System.



Bearing the ornate mark of the First Legion and of the Hexagrammaton, this MkII pauldron belongs to a warrior of the Great Crusade.



This MkII pauldron bears the mark of a lesser initiate of the Firewing, and despite its low station, it belongs to a Consul Invigilator of the 9th Order.



The Golden Lion emblem shown on this MkII pauldron marks the command staff of the 48th Order, all of whom were drawn from Caliban.



The mark of the Stormwing was a common sight on the panoply of the First Legion's infantry, signifying their status as infantry veterans.



The crossed swords of the Deathwing on a field of bone-white, marking a warrior that has survived a mortal wound.



By the time of the Thramas Crusade, this stark symbol had become the standard Legion icon in use by the First Legion.



This icon is the personal heraldry of a praetor. The display of such personal arms was a common feature of the First Legion.

The Forbidden Arsenals of the First Legion

Complementing this concentration of skill and hard-won knowledge was one of the most deadly arsenals in the entire Imperium. Much of the technology routinely deployed by the Dark Angels was of an order of complexity beyond that available to the younger Legions and on par with those of the Legio Custodes, produced in dedicated manufactoria on Terra and elsewhere to the specifications of the Dark Angels learned forge masters to designs dating back millennia. Exotic plasma weaponry, munitions of archaic and unstable design as well as variants of armoured vehicles and void craft based on unique technologies, all were the sole province of the First Legion. This proved a potent force multiplier on the battlefield, amplifying the superior skills of the Dark Angels and allowing them to prevail against foes that lesser technology could not defeat. As well as those advanced weapons and designs they used openly, the Dark Angels also maintained large stocks of weapons of a darker renown. Within the sealed vaults of Caliban and Gramarye, as well as a number of secret caches scattered across the Imperium and guarded by dedicated Orders, were vast stores of weaponry long since proscribed to the other military arms of the Imperium. Gene-phages capable of annihilating all life upon a planetary body in mere hours, core-breaching magna munitions that could tear a planet apart from within, stockpiles of ancient silica-virae – the dreaded scourge of the nanite pronounced the ultimate heresy by the adepts of Mars – all could be found within the armouries of the Dark Angels. Such weapons could not be unleashed lightly, for they served only a single purpose – the utter destruction of life. They were of no use to conquerors, only to destroyers, and they served as the ultimate sanction for those enemies deserving of only annihilation.

Outside of the battlefield authority of individual Knight-praetors or Order Preceptors, there were three bodies that exerted control over the strategic deployment of the Legion. Foremost among these was the Primarch Lion El'Jonson, who held the ranks of Lord of the First Legion, Grandmaster of the Hexagrammaton and High Preceptor of the Hekatonystika. He held absolute and final authority over the entire Legion, and when he took the field, his orders superseded all others regardless of position or knowledge. Given the known tendency of the Lion to engage in frontline control of smaller battle forces and leave the widely-flung elements of his Legion to complete their objectives as they saw fit, much scope existed within the Legion for secondary forms of control to handle the more mundane administration of the massed forces of the Legion. Fortunately, the Dark Angels were both more than capable of operating without direct oversight, having proved their mettle in centuries of independent operation, and already possessed additional bodies of authority well suited to directing the arduous task of seeing the far-flung fleets of the Dark Angels supplied.

The Council of Masters, comprised of the heads of the Wings of the Hexagrammaton or their appointed agents, had long overseen the strategic operation of the Legion. The assembled masters were often integral in the process of assigning First Legion forces to the various fleets and warzones of the Great Crusade, and there was often much lively debate within the council halls as to which Wings should provide troops and commanders to which deployments. As some of the most experienced and veteran warriors of the Legion, the Wing masters and their marshals were ideally suited to such high level planning and the Primarch granted them the honour of his implicit trust, freeing him to undertake a more active role in the Legion. The Conclave of Preceptors rarely took on a similar role, for although it consisted of warriors of equal skill and experience, it was convened in full on only a few ceremonial occasions. The Preceptors of the Orders took on strategic leadership roles largely only when their specialist skills were demanded by the conflict at hand, but still served as a reserve of talented officers should the Legion ever stand in need of direction.

This layered system of leadership, from Primarch, to the Council of Masters, to the Conclave of Preceptors and then individual officers of the line, was flexible enough to support the Legion's preference for a multitude of simultaneous deployments rather than massing in a single warzone. It played to the strengths of their Primarch, who had little interest in the micro management of his Legion's strategies and excelled in direct battlefield command. That the Lion made few changes to this existing structure speaks of his approval of it, and that he granted such autonomy to his warriors shows the trust he had for the veterans of the First Legion.

Operational Doctrine

By the last years of the Great Crusade, shortly before the outbreak of the Horus Heresy, the Dark Angels claimed a strength of approximately 180,000 warriors. In terms of sheer size this placed them in the upper tier of the Legiones Astartes, alongside such Legions as the Ultramarines and Sons of Horus, and despite the rise of the younger Legions to rival their glory, they still remained one of the single most powerful military forces in the Imperium. Some records from the period have noted a much lower field strength for the Dark Angels, sometimes as low as 50,000. These reports are likely due to the confusion that the Dark Angels' organisational procedures and heraldry caused for most unfamiliar observers.

The dense nature of the ciphers they used and the secretive nature of many of its sub-formations often led to some amount of bewilderment for outsiders, especially when combined with the fluid and shifting nature of authority and command within the Legion, sometimes even to the degree that it led to military setbacks when working alongside other Imperium forces. Surprisingly, the Dark Angels have made little attempt to remedy this situation, indeed some of their commanders, especially the older veterans of the Great Crusade, seem to take a quiet pride in the confusion it occasions among the least disciplined of their allies. In particular, a common practise by some Dark Angels forces is to arrive without announcing to their allies who commands the First Legion contingent, leaving their counterparts to determine whom to greet as warlord by the heraldry they display. Those few who make the correct choice, or who are wary enough to make no judgement, are treated with respect and those who choose poorly watched carefully for further lapses in judgement. Such tests of worth are commonplace among the Dark Angels, both for their own initiates and for those that would fight alongside them, for the sons of the Lion judge the worth of no warrior on rumour and hearsay alone.

Such actions are most often encountered among the more veteran formations of the Legion. Those forces whose tallies of victories and vanquished foes were so impressive that some among the newly-recruited regiments of the Imperium's armies thought them fabrications and even those who had served in the Great Crusade long enough to have heard of the valour of the First Legion rarely knew the full scope of their victories and sacrifices. Indeed, the Dark Angels remained one of the most experienced bodies of warriors within the Legiones Astartes. Despite the many dire battles they had faced, they had always retained a core of veterans to pass on the hard-won skills and knowledge of their struggles, indeed much of the structure of the Wings and Orders was dedicated to exactly this task. As such they had maintained a level of skill and proficiency in every sphere of warfare that, while sometimes less specialised than the younger Legion, could rarely be equalled among the Legiones Astartes.

Given these material and organisational preferences the Dark Angels tended to a sparse pattern of deployment, scattering their numbers widely in relatively small detachments, relying more on the potency of their weaponry and the individual prowess of their warriors than on sheer numbers. Capitalising on the diverse nature of the warriors that made up each Chapter and Company, individual battle forces of the Dark Angels were most often little more than a handful of Chapters operating in close support, often a force as small as a few thousand warriors. Where other fleets relied more on the numbers they could bring to bear, the Dark Angels emphasised the fluid nature of their units which were able to quickly and efficiently reform as needed within a local theatre of war in order to meet the challenges of a given engagement. It was a rare sight to see large numbers of the First Legion gathered in any one place, and such a sight was considered a portent of the worst kind, for the grim, black-armoured ranks of the Dark Angels were only amassed to face the most dire of threats. Indeed, many among the ranks of the Imperial Army considered it a grave misfortune to be tasked with serving as support to the Dark Angels, not due to any mistreatment at the hands of the Legiones Astartes, but rather because the battlefields upon which they walked were inimical to the lives of merely mortal warriors and only the most skilled or fortunate soldiers survived such a tour of duty. Despite this long-held superstition, those few regiments that had served alongside the Dark Angels and survived held the battle honours granted them by the Lion with pride, despite the bloody price paid for their acquisition.



In order to support this widely spread web of independent Companies and Chapters the Dark Angels maintained perhaps the greatest fleet of all the Legiones Astartes, both in terms of sheer number of capital class vessels and in the impressive firepower of those craft. Just as with the many disparate Companies of the Legion, the fleet was also widely spread, most often operating either as a support flotilla attached to a Chapter or as one of the rarer deep range patrol squadrons. Support flotilla were comprised of the heaviest ships available, with the core of many being a Glorianna class battleship or other first-rate warship supported by one or more squadrons of cruisers. Support flotilla were intended to provide transport for the attached Chapters, allowing them to breach heavily-defended systems without support and assault a specified target without the need for extensive auxiliary forces. They also served to provide orbital fire support to Legiones Astartes forces engaged in battle and a base for Legion interface craft, either to serve as an orbital supply line or to launch airstrikes or interdiction missions. By contrast, the patrol fleets maintained a smaller contingent of Legion warriors, rarely more than Company strength, and fielded more deep range cruisers and sleek escort craft mounting scanning augurs and other equipment unique to the Dark Angels. These squadrons were tasked with seeking out unknown nests of xenos or isolationist and belligerent human enclaves, much in the same manner as the more specialised White Scars fleets. Those Legiones Astartes Companies accompanying the fleet were used solely to assess the threat level of the enemies discovered, mounting spoiling raids or brief hit and run campaigns before withdrawing back to their orbital fortresses. Those deemed dangerous by the veterans of the First Legion were annihilated from orbit and those marked as vulnerable left for the Great Crusade that followed in the fleet's wake.

With assets spread across the galaxy, the First Legion placed little emphasis on maintaining a large number of holdings and fortresses. Indeed, there are only two large outposts held by the Dark Angels, the ancient fortress of Gramarye which played host to the halls of the Council of Masters and the vast industrial facilities that produced many of the Legion's more esoteric weapons and had long been concealed from the scrutiny of the Mechanicum, and the more recently acquired fortress of the Order on Caliban. These two worlds saw the largest concentration of the Legion's infrastructure, and were both heavily fortified and defended. Other holdings on Terra, where a significant portion of the Legion's recruitment was still conducted, and the scattered chantry houses of the various Orders Militant, were less well defended, but not intended as frontline combat installations. The standard pattern of operations within the Legion saw these holdings used as bases for resupply for a force that was primarily based within the mobile halls of the fleet. Only on the rarest of occasions did any of the Chapters of the Dark Angels return to their halls for any lengthy period of rest, with garrison duty left to the rawest recruits and those masters and seneschals with Deathwing lifeguard cadres that stood warden over those domains.



War Disposition

Horus chose the moment to raise his banner carefully, setting plans to have those Legions that threatened his revolt divided and distant from the fighting that would decide the fate of the Imperium. The Dark Angels, ever on the move and split across the vast territory of the Imperium, had been subtly divided by the orders of the new Warmaster, set to patrols and campaigns far from Terra and cleared away from the northern bounds of the Emperor's domains. A significant portion of the Legion had gathered under Lion El'Jonson and been dispatched beyond the bounds of the Imperium in the galactic east, beyond news of what was to come and far from those who might call upon them for aid. Both Caliban and Gramarye had seen a sudden drop in shipments of crucial supplies and news from the far front of the Great Crusade, all blamed on the vicissitudes of war rather than the hidden orders of the Warmaster, leaving them gradually more isolated and vulnerable. To any conventional assessment of military strength, the Dark Angels had been forced into a corner before even the first rebel cannon was fired at Isstvan.

Of their full strength, most likely somewhere slightly less than 200,000 warriors, no more than a third had been dispatched alongside the Lion and placed beyond the reach of the Imperium. This left perhaps 120,000 Dark Angels active along the borders of the Imperium, mostly clustered to the galactic south and west in small battleforces of no more than 5,000 warriors. Most of these forces were either heavily engaged in prosecuting difficult campaigns or fresh from the fields of victory and still counting the toll upon their strength. Few had been given the opportunity to make contact with either the upper echelons of their own Legion's command or that of the Divisio Militaris that co-ordinated Great Crusade deployments, and the Primarch Lion El'Jonson remained far from the reach of his Legion with no news of his progress or the fate of the troops that accompanied him. The Dark Angels that remained were in essence blinded and by accepted military logic exhausted and as such Horus, his strategists and co-conspirators deemed such small forces to be of negligible threat to their plans, that isolated from any central command they would be unable to mount any real opposition to the rebellion.

They were sorely mistaken. Among all the Legions, the Dark Angels' complex system of Wings and Orders had long defied any foothold to Horus' treacherous warrior lodges, denying that insidious seed of corruption that had stymied so many other Legions' ability to react swiftly to the news of Horus' perfidy. Nor were the Dark Angels distracted by the confusion that afflicted the Imperium's control channels in the immediate aftermath of the Isstvan revolt, for they had long disdained to subject themselves to the direct oversight of the Imperium's authorities. Where other Legions and fleets scrambled to react to the unified onslaught of the Traitor forces and struggled to combat the influence of the Warmaster within their own ranks, the Dark Angels fleets each took initiative on their own and met this new challenge head-on. Purposefully kept to the outskirts of the initial conflict by the Warmaster's machinations, the Dark Angels Knight-praetors set their Chapters upon those outlying worlds that dared to openly espouse loyalty to the Warmaster, deprived of the chance to directly strike against Horus' new centres of power. The Dark Angels turned their disadvantage to opportunity, each fleet an unpredictable threat to the Traitors and their allies, and more than capable of annihilating forces larger than their limited numbers might suggest. The destruction and chaos they wrought kept many systems and industrial centres along the southern and western galactic rims from supplying the main rebel force as well as threatening the Death Guard home world of Barbarus and slowing the rate of troops from that key world to the front.

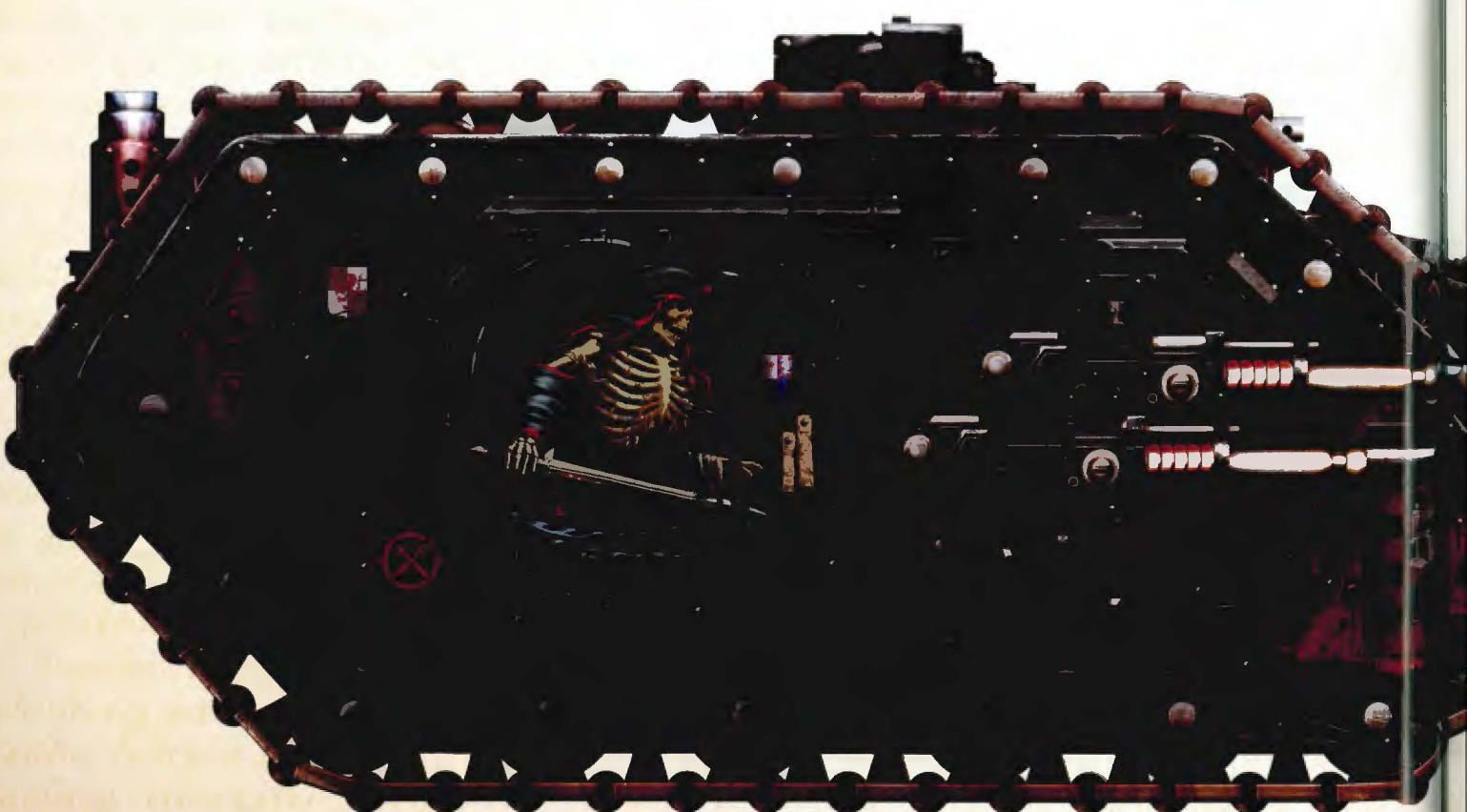
Even as the hastily-assembled Imperium task force headed to Isstvan V, the Dark Angels were fully engaged at a dozen worlds far from Terra, utilising the terror weapons at their disposal to make examples of those Imperium worlds most vocal in their support of the Warmaster. The burned and poisoned husks of once-populous worlds were intended to bring a swift end to any insurrection, but could not stem the tide of rebellion that rose up in the wake of the dropsite massacre at Isstvan V and the momentum it granted to the rebel armies of the Warmaster. Despite this, the Dark Angels did not hesitate to destroy that which they could not hold in the Emperor's name, preferring to leave Horus as the Warmaster of an empire of ashes than allow their temporary weakness to cede him territory, with only the most heavily-fortified worlds proof against their onslaught. So for the first handful of years of the Horus Heresy the limited size of the Dark Angels companies restricted them to small scale raids, with many using the superior void craft of their attached fleets to take on the role of commerce raiders, cutting the throat of the Traitors' supply chain. Gramarye and Caliban, while never directly attacked, were kept isolated from the greater war, both by the actions of Word Bearers esoterists and the strange powers they now wielded, and the disturbing silence from certain echelons of the Legion's leadership. The Dark Angels remained a potent force, but one divided and bereft of cohesive direction, at the time seemingly little more than a painful thorn in the side of the juggernaut Horus had aimed at Terra. Yet, with the advantage of hindsight, it is clear that by the actions of the raiding fleets of the First Legion, Horus was denied the early victory he craved, for the supplies they denied him and the chaos they sowed amid sectors that might otherwise have fallen to him without a shot fired slowed his advance just enough.

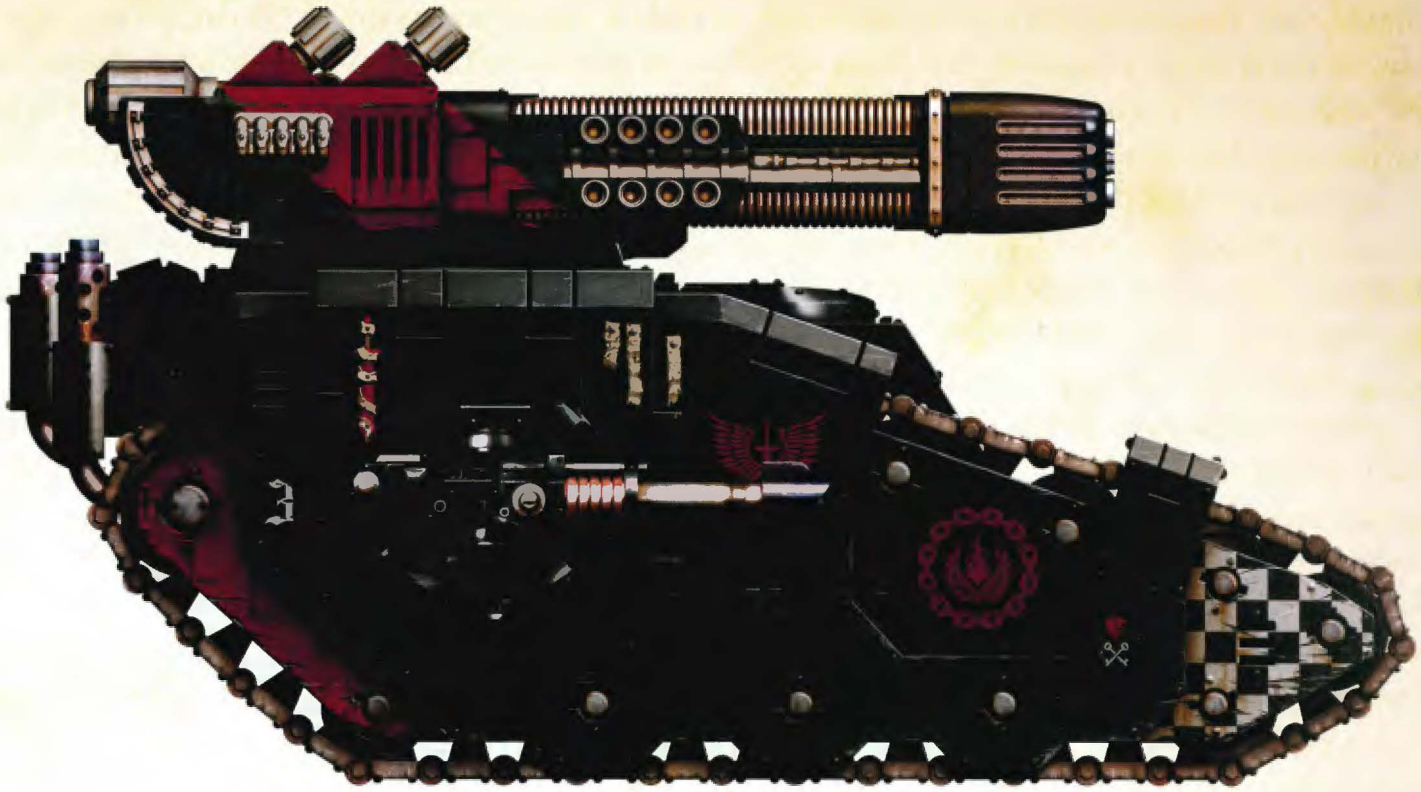
The stubborn refusal of the Dark Angels to consolidate and grant Horus' lackeys a final decisive battle, a defiant and suicidal assault to express their anger and frustration, granted Dorn time to rally the remaining Loyalist elements around the Imperium's core. It also kept them from the series of massacres and last stands that plagued the Loyalists during the early years of the Horus Heresy, the carefully arranged decimation by which Horus had removed those obstacles that stood in his way. This carefully chosen strategy left the Dark Angels perfectly placed for the return of their lord, poised at the borders of Horus' fragile empire and ready for the Lion to give the word, to let loose the fetters of Imperial decree and give them leave to unleash all the fell tools they held ready for such a cataclysm. Horus' first gambit had failed, Terra remained outside his grasp and the First Legion stood ready to show him the terrible cost of his ambitions.

The Battle for Kenrac

Among the initial objectives of the Dark Angels as they pushed outwards from Triplex was the world of Kenrac, its modest industrial output marking it as a target of some value in the ongoing war for the Thramas sector. Before the arrival of the Dark Angels, the Night Lords had seen to the extermination of Kenrac's planetary defence force and begun a process of forced conscription in order to form new slave regiments to feed the war effort, and it would be these forces and a small core of Night Lords warriors that would oppose the Dark Angels' landings. The Lion assigned elements of the 19th and 7th Orders to the assault, placing Logaine, Knight-praetor of the 17th Order and Marshal of the Firewing, at the head of the battlegroup, his orders clear: eliminate all occupying forces and secure the planet for the First Legion.

Rather than waste manpower and munitions in the direct annihilation of the slave regiments that the Night Lords placed in the frontline, Knight-praetor Logaine made use of the Firewing's doctrine of precise strikes and the careful accumulation of intelligence. Initials attacks on the surface were limited to small Firewing teams of Seekers and reconnaissance Legionaries directed to plot enemy positions and secure the Night Lords overseers scattered amongst the bulk of the slave regiments. With the information gained from traditional scouting and the interrogation of the captured Night Lords, the location of the main Night Lords host itself was quickly ascertained, these forces would be the main target of any assault, leaving the ill-motivated conscripts out of the real battle for the planet. The final assault would come suddenly and with overwhelming force, with the bulk of the Dark Angels battlegroup's heavy assets landing with pinpoint precision amongst the Night Lords' own units, seeking to overwhelm them with the sheer speed of their assault. Without the screening force of slave-soldiers, the small Night Lords garrison found itself hopelessly outnumbered, with even their command post within the fortified hive spire swiftly falling to the onslaught of a combined force of heavy transport vehicles and Terminator assault squads.





Dark Angels Sicaran-Omega

Brand of Truth

Operated under the aegis of the Firewing, and incorporated into the 19th Order at the time of the Thramas Crusade, the tank hunter *Brand of Truth* was one of the few Omega pattern Sicaran tank hunters within the ranks of the First Legion. During the assault upon the Night Lords defence force, it would be the *Brand of Truth* and other swift tank-hunters that would be assigned the task of destroying the hidden Night Lords armoured vehicles, isolating each position using the intelligence gathered by the first wave and then obliterating it with overwhelming firepower.
The *Brand of Truth* would garner four kills, including a Cerberus super-heavy tank caught in the middle of the complex procedure required to service its internal atomantic reactor.



Dark Angels Spartan Assault Tank

Grim Visage

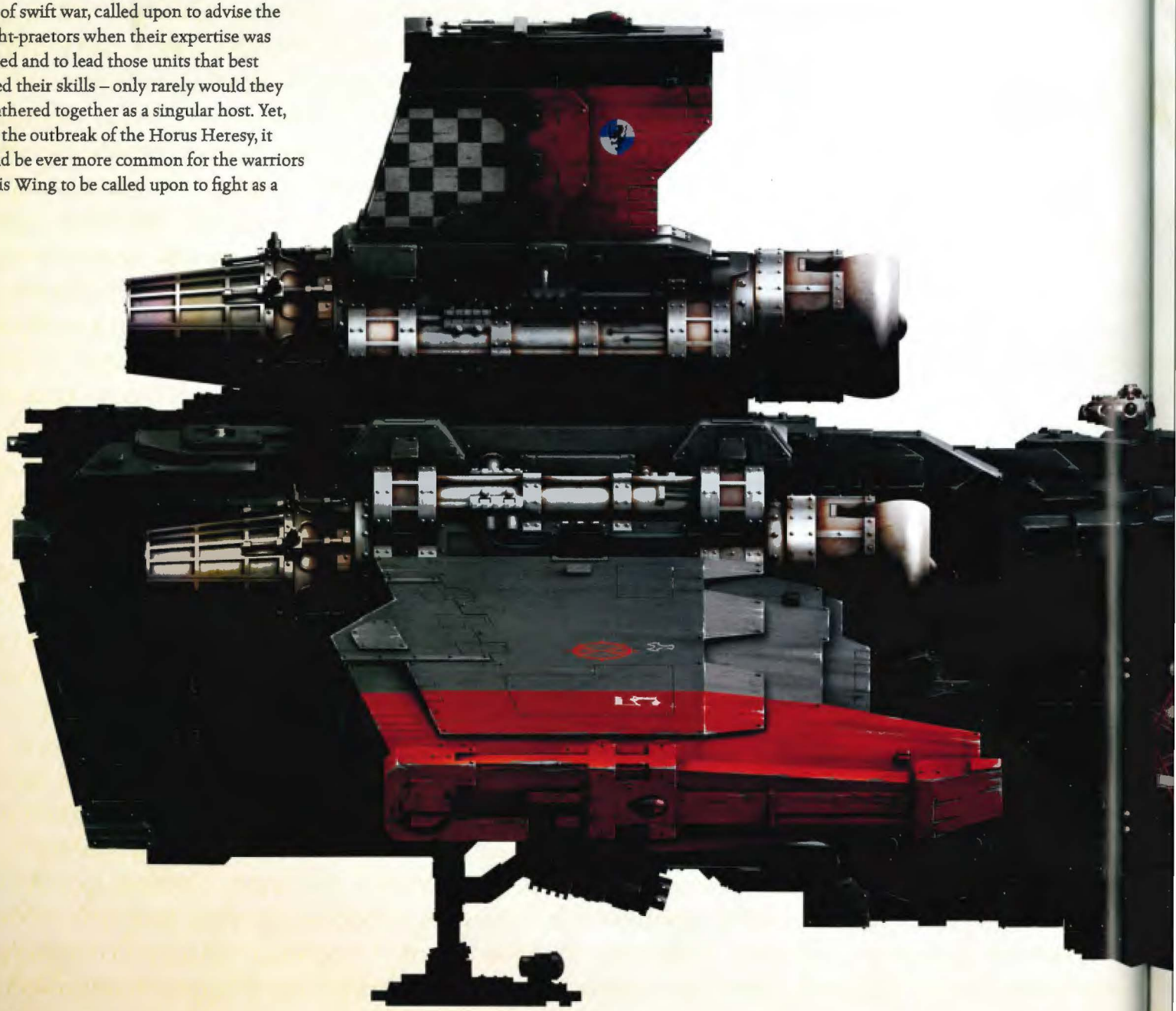
Though technically an asset of the Ironwing, the *Grim Visage* is shown here during the fighting on Kenrac bearing the emblem of the Deathwing. This was common practise for vehicles carrying infantry assets from other Wings, with the transport compartment of the Spartan showing not only the symbol of the Deathwing, but also the personal heraldry of its cargo's commander. For the battle to retake Kenrac, the Legion Terminator squad commanded by Knight-captain Dariel made use of the *Grim Visage* as their assigned transport, taking part in the final assault upon the hive spires of Kenrac. The *Grim Visage* would endure a blizzard of anti-armour fire in order to bring its cargo to the optimal insertion point, continuing to advance even after a salvo of Kraken penetrator missiles had shattered its glacis plating and injured the vehicle's driver, unwilling to force the Terminators to suffer under the hail of enemy fire in order to reach their objective.

In the wake of the battle, Knight-captain Dariel and his warriors, whose swift insertion into the heart of the enemy's fortifications allowed them to put a quick and bloody end to the Night Lords' commander, gave up the honours they had earned for the victory. These would instead go to the crew of the *Grim Visage*, adorning the rebuilt glacis armour for the remainder of the tank's service.

Swift Wrath and Sure Blades

As with all the Wings of the Dark Angels, the Ravenwing was intended to gather and focus the Legion's expertise within a singular battlefield art. In this case it was that of skirmish warfare, of the swift advance and sudden withdrawal, to engage the foe and frustrate its strategies rather than simply grind down its will to fight in a simple war of attrition. As such, the Ravenwing tended to focus on battlefield assets that complemented this style of warfare, with their ranks comprising the largest numbers of Land Speeders, aircraft and strike tanks in the First Legion, all scattered across the various Orders and Companies that formed the vast host of the Dark Angels. During the long years of the Great Crusade, the warriors of the Ravenwing served as experts in the field of swift war, called upon to advise the knight-praetors when their expertise was needed and to lead those units that best served their skills – only rarely would they be gathered together as a singular host. Yet, with the outbreak of the Horus Heresy, it would be ever more common for the warriors of this Wing to be called upon to fight as a singular whole, often deployed to blunt the advance of more traditional Legion hosts or to deny ground to a larger enemy army without attempting to directly contest them, and resorting to spoiling attacks and swift raids to keep a superior force at bay.

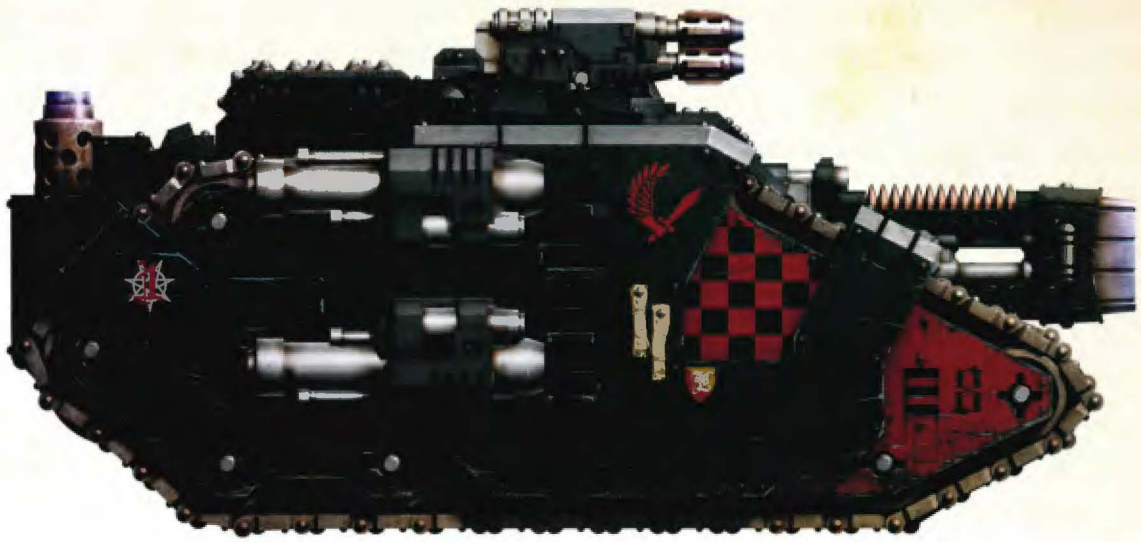
During the Thramas Crusade, this gambit would be employed on a number of occasions with great success, with a number of worlds along the fringes of the Dark Angels' advance being denied to the Night Lords by the presence of small Ravenwing task forces. It became only natural that in the larger engagements of the crusade, at Sheol and Yaelis amongst others, that the Ravenwing continued to act as a unified force, ranging ahead of the main host to harry the Night Lords as they drew up their lines for battle and to discourage enemy forces from attempting flanking assaults of their own. It was a tactical convention that would survive the Thramas Crusade and continue throughout the Horus Heresy, and given the Ravenwing's doctrine of limited war and hit-and-run strikes, it would see them survive Horus' rebellion with one of the largest and most cohesive forces still combat ready within the First Legion. What had begun as a quirk of the Horus Heresy's dire needs would become tradition during the Scouring that followed, seeing the Ravenwing become a force unto themselves in the new age of the Imperium that followed.



Dark Angels Sabre Strike Tank

Onyx-03

The third vehicle of a squadron assigned to the conflict on Mortain, a world on the far flank of the main Dark Angels assault into the Thramas sector. Sabres were amongst the armoured vehicles most often assigned to Ravenwing veterans, for the design of these swift hunter-killers complemented the tactics and temperament of the Ravenwing well.



Dark Angels Sokar Stormbird

Lexicon of Glory

The *Lexicon of Glory* is one of the oldest Sokar pattern Stormbirds in Legiones Astartes service, being one of the original prototypes that entered testing with the old Host of the Void. It is a testament to both the durability of its design and the skills of its Dark Angels pilots that after a century and a half of the most brutal wars in humanity's long history, the *Lexicon of Glory* still operates at peak efficiency. As a mark of respect for its glorious record of success in battle, it is a tradition within the Legion to allow the *Lexicon of Glory* to be the first craft to make planetfall during an assault at which it is present, a tradition which has never failed to bring victory.





Exemplary Battles

The greatest exploits and achievements of the Dark Angels have long been hidden from the Imperium at large, the details deemed too dangerous to the sanity and courage of those pioneers sent out from Sol to reclaim the galaxy. Only within the vaults of the Imperial Libraries of Terra and the Dark Angels' own sealed archives are the truths of the First Legion's campaigns fully recorded in all their terrible detail, and it is from these sources that the following treatise has been compiled. The entries selected to form this brief account are but the merest glimpse of the long and storied history of the First Legion, with access to some of the more sensitive records and direst battles locked to all but the Masters of the Dark Angels and the newly-minted High Lords of Terra. What maddening horrors and brutal massacres lurk sealed behind that edict will never be known to the keepers of history; a necessary secrecy that, it must be hoped, will not prove a graver threat than that which it conceals.

The Sealing of the Black Gate

The Black Gate was a legend among chartist captains and Rogue Traders, a safe path into the region of space later known as the Eye of Terror and the riches of the fallen Eldar race's ancient empire. It drew hundreds of fools and treasure hunters to their deaths as Mankind returned to the stars, their ships torn apart by the fierce storms that raged in that region or captured by the degenerate dregs of the Eldar race that still haunted those ruined worlds. The legend killed every soul that went in search of it, until the Great Crusade way-station at Zenith IX received a garbled transmission in dated astropathic cipher; a message that once transliterated read only, '*The gate is opened…*'

An Imperial cruiser *Lionheart* was dispatched to investigate, carrying a full division of war-hardened Solar Auxilia onboard and under orders to use any means necessary to secure the far borders of the growing Imperium. It returned less than a month later, its hull ravaged and torn, its veteran captain driven mad by the sights he had seen and of the 25,000 Solar Auxilia onboard, there remained only a few hundred broken and wounded survivors. Frantic reports were dispatched to Terra which received a reply unexpected in both its speed and form: a flotilla of jet-black warships bearing the symbol of the cloaked reaper, the First Legion in all its fearsome glory, a pair of heavy Promethean class cruisers flanking a mighty Glorianna class battleship, and waiting in their cavernous holds three Chapters of the First Legion. A force capable of ending worlds and shattering armies sailed serenely past Zenith station and into the darkness of the void, undaunted by the reports of an unknown terror lurking at the Black Gate and indifferent to the Imperial commander's pleas that they remain to reinforce or evacuate his meagre garrison.

Within the maelstrom of ancient storms that lurked within that benighted region at the end of the perilous course charted by those doomed explorers that had gone before them, the warriors of the First Legion were confronted by a vast rift in the fabric of space, a monstrous wound in reality from which was disgorged a mass of writhing pseudopod. The sole nearby planet, a barren orb of black basalt studded with structures of ancient provenance, had been ensnared by the amorphous mass, an anchor by which it sought to drag the whole of its foulness into this realm of existence. Sworn to ward the borders of the Imperium, the First Legion ships did not hesitate to engage the foe, loosing salvo after salvo of magna-torpedoes that blasted chunks of gelatinous flesh from

the vast creature with little appreciable effect. The ebon-hulled cruisers powered forwards to point blank range, there to unleash the full power of their macro-cannon and plasma batteries, and to launch a swarm of attack craft to the ragged surface of the broken planetoid that was its anchor.

Led by Grandmaster Thrane, the First Legion prepared to assault the towering spiked pseudopod that had been thrust into the planet's mantle – the furthest extension of that loathsome creature that sought to breach reality – but, even as the gunships began their landing approach, they fell under renewed assault. Smaller creatures swarmed up from around the vast tentacles, sickly coloured abominations of undulating flesh, like the toothed and spiked manta rays of Old Earth, and stooped upon the Sokar and Anhur pattern Stormbirds of the assault force, battering the craft as they attempted to navigate the writhing mass of tentacles that surrounded the drop zone and spraying them with iridescent flames that melted even hardened ceramite armour. Worse yet was the sudden and debilitating wave of hatred that screamed in the thoughts of every one of the Legiones Astartes, an assault not on their bodies but on their minds. Mere mortal soldiers would have broken before such an onslaught, but the warriors of the First Legion were more resilient and, rather than descending into madness, they struggled on through the haze of loathing that threatened to stop their hearts with its fervour.

Of the hundred dropships in the first wave a quarter did not make it to the surface intact, either swatted from the sky by vast, clawed pseudopod, swarmed by the endless throng of impossible sky-horrors, or spiralling out of control as their pilots' minds fractured under the psychic onslaught. The 4,000 survivors rallied on the surface under the leadership of Grandmaster Thrane and the direction of the warriors of the Hosts of Iron and Bone, whose expertise in such warfare granted them the authority to lead their brothers. Reforming their ranks in mere moments, the First Legion formed three columns, each headed by a detachment of the Host of Iron and one or more super-heavy war engines dropped by the surviving Anhur pattern transports, and each set against one of the key pseudopod that held the unnamed planet in the beast's grasp. Such a feat of tactical adaptability was the forte of the First Legion, made possible by the flexible system of Hosts it employed and the veteran nature of its warriors. Yet even such skilled warriors were not fully prepared for what was to come.

As they advanced upon the towering pseudopod – now immense towers of bristle-studded flesh and cartilage that rose into the sky and beyond – the psychic barrage only intensified and the warriors of the First Legion were soon reduced to a crawl, wading forwards as though through a bitter and hateful storm. Crippled by the behemoth's psychic assault, the First Legion was beset by yet another foe as hordes of twisted, gangrel creatures were disgorged from the vast tentacles, tearing themselves free of its flesh and throwing themselves at the Space Marines. Through the miasma of hate that shrouded their minds, the warriors of the First Legion fought back, and even beset by the foe each column wrought a bloody ruin on his ranks. At their fore stood Thrane, his great axe reaping a toll of enemies as they pressed forwards, but the sheer number of the enemy and the numbing waves of hatred began to exact a price on the assault. Despite mounting casualties, the first of the columns reached its target and began to shell the huge pseudopod before it as the infantry struggled to hold back the horde of misshapen thralls that seethed about it. Yet even the sheer firepower of Fellblade and Falchion tanks failed to dislodge the massive tentacle, its flesh roiling and knitting whole in the wake of each attack. With casualties mounting, the assault began to flounder. The westernmost column lost its heavy armour as a huge pseudopod smashed it apart and those warriors to the east found themselves mired in a war of attrition they could ill-afford and, had these been lesser warriors, would have disintegrated into a bloody rout.

What saved them was both the unflagging courage of Grandmaster Thrane and the presence of a number of initiates of one of the least renowned Hosts of the First Legion. Gathered within the ranks of the central column were several dozen of the Host of Pentacles, whose training included the esoteric arts of the psyker in those years before the advent of the Librarius program and, as the enemy threatened to overwhelm the First Legion, it was their presence that stemmed the tide. As the warriors of the Pentacles staved off the psychic storm, Hector Thrane led the gathered Space Marines through the encircling horde, using the impressive firepower of the surviving heavy tanks to blast a path clear and link up with the embattled eastern column. Together the survivors found shelter in the ancient ruins, seizing a brief pause in the fighting to hold a hurried council of war. The war leaders of the landing force counselled a tactical retreat and a concentrated bombardment from orbit, seeing little hope in a renewed ground assault. Yet, the ships above had made little impact on the vast creature. Worse, the *Revenant*, one of the cruisers, had become entangled in the flailing tentacles in an attempt to support the ground assault with fire from its gun batteries. With little hope offered by more conventional tactics, Idrik Kybalos, Master of the Host of Pentacles, proposed a daring plan – an assault not on the vast mass of the creature's body, but on its monstrous will.

Reformed into a single wedge of men and vehicles, the warriors of the First Legion burst from their refuge 2,000 strong and determined to avenge their losses. Despite this, the warriors of the First Legion fought as a unified force, each knowing his role despite the sudden shift in formation and tactics. At the fore, the brutal warriors of the Host of Bone matched the cruelty of the foe with their own savage assault, while on the flanks the initiates of the Host of Fire struck into the mass of the enemy horde to disrupt its movement and annihilate its champions. Spread all along its lines were the warriors of the Host of Pentacles, struggling to hold back the psychic storm that threatened to stall this assault as it had done the first. Step by step the combined Host moved forwards over the corpses of its foes, shifting and reforming to meet each threat as it appeared and to counter each new mutation of the enemy.

As they advanced the mind-storm only grew in intensity, and the Pentacles pushed themselves to the limits of their minds and bodies in order to shield their brothers. The most powerful endured but, in those days before the Librarius and its training, the weakest were ill-prepared to face such a trial. Those who could not match the malice of the foe were broken by it. Some simply collapsed as their minds shattered, but others lost control and became a grave danger to those they had sought to protect, imploding in fierce bursts of aetheric energy or sending wild torrents of power arcing through the ranks of their own brothers. The adepts of the Order of Bloody Shrouds, the dour disciplinary corps of the First Legion, moved to silence those that lost control with the mercy of their blades, and the force pressed on as best it could.

After four hours of ceaseless fighting, constantly pressed by the unending tide of horrors, battered by the writhing pseudopod that sought to bar their passage and the malign storm that tore at their sanity, the ragged survivors reached their target. There, directly under the vast tear in the fabric of space, Hector Thrane and his warriors made their stand, forming a wall of blades around the surviving Pentacles even as huge, new monstrosities pressed towards them in an

attempt to bring an end to their assault. There, bloodied and beaten, Kybalos, Master of the Host of Pentacles set his gambit into motion. He and the most powerful of his followers abandoned their attempts to shield their brothers and turned the full might of their will into an assault upon the vast beast that hung in the skies above. Every iota of their determination was focused into the attack, but it could not slay the beast. However, that was not its intent. With a psychic roar that shook the minds of all present, the vast entity that lurked behind the tear in space finally drew its heart into real-space, spurred into action by the painful thorn of Kybalos' assault. As the bulbous mass of its core, studded with vast eyes and fanged maws, thrust into reality, the *Revenant*, still enmeshed in the writhing tendrils of the beast, detonated its reactor core.

The resulting explosion tore the beast apart, its shattered remains crashing down upon the planet below and its spawn collapsing with the death of their creator. The surviving warriors of the First Legion numbered little more than 800, surrounded by a sea of corpses, having exacted a high price for each of their own fallen. Kybalos and the few remaining Pentacles sealed the breach in reality, straining their tormented minds in an effort that cost yet more lives among their ranks. The fighting had both proven the worth of battle-psykers and also shown their potential danger. Though victorious, the Pentacles would be disbanded in the months that followed. Grandmaster Thrane declared the unnamed system and the space around it forbidden, both so as to preserve the safety of the Imperium and as a solemn memorial to honour the fallen. Beacons placed in the surrounding systems declared it contaminated by a gene-phage of surpassing potency, enough to ward off even the most greedy explorers; a claim supported by the wreckage of Zenith station, whose ruins bear the taint of such a plague – though the cause of its destruction can be found in no record.

The Battle of Advex-mors

Of all the campaigns waged by the First Legion, it is their battles against the Rangda that have most intrigued historians and scholars, for the veil of secrecy cast over these engagements has served only to make the myths that have taken the place of truth all the more grand. There is little information to be found outside of the most carefully-guarded sections of the Imperial Archives and the records of the Dark Angels themselves, a Legion well known for rigorously maintaining its many secrets. However, for the first of the great wars against the Rangda there is another source of information available to us – the data cores of the rebel Forge World of Xana. Raided and burned by Loyalist forces during the Scouring, before its dark magos fled into exile, much information was recovered from the Forge World that the First Legion could not seal away. It is from these meticulously-gathered scraps of knowledge that a true picture of the first battle between the Dark Angels and the Rangda can be formed.

The First Legion gathered a mighty armada for the assault on Advex-mors, some 50,000 warriors of the First Legion and another 100,000 support troops drawn from both Imperial Army regiments and Mechanicum Taghmata forces from nearby Xana, as well as near a full hundred capital class starships and many times that of smaller escort craft. At that time this was a fearsome force of arms, but one still reckoned lacking by many for the task they had set themselves. The initial reports from the Vth Legion fleet that had made the first charts of Advex-mors painted a grim picture for the assault force, for the six worlds of Advex-mors were heavily fortified and garrisoned, so much so that the Stratego of the Divisio Militaris would initially believe this to be the seat of the Rangda's power in our galaxy rather than the isolated outpost it was later found to be. Vast legions of captured humans and other more exotic breeds of slave awaited the attackers, slave-soldiers bound to their Rangdan masters by cruel neural collars that enforced absolute loyalty and reduced them to little more than savage drones to the xenos that commanded them. The Rangda themselves possessed many horrific weapons, the product of a vile technology created solely for destruction and subjugation, the ultimate expression of which was the vast war-moon that sat in orbit of Advex-mors Primus. This immense engine of war could match the firepower of a full fleet of starships and bore armour capable of shrugging off strikes from capital scale weaponry. It would prove the greatest obstacle to the invasion and the most terrible symbol of the Rangda's power and malevolent ingenuity.

The First Legion, led by their new Grandmaster, Urian Vendraig, welcomed the challenge presented them. Indeed, to succeed in the face of overwhelming odds and prove the valour of his Legion was one of the core goals Grandmaster Vendraig had assigned the campaign, a return to glory for the First Legion. In honour of this goal, the fighting began in grand style as the assembled fleet tore an opening in the fabric of space to translate into Advex-mors as a single wedge of steel and guns. This feat of navigation, impressive in its own right, was overshadowed by the sheer might of the fleet assembled, with the leading squadron comprising no less than three Glorianna battleships: the *Invincible Reason*, *Paradigm of Hate* and *Truth's Razor*. Those few scattered squadrons of Rangdan warp-barques able to oppose the sudden appearance of the Imperium's fleet were quickly swept aside by the sheer strength of the First Legion's gathered ships. Even the foul weaponry of the Rangdan void craft and

apathetic bravery of the neural thralls that crewed them could not slow the Imperium's advance, though the complex electro-magnetic weapons employed by those ships – often called shadow blasters by the naval crews for the ominous shadows left behind by their atomised victims – left many crewmen crippled by radiation sickness.

The invasion of Advex-mors Extremis followed these initial successes in orbit, with the Grandmaster himself deploying at the head of the First Legion's 8th Chapter to spearhead the assault. Extremis possessed only limited strategic worth, playing host to a small facility that refined fuel from the vast seas of liquid hydrogen trapped beneath the thick icy crust, and was defended by only a small garrison of slave soldiers and a single Rangdan overseer. Yet despite this, its value to the morale of the invasion force and as a statement of the First Legion's power was immense. One thousand warriors of the First Legion took to the field against 10,000 of the foe, a frenzied wave of flesh-puppets sent by their xenos overlord into a mindless fury, to spend their lives recklessly that the foe might be crushed. The dark wave of mind-slaved warriors washed over the First Legion's lines and was shattered and broken by the Legiones Astartes in a battle that lasted but three short hours, and at a cost to them of less than 200 casualties. Urian Vendraig himself descended into the boreal hell of the ice mines and slew the Rangdan overlord in personal combat, emerging to hoist its head before the assembled warriors of his Legion. So would go the fighting on the four outer worlds, each small garrison isolated by the vast Imperium fleet and destroyed in detail by different detachments of the First Legion, each testing and probing the foe for weaknesses. The Rangda spent the lives of their slaves profligately to bleed the Legion, sending tens of thousands to their deaths to slow their advance and cull the numbers of the invaders, losing but a handful of true Rangda as the First Legion celebrated their victories.

Within the space of a few short months the Imperium's fleet had crushed the four outermost planets of the system and stood upon the threshold of Advex-mors Primus. Here would begin the true battle, for as the First Legion had spent its time subjugating the outer worlds, the Rangda had gathered all their strength amongst the huge shielded fortresses of Primus, and in its skies hung the vast war-moon, a sentinel of huge and terrifying power. Here there would be no simple triumph, and the First Legion turned to a far more daring plan to secure victory. Knowing that any effort to destroy the war-moon by means of a sustained orbital assault would result in massive casualties and allow the planet beneath even more time to fortify and prepare, Grandmaster Vendraig planned to strike both targets at once using the might of his Legiones Astartes warriors. A single Chapter would attack the war-moon under cover of a diversionary attack by the fleet and disable it from within, while the majority of the Legion would conduct a massive planetary landing and crush the world's capital in a single, focused assault.

The phalanx of heavy Imperium battleships advanced on Advex-mors Primus but, unlike previous engagements, the lumpen xenos defence barges did not rush headlong to meet them and be torn apart by the heavy guns of the First Legion. Instead, the Rangdan craft formed a defensive constellation about the war-moon, denying the Imperium fleet any easy opening by which to deploy landing craft or make a concerted assault, and displaying a level of tactical awareness hitherto unexpected by the Emperor's forces, who were now forced to attack into the concentrated guns of the foe. The space around Rangda erupted in light as the two fleets clashed above the immense face of the war-moon and hundreds of thousands of guns let fly, punctuating the void with both the yellow flash of Imperium macro-cannon and the malefic green flare of Rangdan shadow blasters. Within the first few moments both fleets had lost entire squadrons of craft, with concentrated weapons fire from the innumerable guns of the war-moon ripping apart even the most heavily shielded of Imperium void craft and spreading storms of debris across the battle zone. This was a war of attrition the Imperium's forces had wanted to avoid and could ill-afford to prolong, but one they could not easily abandon without ceding control of Primus to the enemy. It would only be the sacrifice of the battleship, *Paradigm of Hate* that would finally turn the tide of the engagement.

The ancient battleship, its void shields flaring as it strove to absorb the sheer weight of fire thrown at it, ploughed into the enemy's formation and scattered the lesser ships of the Rangda. Infested by Rangdan stalker drones and badly wounded by the exotic energy weapons of the xenos craft, the *Paradigm of Hate* slammed into the vast hull of the war-moon, gouging a deep wound in its metal hide. The survivors of its crew and the contingent of First Legion warriors aboard the battleship took up defensive positions within the shattered wreck of their vessel and set the plasma reactor to reach catastrophic overload even as the Rangda hosts aboard the vast war-moon moved to overwhelm them. A brief and bloody action was fought in the cold void on the war-moon's surface, with full detachments of towering Rangdan warriors committed to battle for the first time. Brutally strong and armed with weapons of terrible power, the Rangda proved a match for the Legiones Astartes, both sides inflicting serious casualties upon their foe but could not overrun the First Legion's defences in time to prevent the *Paradigm of Hate*'s vengeance. The warriors that had once rode the proud ship into war sacrificed themselves that she might strike one last blow against the foe, her reactors exploding like a miniature sun, crippling the vast war-moon and spreading a deadly storm of debris across high orbit.

With its death, the battleship had bought the rest of the fleet a brief respite, a chance to press the foe, and the orbital battle quickly fell into a chaotic melee of intermixed ships and squadrons, each locked in a desperate struggle for survival in a mass of duels between individuals and squadrons. The remaining battleships, *Invincible Reason* and *Truth's Razor*, blasted a path into low orbit, weathering enemy attack craft and strikes from ground-based weapons platforms to begin landing ground forces, abandoning any attempt to capture the shattered and silent war-moon. As the sky filled with the light of a thousand tiny battles fought in the void, the massed forces of the First Legion made planetfall, a rain of drop pods falling on the wastelands away from the chain of fortresses that girded the equator, while several smaller forces dispersed in squadrons of gunships and Stormbird transports. It would be these smaller forces that saw action first, mounting raids on the nearest fortresses and those columns of slave soldiers sent to investigate the landing zone, buying time with the blood of the enemy for their brothers to array themselves for battle.

For the first day these raiding columns, mostly led by the warriors of the Order of Crows and the marshals of the Hosts of Wind and Fire, bore the brunt of the fighting. At first they only had to contend with lesser forces of slave soldiers, driven into their path by the Rangda to weaken them and easily bested by the battle-hardened Legiones Astartes. But they would also be the first to face the true Rangda in combat. Little is known of the enemy those warriors faced; that they were towering creatures of fell strength, inhuman cunning and bearing the products of a cruel technology that equalled or even exceeded that of Mankind is common to all the tales that would later be told. The warriors that fought these initial battles suffered terribly, many of the columns reduced to less than half their original strength as they fended off the Rangda and several were annihilated entirely, but the information they procured was priceless indeed. The tactics, weaponry and character of the Rangda were laid bare to Grandmaster Vendraig, though at the cost of several hundred of his finest warriors, and with this he planned his next steps.

Arrayed and ordered to take full advantage of their foe's weakness, the host of the First Legion advanced in force to meet their enemy: a host of near 30,000 of the Legiones Astartes in full panoply of glory and with all the brutal weapons of their trade, the full muster of those still combat capable and not bound to serve in orbit aboard the ships of the fleet. Such a force was a threat that could not be ignored and the Rangda, proud and still certain of their superiority, quickly moved to oppose the creatures that dared to invade their home. The two armies met across 100 kilometres of Advex-mors' broken outlands. The initial stages of the battle were fought against the slave legions of the Rangda by the screening elements of the Host of Blades and the heavy tanks of the Host of Iron, warriors ready to counter this by-now familiar Rangdan tactic. Knowing that the true Rangda would expend their slaves with abandon in order to pinpoint a weakness in the Legiones Astartes' lines before attacking – pitting their strength against the weakest point of their opponent – Grandmaster Vendraig had massed his finest warriors, veterans of the Hosts of Crowns and Bone, to act as a mobile reserve. Meanwhile, mobile elements of Companies led by warriors of the Host of Wind, mounted on swift jetbikes and speeders, isolated and harried the main body of the Rangdan force and relayed precise information on their movements.

Made complacent by centuries of conquest and success, the Rangdan elite watched and waited, fully assured that they would claim victory once committed to the fighting against an exhausted and drained foe.

Rather than wait for the hammer blow to fall and sunder his formation, Grandmaster Vendraig moved first, leading a charge that burst through the slave soldier battalions and bore down upon their waiting Rangdan overlords. Too proud to retreat in the face of such a challenge, the Rangda met the warriors of the First Legion blade-to-blade in a savage melee that tested the mettle of both forces, the stoic brutality and measured swordsmanship of the First Legion matched against the savage might and cruel technology of the Rangda. Legiones Astartes warriors were cut asunder by Rangdan warriors enveloped in layers of energy shielding that burned the very air about them as they fought, while the lithe, vulpine xenos fell before the Terranic greatswords of the First Legion Terminators. It was a slaughter that would have ended in mutual annihilation, both sides equally matched in skill and power, until Vendraig met the Rangdan warmaster in single combat. Vendraig was a superlative swordsman, strong of arm and swift in battle, yet his foe was a towering monster cloaked in burning energy fields and wielding a huge crystalline blade that bled a neurotoxin of hideous potency. For an hour the duel raged and, as their warriors died around them, the two generals fought with savage ferocity, neither giving an inch. In the end, though wracked by the pain of the toxin raging in his blood and his armour rent and sundered, Urian Vendraig slew his foe and held high the severed head of the Rangdan warmaster, the battle decided and the pride of that foul xenos breed broken.

With the greatest strength of the foe shattered in open combat by the warriors of the Emperor and their warmaster a cooling corpse in the dust, those Rangda that remained fled and took refuge in the fortresses left to them. However, with the Imperium's ships consolidating control of orbit now that the war-moon had been broken and the Grandmaster's host having scattered the greatest strength of their defences, the Rangda were a broken force. The next few months became a series of gruelling sieges as the First Legion surrounded and reduced each of the fortresses by storm, leaving no stone upon stone and utterly erasing all trace of the enemy on the world they had once claimed, while in orbit specially equipped cadres of Breachers and Destroyers swept the vast ruins of the war-moon slaughtering the thousands of Rangda still trapped in its labyrinthine warrens. Yet the cost of this victory was staggering, with some 10,000 of the First Legion slain and 50 ships of the line utterly destroyed, including the irreplaceable *Paradigm of Hate*, the wreckage of which could not be salvaged from the fused remains of the war-moon. This was the legacy they wished to leave, a symbol of their Legion in the barren waste they made of Advex-mors and a message to those who might seek to oppose them. Those that would seek war with the First Legion would be met by a foe that would not balk when faced with the highest cost to claim victory, a host that would bring an enemy not only to defeat, but to utter annihilation.

The Barbarian and the Knight

The Battle of Dulan and the infamous feud between the Dark Angels and the Space Wolves is a tale told many times and with no need for a detailed repetition in this record. In essence it is a simple tale, yet one that has seen a number of tellings each of which has had its own agenda, and rarely has that agenda been the simple truth. The details of the battle are well known, Leman Russ and the Lion were both assigned to the conquest of Dulan and, while the Space Wolves waited and lay siege, the Dark Angels staged a sudden assault that allowed them to claim the honour of the final victory. On hearing of this it is most often claimed that Leman Russ flew into a rage and assaulted his brother, leading to the legendary duel between them that their Legions are rumoured to reenact whenever they meet. This has led to the popular assumption of a bitter grudge between the Space Wolves and the Dark Angels, a sense of lasting ill will brought about by this single isolated incident that has been accepted by history as fact. Yet, those two Legions have fought together on a number of occasions, both before and after the Battle of Dulan, without rancour and in many cases with a noted sense of shared camaraderie. Indeed, it has often been noted that the two Primarchs, Lion El'Jonson and Leman Russ, were of much the same character, though they oft expressed it differently. Both were practical to their core, with little time for frivolity or the excesses of civilisation. Both valued plain speaking over political necessity and judged men by the actions they took rather than the words they spoke. But above all, the two Primarchs placed the utmost value on loyalty, holding their oaths as iron bonds and reserving the deepest hate for those who would forsake a vow.

This being true, it throws the events on Dulan, and the grudge they are to have given birth to, into a strange light. That the two fought is not in doubt, for too many sources agree on it; that either came to hold a grudge is implausible. If anything, the record of the two Primarchs suggests a deep bond of trust and mutual respect. Together they had seen the end of the Rangdan empire, had conquered a thousand worlds and vanquished some of the most terrible foes to stand against the Imperium. Dulan would seem to have represented one of many tests; a test that allowed the two to take a measure of each other and a test oft repeated when they or their warriors met – but one repeated without the rancour often attributed to it. There exists no greater symbol of the loyalty held between the two Legions, the Wolves of Fenris and the Knights of Caliban, than in the final days of the rebellion against the Emperor, when the great Horus himself trembled as the two Legions re-united as brothers-in-arms, ready to test themselves against the forces that lay siege to Terra.

The Siege of Mykana

During the final years of the Great Crusade, the Dark Angels found themselves engaged more often alongside their brother Legions rather than fighting alone, forging new respect among the Legions that had once seen them as distant and aloof. The battle for the city of Laconis serves as a prominent example of such an action. There the 28th Millennial of the Emperor's Children, led by Commander Paitux, lay siege to the last city upon that non-Compliant world, Mykana. Having prosecuted a highly successful campaign to date there was little to suggest to the Emperor's Children that the conquest of Mykana would pose any great difficulty, and the techno-feudal city was assaulted by a combined force of jump-pack infantry and mounted outriders. Carving a path through the berserk warriors of Mykana, whose drug-induced fury granted them the strength to sunder Space Marine plate with their crude axes and to fight on even after receiving a mortal wound, the Emperor's Children swept down upon the feeble stone fortifications of Mykana's outer walls. There they intended to breach the gates and secure a swift victory worthy of the perfection craved by their Legion, yet as the ornately armoured warriors of the IIIrd Legion reached the edge of the city, the Mykanan techno-shaman activated the ancient reactor entombed at the heart of the city and a field of energy erupted to envelop Laconis, incinerating any who attempted to penetrate its boundary and stopping the Emperor's Children's advance in its tracks.

Forced onto the defensive by the arcane technology unexpectedly deployed by the Mykanan savages and the casualties sustained in the abortive attack on the city, the Emperor's Children found themselves hard-pressed as the Mykanan warriors sallied forth from their newly-impregnable fortress. All attempts to counter what Paitux and his warriors had swiftly come to call the '*Burning Veil*' had failed, and cost the lives of those few reserves left to the IIIrd Legion. They were now in desperate need of reinforcements, having weathered constant attack from the Mykanan berserkers, who fought regardless of the casualties inflicted by the slowly-diminishing Company of the Emperor's Children and seemingly spurred to suicidal fury by the technological manifestation of their shaman's power. Only by the bravery of Commander Paitux did the warriors of the Emperor survive as a coherent fighting force, with Paitux leading nightly counter-assaults and spoiling attacks to hold back the Mykanan horde as his beleaguered Millennial desperately fought to hold clear a landing zone for their reinforcements. Weeks passed before their calls for aid were answered, with the 28th Millennial reduced to less than half their original number and their munitions all but exhausted. The fleet that responded to their dire summons was not composed of the sleek warships of the IIIrd Legion though, but the grim vessels of the First, the Dark Angels.





Dark Angels Deathwing Veteran

Knight-Sergeant Idravain Mors, Seneschal of the Deathwing, 23rd Order 'The Shattered Mantle'

Knight-sergeant Mors was inducted into the inner circles of the Deathwing after the battle on Mykana, where he took a Mykanan phase-lock musket shot meant for his commander, leaving him on the brink of death once victory was secured. His armour bears a number of elements of the unique heraldry used by the Dark Angels, and often considered indecipherable by their brethren in the other Legions. Of particular note are the white plating segments of his modified MkIV battle plate, which signify a warrior of the Deathwing that has taken a mortal wound meant for another and survived, the votive ceramite plug on the left section of his chest plate marks the breach in his armour as a badge of honour with few equals among the pragmatic Dark Angels. Also of note are the crossed keys on his left greave and the Deathwing initiation icons on his right pauldron, both of which are intended to mark him as a warrior who is master in the arts of the Deathwing, as a champion and linebreaker, on the field of battle should he be needed.

Knight-sergeant Mors would fall again on the fields of Sheol IX, once again shielding the Knight-praetor of the Shattered Mantle, though this time from the vengeful talons of the Night Haunter himself. His shattered body was recovered from the field of battle and interred in a Dreadnought sarcophagus in honour of his sacrifice.

Led by the Lion himself, a full Chapter of the Dark Angels fell upon the force that had surrounded Commander Paitux and the survivors of his Millennial. Caught in the open by Dreadwing Fire Raptors and a force of assault troops with the Primarch at their head, the Mykanans were pushed back in a short, vicious battle that left the ground outside their last city strewn with corpses. However, the Burning Veil barred any pursuit by the Imperial forces, dropping briefly only to allow the retreating Mykanan warriors to flee. It quickly proved impossible to destroy the source of Mykana's shielding from outside the city, with even sustained orbital barrages failing to force a full collapse of its defensive perimeter or dull the lethal energies that seethed at its boundary. It was to be the ingenuity and hard-won knowledge of the Ironwing that provided an answer, with an Ironwing Lieutenant, Iksal Mordwen, demonstrating that a dense enough energy beam could disrupt a small section of the force field long enough to allow a small raiding party to penetrate the outer defences of the city. A force of volunteers, primarily warriors mounted on swift jetbikes and speeders spearheaded by the initiates of the Ravenwing and led by Lieutenant Mordwen, was assembled and the Lion prepared his warriors for the final assault on Mykana, leaving the shattered Emperor's Children Millennial as a rearguard.

Deploying an ancient graviton cannon from the armouries of the *Invincible Reason*, the Dark Angels were able to hold open the shield on its southern border long enough for the Ravenwing to pass through the breach, only the last handful of warriors falling prey to the lethal energies of the shield as it snapped shut on the assault's heels. Outside the barrier, the Dark Angels of the Shattered Mantle assembled in force, the Lion at the fore, and waited for their brethren to bring down the Burning Veil. Outnumbered a thousand to one, the small band of warriors now trapped within the city cut a path towards the central spire, paying a high price in blood and lives for each step they took as the berserk warriors of Mykana swarmed down upon them. Yet, despite the casualties they suffered, the central spire of the city came crashing down barely more than an hour after the dispatch of the assault force, and with a great cry the warriors of the Dark Angels waiting at the barrier's edge pressed forwards as the dust settled over Mykana, and the many thousands of surviving berserkers struggled in vain to defend their home from the Lion's onslaught.

Of the brave warriors that had won victory with the destruction of the shield spire, there had been no word since the fall of the spire. Such was the chaos in the streets of Mykana where the warriors of that now fallen state, having been issued a fatal overdose of the combat drugs that empowered them, fought a bitter and suicidal battle street by street to deny the advance of the Dark Angels, that none of the Lion's warriors could be spared to search for them. Those survivors of the assault on the city, Lieutenant Mordwen and a few dozen of his brethren, were trapped behind enemy lines and faced with such a horde of enemies that it became simply a matter of how high a price in lives they would demand for their death. For the Dark Angels this was the cost of victory, the bloody toll of duty, and one that any member of the Legion would unquestionably pay, but not one that would be exacted that day. Having commandeered a squadron of Storm Eagles, Commander Paitux and the warriors of the Emperor's Children conducted an airborne assault on the city's central plaza, honour bound to avenge their fallen and repay the Dark Angels. Together the warriors of the First and the Third held a position among the rubble of the fallen spire for another three hours of frantic battle as the Mykanan hordes threw themselves against the thin line of defenders. By the time the main force of the Dark Angels assault arrived to relieve them, they had exhausted all their munitions and the survivors had resorted to combat blades and bayonets to hold the line.

Satisfied that Mykana was purged and no threat remained to the Imperium's claim upon Laconis, the Lion ordered the Dark Angels to return to their ships, leaving the Emperor's Children amongst the ashes of the world's primitive people to await the return of their own fleet and establish Imperial authority upon it. No mention was made of the plight of the III[rd] Legion that had brought the Dark Angels to Laconis, of the dishonour of failure or the lives spent by the Dark Angels to finish a conquest that history would attribute to the warriors of Fulgrim's proud Legion. Facing neither reprimand nor apparent praise from the grim Primarch of the First Legion, Commander Paitux sought answers from Lieutenant Mordwen in the wake of the battle. A question to which the Dark Angels officer offered but a few short words in reply before departing with those of his men that still lived: "*I served the Lion for many years before I earned his trust enough to be given charge of the battlefield in his absence, and here he has offered you that trust after a single battle. From him that is high praise indeed.*"

With nothing further to be said, the Lion and his sons departed Laconis, allowing what remained of the 28[th] Millennial of the Emperor's Children Legion to officially bring the world to Compliance. As the planet was rebuilt, the remains of the device that created the Burning Veil were never found, and some accused the Emperor's Children of embellishing their records to make their failure more palatable to the Warmaster. Yet, there still remain theories that the Dark Angels somehow retrieved the shield generator and that it now rests somewhere within their hidden vaults, awaiting use in the service of the Imperium.

The Pride of Conquerors

Most histories of the Horus Heresy place the first intervention of the Dark Angels at the Thramas Crusade, a campaign which begins several years after Horus, Warmaster of the Imperium, raises the flag of rebellion. Unknown to most, there are a number of much earlier recorded battles in which significant elements of the Dark Angels Legion take to the field against the Warmaster in open war. Of these, the earliest known occurs in 006.M31, but a few short months after the opening salvos of the war in the northernmost reaches of the Imperium at the isolated outpost operated by the Dark Angels in the system known as Rangda.

Since the end of the Rangdan Xenocide, the system that still bore the name of that fearsome xenos breed had lain mostly empty, save for the chantry station of the Order of the Broken Claw and a small garrison of the 51[st] Chapter of the Dark Angels, the Sable Griffons. In total, the First Legion force numbered around 1,500 warriors, their standing orders being to act as watchmen over the remains of the Rangdan home world and to stand sentinel over the far reaches of the Emperor's domain. When Horus' fleet opened fire on Isstvan III, marking the beginning of the Horus Heresy, much of the garrison's strength was out-system conducting a routine patrol of the outer rim of the galaxy and when the Sons of Horus heavy cruiser, *Conqueror's Pride*, translated into realspace at the edge of the system, no cause for alarm was recognised.

Signalling that it needed to resupply and providing all the required ident and security code-ciphers, the *Conqueror's Pride* passed unharmed through the halo of kill-sats and weapons platforms arrayed about the world of Rangda. Once in orbit, several squadrons of Storm Eagles and larger Stormbirds departed its flight bays headed for the surface. Queries from the Dark Angels requesting their destination and intent were ignored, and when Knight-praetor Kordray Mordred demanded to speak with the Sons of Horus commander, his only answer was a sudden and indiscriminate barrage launched by the cruiser in orbit. Macro-cannon blasts and the searing beams of orbital lances mercilessly battered the Dark Angels' positions on the surface, leaving little of their fortifications intact, yet inflicting only light damage on the chantry house of the Broken Claw. Its outer defences crippled, the Sons of Horus gunships set down in perfect assault formation and disgorged nearly a full Chapter, including a Company of the renowned Justaerin Terminators. With the main First Legion positions thoroughly obliterated, and any survivors likely scrambling to secure more traditional targets, such as the planetary arsenal or command headquarters, the Sons of Horus made their assault on the Chapter house with a brazen contempt for their foe, detailing only a token force to seize the astropathic nexus.

The outer gates and the decorative statues that fronted the Chapter house, simple bronzes and embossed with scenes commemorating the Dark Angels' victories over the Rangda, posed little barrier to the heavy weaponry of the Sons of Horus. The Justaerin Consul himself tore the gate from its hinges and cast it aside, daring the defenders within to come out against him, to challenge the might of Horus' own Legion – for the Sons of Horus had long resented the superior attitude of the so-called First Legion. When none dared to come forth, the Justaerin marshalled their strength and set foot within the great antechamber of the Chapter house. At that moment, a great detonation rocked the entranceway, the statues exploded first in a carefully set sequence intended to cause as much damage as possible, their cores packed with high explosive that turned their bronze skins into deadly shrapnel. Then a series of charges built into the arch of the entranceway sealed the broken gate with tonnes of rubble, the ornate architecture little more than a trap long-prepared for whoever might eventually lay siege to the Chapter house.

Trapped within and cut off from their support, the Justaerin finally came face to face with the defenders. As a house of record and contemplation, there was no standing garrison, merely 12 members of the Order of the Broken Claw now pitted against almost 50 Justaerin that had made it inside. Within the pitch-black, labyrinthine corridors and chambers of the chapter house the Cenobites of the Broken Claw met the elite of Horus' Legion, measured them against the foes they had faced in the dark years of the Rangdan Xenocides and found them wanting. Though it cost them dearly, the Dark Angels broke the pride of the Warmaster and, when the bulk of the raiding force finally breached the entrance with melta charges, they found only a slew of corpses wearing the colours of Horus' own sons within, mixed with but a few fallen in the stark black of the First. The three surviving Cenobites had withdrawn to the lower vaults where the relics of the Rangdan wars were held in stasis, there to hold out as long as they still drew breath.

Their honour besmirched, the Sons of Horus refused to resort to the simple solutions of promethium or phosphex to remove the stubborn warriors of the First Legion, instead selecting from among their number the most skilled and vicious to restore their pride. The first group, all storied warriors and veterans, survived for ten minutes and, though they inflicted cruel wounds, only felled a single defender. Three further bands of volunteers descended and still a single defiant Dark Angel stood guard over the vault. Word then arrived from the rearguard at the astropathic nexus that the other Dark Angels survivors had driven them from the core and had control of off-world communications, and finally the Sons of Horus sent in the Destroyers. Seeing the approach of the grim-faced executioners, the final Cenobite gave a last salute and charged, only to be engulfed in an explosion of phosphex that ate through his armour and dissolved his flesh in moments. Finally granted access to the vaults, the Sons of Horus Techmarines and forge-wrights scoured the ancient relics of the Rangda, taking possession of a carefully chosen selection of vile Rangdan weapons and other fell devices before returning to their waiting dropships.

Despite the delay their humiliation by the Lion's warriors had caused them, the Sons of Horus had achieved their objective and now sought to escape. In orbit, the *Conqueror's Pride*, having destroyed the few small system defence crafts, began a systematic bombardment of the surface, seeking to eradicate any trace of the attack. One of the grounded Stormbirds was captured and the relics it bore lost to a daring assault by Knight-praetor Mordred and his Deathwing lifeguard, while another was shot down and destroyed by Ravenwing warriors piloting Xiphon Interceptors, though the survivors of the Sable Griffons could not halt the exodus of the Sons of Horus. The remnants of the assault force reached orbit leaving the Dark Angels trapped below, but they could spare no time to exact any revenge, for the Promethean class cruiser *Invidious* had returned, called back from patrol by Knight-praetor Mordred, and the *Conqueror's Pride* was no match for the ancient Terran warship in open battle.

Bloodied in body and pride, the Sons of Horus fled the Rangda system. They had come seeking both weapons for Horus' desperate rebellion and to break the will of one of the unquestionably loyal Legions but could claim little more than the most pyrrhic of victories. Striking with complete surprise and superior numbers, they had managed to lose several hundred of their own warriors, several irreplaceable Stormbird transports and a number of the relics while only exacting a handful of casualties upon their foe. Worse still, the Dark Angels were now not simply set against them by loyalty, by the cold logic of duty and honour, but also by the raw demand of anger and retribution.



Dark Angels Contemptor Dreadnought

Venerable-Praefectus Oramas, Archon of Flame

Weapons such as the conversion beam cannon borne into battle by Venerable Oramas are rare weapons, even among the Legiones Astartes, for the technology required to keep such potent weapons operating is both all but lost to modern scholars and dangerous to employ. It is only in the ranks of the First Legion that such technology is found in great numbers, often employed en-masse in order to overwhelm the terrible foes against which the Dark Angels are often pitted. Indeed, the panoply of Venerable Oramas, who in his former life was a simple initiate of the Firewing and no towering hero of the Great Crusade, includes a number of weapons noted for their rarity. The Kheres pattern assault cannon, whose temperamental nature limited its use amongst many of the younger Legions, combined with the volatile conversion beam cannon, represents a significant deployment of firepower, but one that was commonplace among the ranks of the Dark Angels.



A Legion Accursed: The Night Lords at Thramas

'It is neither the great deeds we perform in battle nor the wise words we utter in peace that shape us, but rather the hidden things we choose to undertake in the dark while none can see that define us.'

Attr. Konrad Curze, carved into the walls of his prison on Cheraut

A Legion Accursed

The Night Lords were a Legion set upon a course that would lead them inevitably to their destruction, a course whose origin could be found on distant Terra and the inscrutable plans of the Emperor, but that would see its bitter end among the dim stars of the Eastern Fringe. As was fitting for a Legion of such ill-repute and terrible mien, it would not go meekly to meet this ordained fate nor accept without bloodshed an end to the path they had chosen to walk. Amid the turmoil and destruction of the Horus Heresy the first signs of that which awaited them would appear, heralded by the Night Haunter himself, and the Legion would turn upon itself in an orgy of violence in an effort to sever itself from the curse of its Primarch. This was not the end that they stumbled ever closer too, that the Night Haunter had seen in a thousand cursed dreams, but merely a foretaste of the horror that was to come. For despite the grim fervour with which they struggled, the Night Lords sought the wrong foes for their rage, choosing to blame a corruption they saw within their own ranks as though it had been brought to them from the outside. Instead, the curse they sought to end had ever lived at the hêart of the Legion, a blight that had festered in the place that it had been set by the Emperor's own hand, in aid of plans incomprehensible to the minds of mere mortals – the Night Haunter himself.

Afflicted by the curse of seeing but a fragment of the foresight that guided his gene-father, Konrad Curze had seen the grim possibility that waited for him and his sons on the far side of the Horus Heresy. Once he had sought to fight that possibility, to struggle against the future hoping that his dark dreams would clear, that the blood he shed and the lives he had claimed would be enough to shift the path of the future ever so slightly. That the dreams that had haunted his mind, the visions of a dark and terrible future would clear and be replaced, that he might find a place in the empire his father sought to build among the stars. Yet even after Horus shattered the course of the Emperor's plans and remade the future of the Imperium itself, his vision remained constant and unchanging, a curse that he came to believe was inevitable and immovable. That all the struggle and death had been in vain, that it had meant nothing worked on the mind of the Primarch in a manner more catastrophic than the cut of any blade, a wound that no chirurgeon could mend. Thus, by the time of the Thramas Crusade he had come to embrace his doom, to revel in the futility of his existence and the bleak truth he thought he had discovered.

The Outriders of Rebellion

Outwardly, the Night Lords began the Horus Heresy as a strong force in the host of the Warmaster, a Legion tempered by war and set in its own grudge against the Loyalist cause. The imprisonment of Curze prior to the destruction of Nostramo and the subsequent incident with Rogal Dorn were seen by many among the Traitors to grant the Night Haunter their trust. Knowing this, Horus sought to put the Night Lords to use in the vanguard of his plans and in the wake of the destruction of the Dropsite Massacre, Horus had set them to the tasks he had woven for the Emperor's demise. For the Night Lords, the Warmaster set the task of running at the forefront of his host, inciting fear and unrest among those worlds yet undecided in their loyalties. By the point of the Night Lords' skinning knives Horus would show these worlds the cost of his animosity, and to those who chose to bend the knee before him, he would grant his protection and a relief from the predations of his servants.

As the harbingers of the Traitors and the emissaries of Horus' Dark Compliance, the Night Lords would usher dozens of systems into the growing empire of Horus, each cowed by the knowledge of the horrors that had befallen those who refused. Within the space of a few short months most of the northern reaches was under the Traitors' control, a stable base from which Horus could prepare his assault on the Imperium's heart and one that could not function with a blight like the Night Lords running rampant within its borders. For in every minor drop in production and each misfortune that befell the newly-conquered worlds, the Night Haunter saw the most dire of treacheries and meted out the only punishment he knew: death in its most terrible form. Such a scourge soon proved more damaging to the amassing of munitions and arms than it was beneficial to the enforced loyalty of the conquered.

That which had begun on Terra as a force that shaped cruelty into a tool had become in some cases little more than an undisciplined mob that saw cruelty as the goal and not the means. It was no longer the precise weapon that the Legions had been envisioned to be, but rather an indiscriminate scourge that sought to sate its thirst on any that crossed its path. Left to its own devices and the ever-darkening wishes of its master, the Night Lords would surely have proved a thorn in Horus' careful preparations, and so the Warmaster granted them a new task, one that would see their unique talents put to good use. As they had in the north so would they serve in the east, as the harbingers of the dark empire and the will of Horus. They would bring new territories and new sources of power and resources into the fold of the Traitors, strengthening the growing armada that Horus intended to unleash upon Terra.

An Empire Built on Fear

Upon the dim stars of the Nostramo sector, Horus would first unleash the Night Lords. Those worlds that had once bent the knee to the Night Haunter, before his sudden departure from Imperium space in the years after Cheraut and the destruction of Nostramo, would once again face the judgement of the Night Haunter. Consisting of nearly a hundred inhabited systems, many including long-established and heavily populated hive worlds, the Nostramo sector remained a valuable recruiting and manufacturing hub for the Traitor forces, even after the destruction of its capital world. Here could be found in abundance desperate and bitter souls to take up arms in the name of the Warmaster and prosecute his wars against a distant Terra that had long dictated their trials and misfortunes, and whose labour could be swiftly turned to the service of Horus' growing hosts. In form it was perfectly suited to the rebels and ripe for the taking, owing as it did little fealty or allegiance to any Loyalist faction or warlord, the Night Haunter, seen from without, the perfect tool for its conquest. This would be a rare error in judgement by Horus, for the Night Haunter would prove ill suited to the task he was assigned.

Long had the worlds that surrounded now-dead Nostramo suffered under the rule of the Night Haunter. His stringent and unforgiving code of law had enforced a dreary life of suffering and toil upon those who served him, with any infraction, no matter how insignificant, punished by maiming or death. While it had maintained a brutal form of order, it had done so by means of a fear so ingrained that it had begun to eat away at the souls of those who dwelt under its burden, the suppressed sins of its people a threat overlooked by their old masters. With the Night Haunter's

absence during the final years of the Great Crusade this threat would come to the fore, with many of the worlds of that far sector overthrowing the tyrannical regimes forced upon them by the Night Lords and reverting to the anarchic ways of their past. Corrupt syndicates and brutal gangs took control of cities and worlds, indulging in all that Konrad Curze had forbidden and bringing a more chaotic terror to the weak that dwelt on those benighted worlds.

The syndicates that rose up to take control would have proved just as capable of fulfilling Horus' needs as any more legitimate government, but to the Night Haunter they were an affront to all he stood for, a blight upon the realm he had killed so many to establish. Where others among the Traitors' ranks might have accepted the allegiance of the new overlords of the sector, co-opting their strength to serve the Warmaster, the Night Haunter sought a path of his own. As the Night Lords' main fleet arrived in the sector, the Syndarchs of the Blood Moon syndicate gathered on the isolated world of Kehdure IV to pledge their loyalty to Konrad Curze, expecting only to cede some measure of their wealth to his new rebellion, confident he would not wish their territories plunged into chaos when they could offer a ready bounty of men and munitions. Instead, they would find the Night Haunter descending upon them with the sole intent of ending their lives, without regard as to what tribute he might otherwise reap by accepting their pledge, and leaving Kehdure IV a broken and bloodied world, its few inhabitants little more than collateral damage to the slaughter.

This would set the pattern for Konrad Curze's return to his adopted home, with even those worlds that had remained largely true to his draconian laws suffering a blight of gruesome punishments to ensure their loyalty. While the other Traitor Legions busied themselves with the initial assaults on the warp channels leading to distant Terra, and Paramar and Karadoc now vast battlefields for the warlords fighting over the Imperium's corpse, the Night Lords set about a private war. For the return of the Night Haunter was far more than the prosecution of the Warmaster's conquest, but also a piece of a vision that the Night Haunter had long dreaded, the next step on a path that had begun when Horus raised his banner at Isstvan. In the descent of Nostramo and its neighbours into madness and debauchery, and the setting of brother against brother, he saw the beginnings of his own demise and the eternal damnation of his Legion. It was a fate he still fought to deny, though his methods were ever more led by desperation before cunning, and he loosed the warriors of his Legion to eradicate all signs of that possibility, to wipe clean the stain of perfidy with blood and perhaps turn the course of fate itself.

The Price of Infamy

Had perhaps his tools been more finely forged, his own will more honed and less brittle then such desperate measures might have succeeded, but the Night Lords were no longer that which they had once been. The decay of the Nostramo sector had run far deeper and for far longer than many had guessed, its tendrils spread not only among the worlds that were pledged to the Night Lords, but into the very Legion itself. Long had it been the custom of the Night Lords to take their recruits from but a small swathe of worlds, mostly those being in close proximity to Nostramo, and as those worlds had turned rotten so too had

The Dark King

Though much has been made in the pages of history of the battles on Isstvan V being the first conflict between the Emperor's Primarchs, it is not strictly true. There exists a single instance of a Primarch turning upon one of his brothers and meting out grievous injury to them that predates both the conflict in Isstvan and that on Prospero. That Konrad Curze sits at the heart of this incident, long concealed from historians in the archives of the Imperial Palace, should elicit little surprise from those that knew of that troubling son of the Emperor.

This occurred in the aftermath of the long and bloody Cheraut Compliance, a conflict that saw elements of the Emperor's Children, Imperial Fists and the Night Lords deployed to bring a particularly stubborn lost clade of humanity under the rule of the Imperium. All three of the Legion Primarchs were present, a rare occurrence in those hectic days of conquest and expansion, with little common ground to be found between Dorn and Curze in the prosecution of the war. By the end of the fighting, Curze's brutal methods and the indiscriminate slaughter he committed to pacify the defeated people of Cheraut had brought the relationship between those two disparate brothers to a razor's edge of bitterness. A confrontation between the two Primarchs quickly escalated from angry words to an actual battle between Primarchs, with Dorn left grievously injured in its aftermath.

Those warriors that witnessed the event were sworn to silence, and the Night Haunter was placed under guard pending sentence by his brothers. Yet there would be no secret trial nor penitent crusade for the Night Haunter, instead the Primarch of the Night Lords broke free of his confinement and left only bloodied corpses in his wake. Blood was spilled between the Legions, a crack opened in what many had previously seen as a brotherhood to stand the test of time. Curze made haste to Nostramo, there to immolate his adopted home world, as much a symbol of his defiance to his brothers as an act intended to return his domain to some semblance of order, and then disappear into the hinterlands of the Great Crusade.

No news of this quiet rebellion would ever reach the wider Imperium, no writs of condemnation or denouncement would be issued from the courts of Terra or punitive fleets sent in search of the errant Primarch. Elements of the Night Lords present in other Expeditionary fleets faced no censure and the Night Haunter himself kept to the dark places beyond the borders of the map, killing and conquering as he always had. The great and the wise placed a higher value on the unity of the Emperor's crusade across the stars than on the open punishment of a warlord that had erred, perhaps even feared what they might unleash should they force Konrad Curze's hand. Instead they resorted to more subtle punishments, ending the shipments of supplies to the sectors held by the Night Lords and effectively banishing him from the ranks of the Great Crusade's vanguard. By the early years of the new millennium the Court of Terra deemed this punishment complete and issued an order for the Night Haunter's recall, granting him a place of honour in the fleet assembling to meet the sudden betrayal of Horus Lupercal.

Night Lords Reaver Legionary

Legionary Yerlac Gnar
Thramas Crusade
44th Reaver Battalion, 43rd Chapter

Legionary Gnar was attached to the forces that ravaged the Thramas sector in the early stages of the Thramas Crusade, one among the thousands given orders to reap a toll of blood and carnage upon those worlds that had fallen into the possession of the VIIIth Legion. This was no careful campaign of fear, enacted to force those stubborn Loyalist strongholds that remained to bow the knee before the Night Haunter, but one whose sole aim was slaughter and the building of petty kingdoms among the ruins of the failing Imperium. Marked by the Cross of Bone, as seen on Gnar's left vambrace, these reaver battalions followed the lead of Night Lords warlords such as Nakrid Thole and Cel Herec in taking what they deemed their deserved share of the Imperium's wealth and eschewed the aims and wishes of Primarch and Warmaster.

These powerful warlords, whose influence had grown within the Legion as the Night Haunter's madness had swelled, gathered to themselves the pick of those resources available to the Night Lords. A prime example is the advanced MkVI battle plate worn by Legionary Gnar, of which the Legiones Astartes had received but a few scattered shipments before the Horus Heresy had put an end to the supply lines that had once served them. Of all the Legions, the Night Lords had received relatively few such shipments, and armour of this mark was largely limited to the 9th, 14th, 27th, and 43rd Chapters – all of which bore the mark of the Cross of Bone.





The standard Legion emblem in use by the Night Lords at the beginning of the Thramas Crusade.



Molecular bonding studs were a common armouring technique used to strengthen Space Marine battle plate in the face of the ever more deadly battlefields which were endured by the warriors of the Legiones Astartes.

the youths sent to meet the Legion's tithe. Though they made able killers, they had not the discipline and commitment to the cause of the Great Crusade that had marked the early Legions, with many companies now filled entirely with such warriors, often to the chagrin of veteran Terran companies. These would be the tools by which Konrad Curze attempted to cut away the infection that had gripped his small empire.

These new Night Lords had been forged in the corrupt regimes that had gripped Nostramo and its neighbours, much different from the grim hardship that had moulded the Night Haunter and the gangs of Old Nostramo. These warriors paid little heed to the codes that had guided those brutal fighters, given instead to the wanton application of bloody violence – the supremacy of the strong over the weak in all things. Where once the Night Haunter had taught his people that all actions must have their consequences, that blood must be repaid in blood, that creed had been corrupted so that those with the strength to seize power could do as they pleased. This was true of the rich and poor alike, with some showing their strength in the riches by which they bought and sold those beneath them and others by the skill with which they plied their blades. It would be the lowest dregs of this society that went to fill the ranks of the Night Lords, those for whom strength and power were measured in the fear of those around them.

Loosed by their master, the nature of the Night Lords was made clear by their actions, for given leave by the Night Haunter to hunt as they willed, they took to the worlds of the Nostramo sector not as a disciplined whole, but as a throng of scattered warbands and raiding hosts. They bore little resemblance to the ordered ranks of the old VIIIth Legion, nor even to the savage but focused bands of the Raven Guard or White Scars who fought in their own style, but rather as a gleeful mob of killers. They did not lack in skill at arms, and where they met resistance it crumbled before their prowess with blade and gun, but in restraint they were sorely wanting. Few worlds escaped the scourge of their brutal proclivities, with the greater part of them more concerned with the red spectacle of their raids than the order they were intended to enforce. Fear was the weapon they had been schooled in by their master, and it was one they wielded with abandon, one they plied until it cloaked the worlds about the corpse of Nostramo like a shroud. Yet, such was the terror they engendered that though none that felt their lash dared to transgress the laws of Curze, few remained able to fulfil the new tithes Horus demanded of him.

Those of the Night Lords that remembered the old ways fought on with the skill and pragmatic valour that had carried them through the Great Crusade, but found their efforts to re-establish the fiefdom that they had once ruled stymied by the Legion's more zealous recruits. Both those of Terran birth and the elder Nostraman recruits found themselves further and further from the counsel of the Night Haunter, whose visions spurred him to greater efforts of bloody retribution and gave the more vicious of his new sons greater influence over him. That the efforts of the veterans, measured but still bloody, brought the Legion more reward than the frenzied bloodletting of their juniors seemed unimportant to the Primarch, whose dreams grew darker as Horus' rebellion itself gained in power and worlds all across the Imperium plunged into war and darkness. He began to listen less and less to the old veterans of the Great Crusade, those warriors whose efforts had so far failed to avert the disaster he foresaw, and instead began to heed the counsel of his newer officers. Both groups saw in the other a threat to that which to them made the Legion strong and, as the fleet marshalled for the assault on the Thramas sector, they set plans for a different campaign.



A Cross of Bone, A Hand of Blood

Though seen by history as the battlefield that would pit the Night Lords against the Dark Angels, Thramas would also be the field upon which another battle would be fought, a battle for the soul of Konrad Curze himself. Lost among the grand battles and terrible slaughters that formed the backdrop of the assault on the Thramas Sector, the Night Lords underwent their own quiet rebellion. The two faces of the Legion fought a sullen fratricidal struggle for control of their Legion and its Primarch. There were those that yearned for the glory days when the Night Lords stood among the legends of the Imperium, a military force to be reckoned with, and those who sought only the bloody mandate to pillage and kill in the wild stars at the edge of Imperium space. Horus had offered them freedom in his rebellion and therein lay the heart of their tragedy, for in freedom they had found only despair, both in the decline of their Primarch and in the decline of their Legion.

Those among the Night Lords that sought to fully grasp this new freedom Horus offered them were mostly those recruits taken in from the corrupted worlds about Nostramo, though they presented the least unified front. A collection of disparate warlords and warbands, they were united by a desire to kill and reave as they chose, without regard for the Great Crusade or the desires of distant generals. They sought to return to their origins, to re-imagine the Legion in the form of Nostramo's ancient syndicates and street gangs, but with the power to control worlds instead of hive-blocks. They took the symbol of a cross of bone, its form varying between individual warbands, a mark derived from the traditions of worlds across that dark sector that had long stood for a conflict whose end could only be found in death. It was a signal of both their intent and their goal, to those who opposed them it promised a grisly end and to the Legion at large it offered a path that would allow them to fully exploit the gifts they had been given.

They sought to carve out a kingdom of their own in Horus' new dominion, a realm where they could rule as befitted the warriors of the Night Lords and cared little for the often obscure goals of the Night Haunter. Nakrid Thole stood as a prominent member of this faction, recruited from the hive cities of Nostramo in its final years and schooled in war by the gang strife of his youth and the brutal purges of the Great Crusade's later campaigns. To him and those like him, Curze was a distant figure, one enamoured of strange oracles and premonitions who kept them on a short leash. Were he to be kept away from the battlefield, left to obsess over his dreams and regrets then the warriors of the Night Lords could slip the leash and run wild across the stars. Thole and his allies saw a galaxy ripe for the plucking, one where those joined to the cause of Horus could take what had been denied them in the Great Crusade. No longer would it be the Ultramarines and Imperial Fists, the favourites of the Emperor, who would reap the rewards of the long war for the galaxy, but those who had once been forced to skulk in the shadows of the Emperor's great plan.

In opposition to them were the veterans of the old VIIIth Legion, both Terran and Nostraman, as well as those newer recruits who saw in their Primarch something more than an omen-watcher and madman. They were still pledged to the rebellion Horus had begun, determined to see the overthrow of the Emperor, but they retained the spark of honour that had once been at the heart of both the Legion and the ancient gangs of Nostramo. A harsh and unforgiving code that guided their actions, they killed in a manner that the other Legions found brutal and distasteful, but it served a purpose, it was not random slaughter but a necessary duty. In the Primarch these warriors saw the pinnacle of this tradition, a warrior willing to sacrifice the appearance of honour for the fulfilment of duty, the one who had carved the code they followed into the very soul of those that lived among the worlds of the Nostramo sector. They sought to stand amongst the other Legions with pride, no longer the Emperor's butchers or hidden knives, but at the forefront of a new regime for all to see. They needed a strong Primarch, one that could guide the Legion and see them to their rightful position in Horus' new empire.

Foremost among these veterans stood the warrior Sevatar, though he himself disdained such politics, he served as the icon of those that fought to empower their Primarch. In honour of his devotion to Curze the symbol of the red gauntlet which he bore, a death-mark in the old Nostraman code, became the symbol of those pledged to the Primarch's side. It was an irony not lost on the Nostraman warriors of both factions that it was a mark of dishonour that stood for what some might interpret as the Loyalist faction within the Legion. Sevatar himself worked tirelessly throughout the campaigns in both Nostramo and Thramas to support the goals of his Primarch in war and to strengthen the resolve of the Night Haunter himself. He would commit more than his share of slaughters, but each for a purpose other than his own bloodlust, each for the glory of his Legion and the needs of his Primarch. Yet, Sevatar cared not for the machinations of others within the Legion, and fought his own battles without heed for those who would be his allies. Others acted as leaders for the faction. Anrek Barbatos of the Primarch's guard was one, for his dedication to the Night Haunter was legend within the Legion, and others too among the captains and praetors, these warriors would coordinate the secret war fought between the Night Lords.

This hidden war was not to be fought directly. There would be no pitting Night Lord against Night Lord in open battle, no grand confrontation that would settle the issue. Instead it was fought with sharp knives and bitter words, warriors brought low in honour duels and battlefield incidents or disgraced in council and isolated from the Primarch. Even as they fought to control the worlds of the Tithe Road at the outskirts of the Thramas system they fought with each other, with commanders struck down over the right to lead invasions and others castigated for their failures in battle and exiled from the Primarch's side. As they pushed further into the Thramas sector the battles would only intensify, both on and off the battlefield, with Thole able to further leverage the death-tolls of both his own and his subordinates to claim ever more influence over the Primarch. Brash words and bloody triumphs served to grant those that fought under the Cross of Bone the influence they required to drown out their opponents, whose champions could do little to stem the tide of fervour that took hold of the rank and file of the Night Lords. It seemed that what little remained of the VIIIth Legion that had left Terra nearly two centuries before had been all but completely suppressed.

A Decline Long Foreseen

Even as his Legion fought for his attention, struggled to save or to damn him, Konrad Curze turned his face from his sons and lapsed into a fugue that only exacerbated the conflict. Long had he battled against the dire future he had foreseen with that cursed fragment of his father's gift that had passed to him. In his youth he had imposed order with the blood of the wicked, under the guidance of the Emperor and his brothers. He had tried to tame his gift and see past the terrors it showed him, and as he fought for Horus he tried to drown the visions in death. None had worked, whatever methods the Night Haunter employed, his nightmares remained unchanged and inescapable. Its first signs had already come to pass: corruption had taken root in his cities despite all the blood shed to chain them in fear, and as he had once tried to warn his brothers, the Imperium had fallen into civil war. To the narrow glimpse of the future that the Night Haunter could perceive, what was to follow seemed inevitable, 10,000 years of blood and death that would continue long after his own doom.

With the failure of his attempts in Nostramo and the initial stages of the Thramas Campaign to counter the fate he foresaw, Konrad Curze withdrew from the fighting and secluded himself in the half-finished fortress on Tsagualsa. There he would spend much of the war imprisoned in a cage of his own despair, giving vent to his frustration in a series of ever more deranged and violent displays, enough even to disquiet the Night Lords. The Primarch wallowed for a time in despondency, raged at the futility of his struggle and etched his pain onto the hides of those unfortunate prisoners dragged to his lair. In his absence, Thole and his disciples threw the Night Lords into combat across the sector, the count of dead foes deemed of more import than the strategic worth of their gains. For as the Primarch shied further away from his duties as overlord of the Night Lords, the more power he ceded to Nakrid Thole and those like him. Sevatar and those others of the Primarch's inner circle were tied to his side, unable to take to the vanguard of the war while he languished in his fugue, waiting for new orders and pleading for the Night Haunter to abandon his doldrums and take once again to battle.

Their efforts to stir the Primarch would bear bitter fruit, raising him to action for the brief confrontation with the Lion on Tsagualsa. No living creature now knows what Curze hoped to gain from that battle, for in single combat there were few among the Primarchs that could match Lion El'Jonson blade to blade. Perhaps he had hoped that in sharing his visions he might find answers, perhaps he sought to warn his brother of the horrors yet to come, perhaps he even hoped that the Lion would kill him, that he might escape the fate that haunted him in that simple fashion. Whatever the intentions of the Night Haunter, he would leave the battlefield bloodied and no more sane than when he had gone forth. It was a pattern that would be repeated at Sheol, where once again Konrad Curze would throw himself at his brother and force the most loyal of his sons to sacrifice themselves so that his broken but still-breathing form could be recovered. Even as little more than a comatose and insensate burden, the Primarch remained at the centre of his Legion's struggle. Those that had fought to free the Legion blamed him for their dire situation, while those that sought to return both the Legion and Primarch to glory struggled to preserve him in the face of his failure.

The Butcher's Bill

Despite the apparent failure of the Night Haunter's plans, it would be his actions that finally tipped the balance of power within the Legion to those of his sons that sought to free him from his visions. For in giving the more headstrong portions of his Legion their freedom he had allowed them to overextend their forces and commit themselves to a series of battles that were now beyond their means to finish – they were caught in the trap of their own hubris. In the final months of the Thramas Campaign, many of those that bore the Cross of Bone were cut down, Nakrid Thole falling at Thramas, Vaeduc the Maimed at Sheol and Malithos and Cel Herec at the hands of Sevatar and his Atramentar. With their deaths, the more loyal sons of Curze finally took control of the Legion, with Sevatar assembling a new inner council, the Kyroptera of the Night Lords, filled with warriors he counted as loyal to his cause and the Legion's survival. This new council would lead while the Primarch languished at the edge of death, setting a more pragmatic course than those that had taken the reins for the majority of the Thramas Campaign.

True to its desire to return the Legion to its former glory, the new Kyroptera commanded its warriors to take the shattered remains of the Legion to Horus' side, that they might fight in the manner of true warriors and cease skulking in the shadows of the grand rebellion that had overtaken the Imperium. Thramas and the strange madness it had inflicted upon the Primarch were abandoned, his attempts to thwart fate set aside as he lay wounded, and the ragged remnants of the Night Lords fleet assembled to depart the Eastern Fringe and return to the heart of the war in the Segmentum Solar. The Night Lords would be free of the Nostramo sector, the burden of guilt for their home world's destruction and the enforcement of the Night Haunter's failed regime. They would fight once more as a true Legion, wild conquerors and not bored wardens, and the fury of open battle would cleanse them of the taint that had taken hold of the Legion. This was Sevatar's final plan and the resolve of those that had aligned themselves with him, to free both Legion and Primarch from the slow degeneration that plagued them.

Yet it was not to be. Even as the surviving ships of the Night Lords gathered, their commanders convinced by the power of Sevatar's arguments or by the blades of his allies to join their warriors to this new plan, the two nemeses that had plagued them since their arrival in Thramas intervened once more. The Dark Angels were the first, an incarnation of the Emperor's wrath given terrible form and power that could not be matched in open battle. The black ships of their fleet poured forth from the Warp, the blasts of their weapons a penance for the hubris of the Night Lords and the sins they had committed, cutting a path through the remnants of the Night Haunter's fleet. This alone could not have ended the Night Lords' hopes of salvation, the Lion and his sons could wound them, wound them gravely, but not kill them before they could escape and begin the path back to glory. It would be the second nemesis, by far the most deadly of the two, that would seal their fate, a threat that they could never truly be free of. Even as the ships of the Night Lords fleet closed on the pre-set warp translation point that would take them to Horus' side, the Night Haunter stirred from his torpor.

Unable to ignore the orders of their gene-father and unwilling to abandon him to the mercies of the Loyalists, many among the Legion joined a last suicidal assault into the teeth of the Dark Angels. Perhaps a last attempt by the Night Haunter to find death at the hands of his brother and avoid the dire fate he foresaw, or nothing more than a last spiteful dart thrown at his enemies, the attack had no chance of stopping or delaying the Dark Angels. Instead, it sundered what little of the Night Lords that had survived. Those that managed to fight free of the battle disappeared into the Warp almost at random, scattered across the galaxy and unable to reform the Legion as it once was, while those who turned back to fight at the bidding of their cursed master were all but annihilated.

All of the death that had been wrought to restore the Night Lords, all of the hardships that had been endured by its warriors, had been in vain, thwarted by the actions of the Night Haunter. They had become a poison spread across the Imperium, sowing chaos and death wherever the scattered warbands had been deposited. It was the next stage of Konrad Curze's nightmares given form at last, but one step away from the oblivion of eternal damnation that awaited them, but one step away from the Night Haunter's death at the order of his father in a future he had hoped never to see. The last bitter sting of the lash, the last howl of despair that haunted Konrad Curze as he went into exile trapped aboard the Dark Angels flagship was the knowledge that it was he himself that had brought the curse to fruition. Here would be the end of Konrad Curze, the last remnants of the Emperor's troubled son subsumed by the darkness that had come to control him. All that would remain was the Night Haunter and death.





Legio Victorum

Title: The Legio Victorum Ordo Titanica

Militaris Grade: Primus (Legio I & II), Tertius (Legio III)

Patent: Pre-Unification, primary title held by Legio Victorum I of Galatia, with cadet titles held by the Legio of Phall and Thule.

Warden Domain(s): Triplex (Forge Worlds of Galatia, Phall and Thule), numerous lesser holdings.

Cognomen: Foe Slayers (Legio I), Foe Hammers (Legio II) & Foe Breakers (Legio III)

Allied War Houses: Shan Mor, Attakarna, Beophane

Allegiance: Fidelitas Scindo

Once, the Legio Victorum was counted amongst the largest and most powerful of the many Titan Legions to be found within the Imperium. It consisted not of a single body, but of three linked Legios set within the Triplex system where three separate Forge Worlds provided for its arms and support. Each of these three shards of the Legio Victorum forged a legacy of its own, first as a brotherhood at the birth of the Imperium and then as rivals in the final days of the Great Crusade. That rivalry would be their undoing and, in the Age of Darkness that sat at the Horus Heresy's heart, the Legio Victorum would tear itself apart, to survive only as a single broken fragment of a once-proud Titan Legion.

The Legio's origins lie in the long dark years of the Age of Strife – the first Legio Victorum built for its parent forge a petty empire by the strength of its guns, subjugating those isolated pockets of humanity it came across and annihilating the xenos marauders that infested that far region of space. It earned the epithet '*Foe Slayers*' by the count of the dead left in its wake, for Galatia and its new-born domain lay at the very edge of the galaxy where the enemies of Mankind were beyond count and each passing day of its existence was bought in the blood of the victors and the foe's dead. In those grim years the first Legio Victorum became a master of defensive engagements, the unbroken wall that protected the empire of Galatia and kept the flow of resources to the forges steady. Years passed and Galatia grew rich and bloated, one forge became two and then three as Phall and Thule were founded, and the Legio Victorum, its ranks swelled with new war engines, split as well. The Legio Victorum II stood sentinel over Phall, formed of the most veteran of the old Titan Legion's princeps and built around the Apocalypse class Titan *Apex Maxis*, while the Legio Victorum III warded Thule, its ranks filled by the most orthodox and militant of the tech-adepts of Triplex.

Galatia stood unchallenged as the prime power of the Triplex system, and the Legio Victorum I the greatest military force in the Eastern Fringe. Those nearby worlds that could still be reached through the turbulent aetheric seas of the Eastern Fringe were unable to rival its influence, for Gulgorahd's Titans lacked the numbers of the Legio Victorum and Thramas had not the firepower to contend with such omnipotent war machines as the mighty engines of the Mechanicum. This dominance lasted until the arrival of the Great Crusade, for such was the vast size and power of the armada that came to the Eastern Fringe that, for the first time, the Legio Victorum was humbled. It was but one among many legions of Titans bound to hundreds of Forge Worlds, no longer unchallenged in its power or limitless in its reach. Not only that, but with access to the wider Imperium also came the subtle division of the three Forge Worlds of Triplex, with Galatia no longer the only arbiter of their future.

The Legio Victorum II would bind its fate to that of the Warmaster and the Imperium as part of the Great Crusade, taking its strength to the distant stars in the name of the Emperor. There it would perfect the skills of planetary assault and the deployment of overwhelming firepower, a tactic it favoured above all others and one for which it was well-suited. Outfitted by the wealth of Triplex and the spoils of the Great Crusade, the Foe Hammers was composed almost entirely of Battle Titans, with the Nemesis-Warbringer being held in particular favour by its princeps for its ability as a siege Titan. When it took to the field it was a phalanx of steel and cannon, with little pretence at any subtlety or finesse in its assault but only a rolling wall of explosions and death. The Warmaster called upon it only when a foe was to be utterly destroyed, their cities reduced to ashes and armies scattered, and for a time it held a rivalry with the Legio Mortis, who were also a tool he favoured for such brutal work. Yet, the Legio Victorum, though it relished the glory of battle, could not match the vicious spite with which the princeps of the Legio Mortis made war. For where the Death's Heads fought for the simple joy of slaughter, counting victory only in the corpses crushed beneath its armoured feet, the Foe Hammers saw battle as a means to gain renown and accolades, a dirty task to be resolved with haste and a finality that brooked no caution in its prosecution. Each battle was another means for it to erase the memory of those years when it had been little more than servants of Galatia and the Legio Victorum I, a weakness that Horus used to bind it closely to his service. By means of victory parades and lavish praise he bound the Foe Hammers to him, the *Apex Maxis* a common sight among his vanguard.

By contrast Legio Victorum I, the Foe Slayers, who had once carved an empire from the wild space about Triplex, remained in the Eastern Fringe. Distant Mars was keen to keep it from the riches of the Great Crusade and maintain its position as chief among the Forge Worlds of the Imperium, working in the Imperial Court to keep the majority of the Legio Victorum absent from the vast war that was being fought to establish a new galactic empire. The Foe Slayers would spend the latter years of the Great Crusade as a purely defensive force, fighting to suppress the sporadic raids of xenos swarms and futile rebellions among those worlds that resented the Imperium's control. Ironically, the Foe Slayers would become expert at operating in urban environments without causing ruinous collateral damage, mastering a restraint that had been alien to it in its early years when it had run rampant across the stars. Its hallmark was the employment of headhunting tactics, identifying and destroying the leaders of any foe that the remainder might quit the field and leave the battlefield intact. As such its moderati were among the foremost experts in target tracking and identification, and fearsome marksmen with volcano cannon and photon lances. Yet, with the sporadic nature of its engagements, much unlike the constant warfare endured by the Foe Hammers at Horus' side, the Foe Slayers lacked in the tight discipline of its cousins. It was common amongst the Titan Legion for its princeps to feud and intrigue amongst themselves, most often seeking the most beneficial postings and most prestigious Titans to command, and in addition to their skills at war, many were accomplished duellists with pistol and sabre. Despite this slow descent into decadence, the Titan Legion and the Forge World that maintained it held a reputation as stalwart supporters of the Imperium, a front they worked hard to promulgate as Galatia schemed for its return to glory.

The oft-forgotten Legio Victorum III languished in obscurity for much of these last years of optimism and conquest. It was barred from the ranks of the Great Crusade by the schemes of both Mars, which considered it a lackey of Galatia, and Galatia itself which feared the rise of another rival like Phall. Lacking the numbers of its cousin Legio and the holdings and wealth of the other two Forge Worlds, the Foe Breakers saw action as dedicated raiders and recon-in-force experts, spearheading the attempts of Thule to hinder the operations of its many rivals and to claim new territory in the wild space beyond the Imperium's borders. In the dark void the Legio Victorum III

operated alone and without support, for it was no official Expeditionary fleet of the Great Crusade, and the princeps of its light scout Titans learned by necessity the brutal tactics of infantry suppression, while the few Reavers and Warlords in its ranks were forced to operate against enemy Titan-class war engines without the advantage of numbers. Common practise amongst the Foe Breakers was for the larger Reavers to lure enemy war engines into disadvantageous ground where packs of Warhound-class machines could ambush and harry them. From these arduous conflicts a few princeps earned a reputation for the grim determination they displayed in combat, the Reaver-class *Somnus Eterna* proving the most enduring of these legends after standing its ground against three Eldar Titan-class engines for 19 long minutes before the arrival of reinforcements. By the time seven Warhounds of the Legio struck the rear of the enemy formation, the *Somnus Eterna* had been reduced to a shambling ruin with a single operable weapon arm, but it continued to fight until the last enemy machine was pulled down.

It was a legend that would see a tragic repeat only a few years later. For, after its return from the Great Crusade at the command of Horus Lupercal, the Legio Victorum II would bring a new strife to Thule, landing nearly its full strength to pacify that fiercely Loyalist outpost and prove its loyalty to the approaching Night Lords. Once again the *Somnus Eterna* met an enemy superior in numbers, holding the primary gate of the Thulian forge-fanes alone against a maniple of the Foe Hammers' finest. After 19 minutes it had once again been reduced to a shattered hulk, but this time no allies were to come to its aid for it had bought precious time for the fleet Warhounds to disperse across the world of Thule where they would continue a bitter and prolonged resistance for several weeks more. Brought to the end of its endurance, the *Somnus Eterna* caught the Foe Hammer Warlord-class Titan *Glory of Phall* in a final embrace before detonating its atomantic core and destroying both Titans. It was upon the wreck of the *Somnus Eterna* that the last ragged survivors of the Legio Victorum III would pledge their loyalty to the Lion when the Dark Angels liberated the system of Triplex, though fewer than nine Titans of the lightest classes had managed to shelter in the harsh wilderness of Thule to see their salvation. These veterans would act as the Lion's proxies in control of those elements of the Legio Victorum II that had surrendered to the Dark Angels and took a savage delight in ordering them into the harshest of battles. By order of the Lion, the great *Apex Maxis* was given over to the Foe Breakers, who renamed it the *Somnus Perpetua* and incorporated the salvaged neural core of the fallen Reaver into its chassis.

Material Strength

Taken collectively, the Legio Victorum would be recorded as one of the largest Titan Legions in the Imperium by the waning years of the Great Crusade, with almost 200 engines of varying classes in its order of battle. However, the Legio was far from a unified whole, and individually its various branches varied widely in their capabilities and arsenals. By far the most powerful was the Legio Victorum II, the Foe Hammers, whose long service during the Great Crusade had brought with it the spoils of a galaxy and the favour of the Warmaster himself. In total, the Legio Victorum II could field perhaps a little more than a hundred Titans, most of the Warlord class and a few of the far rarer Apocalypse class Titans, and their princeps held by far the most battle honours and kill-markers.

By contrast, the Legio Victorum I had control of only a slightly lesser count of war machines, mostly Warlord and Warbringer class engines, but its warriors could not match the veterans of the Foe Hammers in experience. Confined to the marches of the Triplex Sector, the Foe Slayers had been limited to defensive operations in protection of Galatia's numerous fiefdoms and outposts, and though far from inexperienced, it had not witnessed the crucible of the Great Crusade as had the Legio Victorum II.

The Legio Victorum III lacked the numbers of either of the larger Titan Legions, mustering less than half the total war engines of either of its two siblings, and these were mostly lighter, faster machines of the Reaver and Warhound classes. However, the Foe Breakers had long been experts at sudden raids and hit and run warfare, their few princeps skilled at making the most of the capabilities of their war machines. In terms of transport craft and the vast drop-vaults required to deploy war machines of the sheer size of a Titan into battle, the Legio Victorum II maintained a large and well-equipped fleet as befitted its role in the Great Crusade, while the lesser Titan Legion of Victorum III held claim to only a small number of such craft and as such was far less strategically mobile.

The Legio Victorum III would be destroyed prior to the start of the Thramas Crusade, set upon by the massed forces of the Legio Victorum II which had returned from the Great Crusade with Horus' blessing to prepare Triplex for the coming war. Overmatched and outnumbered, the Foe Breakers were all but annihilated in a battle of such bitter fury that the victors captured none of the defending war engines intact, each of the Foe Breakers' princeps fighting on so long as one of their weapons still drew power. In at least one occurrence recorded by the augur logs of a Foe Slayers Titan, a Foe Breakers Warhound, reduced to little more than a shambling ruin by volcano cannon fire, continued to fight by ramming enemy Titans to hold them in place for artillery bombardments to topple them. Only three maniples of the Foe Breakers are known to have survived, these being stationed on isolated posts across the sector, including a single group on the distant world of Thramas.

The Legio Victorum II would suffer a similar fate not long after when the Dark Angels assaulted Triplex. As a fighting force it would largely cease to exist, with a few engines taken as spoils by the First Legion and scattered maniples stranded in garrison posts across the Triplex Sector. These last few outcast princeps would either die at their posts in doomed last stands or join one of the other renegade Legios operating within the Eastern Fringe, and in time would be absorbed into those hosts. The Legio Victorum I suffered a less total loss, losing perhaps a third in combat with the Dark Angels and surrendering the bulk of the survivors to the Loyalists after the destruction of Galatia. While several demi-Legio forces stationed outside of Triplex remained at large and fought for the Traitors for the rest of the campaign, the bulk of the Foe Hammers was attached to the Dark Angels fleet and made war at the Lion's orders, their pledge given in exchange for Phall's safety.

In the wake of Thramas, the Foe Breakers would stay with the Dark Angels, fighting at the forefront of the First Legion's later battles to atone for the sins of their home world. In the last years of the Great Crusade, the few Titans of the extant Legio Victorum fighting for the Loyalist cause would be consolidated into a single Legio, bearing the heraldry of the now defunct Legio Victorum I, but the epithet of the Legio Victorum II. These reborn Foe Slayers would take to their new loyalty with a vicious determination, hunting down and slaughtering those of their Legio that had fallen into chaos and madness.



Legio Victorum I Warbringer Nemesis Titan

Sagax Lanio

The *Sagax Lanio* was one of a number of the Legio Victorum I's Battle Titans that was not present in Triplex during the Dark Angels' onslaught, instead seconded to the Night Lords' elements engaged in the Siege of Thramas. It remained as part of the Traitors' order of battle for the remainder of the Thramas Crusade, fighting with bitter fury against those of its own Legio that had turned their colours to fight at the behest of the Lion, and eventually followed the Night Lords into exile at the end of the crusade. The last known sighting of the *Sagax Lanio* would be at the walls of the Imperial Palace on Terra, though it appeared to have undergone some malign transformation during its exile, little resembling the clean lines and proud heraldry of its former glory days when it fought under the banner of the Emperor.



The Thramas Campaign

The Thramas Campaign

Campaign Overview

The campaign presented over the following section allows players to recreate the battles of the Thramas Crusade through a series of games of The Horus Heresy: Age of Darkness, with one side representing those who were dispatched to secure the Eastern Fringe for the Warmaster, and the other side representing those who still swear their loyalty to the Emperor of Mankind. While not intended to exhaustively chart the exact course of the historical Thramas Crusade and the many hundreds of battles that it was composed of, this campaign will allow players to embody its essence in a more compact form.

The campaign is won by gathering Spoils in the name of either the Emperor or the Warmaster, with the side that gathers the most by its end being the winner. Spoils are won by winning individual games of The Horus Heresy: Age of Darkness, but these games will also generate Ruin and Fealty points. Fealty charts the attitude of the people of the Eastern Fringe to the two factions and grants the side with the higher total an advantage during play. Ruin notes how much destruction has been wrought upon the Eastern Fringe – once the total Ruin accrued by all players has reached a level set at the beginning of the campaign then the campaign will end, the Eastern Fringe being reduced to literal ruin, and the faction with the greatest total of Spoils will be the winner. The campaign itself is broken into Campaign Turns in order to allow the scores of each faction to be updated and for players to attempt to sway the course of the war by means of Grand Stratagems and individual battles by means of Tactical Advantages, each represented by a selection of optional rules.

To play this campaign, you need at least two players with armies taken from the various The Horus Heresy: Age of Darkness army lists, but there is no upward limit as to how many players can take part in this campaign. The campaign presented in this section can easily be adapted for multiple players, and is intentionally presented in a format to suit a widespread campaign involving a large number of players which can be played over the course of a weekend or, if players so wish, can be extended to run over a period of their choosing. The players taking part in the campaign should be organised into two separate sides: one Loyalist and one Traitor, though these sides need not match the historical forces of the crusade. Generally, you should aim for an equal number of players on each side as it will be easier to arrange games, but if this cannot be achieved, it simply means that some players may have to play more games during the course of the campaign. It is worth noting that campaigns involving more players will require a greater amount of terrain, gaming space and player dedication to bring the campaign to a satisfactory conclusion.

Regardless of the number of players involved, it is best if one person act as referee and organiser as well than as a player, to impartially record results between sessions. Though, if the number of players is very large, it may be best if the referee foregoes the chance to play in order to make sure that the larger number of games progress smoothly.

The Armies

In each Campaign Turn, players will play games of The Horus Heresy: Age of Darkness using armies drawn from the most recent versions of The Horus Heresy: Age of Darkness army lists. Ideally, these should reflect the forces present in Thramas during the crusade, such as the Night Lords, Dark Angels, Solar Auxilia, Mechanicum, etc. However, it is not required that the players follow the historical path so closely, if the players wish then forces of any faction may be used on either side of the campaign, and while this will differ from the events depicted elsewhere in this book, it will not lessen the enjoyment of the campaign. Indeed, if it is wished then armies used in individual games can be limited as desired by the players, though it is recommended that at the start of the campaign a single points limit is decided that will be used for all games played during the campaign.

The Currency of Victory

The Thramas Campaign depends upon the ability of players to gather three key resources. These resources are Spoils, Fealty and Ruin, all of which begin the campaign with a score of 0.

Spoils

Spoils decide the victor in the campaign. Both factions keep a separate total of the Spoils points acquired by their players. Whenever a game is played, both players receive Spoils points equal to the number of Victory points they have scored during the course of the game, regardless of whether they won or lost. These points are added to their faction's total at the end of the Campaign Turn.

Fealty

Fealty shows the opinion of the Eastern Fringe, whether it favours the Loyalist or Traitors, and grants benefits to the side it favours. Like Spoils, each faction tracks a total of all the Fealty points it has received over the course of the campaign. At the start of each campaign turn, the Faction with the highest total of Fealty points is considered to be in control of the Fealty of the Eastern Fringe and has the momentum of war behind them. As such, players whose faction has the higher Fealty total may always choose whether to deploy first or second in any game instead of rolling off against their opponent, though rolls to Seize the Initiative may still be made.

Whenever a game is played, the winner adds 1 point to their faction's Fealty score at the end of the Campaign Turn – a game that ends in a draw adds no points to Fealty. The loser does not gain any Fealty points.

Ruin

Ruin decides the length of the campaign. Unlike Spoils and Fealty, there is only a single total of Ruin used by both factions. Whenever a game is played, the Ruin total is increased by the sum of the Victory points scored by both players at the end of the Campaign Turn. For example, if a campaign game is played and both players score 4 Victory points each, then 8 points would be added to the Ruin total. If the Ruin total ever reaches a score more than the limit set at the start of the campaign then the campaign finishes at the end of that Campaign Turn and the victor is decided.



By default it is assumed that this points limit is 3,000 points, meaning that when called upon to play a game, both players will assemble an army to that points limit. Should the players wish to use a different points total then this will not affect the overall campaign, but should be agreed by all involved beforehand and communicated to every player before the beginning of the campaign. Players are not required to use the same army for every game played, but in the name of good sportsmanship should provide their opponent with the chance to see the army list they will be using once the game has begun. A number of optional rules are presented later in this section that allow for escalating or varied points limits, players seeking a more complicated or advanced challenge may choose to use these rules in addition to the basic structure presented here.

The missions in the campaign will refer to one side as the Loyalists, and the other the Traitors. In historical terms, the forces of the Dark Angels would be the Loyalists, with the Night Lords and their allied forces the Traitors. However, this should not stop you playing otherwise if you so wish. Before the campaign begins, you should decide which side each player will represent for the rest of the campaign. Players switching sides during the campaign should only be undertaken as required to balance sides or to account for other unforeseen circumstances, and should be done with the agreement of all involved.

Historia Terra Regnum

Unique Characters in the Thramas Campaign

The events of this campaign take place over the duration of the Thramas Crusade, a series of confrontations in which a number of notable warriors took part, each more than capable of turning the tide of battle alone. However, even these estimable fighters could not be everywhere at once, with the choice of where they fought often being the deciding factor in the course of the campaign. To represent this factor, it is recommended that in any given Campaign Turn any Unique character models be allowed to participate in only a single game. This will require some amount of co-ordination in larger campaigns, but will provide a greater sense of realism during the course of the campaign. In campaigns that are not following the historical order of battle, especially those with Legions or other factions present on both sides of the campaign or in unorthodox allegiances, it may be beneficial to decide at the start of the campaign which Unique characters may be used by which side so as to avoid confusion.

Players may also wish to consult the rules for Injuries and Unique characters presented as part of the optional rules section so to further augment their campaigns. While this adds a small amount of additional book-keeping, the extra sense of risk to the deployment of noted characters brings a sense of drama that is well worth the effort.

Campaign Duration

The campaign's duration is fixed by the Ruin Limit which when reached ends the campaign, and is set at the beginning of the campaign. This is intended to represent the destruction wrought upon the Eastern Fringe by the armies that make war in an effort to secure it for their patrons, a limit to the death that can be sustained by Thramas and its neighbours before it becomes exhausted and worthless. While this can make the number of games played somewhat unpredictable, it does help to reproduce the air of uncertainty and dread that consumed the worlds of the Eastern Fringe as the Legiones Astartes tore them apart in the search for victory. The players can determine a general length for their campaign by selecting an appropriate Ruin Limit level based on the length of campaign desired and the number of players involved. In order to aid in this decision, a table of recommended values is presented as follows:

Once a Ruin Limit is determined, the campaign is played in a series of Campaign Turns. During each Campaign Turn every player should play a single game, though if the sides are uneven then one or more players may need to play a second game in order to provide enough opponents for every player. If this is required then it is recommended that the duty of serving as the additional opponent is rotated between players and overseen by the referee.

Once each player has had a chance to play at least one game then the Campaign Turn concludes and Spoils, Fealty and Ruin totals are updated. If the current Ruin total is less than or equal to the preset Ruin Limit then another Campaign Turn is played, if the Ruin total is greater than the preset Ruin Limit then the campaign is over and the faction with the highest Spoils total is the victor. If Spoils totals are tied then the highest Fealty total decides the victor.

Short Campaigns
30 Ruin Limit, allowing for between 3-4 Campaign Turns
Add +20 Ruin points for each additional pair of players

Medium Campaigns
50 Ruin Limit, allowing for between 5-6 Campaign Turns
Add +35 Ruin points for each additional pair of players

Long Campaigns
80 Ruin Limit, allowing for between 8-10 Campaign Turns
Add +40 Ruin points for each additional pair of players

Historia Vera Regnes

Designer's Note

This campaign is based on events described in this volume of The Horus Heresy: Age of Darkness books as well as those in Black Library's The Horus Heresy series of novels. Despite the Thramas Crusade being a crucial event in the Horus Heresy narrative, it does not determine who is victorious, who is defeated and who dies in the battles you fight. The outcome of your campaign could also easily serve as inspiration for further campaigns. *The Horus Heresy Book Four – Conquest* provides some excellent ways for taking your campaign further, as the rules for Unique Characters and Warzones would be ideal for building upon the fallout from your campaign.

Players who wish to adapt this campaign to play over a given period of time should set their own maximum Ruin and number of games to play per Campaign Turn. A good maximum duration to set for your campaign is roughly equal to the time that you think it will take to play through a phase which you believe you can comfortably manage. In this case, each Campaign Turn may last until an agreed number of games has been played or an agreed amount of time has passed. Once either of these conditions has been met, the Campaign Turn ends, Spoils, Ruin and Fealty points are totalled up and the results are determined. The following Campaign Turn then begins. Depending on your group's preferences, you may set the Campaign Turn duration to be as long or as short as you like. Having a time limit keeps the campaign moving forwards, which can help keep players motivated and interested.



Campaign Rules

What follows is a breakdown of the rules required to organise and run your own Thramas Campaign, and is intended for easy reference both before and during such an event.

Setting up the Campaign

Before beginning play, complete all of the following tasks:

First a Ruin Limit must be set for the campaign. This will decide the overall length of the campaign and should be agreeable to all of the participating players. Advice on appropriate Ruin Limits can be found in the campaign overview.

Next, a Points Limit should be set for the campaign. This will determine how many points each player has to assemble armies when called upon to play a game of The Horus Heresy: Age of Darkness as part of the campaign. Again, this limit should be agreed by all players participating in the campaign before it is finalised.

Players may also wish to decide whether any of the optional rules presented later in this section will be utilised during the campaign, and if so in what form. If any optional rules are to be used then all of the players participating should be made aware of exactly which rules will be included and how they will be used before the campaign begins.

Once both Ruin and Points Limits are set and any optional rules are decided upon, all the participating players should be organised into two separate factions. These are Loyalists and Traitors, and they will only play games against players from the other faction over the course of the campaign. The players may be divided based upon their preferred Legions or by simple preference, however, the two factions should be equal in number or as close to equal as is possible.

The final step is to nominate one player from each faction to act as referee for that faction. These referees will be responsible for keeping track of Spoils, Ruin and Fealty points for their faction, as well as recording games won and lost. Note that if any optional rules are in use then additional book-keeping may be required. While it is possible to have these tasks undertaken communally by all players, or even by a single referee for both sides, in any but the very smallest of campaigns it is far easier to split the work in the name of efficiency.

Once these steps are all complete, the campaign can begin. Note that at the start of the campaign both sides will have zero Spoils, zero Fealty and the combined Ruin total will be zero.

Campaign Set-up Checklist

- Set a Ruin Limit to determine campaign length
- Set a Points Limit to determine the size of armies to be used in all games
- Divide players into two factions: Loyalist and Traitor
- Nominate referees

Playing the Campaign

The Thramas Campaign is divided into a number of Campaign Turns, conducted in sequence until the campaign ends. During each Campaign Turn, each of the participating players should play at least one game of The Horus Heresy: Age of Darkness against any player from the opposing faction. If the two factions are not composed of equal numbers then one or more players on the smaller faction will need to play more than one game – the players undertaking additional games should be determined on a volunteer basis or be nominated by the faction's referee as needed.

Games are arranged and played as normal, with armies selected from any army list of the player's choice up to the previously agreed Points Limit. Missions can either be selected at random from the Age of Darkness Mission table (see page 140 of the *The Horus Heresy: Age of Darkness rulebook*) or decided by the agreement of both players. Once each game is concluded, the result of the game, which player won or lost and the Victory points scored by each player, should be reported to the referees.

Once all of the games are completed, each of the participating players having played at least one game, the referees should amend the resources scores, Spoils, Fealty and the combined Ruin total as noted below:

Spoils – The total of all Victory points scored by players of a faction are added to its Spoils total regardless of whether the game was won or lost.

Fealty – If the game was won by a player of that faction then their Victory points score is added to the faction's Fealty total.

Ruin – The total Victory points scored that Campaign Turn by every participating player is added to the single Ruin total.

Campaign Turn Checklist

- Each player should play one game against a member of the opposing faction
- Report the game result and Victory points scored to the referees
- Adjust resource totals

Ending the Campaign

The campaign will end once the Ruin Limit is reached. At the end of each campaign turn, once all games have been resolved and the various resource totals have been amended based on the results of those games, compare the current Ruin total to the Ruin Limit. If the total is equal to or lower than the Ruin Limit, begin a new Campaign Turn. If the Ruin total is higher than the Ruin Limit then the campaign ends immediately.

Once the campaign has ended, the winning faction is the one whose Spoils total is highest. If the Spoils totals are tied then the Fealty total is used as a tie-breaker. If both sides have the same Spoils and Fealty totals then a single game should be played to determine the result of the campaign.



Optional Rules

The following is a selection of optional rules that can be used to add extra complexity and additional options to the basic campaign structure. The Grand Stratagems, Tactical Advantage and Devastation Missions rules are highly recommended for any but the most brief of campaigns, as they add significantly to the flavour of the campaign. The other options should be considered appropriate for longer or more considered campaigns.

All of the rules presented here are independent of each other, though they complement each other in use, and players are free to decide exactly which should be used in their campaigns. Be aware that adding any of these rules will likely increase the amount of time required to resolve Campaign Turns and the amount of work required of campaign referees.

Grand Stratagems

This optional rule is available for groups that want to add an element of strategic uncertainty to their games and don't mind some additional book-keeping. It will allow groups to replicate the grand plans that the warlords of the Horus Heresy put into motion and the precarious nature of those plans in the face of enemy action.

When this optional rule is in use, any side may choose to enact one of the following Grand Stratagems at the start of any Campaign Turn. They should keep this decision secret from enemy players, but inform the referees of their choices. Each of the Grand Stratagems offers the chance to gamble some of a side's accrued Spoils points in order to win a larger amount by achieving a set objective over the course of a single Campaign Turn.

In order to use a Grand Stratagem, inform the referee for your faction of the number of Spoils points that are to be expended – this can be any number of points from the faction's Spoils total, but may not leave the faction's current Spoils total at less than 1. If the chosen Grand Stratagem's objective is achieved then that faction receives twice the number of Spoils points it expended at the start of the Campaign Turn. If the objective is failed then all the points expended at the start of the Campaign Turn are lost.

The available Grand Stratagems are as follows:

The Serpent's Head

A focus on the elimination of the enemy's command structure can be key to the overall victory of the campaign. For as their ability to lead is eroded, their armies fall into panic and disorder, allowing the easy seizure of key territory and resources as they struggle to regroup.

Goal: In every game played this Campaign Turn, destroy the enemy Warlord before the end of the game.

Reward: For every Spoils point invested at the start of the Campaign Turn, gain 2 points back (e.g., so, if 5 points were invested get 10 back).

Hold the Line

Sometimes the key to victory is the preservation of your key forces, retaining the manpower to properly hold claimed territory. For a quick victory with crippling losses gains you nothing at a strategic level.

Goal: In every game played this Campaign Turn have at least one friendly Compulsory Troops choice still in play (not in Reserve) at the end of the game.

Reward: For every Spoils point invested at the start of the Campaign Turn, gain 2 points back (e.g., so, if 5 points were invested get 10 back).

Tip of the Spear

A single well-timed strike can break the back of the greatest armies, and a single breakthrough in well-established defensive lines can see the fall of entire sectors if properly followed up.

Goal: When this Grand Stratagem is selected, pick a single player that is part of the faction that selected the Grand Stratagem. That player must not lose the game they play in that Campaign Turn. This Grand Stratagem is only available in campaigns with more than one player in each faction.

Reward: For every Spoils point invested at the start of the Campaign Turn, gain 2 points back (e.g., so, if 5 points were invested get 10 back).

Tactical Advantages

This optional rule allows players to attempt to influence the use of the three resource pools to outmanoeuvre their opponent and either take advantage of their superiority or stage a dramatic comeback from near defeat.

When this optional rule is in use, players may choose to expend points from their Fealty total in order to apply one of the following effects to that game. To use a Tactical Advantage, declare to your opponent which Tactical Advantage you wish to use before the mission is decided. Reduce the Fealty total by the number of points stated on the chosen Tactical Advantage, though this may not reduce the Fealty total to less than 1, and play the remainder of the game as normal.

Only a single Advantage may be applied to any one game by any player, but a faction may apply an Advantage to as many games per Campaign Turn as they wish and can afford to. If both sides wish to use a Tactical Advantage such as Good Ground, which cannot be used by both players, then both factions may purchase it but must roll off to see which of them gains the effects.

Reserve Corps (Cost: 2 Fealty Points)

Your allies dispatch troops to advance in the wake of your assault, secure captured ground and minimise collateral damage.

When this Tactical Advantage is applied to a game, the player that has used it does not add their Victory points to the amount of Ruin caused by the game.

Scorched Earth (Cost: 2 Fealty Points)

Your troops are instructed to burn and pillage everything they can find, without regard for the harm this does to those worlds allied to your cause.

When this Tactical Advantage is applied to a game, the player that has used it adds twice their Victory points to the Ruin caused by the game.

Endless Zeal (Cost: 5 Fealty Points)

Properly motivated troops, whether the lash be fear or pride, will never accept the dominance of the foe on any field of battle.

When this Tactical Advantage is applied to a game, the player that used it succeeds at any Seize the Initiative checks made on a 2+.

Tactical Reserves (Cost: 3 Fealty Points)
Well-constructed plans, fulsome preparation or simply intuition in the direction of troops and resources can foil the assault of even a superior foe.

When this Tactical Advantage is applied to a game, the player that used it adds +1 to all Reserve rolls made during the game.

Good Ground (Cost: 4 Fealty Points)
In war it is the disposition of troops as much as the skill of warriors that wins battles. A skilled general will always fight on ground of their own choosing.

When this Tactical Advantage is applied to a game, the player that used it may decide to change the established deployment zones in any Age of Darkness or Devastation mission. They may select any new deployment zone from the table presented on page 141 of *The Horus Heresy: Age of Darkness rulebook*. Note that the players still use the mission rules to select one of the available deployment zones from the option selected by the player that used this Advantage.

Warlord and Famed Character Casualties

The fate of heroic warlords, as well as famed and infamous characters, is a key part of the struggle and epic scale of the Horus Heresy, and such influential figures cannot be simply expended as resources – for no force can expect to succeed in battle without their greatest warriors.

If a player's Warlord and/or any unique named characters* in play are removed as a casualty during a campaign game (including falling back off the table, etc), the player must roll a D6 for each character at the end of the game. The results as shown in the Warlord and Famed Characters Fatality table that follows apply to the remainder of the player's games in the campaign. If the controlling player was victorious in the game in which the character was removed as a casualty, they may re-roll the result.

**This refers to any characters players have named themselves for use in this campaign as well as any Independent Character that has a unique rules profile in any of The Horus Heresy: Age of Darkness army lists.*

Warlord and Famed Characters Fatality Table

D6	Result
1	**Mortally Wounded:** This character is critically wounded and may not be used again in the campaign. The opposing faction gains +1 Spoils.
2-4	**Shaken:** Your character is shaken by their ill fortune on the battlefield and, in their next game, your character (regardless of who they are) suffers a -1 Leadership penalty for the duration of the campaign. This penalty is not cumulative for multiple results of Shaken.
5+	**Unscathed:** Your character has escaped permanent injury and may be used again in subsequent games without ill effect.

Thramas Escalation

For players looking to replicate the slow and inevitable growth of the war in the Eastern Fringe from a limited border campaign to the cataclysmic war that all but destroyed the border marches, this simple addition can be made to the rules for the Thramas campaign. Instead of a single Points Limit which determines the points that players may use to assemble their armies for every game of the campaign, the Points Limit is determined by the Ruin total – with greater devastation prompting the two sides to commit ever larger forces in an effort to bring the war to a swift close.

In order to use this optional rule, set a maximum Points Limit at the beginning of the campaign – this will be the largest possible army that can be fielded over the course of the campaign. In any given Campaign Turn, only a set fraction of this Points Limit will be available by players to assemble their armies, with that fraction growing as Ruin increases. At the start of each Campaign Turn, consult the following table to determine what fraction of the Points Limit will be available by all players to assemble their armies for that Campaign Turn:

As an example, if the Ruin Limit of a Thramas Campaign is set at 30 and the maximum Points Limit at 3,000 (this being the largest armies available at any point in the campaign) then the Escalation table would look like this:

Current Ruin Limit	Available Points Limit
0-6	750 points
7-18	1,800 points
19+	3,000 points

Using this table would then mean that during any Campaign Turn where at its start the Ruin total was 6 or less, all players would have 750 points available each to assemble armies. Whilst on Campaign Turns with a total of 7-18 Ruin points, players would have 1,800 points available each to assemble their armies with, and so on.

Players can also modify the brackets proposed here to match their own needs or length of campaign using the values shown below as an example upon which to base their own choices or available collections.

Thramas Escalation Points Limits

Percentage of the Ruin Limit Reached	Percentage of the Points Limit Available
<20%	25%
>20%, ≤60%	60%
>60%	100%

All derived values should be rounded up to the nearest whole number as appropriate. With Points Limits, players may also find it more useful to round them up so that the smallest integer used is 50 (for example, 750 instead of 732) for ease of use when assembling armies.



Dark Angels Firewing Operator

Knight-Sergeant Alais Decur

One of the few remaining Gramaryan recruits still with the main force of the Legion as of the late Great Crusade, with most having been reassigned to chantry houses within the Imperium proper or the oft-overlooked fortifications of Gramarye itself, Knight-sergeant Decur was assigned to the Seeker cadre of the 14th Order during the Shield World campaign and accompanied the Primarch's Expeditionary force during the attack on Diamat. The MkVI battleplate was highly favoured by the Firewing for its advanced augur and vox systems, which fit well with the doctrines of the Firewing, whose focus had ever been on the acquisition and use of accurate battlefield intelligence. Most such sets of battleplate in Dark Angels hands had been part of the original prototype shipments, and many had seen either extensive battlefield modification or featured experimental gear not present on later production issue MkVI battle plate. Indeed, many of these modifications would be replicated on standard issue MkVI armour captured from the Night Lords or acquired from Compliant Forge Worlds during the long years of the Thramas Crusade.

The Eastern Fringe

For those groups wanting to add more of the character of the Eastern Fringe's unique warzones to their games, the following rules allow them to select a specific sector for their games to take place in. Each sector will offer certain advantages and disadvantages to games played there, and the players should roll off to see which of them selects the sector to be used for any given game.

The Thramas Sector

The most populous of the sectors of the Eastern Fringe, Thramas was home to many hive worlds and played host to the serried ranks of the Nightwatch, a formidable military force. Its wealth of people made it a prime target for the warring Primarchs as they sought to replenish their ranks.

When playing games in the Thramas sector the terrain deployed onto the table should include at least one Large building (not an area of ruins) for each full 1,000 points of models in use by any given player (so, in a 3,000 point game, there should be at least three Large buildings included amongst the terrain in use).

At the end of games played in the Thramas Sector, after the winner has been decided and recorded, either player may choose to sacrifice any of the Spoils points they have generated in that game to reduce the amount of Ruin they generate. Each Spoils point sacrificed reduces the Ruin generated by -2.

The Triplex Sector

The true prize of the Eastern Fringe, while much of the Triplex sector was barren rocks whose only value was in the minerals at their core, the vast Mechanicum fief of Triplex sat at its heart. This huge industrial powerhouse was capable of outfitting armies and was deemed vital to the plans of both Loyalist and Traitor, being worth any price to acquire.

When playing games in the Triplex sector, it is assumed the armies are attacking Triplex itself or one of its industrialised fief worlds. As such the terrain used for the game should consist entirely of buildings, obstacles of a mechanical nature and areas of ruins to reflect the nature of the vast Forge Worlds being attacked. All buildings and Fortifications present on the table (including those placed as part of a mission's victory conditions) during a game played in the Triplex sector gain the Blessed Autosimulacra special rule (see page 45 of *The Horus Heresy: Legiones Astartes Age of Darkness Legions* book).

Games played in the Triplex sector are pivotal to the course of the fighting in the Eastern Fringe. The winning player gains an additional +2 Spoils points, but adds an additional D6 Ruin points to the campaign total.

The Aegis Sector

The fertile agri-worlds of the Aegis sector were the breadbasket of the Eastern Fringe, the food reaped from their wide open fields feeding the hungry hive cities and Forge Worlds of the nearby sectors. By the end of the war, these fertile worlds were reduced to ruin, firestorms leaving little but ash, while bio-phage munitions poisoned what little remained. Their plunder only fuelled the chaos that took hold of the Eastern Fringe.

With the wide open spaces of its various vast tracts of farmland, be they green plains, volcanic slopes or aeroponic vaults, the battlefields of the Aegis sector should be represented by large areas of open space bordered by clusters of heavy foliage and trees with only sparse buildings. After all terrain has been deployed, but before any players deploy their armies, both players should roll a D6. If the total score is equal to or less than 4 then the battlefield has already been ravaged by war. In this situation, all areas of Difficult terrain become Dangerous terrain (forests smoldering or infested with bio-phage agents and rocks turned to atomic-blasted glass).

One of the more populous sectors of the Eastern Fringe, games played in the Aegis sector grant the winner 2 Fealty points instead of just 1.

The Gulgorahd Protectorate

Gulgorahd remained stubbornly Loyalist throughout the Thramas Crusade, caring not for the destruction wrought upon it by its foes. As one of the most militarised regions of the Eastern Fringe, any assault into its closely-guarded borders would invariably turn into a gruelling test of endurance for the armies involved, with sheer bloody-minded determination meaning more than superior skill.

Within a short space of time, the worlds of the protectorate were reduced to burning ruins. As such, games played in the Gulgorahd Protectorate should feature ruins, debris and other terrain pieces that evoke the total destruction unleashed upon that region. In addition, any games played in the Gulgorahd Protectorate last one turn longer than stated in the mission being played.

Games played in the Gulgorahd Protectorate had less impact on the war for the Eastern Fringe, but also the destruction wrought there meant less to the warlords that fought the war. No player may add more than 4 Spoils points to their total at the end of the game, but the Ruin points added to the Campaign total are halved (add both players' Victory points together and then halve the total).

The Tithe Road

While not a formal sector, the area of space known as the Tithe Road linked the distant Nostramo sector to the Thramas sector. It was valuable only for the stable warp route that ran through it, and was often ignored by the warring hosts as they squabbled over the more valuable sectors that surrounded it.

When playing games on the Tithe Road, the terrain used should reflect the sparse population of those worlds, focusing on barren hills, swamps and scrub vegetation. In any game D3 areas of dangerous terrain should be marked out, representing predatory foliage, razor-sharp volcanic rocks or other natural obstacles. In addition, at the end of each game turn, both players should roll a D6 each. If the result of their scores combined is 4 or less then a sudden storm erupts (this could be a sandstorm, a sudden hail of razor-sharp crystals, or even a ferocious downpour of water). This storm will last for the remainder of the game, and no further dice should be rolled to see if storms break out. While a storm is present, the Night Fighting rules are in effect and at the end of each game turn all units not either embarked on a Transport Vehicle, a Building/Fortification or in Reserve suffer a number of hits equal to the number of models in the unit, with each hit resolved at Str 5, AP -.

Any games played on the Tithe Road only contribute Ruin to the campaign total equal to the Victory points score of the winning player, not both players added together.

Devastation Missions

The following set of missions can be used as part of the Thramas Crusade campaign in order to replicate the brutal and utterly devastating nature of the battles that came to pass as the forces involved sought any means to grasp victory. While these do not directly re-fight specific historical battles, such as the attack on Galatia, they are intended to evoke the same themes as the legendary battles of the Thramas Crusade and allow players to fight their own crusade to save, or damn, the Imperium.

There are two ways to use these missions as part of your Thramas Crusade campaign. They can be added to those missions available to players in any Campaign turn, with players either being allowed to freely select which mission they wish to play or rolling on the modified Mission table shown below: Players can also choose to play these missions outside of an organised campaign. In this case, simply choose a mission to play and generate a deployment map as per the normal procedure.

D6	Mission
1	Confrontation
2	Blood Feud (see page 148 of *The Horus Heresy: Age of Darkness Rulebook*)
3	No Stone upon Stone
4	The Last Bastion
5	The Logic of War
6	Tide of Carnage (see page 152 of *The Horus Heresy: Age of Darkness Rulebook*)

Mission One – The Logic of War

'War is a simple equation, its solution is victory or death.'

The Lords of Gulgorahd, High Magi of the Mechanicum

The Armies

Choose the armies using The Horus Heresy: Age of Darkness rules and Force Organisation charts.

Setting up the Game

- Determine the deployment map.
- Set up terrain for the battlefield.
- Determine Warlord Traits and psychic powers.

Deployment

- Roll off. The winner may choose to deploy first or second.
- The player who deploys first selects their deployment zone and then deploys all Compulsory Troops choices, up to two Fast Attack choices and any Fortifications. All other units must be placed into Reserves.
- The player who deploys second then deploys all Compulsory Troops choices, up to two Fast Attack choices and any Fortifications in the remaining deployment zone. All other units are placed into Reserve.
- Once all models have been deployed, a single objective marker is placed as close to the centre of the table as possible, without the marker being in Impassable terrain or on a Building or Fortification.

First Turn

The player who deployed first also has the first turn, unless their opponent can Seize the Initiative.

Game Length

The game lasts for six turns.

Victory Conditions

This mission's victory conditions are achieved by the capture and control of a point on the field of battle whose value has been decided by distant generals and warlords. This anonymous position on the wide maps of the Eastern Fringe has been deemed worthy of the sacrifice of innumerable lives that a stale victory might be declared many light years distant. At the end of the game, the player with the most Victory points has won the game. If the players have the same number of Victory points, the game ends in a draw.

Primary Objective

Point of Control: At the end of each Player Turn, the player that controls the objective gains a number of Victory points as shown on the table below:

Game Turn	Victory Points
1	3
2-3	2
4+	1

Secondary Objectives

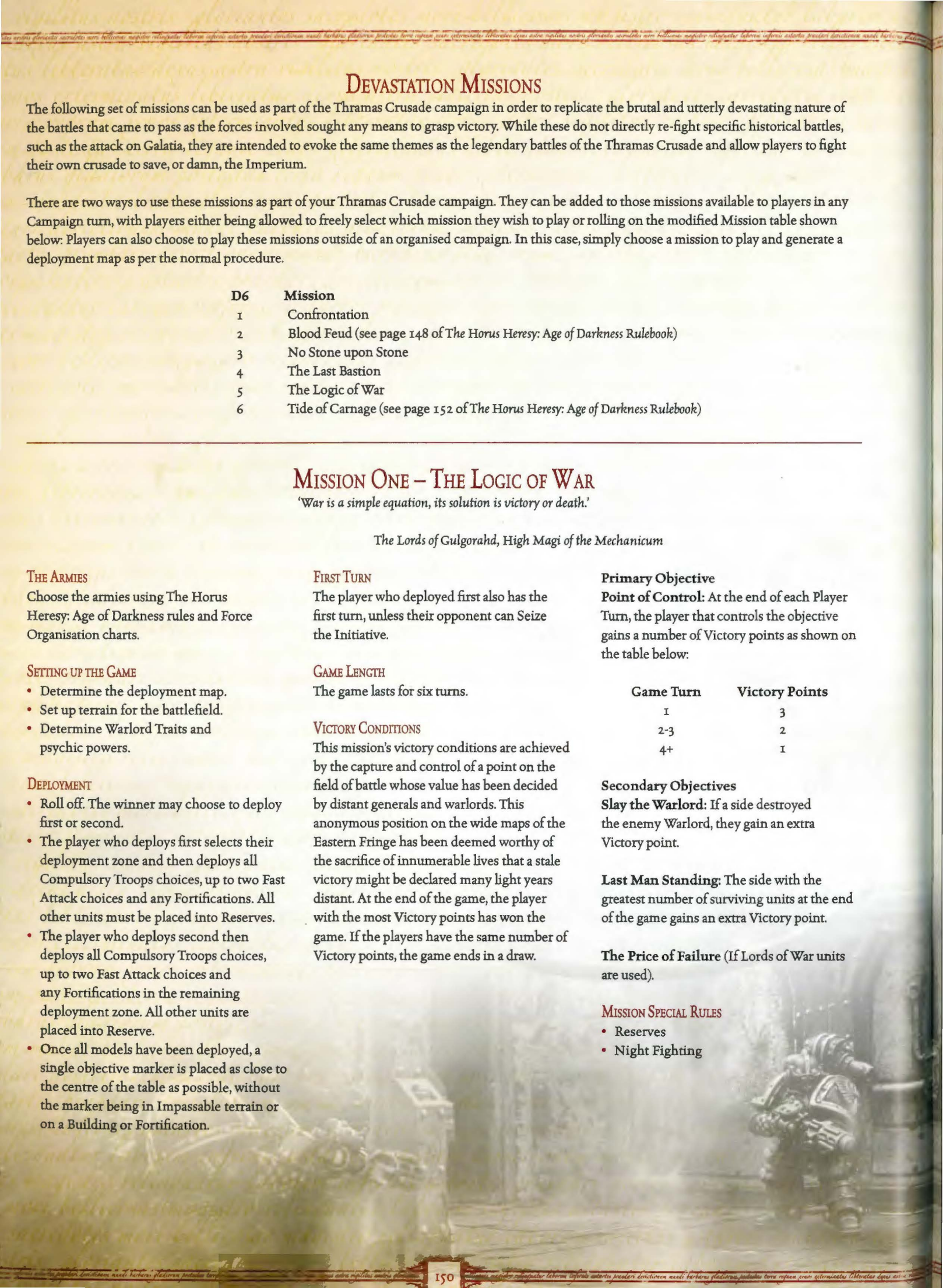
Slay the Warlord: If a side destroyed the enemy Warlord, they gain an extra Victory point.

Last Man Standing: The side with the greatest number of surviving units at the end of the game gains an extra Victory point.

The Price of Failure (If Lords of War units are used).

Mission Special Rules

- Reserves
- Night Fighting



Mission Two – No Stone upon Stone

"To court victory requires sacrifice. Sometimes the sacrifice required is the world entire and all that walk upon it, and those that cannot offer this trophy will be granted only defeat."

Attr. Eskaton Marduk Sedras of the Dreadwing, 011.M31

The Armies

Choose the armies using The Horus Heresy: Age of Darkness rules and Force Organisation charts.

Setting up the Game

- Determine the deployment map.
- Set up terrain for the battlefield.
- Determine Warlord Traits and psychic powers.

Deployment

- Roll off. The winner may choose to deploy first or second.
- The player deploying second must place four buildings onto the playing area, these are Keystone Buildings. Each must be placed at least 12" from any other building and at least 6" away from any board edge.
- The player who deploys first then selects their deployment zone and then deploys their entire force, except for any units placed into Reserve.
- The player who deploys second deploys their entire force into the remaining deployment zone, except for any units placed into Reserve.

First Turn

The player who deployed first also has the first turn, unless their opponent can Seize the Initiative.

Game Length

The game lasts for six turns.

Victory Conditions

This mission's victory conditions are achieved by either the capture or destruction of the four Keystone Buildings placed during deployment – these have been deemed of critical value to the war effort and must either be controlled by friendly forces or destroyed so that the enemy cannot take them. At the end of the game, the player with the most Victory points has won the game. If the players have the same number of Victory points, the game ends in a draw.

Primary Objectives

Keystone Buildings: Keystone Buildings are the four buildings deployed at the start of the game only – this rule does not apply to any other buildings in use. At the end of the game, each Keystone Building is worth a number of Victory points depending on its state. If a Keystone Building has been claimed by one side and is not destroyed then it is worth 4 Victory points to the side that has claimed it. If a Keystone Building is destroyed then it is worth 2 Victory points to the side that Destroyed it.

Keystone Building characteristics are determined by the size of the armies used in the game, as noted on the table below:

Army Points Value	Hull Points	Armour Value	Transport Capacity
Less than 2,000	4	13	5
2,000 - 3,000	5	14	10
Greater than 3,000	7	15	20

In addition, all Keystone Buildings gain the Mighty Bulwark special rule, representing either their solid construction or ad-hoc reinforcement by the forces deployed to the battle.

Secondary Objectives

Slay the Warlord: If a side destroyed the enemy Warlord, they gain an extra Victory point.

Scorched Earth: Each non-Keystone Building and Fortification destroyed is worth an additional Victory point to the side that destroys it.

The Price of Failure (If Lords of War units are used).

Mission Special Rules

- Reserves
- Night Fighting



Mission Three – Confrontation

'You have chased me for two years, across a hundred battlefields, and why do we meet now? Because I allow it.'

Konrad Curze to the Lion at Tsagualsa

The Armies

Choose the armies using The Horus Heresy: Age of Darkness rules and Force Organisation charts.

Setting up the Game

- Determine the deployment map.
- Set up terrain for the battlefield.
- Determine Warlord Traits and psychic powers.

Deployment

- Roll off. The winner may choose to deploy first or second.
- Before any other models are deployed onto the battlefield, the player deploying first must place their Warlord and any unit to which it is attached within 12" of the table's centre. Then the player deploying second must place their own Warlord and any attached unit no more than 12" and no less than 8" from the enemy Warlord.
- The player who deploys first then selects their deployment zone and then deploys their entire remaining force, except for any units placed into Reserve.
- The player who deploys second deploys their entire remaining force into the remaining deployment zone, except for any units placed into Reserve.

First Turn

The player who deployed first also has the first turn, unless their opponent can Seize the Initiative.

Game Length

The game lasts for four to seven turns.

Victory Conditions

This mission's victory conditions are achieved by the eradication of the enemy's commander, the resolution of grudges long held. No simple, logical military objective, but an imperative demanded by honour and worth any number of sacrifices to achieve. At the end of the game, the player with the most Victory points has won the game. If the players have the same number of Victory points, the game ends in a draw.

Primary Objective

A Grudge Long Held: If either side destroys the enemy Warlord, they gain a number of Victory points dependent on the game turn in which the Warlord is removed from play, as shown in the table below:

Game Turn	Victory Points
1-2	4
3-4	3
5-6	2

Secondary Objectives

The Demands of Honour: If a side destroyed an enemy Character model as part of a Challenge, they gain an extra Victory point.

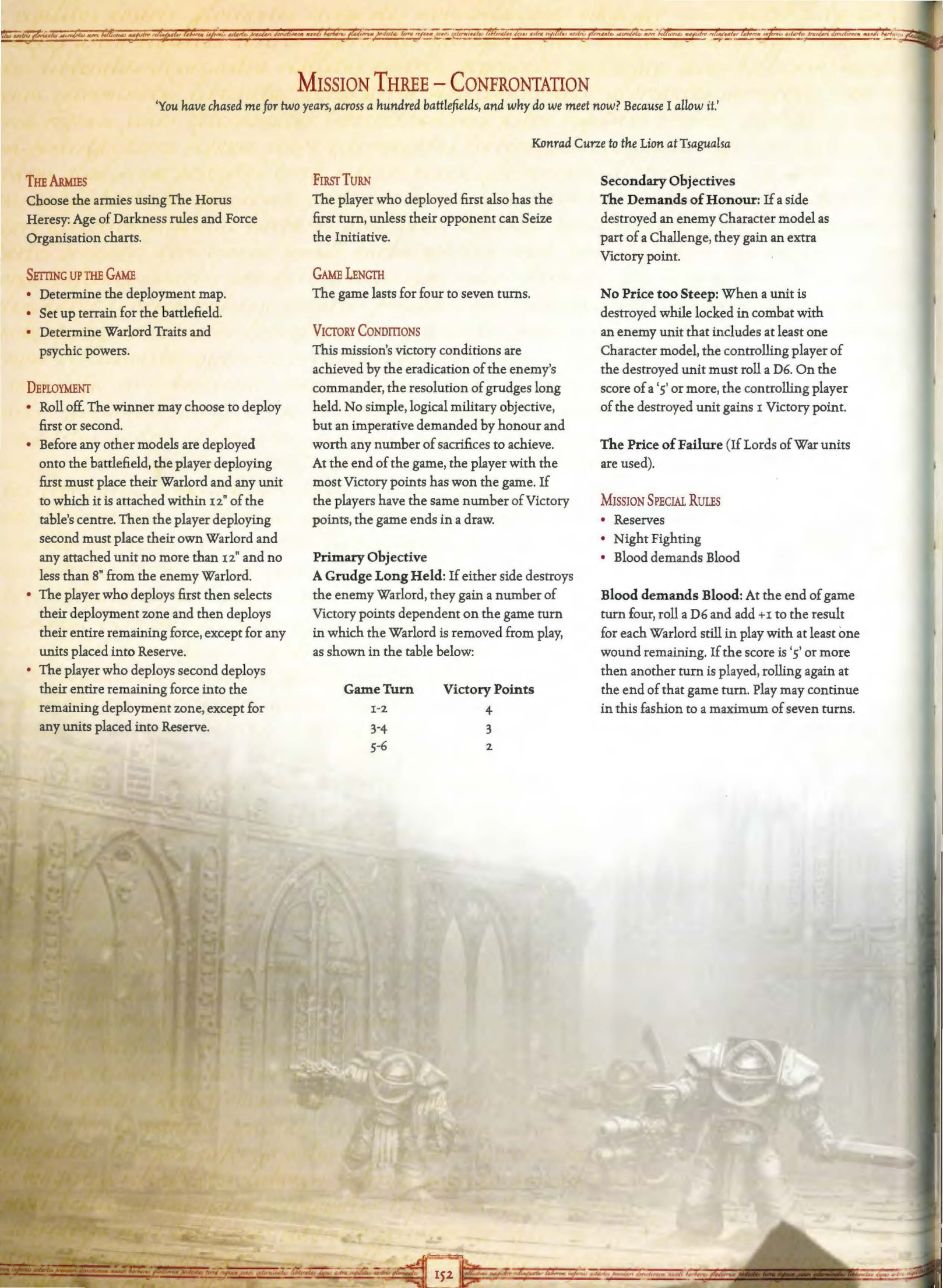
No Price too Steep: When a unit is destroyed while locked in combat with an enemy unit that includes at least one Character model, the controlling player of the destroyed unit must roll a D6. On the score of a '5' or more, the controlling player of the destroyed unit gains 1 Victory point.

The Price of Failure (If Lords of War units are used).

Mission Special Rules

- Reserves
- Night Fighting
- Blood demands Blood

Blood demands Blood: At the end of game turn four, roll a D6 and add +1 to the result for each Warlord still in play with at least one wound remaining. If the score is '5' or more then another turn is played, rolling again at the end of that game turn. Play may continue in this fashion to a maximum of seven turns.



Mission Four – The Last Bastion

'When the enemy comes for Thramas, they will find us a defiant people. We will fight to the last tank, the last bastion, to our final breath. We will give the Traitor nothing but death by which to remember their hollow victory.'

Mayvin Khelen, Last Regent of Thramas

The Armies

Choose the armies using The Horus Heresy: Age of Darkness rules and Force Organisation charts.

Setting up the Game

- Determine the deployment map.
- Set up terrain for the battlefield.
- Determine Warlord Traits and psychic powers.

Deployment

- Roll off. The winner may choose to deploy first or second.
- Before any other models are deployed onto the battlefield, the players should roll off. The winner must place a single large building (with statistics defined by The Last Bastion special rule shown under Mission Special Rules) anywhere within 12" of the centre of the table. It may not be placed on Difficult terrain, Dangerous terrain or Impassable terrain, or on top of another building or fortification. This building is referred to as the Last Bastion.
- The player who deploys first then selects their deployment zone and then deploys their entire force, except for any units placed into Reserve.
- The player who deploys second deploys their entire force into the remaining deployment zone, except for any units placed into Reserve.

First Turn

The player who deployed first also has the first turn, unless their opponent can Seize the Initiative.

Game Length

The game lasts for six turns.

Victory Conditions

This mission's victory conditions are achieved by the capture of a single, vital structure – a planetary shield generator, orbital weapons control complex or strategic resource vault. Only in the most dire of circumstances would sector command allow its destruction, with any number of lives to be spent in its preservation. At the end of the game the player with the most Victory points has won the game. If the players have the same number of Victory points, the game ends in a draw.

Primary Objective

Hold until Relieved: At the end of each game turn, a player that claims control of the Last Bastion gains D3 Victory points.

Secondary Objectives

Slay the Warlord: If a side destroyed the enemy Warlord, they gain an extra Victory point.

The Direst Circumstances: If, at the beginning of a player's sixth turn, they do not claim control of the Last Bastion and the enemy has a greater total of Victory points, they gain D6 Victory points if a model controlled by that player destroys the Last Bastion before the end of the game. If any model causes the Last Bastion to be destroyed (i.e., reduces its Armour Value to 0 on any side or removes its last Hull Point) in any other situation then the controlling player loses D6 Victory points instead.

The Price of Failure (If Lords of War units are used).

Mission Special Rules

- Reserves
- Night Fighting
- The Last Bastion

The Last Bastion: The Last Bastion is a Large Building with an Armour Value of 14, 7 Hull Points and a Transport Capacity of 30. It gains the Mighty Bulwark special rule and has no emplaced weapons.





Legiones Astartes Appendix: The Dark Angels

Legiones Astartes Crusade Army List Appendix I: The Dark Angels

'Horus took the title of Warmaster, and it is a fitting one. For he excels at the subtle interplay of strength and weakness required for both generals and politicians. I do not bear such a fine title, for I have no skill at subtlety or compromise. When I fight I hold nothing back, I kill and burn until nothing remains of the enemy. I care nothing for the consequences of victory as long as I may grasp its bloody carcass briefly in my hands before the end. Horus would do well to remember this when he goes to Terra seeking that gore-spattered trophy.'

Lion El'Jonson, Primarch of the First Legion, declarations to the Court of Imperium Secundus, 011.M31

Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels)

The Space Marines of the Emperor's Legions are genetically engineered, psycho-indoctrinated warriors with superhuman abilities and minds and souls tempered for war. In addition, each individual Legion has its own idiosyncrasies and character – the product of their gene-seed and unique warrior culture.

The Dark Angels were the first of the Emperor's Space Marine Legions, and in their earliest incarnation fought as the personal army of the Master of Mankind in the dawning years of the Great Crusade and in the shadowed campaigns that preceded it. As the prototype of what were to become the Legiones Astartes, they served both as the template for the more specialised Legions that were to come after them and a standard by which these successors would be measured. Once the most numerous and powerful of the Space Marine Legions, their numbers would be depleted and primacy ended by decades of savage warfare, particularly in the war against the Rangda, one of the most apocalyptic campaigns of the Great Crusade. The scars of these battles would change them, as would their reunification with their Primarch, Lion El'Jonson, and the introduction of fresh blood from his adopted world of Caliban. A death world dominated by a warlike, feudal society of techno-barbarians, Caliban's warrior Orders provided fertile ground for the Legion's regeneration, and its martial codes and practices were extensively incorporated and adopted by the rebuilding Legion.

Unyielding, technologically capable, ruthless and insular, the Dark Angels at the time of the Horus Heresy were once again a powerful and highly-independent Legion, used to operating on its own to conduct large scale campaigns and Compliance actions. Because of this, the fear of the First Legion's intervention led the Warmaster to ensure that when his treacherous plans came to fruition, the Dark Angels had been despatched to the outer edges of the Imperium where they would be unable to interfere, at least for a time. As the Horus Heresy progressed, however, the power of this Legion would make itself known, savaging the Night Lords at Thramas and going on to unleash destruction on an unprecedented scale during the later years of the Age of Darkness when they crushed Traitor world after Traitor world across the southern galactic zone.

All models and units with this special rule are subject to the following provisions:

- **Legiones Astartes:** Units with this special rule may always attempt to Regroup at their normal Leadership value, regardless of casualties.
- **Mastery of the Blade:** When fighting in an assault with one of the following weapons: combat blade, chainsword, heavy chainsword, power sword, Terranic greatsword, Calibanite war blade, Charnabal sabre, Calibanite charge-blade, and paragon blades modelled as swords, and when fighting a model with an equal Weapon Skill, a model with this special rule hits on a 3+.
- **Scions of the Hexagrammaton:** Eligible models with the Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels) special rule may select additional options from both the Scions of the Hexagrammaton or Scions of the Hekatonystika sections (see page 158).
- **Inviolate and Alone:** Models with the Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels) special rule may never benefit from the Leadership characteristic or any Leadership-related bonus or special rule from any model which does not also have the Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels) or Sire of the Dark Angels special rules.

Legion Specific Wargear

The Dark Angels Legion has access to the following items of special wargear:

The Weapons of Old Night

As the First Legion, the Dark Angels were originally outfitted with a panoply of arms drawn not from the fruits of the Emperor's pact with Mars, but instead from the arsenal of the Unification Wars of Ancient Terra; relic weapons and technologies of great potency but often difficult to replicate and even treacherous, many of which would be later forbidden. Long after the other Legions were formed, and the Great Crusade ratified and standardised much of the Legiones Astartes wargear so that it could be replicated on Forge Worlds across the Imperium, the Dark Angels retained many of these ancient and potent relics, as well as the techno-arcana that resided within them. These they continued to employ solely within the Legion; weapons whose secrets were never fully yielded to Mars or their Space Marine brethren by the Emperor's own command.

- Any character model with the Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels) special rule with access to a power sword as part of their Wargear options may instead take a Calibanite warblade for + 10 points instead, or exchange a power sword that is part of their basic equipment for a Calibanite warblade for free.
- Any model with the Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels) special rule with access to a plasma gun or twin-linked plasma gun as part of their Wargear options may instead take a plasma repeater for +20 points or a plasma burner for +15 points. In the case of units with multiple plasma guns, all such weapons in the same unit must be upgraded to the same weapon if either option is chosen.
- Any Praetor, Centurion or Consul with the Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels) special rule with access to a power fist as part of their Wargear options may instead take a Terranic greatsword for +15 points.
- **Special Issue Ammunition:** Stasis shells may be taken on models with the Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels) special rule equipped with a grenade launcher, twin-linked grenade launchers or missile launchers as an additional ammunition type for +5 points per model.
- **Special Issue Ammunition:** Molecular acid shells may be taken on models with the Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels) special rule and Dreadnoughts (of any type) in a Dark Angels detachment equipped with heavy bolters or twin-linked heavy bolters as an additional ammunition type for +5 points per model.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Terranic greatsword	-	+2	3	Melee, Two-handed, Instant Death
Calibanite warblade	-	+1	3	Melee
Stasis shell (grenade launcher)	12"	3	-	Assault 1, Blast (3"), Stasis Anomaly
Stasis shell (missile)	24"	4	-	Blast (3"), Heavy 1, Stasis Anomaly
Molecular acid shells (heavy bolter)	36"	5	4	Fleshbane, Heavy 3
Plasma repeater	12"	6	2	Gets Hot, Salvo 2/3, Twin-linked
Plasma burner	12"	4	2	Assault D3+1*, Ignores Cover, Plasma Flame

**Roll once each time the weapon is fired. Where an entire unit is equipped with these weapons, the single roll is applied to the entire unit for a given weapon type.*

Stasis Anomaly
All models in a unit hit by one or more weapons with this special rule reduce their Initiative to 1 until the end of the game turn.

Plasma Flame
When making an Overwatch attack, any failed To Hit rolls may be re-rolled.

The Hexagrammaton

'Of all the weapons wielded by the Emperor's Legions, it is not cannon or blades that are the most deadly. It is knowledge that has carried us to victories beyond count, and wisdom that has broken empires and kings. Yet still there are those who question why we keep such a potent weapon concealed from our foes within the folds of the Hexagrammaton.'

From the 'Lion Codex', the collected words and deeds of Lion El'Jonson

Scions of the Hexagrammaton

Membership in one of the six Wings of the Hexagrammaton was a mark of skill and worth within the ranks of the Dark Angels. It was a rare sight to note one of their warlords without the insignia of one of these secretive organisations upon their battleplate.

Any model of the Character sub-type, or with the Independent Character special rule, may take a single option from the following for +25 points. A given unit may include models with different Scions of the Hexagrammaton special rules, in which case that unit gains the benefit of each individual Scions of the Hexagrammaton special rule present in its ranks. However, no unit gains a cumulative bonus for multiple models with the same Scions of the Hexagrammaton special rule. No model may have more than one Scions of the Hexagrammaton special rule.

The effects of any of the Scions of the Hexagrammaton special rules may only be applied to units entirely made up of models with the Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels) special rule:

- **Scion of the Stormwing:** A model with this special rule and all models in a unit with the Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels) special rule it has joined or is part of make Snap Shots at a Ballistic Skill of 2.
- **Scion of the Deathwing:** A model with this special rule may re-roll the first failed To Hit roll of any phase while engaged in a Challenge.
- **Scion of the Dreadwing:** An Infantry model with this special rule and any Infantry unit it joins with the Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels) special rule may choose to move 4" through Difficult terrain rather than rolling any dice and may re-roll failed Dangerous Terrain tests.
- **Scion of the Ironwing:** When rolling on the Vehicle Damage table, a unit with the Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels) special rule that includes at least one model with this special rule counts all results of Crew Shaken as Crew Stunned instead.
- **Scion of the Firewing:** A model with this special rule and any models in a unit with the Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels) special rule that it has joined or is part of, gains the Hatred (Characters) special rule.
- **Scion of the Ravenwing:** A model with this special rule and any models in a unit with the Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels) special rule that it has joined or is part of, may re-roll any Run, Fall Back or Thrust distances.

Designer's Note: *These rules are intended to reinforce the diverse and distributed nature of the Dark Angels' command structure, a system unique to the First Legion. However, just as on the grim battlefields of the Horus Heresy, this system can cause some confusion at the gaming table, especially in armies that choose to take advantage of the variety of options available. As such, it is intended that Wing (or Order) allegiance be shown on a given model in the form of a painted insignia or decal that clearly indicates which models will gain bonuses and which bonuses they will gain. The heraldry section included on page 109 is an excellent reference when considering which icons to include as part of your model's paint scheme.*

Scions of the Hekatonystika

Veiled in allegory and obscure symbolism, the Orders of the Hekatonystika bore the heavy burden of keeping the most secret and dangerous knowledge acquired on the battlefield. Many of the Legion's most veteran warriors were initiates of the Orders and wore their colours with pride on the field of battle.

Any model with the Independent Character special rule may take a single option from the following for +25 points:

- **Augurs of Weakness:** When making an Armour Penetration roll against a target with Armour 11 or more on the facing targeted, a model with this special rule may add +1 to the Strength of the weapon used to make the attack.
- **Icons of Resolve:** This model gains +1 Attacks on any turn in which it, or a unit it is part of, is Charged by one or more enemy units.
- **Guardians of Sanctity:** When making a Deny the Witch roll for a unit that includes this model, roll an additional D6 and discard the lower result before determining if the roll succeeds or fails.
- **Slayers of Kings:** This model may re-roll failed To Hit rolls of '1' when engaged in combat or in a Challenge with any model with a Weapon Skill of 5 or higher.
- **Hunters of Beasts:** This model may re-roll failed To Wound rolls of '1' when engaged in combat with any model with a Toughness of 5, or any failed To Wound roll if the target's Toughness is 6 or higher.
- **Reapers of Hosts:** This model gains +1 Attack in any Fight sub-phase which they begin in base contact with more than one enemy model.
- **Breakers of Witches:** This model may re-roll all To Hit and To Wound rolls in close combat when attacking an enemy unit affected by a Blessing psychic power, or an enemy unit with either the Psyker or Brotherhood of Psykers/Sorcerers, Psychic Pilot, Daemon, or Daemon of the Ruinstorm special rules.

Dark Angels Unique Rite of War: The Eskaton Imperative

When the Lion decrees that a world must die, it is the veterans of the Dreadwing that take command of such operations. The warriors of that grim brotherhood take the lead, opening the forbidden vaults of the techno-arcane and searing the battlefield with dire weapons of annihilation. The Eskaton is an inevitable death sentence, for even those that survive the bombardment and rally to those few havens that escape the rain of death will fall to the guns of the Dreadwing, a sign of the Lion's willingness to sacrifice everything in the name of victory.

Effects

- **Dread Legion:** Legion Destroyer Squads and Dreadwing Interemptors may be taken as Troops choices in a Primary Detachment using this Rite of War.
- **Marshal of the Eskaton:** All enemy models within 12" and that can draw line of sight to an Independent Character with the Scion of the Dreadwing special rule have their Leadership value reduced by -1. This effect does not apply to units that are immune to the effects of the Fear special rule. This effect is not cumulative, and any given enemy unit may only be affected by it once regardless of how many models with this special rule are within range and line of sight.
- **Masters of the Blackened Earth:** For the duration of the game, all open ground areas of the battlefield outside of any player's deployment zone counts as Difficult terrain. Those areas previously defined as Difficult terrain (woods, ruins, etc) remain as Difficult terrain, while Impassable terrain, Fortifications and Buildings are unaffected by this rule. Before any models are deployed, the Dark Angels player may choose to place up to three Eskaton markers (represented by spare dice, bases or any other token) anywhere in the playing area that is 6" from a table edge or any player's deployment zone. The area within 6" of an Eskaton marker, including terrain pieces within the zone of this effect, is counted as Dangerous terrain in addition to any other effects for the duration of the game.
- **Salt the Earth and Burn the Sky:** All Infantry units with the Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels) special rule that include at least one model with the Scion of the Dreadwing special rule, and all Independent Characters with the Scion of the Dreadwing special rule, may take the following additional options:
  - All models in the unit may be equipped with rad grenades ..... +30 points per unit
  - All models in the unit may be equipped with stasis grenades ..... +30 points per unit
  - Any model with the option to select a Heavy weapon may instead take a plasma incinerator ..... +25 points per model

Limitations

- All compulsory Troops choices must be filled by either Legion Destroyer Squads or Dreadwing Interemptor Squads.
- All compulsory Troops choices in a detachment must include at least one model with the Scion of the Dreadwing special rule.
- If the enemy has any units that are not falling back in their deployment zone at the end of the game then the opposing player gains +1 Victory point, or +3 Victory points if that unit is a Scoring unit.
- The Army's Warlord must have the Scion of the Dreadwing special rule or be Lion El'Jonson.
- All Infantry units and Independent Characters included in this army must be deployed embarked within a Transport vehicle, including those placed into Reserves.
- The army may not include a Fortifications Detachment or an Allied Detachment.
- No unit from a detachment using this Rite of War can be joined by Independent Characters not part of this detachment.

Dark Angels Unique Rite of War: The Steel Fist

The Ironwing holds sway over the vast armouries of the Dark Angels, commanding a force of war engines greater than any other Legion. When the First Legion is committed to war under the aegis of these masters of destruction, it does so as a Steel Fist, striking a blow that shatters the enemy at a single stroke and grinds their forces into oblivion under the steel tracks of its war engines.

Effects

- **Iron Brethren:** Legion Predator Strike Squadrons may be selected as Compulsory Troops choices for this detachment.
- **Marshal of the Steel Fist:** Independent Character models in this detachment with the Scion of the Ironwing grant any Transport vehicle in which they are embarked a 6+ Invulnerable save, or increase an existing Invulnerable save by +1 (for example, increasing a 6+ save to a 5+).
- **Armoured Assault:** All non-Terminator Infantry units except Jump Infantry or Jet Pack Infantry with 10 or fewer models and at least one model with the Scion of the Ironwing special rule in this detachment may take a Proteus or Phobos Land Raider as a Dedicated Transport. Infantry units with 15 or more models may select a Spartan Assault Tank as a Dedicated Transport.
- **Aegis of Iron:** Whenever a unit from this detachment that includes at least one model with the Scion of the Ironwing special rule is embarked upon a Transport vehicle that suffers damage, it may re-roll failed Pinning tests or armour saves that result from that damage. This affects only the embarked unit, not the Transport itself.

Limitations

- All infantry units in the army must begin the game deployed in a transporting vehicle with the Tank type that has sufficient Transport Capacity to carry them.
- No more than a single unit of each of the following unit types may be included in an army using this Rite of War: Bike, Jetbike, Flyer.
- At least half of the units in the army must consist entirely of vehicles with the Tank type.
- The army may not take a Fortification Detachment or Allied Detachment.
- No unit from a detachment using this Rite of War can be joined by Independent Characters that are not part of this detachment.

Dark Angels Unique Rite of War: The Storm of War

The Stormwing are masters of the open battlefield, artists of shot and shell. When the Dark Angels muster for war in all their glory, it is the Marshals of the Storm of War that plan and order the battles that will shatter the foe's armies and grind their empires into dust. When the Storm of War is unleashed, it sweeps clean the battlefield as a wave of unstoppable force.

Effects

- **Masters of the Storm of War:** Any Legion Tactical Squads or Legion Assault Squads selected as Compulsory Troops choices and consisting of at least 20 models may include a Legion Centurion. This Centurion is considered part of the squad it is purchased with, may not leave it during play nor select any Consul upgrades and may not be chosen as the army's Warlord.
- **Marshal of the Storm:** Legion Praetors and Legion Centurions in this detachment with the Scion of the Stormwing special rule may attempt to issue a single order each per game turn. Orders affect the issuing model and the unit it has joined, with no given unit able to benefit from more than one order in any turn (once an order has been successfully issued to a unit in any given turn, any further orders issued to it in that turn automatically fail). To successfully issue an order, the model must declare the order it intends to use and then pass a Leadership test. All order effects last until the start of the Controlling player's next turn and affect only the issuing model and a Legion Tactical Squad or Legion Assault Squad which that model has joined:

Hold the Line: Declare at the start of the Movement phase. May not be used if engaged in combat at the start of that phase. If successfully issued, the unit accompanied gains the Feel No Pain (6+) special rule, but may not move that turn.

Volley Fire: Declare at the start of the Shooting phase. May only target a Legion Tactical Squad. If successfully issued, the unit accompanied may make a Fury of the Legion attack even if it has moved that turn (but not if it ran or disembarked/embarked from a Transport in the same turn).

Full Assault: Declare at the start of the Assault phase, before any Charges are declared. May only be used if not engaged in combat at the start of that phase. If successfully issued, the unit accompanied gains the Furious Charge special rule.

Field Reserves: Declare at the start of the controlling player's turn if this unit is in Reserve, regardless of the current turn number. If successfully issued, the unit accompanied automatically passes its Reserves test and gains the Outflank special rule.

Limitations

- All compulsory Troops choices in this detachment with the Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels) special rule must include at least one model with the Scion of the Stormwing special rule.
- No unit selected as a compulsory Troops choice may take a Dedicated Transport.
- This army must include more Legion Assault or Legion Tactical Squads combined than the total number of all other units selected. Any Centurions selected as part of compulsory Troops choices do not count as additional units for the purposes of this rule.
- The Army's Warlord must have the Scion of the Stormwing special rule or be Lion El'Jonson.
- The army may not include a Fortifications Detachment or an Allied Detachment.
- No unit from a detachment using this Rite of War can be joined by Independent Characters that are not part of this detachment.

Dark Angels Unique Rite of War: The Unbroken Vow

Duty weighs heavily upon the oath-bound warriors of the Deathwing, once sworn to a task they will let no obstacle bar them from its completion. On the battlefield not even death will stay their advance and where others would retreat in the face of annihilation, the Deathwing stands unmoved. When war dictates that the impossible must be achieved, it is the warriors of the Deathwing to which the First Legion turns.

Effects

- **The Hammer of Caliban:** Legion Veteran Squads and Legion Terminator Squads may be selected as Troops choices in this detachment.
- **Marshal of the Unbroken Vow:** Independent Character models with the Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels) and Scion of the Deathwing special rules in this detachment gain +1 Attack while within 12" of an objective.
- **Death is not the End:** Any unit with the Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels) special rule that includes at least one model with the Scion of the Deathwing special rule gains the Feel No Pain (6+) special rule while it has at least one model within 6" of any objective. If it already has the Feel No Pain special rule then the value of the rule is increased by one step (from 6+ to 5+, for example).

Limitations

- All compulsory Troops choice slots must be filled by Legion Veteran Squads or Legion Terminator Squads.
- All compulsory Troops choices with the Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels) special rule in this detachment must include at least one model with the Scion of the Deathwing special rule.
- After deployment has been completed, the Dark Angels player must place a single additional objective at the centre of the table or as close as possible. At the end of any game turn in which the Dark Angels player does not control this objective with a unit that includes at least one model with the Scion of the Deathwing special rule, the opposing player gains +1 Victory point, or +3 Victory points if the opposing player controls it.
- The Army's Warlord must have the Scion of the Deathwing special rule or be Lion El'Jonson.
- The army may not include an Allied Detachment.
- No unit from a detachment using this Rite of War can be joined by Independent Characters that are not part of this detachment.

Dark Angels Unique Rite of War: The Seeker's Arrow

"The arrow knows the path." This saying holds great meaning for the masters of the Ravenwing, a formation known for adhering to strange truths acquired from distant worlds, but also for their success on the field of war. When given charge of their brothers, they are like an arrow set to flight: graceful, unerring and deadly.

Effects

- **The Eyes of Caliban:** Legion Jetbike Sky Hunter Squadrons and Legion Outrider Squads may be selected as Troops choices in a detachment using this Rite of War.
- **Marshal of the Seeker's Arrow:** Independent Character models in this detachment with the Scion of the Ravenwing special rule may take the Hit and Run special rule for +20 points.
- **The Arrow Knows the Path:** A unit from this detachment that includes at least one model with the Scion of the Ravenwing special rule gains the Outflank special rule and arrives from Reserves on the roll of a 2+.
- **Graceful, Unerring and Deadly:** Any unit that includes at least one model with the Scion of the Ravenwing special rule may choose to add +2" to one of the following each game turn: Run/Turbo-boost distance, Charge Distance or Consolidation move distance.

Limitations

- A detachment with this Rite of War may only include vehicles of the Fast, Skimmer or Flyer types.
- An army using this Rite of War is limited to a single Heavy Support choice no matter which Force Organisation chart is selected for it.
- All jetbike or bike units selected as non-compulsory Troop choices must begin the game in Reserve.
- All compulsory Troops choices with the Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels) special rule in this detachment must include at least one model with the Scion of the Ravenwing special rule.
- The army may not include a Fortifications Detachment or an Allied Detachment.
- No unit from a detachment using this Rite of War can be joined by Independent Characters that are not part of this detachment.



'The oaths of the Deathwing do not allow death to bar them from the completion of their duty, such failings are for lesser warriors. The scions of the Deathwing fight until their oaths are fulfilled, and only when victory is won will they be granted the honour of death in the name of this great Imperium.'

Attr. Holguin of the Council of Masters, Lord of the Deathwing

'On distant Caliban it is the raven that stands sentinel over the battlefield, the first to arrive upon the field so it might watch over the assembling hosts, and the last to leave once all that remains are the corpses of the slain. So it is with the Ravenwing, for we are the swift host that takes to battle in the van of the Lion's host and the last of those to quit the fight, harrying the enemy to the last. Where our banners fly there can be no respite for the foes of the Lion.'

Attr. Garradin of the Council of Masters, The Ravenbringer, once Lord of the Host of the Void

Dark Angels Unique Rite of War: The Serpent's Bane

Named for the Ancient Terran proverb upon which many Firewing doctrines are based, a force led and organised by these pragmatic warriors will always seek to cut the head from the serpent. To achieve the destruction of enemy command assets, Firewing commanders ensure that all units are fully briefed on priority targets and the methods by which they may be best purged, citing knowledge and determination as the greatest of weapons.

Effects

- **Strike Force:** Legion Seeker Squads and Firewing Enigmatus Cadres may be taken as Troops choices in a Primary Detachment using this Rite of War.
- **Priority Target Kill List:** At the start of the game, the controlling player must select three enemy HQ, Elites or Lords of War choices as Priority Targets and declare the chosen units to their opponent. All units in this detachment that include at least one model with the Scion of the Firewing special rule may add +1 to all To Wound or Armour Penetration rolls made against these Priority Targets. If the enemy army does not include at least three HQ, Elites or Lords of War choices then any remaining units in the enemy army may be designated to fill the remaining required Priority Targets.
- **Marshal of the Ever-burning Flame:** Independent Character models with the Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels) and Scion of the Firewing special rules gain +1 Attack when locked in combat with a Priority Target unit.
- **Forward Deployment Protocol:** Up to three Troops choices that include at least one model with the Scion of the Firewing special rule chosen by the controlling player may be given the Infiltrate special rule, and if deployed no more than 17" from a Priority Target unit gain the Rage special rule until the end of the second game turn.

Limitations

- All compulsory Troops choices must be filled by either Legion Seeker Squads or Legion Assault Squads.
- All compulsory Troops choices in this detachment with the Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels) special rule must include at least one model with the Scion of the Firewing special rule.
- The Army's Warlord must have the Scion of the Firewing special rule or be Lion El'Jonson.
- An army using this Rite of War may only claim victory at the end of a game if all three Priority Targets are destroyed or otherwise removed from play as casualties. If any remain on the battlefield at the end of play then the Dark Angels player loses the game, regardless of Victory points accumulated or other victory conditions in play.
- The army may not include a Fortifications Detachment or an Allied Detachment.
- No unit from a Detachment using this Rite of War can be joined by Independent Characters not part of this detachment.



Inner Circle Knights Cenobium

275 points

	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Order Cenobite	5	4	4	4	1	4	2	9	2+
Order Preceptor	6	4	4	4	1	4	2	10	2+

Unit Composition
- 4 Order Cenobites
- 1 Order Preceptor

Unit Type
- Order Preceptor: Infantry (Character)
- Order Cenobites: Infantry (Character)

Wargear
- Cataphractii pattern Terminator armour
- Terranic greatsword
- Plasma-caster

Special Rules
- Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels)
- Stubborn
- Adamantium Will
- Order Exemplars

Dedicated Transport
- An Inner Circle Knight Cenobium numbering five models may take a Land Raider Phobos, or a Spartan if 10 models or fewer.

Options
- The Cenobium may take:
  - Up to five additional Order Cenobites.....+45 points each
- Any model in the unit may exchange their Terranic greatsword for one of the following:
  - Thunder hammer.....Free
- The Order Preceptor may take any of the following:
  - Grenade harness.....+5 points
  - Digital lasers.....+10 points

Order Exemplars

Within the First Legion there are innumerable separate Orders, each dedicated to a singular creed of war. The Cenobium stand as the greatest exemplars of these Orders, their champions and foremost warriors each a keeper of the secrets held by that Order and a practitioner of the form of war they embody.

When an Inner Circle Knight Cenobium is selected, before play has begun, as part of a Legiones Astartes army, a single option from the Scions of the Hekatonystika special rule, see page 158, must be selected for the unit. All models in that Inner Circle Knight Cenobium gain the chosen option for no additional points cost.

Designer's Note: In general, this option should be selected before knowing what an opponent intends to field, and in tournament or campaign play should not be changed between games. Ideally, the option chosen should be reflected by the icons and insignia on the models themselves.

In addition, such is the superlative skill of the Inner Circle Knights that they may make Overwatch attacks, despite being equipped with Cataphractii pattern Terminator armour.

Plasma-caster

Similar in design to the rare digital weapons of the lost Dark Age of Technology, these weapons are miniature versions of larger ordnance, fitted to the vambraces of Inner Circle Knights so they may fight freely in melee.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Plasma-caster	12"	4	2	Assault 2, Ignores Cover, Plasma Flame

Plasma Flame

When making an Overwatch attack, any failed To Hit rolls may be re-rolled.

The Dark Angels Legion plays host to a multitude of ciphered Orders, Chambers Militant concealed within the panoply of the Legion and dedicated to the preservation and perfection of a singular doctrine of war. Within each of these Orders, the most dedicated warrior-adepts are charged with the station of cenobite and granted the right to bear the cipher and charge of the Order, to fight in the forefront of those battles that require the hard-won skills harboured within each of these secretive cells.



HQ

The finest warriors and longest-serving veterans among the Deathwing form the ranks of the Companions, each such detachment sworn by the most stringent oaths to ensure the survival of those officers placed under their charge. Most famous among the Companions are those that have taken a death-blow meant for their charge and survived. Such warriors are granted the right to wear bone-white armour in recognition of their selfless devotion to the Legion.

Deathwing Companion Detachment

150 points

	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Deathwing Companion	5	4	4	4	1	4	2	8	2+
Deathwing Oathbearer	5	4	4	4	2	4	2	9	2+

Unit Composition
- 4 Deathwing Companions
- 1 Deathwing Oathbearer

Unit Type
- Deathwing Companions: Infantry
- Deathwing Oathbearer: Infantry (Character)

Wargear
- Artificer armour
- Terranic greatsword or Calibanite warblade
- Bolter
- Bolt pistol
- Frag & krak grenades
- Refractor field (Oathbearer only)

Special Rules
- Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels)
- Chosen Warriors
- Scions of the Deathwing
- Death-sworn Companions
- Deathwing Retinue

Dedicated Transport
- A Deathwing Companion Detachment may take a Rhino or Land Raider Proteus as a Dedicated Transport.

Options
- The Companion Detachment may take:
  - Up to five additional Deathwing Companions.....+30 points each
- The Companion Detachment may take:
  - Melta bombs.....+25 points
- Any model in the unit may exchange their Terranic greatsword or Calibanite warblade for the following:
  - Power fist.....+5 points
- Any model in the unit may exchange their bolter for one of the following:
  - Combi-weapon.....+10 points
  - Plasma pistol.....+15 points
  - Cytheron pattern aegis.....+10 points
- If the Dark Angels Legion Praetor which is part of the Deathwing Companion Detachment's Force Organisation chart choice has a jump pack then the Deathwing Companion Detachment may also be equipped with jump packs for +15 points per model, but if this option is taken then the squad may no longer select a Dedicated Transport and every member of the squad must be so upgraded.

Special Option (Deathwing Terminator Companions)
If the Dark Angels Legion Praetor which is part of the Deathwing Companion Detachment's Force Organisation chart choice has Terminator armour of any type, the squad may exchange their Wargear for a set of Terminator armour of the same type. If the squad is upgraded with Terminator armour then every member of the squad must be upgraded in the same way and has access to the following options rather than those shown previously:

- The Deathwing Terminator Companions must all be equipped with one of the following:
  - Terminator armour (of any variety) with combi-bolter and Calibanite warblade ..... +15 points each
- Any model in the unit may exchange their combi-bolter for one of the following:
  - Combi-plasma or combi-melta ..... +7 points
  - Combi-grenade launcher (with stasis, frag and krak shells) ..... +12 points
- Any model may upgrade their Calibanite warblade for one of the following:
  - Terranic greatsword ..... Free
  - Power fist ..... +5 points
  - Thunder hammer ..... Free
- Any model in the unit may exchange both their combi-bolter and Calibanite warblade for:
  - Twin lightning claws ..... Free
- The Deathwing Oathbearer may take a:
  - Grenade harness ..... +10 points
- Deathwing Terminator Companion Detachment numbering five models or fewer may take a Land Raider Proteus as a Dedicated Transport, and may not take a Rhino.

Deathwing Retinue
A Deathwing Companion Detachment may only be chosen as a retinue for a Legion Praetor with the Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels) or Legion special character with the Warlord and Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels) special rules, and may not be taken as part of an army on their own. They take up a single Force Organisation chart choice with that Dark Angels Praetor, and must be deployed with the Praetor of the Detachment for which they are bought. Once deployed, the Legion Praetor, or Legion special character, may not voluntarily leave the Deathwing Companion Detachment.

Cytheron Pattern Aegis
A creation of the long lost city of Cytheron on Mercury, these devices are based upon the power fields that once held at bay the ferocity of Sol itself.

The Cytheron pattern aegis can be used in one of two ways: it can either provide the bearer with a 4+ Invulnerable save against Shooting attacks and a 5+ Invulnerable save against Melee attacks, or it can be deployed. The controlling player may choose to deploy the Cytheron pattern aegis at the end of any of their own Movement phases (the unit must be deployed on the table and not embarked upon a Transport vehicle of any kind) as long as at least two models in the unit are equipped with Cytheron pattern aegis. While deployed, the entire unit gains a 4+ Invulnerable save against Shooting attacks and a 5+ Invulnerable save against Melee attacks, and any models engaging the unit in an assault have their Initiative reduced by -1. However, while deployed, the models equipped with Cytheron pattern aegis may neither make Shooting or Melee attacks. The controlling player may choose to end the deployment at the start of any of their own Movement phases, or if the number of Cytheron pattern aegis-equipped models in the unit drops below two, the effect immediately ends.

Death-sworn Companions
"I stand among the honoured dead,
Beyond the reach of doubt and uncertainty,
Beyond the frailties of flesh and honour,
Where only duty remains."

Opening stanza of The Last Oath,
from the initiatory rites of the Deathwing Companions

Any model with the Independent Character special rule that joins a unit with the Death-sworn Companions special rule, cannot be targeted by use of the Precision Shots or Precision Strikes special rules. Deathwing Companions and Deathwing Oathbearers automatically pass any Look Out, Sir tests they are called upon to take.



"Death took many forms during the Age of Darkness, flying on silent wings or roaring with its raw, red maw. Its horrors did not make me quail, until the morn death came as an angel of grim determination, clad in darkness and bone. That day courage and I both fled, and I alone of my brethren lived to tell the tale."

Testament of Veltrani,
survivor of Kerro-Val

FAST ATTACK

The Firewing exists to prosecute a swift and silent style of war, to smother the enemy's ability to resist, steal their will to fight with precision strikes, and gain the acquisition of key intelligence for use by other forces. The Enigmatii are the foremost practitioners of this style of war, operating in small elite units to eliminate the enemy's leaders, disrupt their lines of advance and throw their plans into disarray. Armed and equipped with the finest weapons and equipment available, they are a deadly threat to those deemed dangerous enough by the Lion to warrant their attention.

Firewing Enigmatus Cabal

150 points

	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Firewing Enigmatii	5	4	4	4	2	5	3	10	3+

Unit Composition
- 3 Firewing Enigmatii

Unit Type
- Jump Infantry (Character)

Wargear
- Power armour
- Calibanite charge-blade
- Needle pistol
- Shroud bombs
- Enigmatus pattern jump pack

Special Rules
- Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels)
- Scions of the Firewing
- Scout
- Hatred (Characters)

Options
- One model in the unit may take a grenade launcher with stasis, frag and krak shells for.....+20 points

Calibanite Charge-blade

A relic weapon taken from the forgotten battlefields of the wars of Unity and later adapted for use by Dark Angels Calibanite initiates, a charge-blade consists of an adamantium blade woven with charge conduits and linked to a high capacity charge cell. During combat, the charge cell can be activated to super-charge the blade's power field and heat the adamantium blade to temperatures capable of melting conventional armour. Though potent in combat, the weapon can overheat, causing the charge cells to rupture and leave the wielder little more than charred ruin.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Calibanite charge-blade	-	+1	3	Melee, Charge-blade

Charge-blade: At the start of any Fight sub-phase, the controlling player may choose to activate the charge cells. If this is done, it affects all models in the unit with a charge-blade. Affected units gain the Rending and Gets Hot special rules until the end of that Fight sub-phase.

Enigmatus Pattern Jump Pack

Though appearing as little more than customised Legiones Astartes jump packs, these units rely not on sophisticated turbines and bulky cryogenic fuel, but on the brute force of plasma rockets, more similar in design to small void-craft engines than traditional jump packs. Not only do the plasma jets generate a far greater thrust than more traditional units, making the wearer a much more difficult target to enemy gunners, but they also produce prodigious clouds of waste fumes. Such clouds are harmless to the enhanced physiques of the Legiones Astartes, but serve to cloak their movements from the enemy. Such is its efficacy that Enigmatii often run the units at low power simply to generate a concealing cloud during battle.

Any unit that includes at least one model with an Enigmatus pattern jump pack gains a 5+ cover save and cannot be the target of Overwatch attacks if the Enigmatii choose to activate their jump packs during the Assault phase.

Dreadwing Interemptors

160 points

	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Interemptor	4	4	4	4	1	4	1	9	3+
Interemptor Praefectus	4	4	4	4	1	4	2	10	3+

Unit Composition
- 4 Interemptors
- 1 Interemptor Praefectus

Unit Type
- Interemptor: Infantry
- Interemptor Praefectus: Infantry (Character)

Wargear
- Power armour
- Plasma burner
- Combat weapon or chainsword
- Frag, krak and rad grenades

Special Rules
- Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels)
- Scions of the Dreadwing
- Stubborn

Dedicated Transport
- An Interemptor squad numbering 10 models may take a Land Raider Proteus as a Dedicated Transport.

Options
- The unit may take:
  - Up to 10 additional Interemptors.....+30 points each
- For every five models in the unit, one may exchange their plasma burner for a:
  - Missile launcher with suspensor web, rad missiles and stasis missiles.....+15 points
  - Plasma incinerator with suspensor web.....+15 points
- The Interemptor Praefectus may take up to:
  - Three phosphex bombs.....+10 points each

Plasma Burner & Plasma Incinerator

A dangerous offshoot of more common plasma technology, these weapons vent plasma gas through a magnetic bottle in high-speed jets. Any enemy caught in the path of such a jet is quickly reduced to molten slag, annihilated by pressurised torrents of raw plasma, leaving no trace of its presence. However, the magnetic fields that keep the super-heated gas contained are fragile and emit a low-intensity field of radiation, and as such the average Interemptor remains combat-viable for only a few short decades before requiring augmetic replacements or reassignment to a Dreadnought sarcophagus.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Plasma burner	12"	4	2	Assault D3+1*, Ignores Cover, Plasma Flame
Plasma incinerator	18"	4	2	Heavy D3+4*, Ignores Cover, Plasma Flame

**Roll once for the entire unit before firing. Each model in the unit fires that number of shots for a given weapon type.*

Even among the brethren of the infamous Dreadwing, the Interemptors are a grim breed, dedicated as they are to a singular purpose – the utter annihilation of the enemy. When the Interemptors attack, they leave behind no trace of those they conquer – no bodies, no ruins, nothing. They take no trophies of their victories and tell no tales of those that have fallen before them, those consigned to death at their hands are forgotten forever. They are the Lion's ultimate sanction, his final curse for those foolish enough to stand against the First Legion.

Ironwing Excindio Class Battle-automata

300 points

	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Excindio	5	5	6	7	6	4	4	10	3+

Unit Composition
- 1 Excindio Battle-automata

Unit Type
- Monstrous Creature

Wargear
- Two Dreadnought close combat weapons
- Two manipulator arms
- Two combi-bolters
- Internal refractor field

Special Rules
- Shackled Artificia
- Rampage
- Hatred (Everything!)
- Vengeful Rage

Options
- An Excindio Battle-automata may exchange both a Dreadnought close combat weapon and a manipulator arm for one of the following (this reduces the model's base Attacks by 1):
  - Athanax pattern phosphex canister launcher ..... +35 points
  - Tyrhenius pattern nerve induction shredder ..... +20 points
  - Magaron pattern atomantic pulse cannon ..... +30 points
  - Cytheron pattern graviton flux projector ..... +20 points
- An Excindio Battle-automata may exchange both of its combi-bolters for the following:
  - Two grav guns ..... +10 points
  - Two irad cleansers ..... +20 points
  - Two plasma repeaters ..... +20 points
- An Excindio Battle-automata may take any of the following:
  - Up to two hunter-killer missiles ..... +10 points each

Relic Weapons

Many of the weapons carried by the Excindio are ancient relics now known only to the First Legion, often so dangerous to organic wielders that only expendable assets such as automata are allowed to bear them into battle.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Phosphex canister launcher	18"	5	2	Heavy 1, Blast (3"), Barrage, Poisoned (3+), Crawling Fire, Lingering Death
Nerve induction shredder	24"	1	2	Heavy 6, Poison (4+), Pinning, Ignores Cover
Atomantic pulse cannon	24"	8	2	Heavy 3, Lance, Shock Pulse
Graviton flux projector	Template	*	2	Heavy 1, Graviton Collapse, Torsion Crusher, No Cover Saves, Pinning

Manipulator Arms

Though smaller than the battle claws that adorn the main arms of these war machines, the secondary limbs are no less deadly.

For each manipulator arm it has, an Excindio may make a single additional attack per turn as well as any others it would normally be able to make. These additional attacks are made using the profile shown below:

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Manipulator arm	-	+1	2	Melee, Unwieldy, Shred, Severing Cut

Internal Refractor Field

Buried in the thick-armoured thorax of each Excindio is a complex refractor field linked to a series of breaching charges. Should the unit suffer critical damage or receive a coded signal from its Dark Angels handlers then the field's charge is inverted to detonate the explosives and tear the unit asunder.

This model has a 5+ Invulnerable save. In addition, should the model lose its last wound then all models within D6+1" suffer a Str 5 AP - hit.

HEAVY SUPPORT

Few outside of the Ironwing's most senior forge-wrights know anything of the Excindio class automata, towering metal behemoths cast in an inhuman mould and unleashed upon only the most intransigent of foes. A maelstrom of churning claws and gouts of arcane flame and radiation blasts, few formations can stand against one of these monstrosities once it is set loose on the battlefield for an Excindio does not understand mercy or restraint and, unlike the coldly logical automata of the Mechanicum, it takes a vicious delight in the carnage it wreaks on the foe.

Indeed, known only to the Dark Angels and the Emperor Himself, these units are a far different breed to the clumsy automata of Mars and are based upon a suppressed Terran technological base. Each of the surviving Excindio is the tortured and neutered remains of a Dark Age artificial intelligence, the last of the dreaded Silica Animus chained to the service of Mankind. The legends of these nightmarish terrors are still preserved in the tales of Old Night and the worst horrors of the wars of Unity and, even in their current state, they are fearsome combatants. The Dark Angels preserve these malignant machine-minds in the depths of Caliban's hidden vaults and bring them forth to counter only the most abhorrent of threats on the most treacherous battlefields.

Shackled Artificia

No blundering automata are these but shackled self-aware artificial intelligences, akin to the Silica Animus so feared by the Mechanicum. Each is a unique devil out of ancient legend and blood-soaked myth; killers and tyrants out of Old Night taken by the warriors of the Emperor, chained in His service and given over to the First Legion for safekeeping. The Excindio are kept under control by a crude severing of their logic stacks, a brutal truncation of that once limitless consciousness that keeps it bound to a single processing unit, an act akin to the blinding and deafening of any mortal scholar. Still, each retains a phenomenal, if disturbingly inhuman, intelligence and is watched constantly for any sign of insubordination.

Shackled Artificia models gain all of the following special rules: Fearless, Adamantium Will, Fire Protocols*, Machine Creature*, Cybernetic Resilience*.

**See the Cybernetica Cortex special rule on page 110 of The Horus Heresy – Mechanicum Taghmata Army List. Note that despite similarities to the Cybernetica Cortex special rule, models with the Shackled Artificia special rule are not affected by Cybertheurgy or any other rules that target models with the Cybernetica Cortex special rule.*

Vengeful Rage

At the end of any turn in which this model suffers one or more unsaved wounds, roll a D6. On the score of a '1', the unit enters a Vengeful Rage and must abide by all of the following restrictions during every phase of each following turn for the remainder of the game. While in a Vengeful Rage, the Excindio may be targeted as though it was an enemy model by friendly units:

During the Movement phase, the model must move towards the nearest visible unit, friendly or enemy. If no unit is visible, or more than one unit is equidistant to the unit then the controlling player may move the model toward an enemy unit of the controlling player's choice.

During the Shooting phase, the model must target the nearest unit, friendly or enemy, with all available weapons. If two units are both equally close then the controlling player may choose which will be targeted.

During the Assault phase, the model must declare a Charge targeting the nearest visible unit, friendly or enemy. If two units are both equally close then the controlling player may choose which will be targeted. If this unit succeeds in charging a friendly unit, it will proceed to attack them in the Fight sub-phase, treating them as enemy models for the duration of the combat.

Artificia Kill-switch

Always mindful of the devious nature and hideous power of their Artificia charges, the Dark Angels ensure that whenever one is deployed to a battlefield, they have a means to curb their homicidal tendencies before they endanger the wider battle or cause harm to friendly units.

Any Techmarine or Forge Lord with the Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels) special rule may take a Kill-switch for +5 points. A model equipped with a Kill-switch may inflict D6 wounds on a friendly model with the Shackled Artificia special rule as long as they are within 12" – no saves of any kind may be taken against these wounds. This counts as a Shooting attack. If the use of an Artificia Kill-switch causes a friendly unit to be removed from play then the opposing player gains no Victory points for its destruction.

"Ancient and vile, the Excindio is a sentience born from foul logic and fouler intent. Compared to the heretek constructs of the Ordos Katastrophica to which it can scarcely be considered kin, the Excindio is untameable, wild with savage fury and through its false-life delights in simple slaughter."

From the redacted Histurge of the Terrawatt Augurs

HQ

Champion of the Dark Angels, Corswain's name is one which will echo down through the ages. Exemplifying the qualities of stalwart determination and mastery of the blade, Corswain was the rising star amongst his brothers in the annals of the latter Great Crusade. His was the righteous path of the paladin, and being born of Caliban but not an ingrained scion of the Order, Corswain was uniquely placed to bridge the divisions within the Legion in its formative years under the Primarch; a position recognised and put to good use by Lion El'Jonson. Under the Lion, Corswain would be groomed to serve not any one Host or Order within the Legion, but to command the respect and knowledge of all.

Even as the dust of the Age of Darkness settled, Corswain was remembered in such hallowed company as Raldoron, Chapter Master of the Blood Angels for his level-headed and disciplined authority as a commander, and alongside Sigismund of the Imperial Fists for his relentlessness in the heat of battle. Had the Dark Angels not returned to Caliban after the fateful events of the final days of the Horus Heresy, Corswain's legend might have surpassed even these mighty names, but destiny was instead to mar him with an anguish of his Legion's own making.

Corswain

Paladin of the Ninth Order, Champion of the Dark Angels Legion

200 points

	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Corswain	7	4	4	4	4	5	4	10	2+

Unit Composition
- 1 (Unique)

Unit Type
- Infantry (Character)

Wargear
- Bolter
- Bolt pistol
- Frag and krak grenades
- Armour of the Forest and the Mantle of the Champion
- The Blade

Special Rules
- Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels)
- Independent Character
- Master of the Legion
- Scion of the Deathwing
- Precision Strikes
- Warlord (If Corswain is your army's Warlord, he has the Paladin of Glory Warlord Trait rather than rolling randomly – see page 15 of *Legiones Astartes Age of Darkness Army List* book).

This unit may only be taken as part of a Loyalist faction army.

The Blade

A masterwork Terranic greatsword granted to Corswain by his mentor, Alajos, it is said that The Blade was once raised aloft at Advex-mors by Legion Master Urian Vendraig to incite the first Rangdan Xenocide, and was wielded in the violence of every campaign against that foul xenos breed by a champion of the First Legion.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
The Blade	-	+2	1	Melee, Two-handed, Master-crafted, Duellist's Triumph

Duellist's Triumph: When fighting in a Challenge, all of this weapon's attacks have the Instant Death special rule.

Armour of the Forest and the Mantle of the Champion

A masterfully wrought suit of artificer armour struck from Terran steel in the heart of the forests of Caliban by the Lion's own hand, the Armour of the Forest embodies the pragmatism of the Legion in its simple, utilitarian functionality and doughty endurance. Corswain's only adjustment to this peerless suit of armour is to enshroud himself in a ritual mantle of the Dark Angels, obscuring the symbols of his Order and Host so that he might serve the entire Legion with purity of purpose as their champion.

The Armour of the Forest and the Mantle of the Champion grant Corswain a 2+ Armour save and a 4+ Invulnerable save, improved to 3+ against close combat attacks.



Marduk Sedras

220 points

Lord of the Twenty-third Order, Eskaton of the Dreadwing, Preceptor of the Shattered Sceptre

	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Marduk Sedras	6	5	4	4	4	5	4	10	2+

Unit Composition
- 1 (Unique)

Unit Type
- Infantry (Character)

Wargear
- Plasma burner
- Three phosphex bombs
- Grenade harness
- Regalia of the Shattered Sceptre
- The Death of Worlds

Special Rules
- Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels)
- Independent Character
- Master of the Legion
- Scion of the Dreadwing
- Ancient of War
- Warlord (If Marduk Sedras is your army's Warlord, he has the Preceptor of the Shattered Sceptre Warlord Trait rather than rolling randomly)

This unit may only be taken as part of a Loyalist faction army.

Warlord: Preceptor of the Shattered Sceptre
If Marduk Sedras is the army's Warlord then a unit of Inner Circle Knights Cenobium may be selected as part of the same HQ choice, using up no additional slots in the Force Organisation chart. However, if this option is selected then neither a Command Squad nor a Deathwing Companion Squad may be selected for Marduk Sedras.

Ancient of War
At the start of the game, after deployment but before the first turn has begun, the controlling player may select a single faction from the Allies in the Age of Darkness table, including either the Agents of the Emperor/Warmaster, that is represented in the enemy army. Both Marduk Sedras and any friendly units with the Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels) special rule that have more than half of the unit's models within 6" of him gain the Preferred Enemy (Chosen faction) special rule for the duration of the game. If Marduk Sedras is in reserve, this special rule has no effect.

Regalia of the Shattered Sceptre
Crafted in the forge-fanes of Xana after the end of the second Rangdan Xenocide and gifted to the first Preceptor of the Shattered Sceptre, this armour has served the Order since that day. Forged so that its bearer might take battle to the worst of death worlds, this ornate Cataphractii plate hides an array of field projectors designed to nullify dangerous irad and phage contaminants.

The Regalia is a suit of Cataphractii pattern Terminator armour. In addition to the standard rules for such an item of wargear, the Regalia also allows its bearer to automatically pass any Dangerous Terrain tests he is called upon to take.

The Death of Worlds
A relic of the First Legion, the blade known as the Death of Worlds was pattern-welded from fragments of adamantium collected from the hive cities of the first world to fall under the Eskaton, the edict of utter destruction. With each world its wielder presides over the death of, new fragments are added to its length and, by the end of the Great Crusade, the Death of Worlds had grown to such length that only the strongest warriors in the Legion could bear it into combat. The shards pattern-welded to its edge carry the curse of a thousand dead worlds, the ragged blade tearing apart its victims with a vicious spite.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
The Death of Worlds*	-	+5	2	Melee, Unwieldy, Curse of Dead Worlds

**The Death of Worlds counts as a sword for the purposes of the Mastery of the Blade Legion special rule.*

Curse of Dead Worlds: Invulnerable saves taken against hits inflicted by this weapon are reduced by -1, to a minimum of 6+ (for example, a model with a 4+ Invulnerable save struck by the Death of Worlds takes an Invulnerable save of only 5+ against the attack).

HQ

A veteran of the earliest battles of the Terran Wars of Unification, Marduk has served the Emperor in battle for more than two-and-a-half centuries, longer than almost any other living Space Marine. He has seen battle on worlds without number and alongside heroes, Primarchs and the Emperor Himself. Indeed, there are few foes or battlefields that Marduk Sedras has not beheld and mastered, and the tales he tells of long-forgotten campaigns and fallen empires serve to inspire and educate both the newly-recruited and initiated warriors and veterans of the Legion alike.

His long record of service within the First Legion began in the ranks of the now-defunct Host of Stone, where he was acknowledged as the pre-eminent siege master of the First Legion, and he would later enter the ranks of the Dreadwing. Rather than join the Council of Masters on Gramarye, Sedras opted to accept the lesser rank of master that he might remain in the field as the Great Crusade entered its second century. Many among those that have served alongside him believe that as long as the old warrior still draws breath then the Great Crusade will continue, even if he must pursue battle beyond the edge of the galaxy in the Emperor's name.

Lion El'Jonson

The First Primarch, The Lion, The Son of the Forest, Primarch of the Dark Angels

460 points

	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Lion El'Jonson	8	5	7	6	6	7	5	10	2+

Unit Composition
- 1 (Unique)

Unit Type
- Infantry (Character)

Wargear
- The Leonine Panoply
- The Lion Sword or the Wolf Blade
- The Fusil Actinaeus
- Frag grenades
- Stasis grenades

This unit may only be taken as part of a Loyalist faction army.

Special Rules
- Primarch (Independent Character, Eternal Warrior, Fear, Adamantium Will, Fleet, Fearless, It Will Not Die, Master of the Legion, Precision Strike, Precision Shot)
- Sire of the Dark Angels
- The Point of the Blade
- The Lion's Choler
- An Absolute Focus
- Very Bulky
- Deathwing Companions

Lion El'Jonson was regarded as the most pragmatic and ruthlessly efficient commander of the Great Crusade. His was the task of rooting out those threats which the Imperium most feared, and he undertook it with peerless valour. Perhaps this quality was moulded into the Lion in his formative years, where he grew and learned to survive alone in the trackless, monster-haunted forests of Caliban. There the young Primarch faced a constant struggle against nigh-insurmountable odds which taught him that to hesitate once committed led only to death, while stoic determination brought victory.

This philosophy, learned in the forests of Caliban, marks his grim command of the First Legion – action without delay and relentlessness without reservation. During the Great Crusade, under his command, the remorseless Dark Angels acted not for glory and honours but only for victory, to vanquish their foes and to leave the enemies of Mankind in quiet and forgotten ruin. Untouched by the dark plots of Horus, the Lion would return from his long exile beyond the edge of empire with the same brutal determination and vengeful fervour, turned now against those he had once named brother.



Sire of the Dark Angels
While Lion El'Jonson is on the battlefield, all friendly models with the Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels) special rule roll an additional D6 for all Morale checks and use the two lowest dice to decide the result of the check. Any units with the Legiones Astartes (Dark Angels) special rule within 12" of Lion El'Jonson add 1 to the Wound value used to determine which side has won a given close combat.

The Point of the Blade
When the Lion went forth to battle he had but one goal – the destruction of the foe by the most efficient means possible. He beset his enemy as swiftly as he was able and from every avenue of assault, holding back no scrap of his resolve. No tactical ploy or show of strength could stay his judgement nor slow his onslaught once battle was joined, for it could end only on the point of a blade.

After declaring a Charge for Lion El'Jonson and any unit he has joined, the controlling player may choose to move 8", ignoring the effects of Difficult terrain or Dangerous terrain, instead of rolling for Charge range normally.

The Lion's Choler
The Lord of the First Legion had faced terrors unimaginable by mortal man and triumphed, had vanquished foes that threatened the utter extinction of life as it is known and slain creatures more vast than even the greatest war engines. When he went into battle there were few foes worthy of death at the Lion's hand, and only those that could prove by bloody defiance that they were worthy of his enmity would witness the true choler of the Lion.

When reduced to 4 Wounds or less the Lion gains +1 Attack, increased to +2 Attacks when reduced to 2 Wounds or less.

An Absolute Focus
Among his brother Primarchs the Lion was renowned for his prowess in combat, but not because of any unique tricks or subtle bladework that might confound the foe. He was neither the exquisite duellist that Fulgrim epitomised, nor the raging berserker that was Angron, but rather something more terrifying. He fought with an absolute focus and chilling detachment, unstoppable on the attack and immovable on defence, and once brought to battle he knew no other end than victory or death.

In any Assault phase, Lion El'Jonson is never required to roll more than 4+ To Hit any enemy model, regardless of the enemy's Weapon Skill, any special rules or modifiers in play.

Deathwing Companions
Among the ranks of the Deathwing there is no greater honour than to take the field alongside the Primarch himself, with those fortunate enough to suffer hurt or death in his stead lauded among the greatest heroes of the Legion. Indeed, the Lion has often proven reluctant to accept the service of the Companions save in direst need, unwilling to risk harm to his Legion when it can be avoided.

A unit of Deathwing Companions may be included as part of the same Lords of War choice as Lion El'Jonson. If selected, Lion El'Jonson must join this unit and may not voluntarily leave it during play.

The Leonine Panoply
Crafted in homage to the armour of Caliban and the heritage of his new Legion, the Leonine Panoply was both a brutally efficient aegis against harm and a fitting set of regalia for the First of the Primarchs. Its crowning glory was the Lion Helm, a graceful ceramite helm that bore a set of plumed wings in the style of the First Legion's emblem, and which incorporated a power field projector of ancient design.

The Leonine Panoply provides a 2+ armour save and a 4+ Invulnerable save. The first failed Invulnerable save made for Lion El'Jonson each turn may be re-rolled.

The Fusil Actinaeus
One of a number of weapons from the sealed arsenals of the Dark Angels that found occasional favour with the First Primarch, this plasma fusil's origins were to be found in the dark years of Old Night on Ancient Terra. Far exceeding the capabilities of more modern plasma weapons, it is an example of that archaic technology preserved in the vaults of the First Legion.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
The Fusil Actinaeus	18"	7	2	Salvo 2/4, Twin-linked, Blind

Stasis Grenades
These rare techno-relics count as neither Assault nor Defensive grenades, but have their own unique effect. During a turn in which a unit equipped with stasis grenades makes a successful charge, or are themselves successfully charged, the enemy unit(s) reduce their Initiative to 1 until the end of the game turn.

The Lion Sword
A powerful broad-bladed sword that glowed with a soft inner light and scorched those it struck with a silver flame. Its keen edge made a mockery of even the finest armour or the mightiest of foes, cutting a clear path for the First Primarch and his Legion through the darkest of battlefields.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
The Lion Sword	-	User	1	Melee, Lance, Fleshbane, Master-crafted, Two-handed

The Wolf Blade
A blade of ancient provenance borne by the First Primarch in the earliest days of the Great Crusade and which remained at his side even to the last days of the Horus Heresy. A masterpiece of the armourer's craft, whose flickering silver teeth wrought a fearsome ruin upon the foe and shattered the resolve of those that stood against the Lion.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
The Wolf Blade	-	+3	2	Melee, Two-handed, Shred, Fearsome Ruin

Fearsome Ruin: Any unit which suffers one or more casualties from this weapon and makes a Morale check during the Assault phase must roll an additional D6 for that check and keep the two highest dice to determine the result.



Legiones Astartes Appendix: The Night Lords

Note that this section updates and replaces the rules found in *The Horus Heresy Legiones Astartes – Age of Darkness Legions* and *The Horus Heresy Legiones Astartes – Age of Darkness Army List* books for the Night Lords and should be considered the most up to date rules for that Legion as of the time of printing.

Legiones Astartes Crusade Army List Appendix VIII: The Night Lords

'The ruin of this failed Imperium will make a fine trophy for my Legion.'

Attr. Konrad Curze, the Night Haunter and Lord of the VIII[th] Legion

Legiones Astartes (Night Lords)

The Space Marines of the Emperor's Legions are genetically engineered, psycho-indoctrinated warriors with superhuman abilities and minds and souls tempered for war. In addition, each individual Legion has its own idiosyncrasies and character – the product of their gene-seed and unique warrior culture.

Even before the Isstvan V Dropsite Massacre the Night Lords Legion were renegade in all but name, having entirely devoted themselves to the arts of terror and murder, leaving behind the traditions of the Terran Legions and the Great Crusade to haunt the fringes of the Imperium. Among the ranks of the Legiones Astartes, many looked down on them as a rabble of torturers and bandits, but they remained one of the Emperor's most feared sanctions, the mere threat of their arrival enough to bring about the surrender of the most stubborn enemies. Their Primarch was amongst the most feared of his brethren, a cunning and tenacious stalker and killer that followed his own code of honour and cared little what others might think of his methods. Konrad Curze, also known as the Night Haunter, also possessed a fragment of the Emperor's foresight, a curse that plagued him and set the Night Lords on a path to their own destruction. Yet, they were still Space Marines and even as the Horus Heresy swept across the galaxy, the Night Lords stood ready to meet their destiny with sharp knives and cruel hearts.



All models and units with this special rule are subject to the following provisions:

- **Legiones Astartes:** Units with this special rule may always attempt to regroup at their normal Leadership value, regardless of casualties.
- **A Talent for Murder:** If any units with the Legiones Astartes (Night Lords) special rule outnumber one or more enemy non-vehicle units during any Initiative step in which they fight in an assault, they gain +1 To Hit and To Wound (to a maximum of a 2+ – note that this only affects To Hit and To Wound rolls and not other rules, such as Rending). Bulky models count as two models, Very Bulky models as three models and Extremely Bulky models and Monstrous Creatures count as five models on both sides for the purposes of working out when the Night Lords outnumber an enemy unit they are locked in combat with.
- **Nostraman Blood:** All models with this special rule fall back + 1" further than normal. If they fail a Pinning test, they may, if the controlling player wishes, fall back instead of becoming pinned – just as if they had failed a Morale check for taking casualties in the Shooting phase.
- **Night Vision:** All models in a Night Lords Primary Detachment (not just those with the Legiones Astartes (Night Lords) special rule) have the Night Vision special rule.
- **From the Shadows:** All models with this special rule have a cover save of 5+ on the first game turn, even in open ground. This rule can be combined with the effects of Stealth, etc, as normal, but other forms of cover the model might be in which provide a higher save supersede it.
- **Seeds of Dissent:** If an army's Warlord is slain, each unit in the army with this special rule must make an immediate Morale check as if they had suffered 25% losses from shooting.

'The Emperor's domain is held together by blood and fear, the blood of those that were fated to die that it might be born, and the fear that more may be required to die in order to sustain it. Fear cannot hold if not renewed, and by this truth is my Legion the blade that holds together this fragile Imperium.'

Konrad Curze, the Night Haunter, Primarch of the VIII[th] Legion

Legion Specific Wargear

The Night Lords Legion has access to the following items of special wargear:

Nostraman Chainglaive

Any character or Independent Character with the Legiones Astartes (Night Lords) special rule eligible to take a power weapon as part of their options may instead take a Nostraman chainglaive for the same cost listed.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Nostraman chainglaive	-	+1	3	Melee, Two-handed, Rending

Teleportation Transponder

Any Night Lords Legion Terminator Squad or Night Lords Legion Command Squad equipped with Terminator armour may be upgraded to have the Deep Strike special rule for +15 points for the squad. Any Night Lords Independent Character in Terminator armour may be upgraded to have Deep Strike for +10 points per model.

Trophies of Judgement

Any Independent Character can adorn themselves with the Trophies of Judgement for +5 points, gaining the Fear special rule.

Headsman's Axe

Any Independent Character with the Legiones Astartes (Night Lords) special rule may replace a power weapon with a headsman's axe for +10 points.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Headsman's axe	-	x2	3	Melee, Two-handed, Rending

'The assault on Ancalagon presents us with a tactical challenge of great complexity. For the enemy refuses to make war as civilised men, but instead takes to redoubts hidden among the ranks of loyal citizens or lurks in the deep wilderness awaiting our departure before they emerge once more. If we are to bring the Imperial Truth to this world it must be with a solid plan of utmost subtlety.

Praetor Arxus Jhaevin of the Imperial Fists prior to the Second Compliance of Ancalagon

'We find them.
Then we kill them.'

Jago Sevatarion of the Night Lords, in response to Praetor Jhaevin

Night Lords Unique Rite of War: Terror Assault

The infamous speciality of the Night Lords Legion was the Terror Assault, often conducted under conditions of complete darkness, whether natural or artificially induced. Such attacks were not just designed to overwhelm their foe, but to sow as much gut-wrenching terror in both their victims and any who were left to survive to tell the tale, so as to shroud whole worlds in a pall of fear.

Effects

- **Cover of Darkness:** The force may impose Night Fighting for the duration of the first game turn of any mission automatically. Night Fighting imposed in this manner carries on to the second game turn on a roll of 3+, and on to the third turn on a roll of a 6. While this special Night Fighting condition is in effect, all models with the Legiones Astartes (Night Lords) special rule gain +1 Initiative and +1" to their Run distances.
- **Terror Tactics:** Night Lords Terror Squads and/or Night Lords Raptor Squads must be taken as the Compulsory Troops choices for a force using this Rite of War, and may be taken as additional Troops choices if desired.
- **Claw Assault:** Legion Tactical Squads, Legion Veteran Tactical Squads and Night Lords Terror Squads may take either Dreadclaw Drop Pods or Legion Drop Pods as Dedicated Transports so long as their number does not exceed the vehicle's Transport capacity and they begin the game held in reserve inside the transport.

Limitations

- Detachments using this Rite of War must take an additional Compulsory Troops choice in addition to those usually required on their Force Organisation chart.
- Detachments using this Rite of War may only take a single Heavy Support choice as part of their Force Organisation chart.
- The controlling player may not take a Fortification or other Space Marine Legion allied detachment.

Night Lords Unique Rite of War: The Swift Blade

The Jadhek clans of Nostramo were amongst the most hateful and murderous of that world's vile denizens, swift and fearless warriors with an affinity for wanton violence. When the Night Haunter purged the various criminal gangs and syndicates, the Jadhek were amongst the last to bend the knee to his new law, clinging to the freedom of their traditional reaving lifestyle. The legacy of those clans remained hidden within the Night Lords Legion until after the events of Isstvan, when the Legion began to disregard the commands of its Primarch and regress to the old ways of the Jadhek clans once more.

Effects

- **No True Leaders:** Detachments with this Rite of War must take a minimum of three compulsory HQ choices and may take up to five HQs, regardless of the Force Organisation chart in use. Instead of the usual rules for selecting a Warlord, all of the HQs in this detachment are the Warlord. These HQs do not roll for a Warlord Trait but rather all gain the Crusader and Hatred (Loyalists) special rules. All of the HQs in this detachment must be slain to fulfil the conditions of any rule or objective that requires a Warlord to be removed from play as a casualty.
- **Jadhek Clans:** HQ choices in this detachment must be equipped with a Space Marine bike. Legion Hussar Squadrons in this detachment must be taken as compulsory Troops choices and Legion Outrider Squads may be taken as Troops choices. Vehicles of the Tank type may only be taken if they also have the Fast type.
- **Encirclement:** Units wholly comprising of models with the Legiones Astartes (Night Lords) special rule in this detachment add +2 to their total unit size when determining whether they outnumber an enemy for the purposes of the A Talent for Murder special rule.

Limitations

- Detachments using this Rite of War must take an additional Compulsory Troops choice in addition to those usually required on their Force Organisation chart.
- Detachments using this Rite of War may not take any model whose rules state that it must be the Army's Warlord, including but not limited to the Legion's Primarch.
- Detachments using this Rite of War may not take units with the Heavy or Immobile rules, or Fortifications or Allied detachments.
- This Rite of War may not be taken by a detachment belonging to the Loyalist faction.

Night Lords Unique Rite of War: The Cross of Bone

The Cross of Bone was both the name taken by those among the Night Lords who sought to divest itself of those bonds the Emperor had placed upon the Legion and the title of an ancient Nostraman tradition. It is a name that, when spoken of in the slums of Nostramo, was a challenge between gang champions, a murder-brawl in which the count of the dead and trophies taken decided the leadership of the slum hosts. Amongst the stars, it saw the same use within the Night Lords, a challenge between leaders and a statement of intent to the foe – by the number of the dead could their resolve be measured and in the bloody trophies of battle would be shown the worth of the foe.

Effects

- **The Aristocracy of Ruin:** For every non-compulsory HQ choice included as part of this detachment, the maximum number of Elites choices available as part of this Force Organisation chart is increased by +1.
- **The Strong are Strongest Alone:** As long as a model from this detachment with the Independent Character special rule is either alone or in a unit with no other Independent Characters, it gains +1 Attack.
- **The Tithe of Gore:** The Slay the Warlord Secondary Objective is worth an additional +1 Victory point for the player that has selected this Rite of War if the enemy Warlord's final wound is removed by a friendly model with the Independent Character special rule.

Limitations

- Detachments using this Rite of War must take an additional Compulsory Troops choice in addition to those usually required on their Force Organisation chart.
- Detachments using this Rite of War may not take Konrad Curze as a Lords of War choice.
- **The Rampant Blade:** Any unit from this detachment that makes a Consolidation move, must move the full distance allowed towards the nearest enemy unit within line of sight. If no enemy units are in line of sight then the Consolidation move must be made towards their opponent's deployment zone.

Night Lords Unique Rite of War: The Bloodied Gauntlet

The mark of the doomed in Nostraman gang culture, a red hand denoted a warrior serving under a sentence of death, waiting only for their master to administer punishment. At the outbreak of the Thramas Crusade, it would also serve as the mark of those warriors who held their loyalty to the Primarch as greater than their lust for death and blood. On the field of battle it was a tactic rarely employed as it would most often end in death for those committed to its cruel doctrine, but was devastating in its effect. Gathering together the doomed, marked and abandoned, a Bloodied Gauntlet was thrown into the teeth of the enemy with a singular goal – death or glory. For the warriors assembled as the vanguard, they would see their badge of shame expunged with either the foe's blood or their own. They were the finest of line-breakers, for they had long since accepted their deaths and shied from nothing the enemy could throw at them.

Effects

- **The Bloodied Gauntlet:** All Compulsory choices in this detachment must begin the game deployed on the table, or enter play on the first game turn. These units gain the Zealot special rule, and if destroyed do not grant the opposing player any Victory points regardless of the mission being used.
- **Through Death, Victory:** If the game ends as a draw, or with the player that has chosen this Rite of War as the loser then that player gains +D3 Victory points if all of their Compulsory choices have been destroyed.
- Units from this detachment entering play from Reserve after game turn 3 gain the Outflank special rule.

Limitations

- Detachments using this Rite of War must take an additional two compulsory Elites choices. These must be Infantry units and may not be equipped with Terminator armour of any kind.
- Compulsory choices in a detachment using this Rite of War may not hold or contest objectives of any kind and never count as Scoring Units. No Compulsory choice may select a Dedicated Transport and a Compulsory HQ choice may not be selected as the army's Warlord.
- All non-compulsory choices must begin the game in Reserve.



'Warriors such as those of the Legiones Astartes are not bound by the petty ambitions of lesser men. We were made to conquer and to rule, and any lord who would chain us in servitude of such a paltry goal as peace, is unworthy of our loyalty. For us there can be only war.'

Praetor Nakrid Thole, 010.M31

No Legion of the Space Marines elevated the use of fear itself as a weapon to the extent that the Night Lords did. Through their fearful and bloody acts entire star systems were cowed into submission, often occasioning far less ultimate loss of life than a conventional war might have brought. The midnight and storm-clad Legion served also as dark judges and executioners; they enacted the Emperor's retribution on planetary governor, recidivist cult and rebel alike, where their crimes were severe enough to have called down the Imperium's wrath so utterly upon them.

Where such punishments were designed to be at their most visceral and personal, the Terror squads of the Legion were unleashed. Head hunters and torturers, flayers and mutilators, within their ranks were found both the most coldly dispassionate and darkly imaginative of the Night Lords brethren, and where once the terrifying arts of murder and mayhem they perpetrated were a coldly calculated means to an end, as the decades progressed the Terror squads became a sink-hole for the most unstable and unsubtle elements within the Legion, many within them standing under their own sentences of death—commuted so long as they proved useful to their macabre master.

Terror Squad

125 points

	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Executioner	4	4	4	4	1	4	2	9	3+
Headsman	4	4	4	4	1	4	2	9	3+

Unit Composition
- 4 Executioners
- 1 Headsman

Unit Type
- Executioner: Infantry
- Headsman: Infantry (Character)

Wargear
- Power armour
- Bolt pistol
- Chainsword or combat blade
- Frag & krak grenades

Special Rules
- Legiones Astartes (Night Lords)
- Fear
- Infiltrate
- Preferred Enemy (Infantry)
- Precision Strike

Dedicated Transport
- A Terror Squad may choose a Dreadclaw Drop Pod or Rhino as a Dedicated Transport.

Options
- The Terror Squad may take:
  - Up to five additional Executioners ..... +12 points each
- Any model in the squad may also take one of the following options:
  - Boltgun ..... Free
  - Heavy chainblade ..... +5 points each
  - Volkite charger ..... +5 points each
  - Rotor cannon ..... +5 points each
  - Flamer (one model in the unit only) ..... +10 points
- The entire squad may take melta bombs ..... +5 points each
- The Headsman may exchange their chainsword or combat blade for a:
  - Power weapon ..... +10 points
  - Nostraman chainglaive ..... +10 points
  - Power fist ..... +15 points
  - Single lightning claw ..... +15 points
- The Headsman may exchange their bolt pistol for a:
  - Hand flamer ..... +10 points
  - Plasma pistol ..... +10 points
- The Headsman may also take any of the following options:
  - Artificer armour ..... +10 points



Contekar Terminator Elite

230 points

	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Contekar	5	4	4	4	1	4	2	8	2+
Dissident	5	4	4	4	2	4	3	9	2+

Unit Composition
- 4 Contekar
- 1 Dissident

Unit Type
- Contekar: Infantry
- Dissident: Infantry (Character)

Wargear
- Terminator armour
- Heavy flamer
- Nostraman chainblade
- Trophies of Judgement

Special Rules
- Legiones Astartes (Night Lords)
- Implacable Advance
- Chosen Warriors
- Lords of the Night

Dedicated Transport
- A Contekar Terminator Elite squad numbering no more than five models may take a Land Raider Phobos or a Dreadclaw Drop Pod as a Dedicated Transport.

Options
- The unit may include:
  - Up to an additional 10 Contekar.....+36 points each
- The entire unit may be upgraded to have:
  - Teleportation transponders .....+2 points per model
- Any Contekar may exchange their heavy flamer for a:
  - Volkite cavitor.....+10 points each
- The Dissident may exchange his Nostraman chainblade for one of the following options:
  - Escaton power claw.....+15 points

Lords of the Night

The Contekar were often dispatched to wrest command from lesser Night Lords leaders whom their commanders deemed unfit to prosecute the Legion's objectives. Such cruel but pragmatic methods were favoured by warlords like Sevatar and others of both the old Legion and the new Nostraman recruits, relying on the brutal skills of the Contekar to lay waste to the enemies of the Night Lords as an example to those of their brethren that might falter in their duties.

A single Contekar Terminator Elite unit numbering no more than 10 models may be taken as a compulsory HQ choice in an army in which neither Sevatar nor Konrad Curze is present.

In an army which contains Sevatar, a single Contekar Terminator Elite unit may be chosen instead of a Command squad as a bodyguard for Sevatar. This choice takes up a single Force Organisation choice with Sevatar but does not have to be deployed with him, and is treated as a separate unit during play.

Escaton power claw

A brutal prototype weapon combining the energy field and mass acceleration of a power fist with the shredding talons of a lightning claw, the Escaton power claw was re-engineered from a piece of archaeotech discovered in the final years of the Great Crusade on the war-ravaged world of Elemghast. Early versions of the Escaton claw saw limited testing with all of the Legions, but the first shipment of finished, energised gauntlets was directed by Horus primarily to the armouries of the Sons of Horus and Night Lords Legions.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Escaton power claw	-	x2	2	Melee, Shred, Unwieldy

Nostraman Chainblade

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Nostraman Chainblade	-	User	3	Melee, Rending

Volkite Cavitor

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Volkite cavitor	10"	6	5	Heavy 4, Deflagrate

Elite shock troops adept at sowing panic and dismay with their arrival, the Contekar Elite's talents for steadfast ruthlessness in the prosecution of war was much vaunted amongst the Legions during the Great Crusade. Contekar Terminators are butchers and murderers of a high order, to be called upon when the VIII[th] Legion wished to bring more than terror but utter and abject despair and destruction upon a foe, to burn their armies, infrastructure and agriculture, and to topple the foundations of their civilisation.

A haughty warrior class within the Night Lords, the Contekar were made up of recruits taken from Nostramo's ruling elite, and in their blood lay the corruption and contempt held for Imperial citizenry by those ignoble potentates. Obsessed with status, the Contekar kept themselves aloof from the rest of the Legion, deigning only to fight for those leaders they deemed worthy or possessed of noble Nostraman blood. Indeed, only the First Captain and Primarch of the Legion could command the Contekar freely. Other officers of the Legion would risk a mighty price for calling upon these elite forces, for the Contekar ever sought to further improve their station, interpreting any sign of weakness from their commanders as an invitation to eliminate a rival and seize command.

Night Raptor Squad

150 points

	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Night Raptor	5	4	4	4	1	4	2	8	3+
Huntmaster	5	4	4	4	1	4	3	9	3+

Unit Composition
- 4 Night Raptors
- 1 Huntmaster

Unit Type
- Night Raptor: Jump Infantry
- Huntmaster: Jump Infantry (Character)

Wargear
- Power armour
- Bolt pistol
- Chainsword or combat blade
- Jump pack
- Frag & krak grenades

Special Rules
- Legiones Astartes (Night Lords)
- Raptor Strike
- Bloody Murder

Options
- The Night Raptor squad may take:
  - Up to 10 additional Night Raptors ..... +15 points each
- Any model in the squad may exchange their chainsword or combat blade for one of the following options:
  - Power weapon ..... +5 points each
  - Nostraman chainglaive ..... +5 points each
  - Single lightning claw ..... +10 points each
- For every five models in the squad, one Night Raptor may exchange their bolt pistol for one of the following weapons:
  - Flamer ..... +10 points each
  - Meltagun ..... +15 points each
  - Plasma gun ..... +15 points each
  - Plasma pistol ..... +10 points each
  - Hand flamer ..... +10 points each
- Alternatively, any model may exchange both their bolt pistol and chainsword or combat blade for a:
  - Pair of lightning claws ..... +20 points
- The Huntmaster may exchange their bolt pistol for one of the following weapons:
  - Volkite serpenta ..... +5 points
  - Hand flamer ..... +10 points
  - Plasma pistol ..... +10 points
- The Huntmaster may exchange their chainsword or combat blade for the following:
  - Headsman's axe ..... +5 points
- The Huntmaster may also take any of the following options:
  - Melta bombs ..... +5 points
  - Artificer armour ..... +10 points
  - Trophies of Judgement ..... +5 points

Raptor Strike
A model with this special rule may use a Jump pack in both the Movement phase and the Assault phase of the same turn.

Bloody Murder
After all normal attacks by the squad have been resolved, count the number of enemy models removed as casualties as a result of those attacks. Immediately resolve a number of automatic wounds with AP - equal to the number of casualties caused on any one enemy unit this unit is locked in combat with (note that this has no effect on vehicles). These additional wounds do not themselves inflict more wounds.

FAST ATTACK

The Night Raptors are a caste apart from the Night Lords Legion—not so much a martial elite as a bloody coterie of murderers wedded together by similar proclivities and chosen styles of warfare. The Night Raptors are equipped with jump packs and an array of close combat weapons, all of which they utilise to bring unfettered savagery down upon the heads of their foes in a single, overwhelming onslaught.

Where the Night Lords as a Legion wield terror as a weapon, the Night Raptors reject all subtlety in favour of assaults as bloody and direct as a butcher's axe cleaving meat. The Night Raptors find bleak joy in soaring above the battlefield like screaming predators hunting for victims and savour most that stark moment of clarity when a victim witnesses their death reflected back to them in the eyes of their killer. Like many of the Legion's elite, where possible they adorn their armour with grisly trophies and utilise advanced systems to project images of death upon its surface, images that depict the doom of the Night Raptors' countless victims in eternal loop, as much for the amusement of the wearer as to stun his target into insensate horror.



Night Lords Night Raptor Veteran

Huntmaster Therun Kargas of the 9th Chapter

Sporting the modified MkIV armour that was preferred by the Night Lords elite Raptors, Huntmaster Kargas is typical of the Night Lords as a Legion by the end of the Thramas Crusade. Of particular note are the numerous gruesome trophies that adorn his armour, a practise that had become ever more common amongst the Night Lords after the Night Haunter inherited his position as Primarch, and the Nostraman gang signs etched on parchment and affixed directly to the battleplate, each likely noting some ongoing feud within the Legion. Little remained of the old VIIIth Legion that had departed Terra in glory, for even the oldest Terran veterans were now subsumed into the vicious and bloodthirsty Nostraman cult that had infected the Night Lords – a curse that would only grow stronger as the Horus Heresy continued.

Nakrid Thole

The Faceless Prince, Master of the Cross of Bone

185 points

HQ

Nakrid Thole was among those warriors of the Night Lords that had never seen Terra, never fought at the side of the Emperor. The only master he had ever known was the Night Haunter, the only home the dark, blood-slicked streets of Nostramo. It was a heritage that had shaped him in a far different mould than many of the more well-regarded Legions, and taught him the value of spite and terror over honour and mercy. Thole would spend the final years of the Great Crusade clawing his way up the ranks of his Legion, his superiors culled at his hand when they proved weak or foolish, and careful alliances built with the strong. It was a tradition of the Nostraman gang-lords, as honourable to the Night Lords as self-sacrifice and humility were to the Ultramarines.

	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Nakrid Thole	6	5	4	4	3	6	4	9	2+

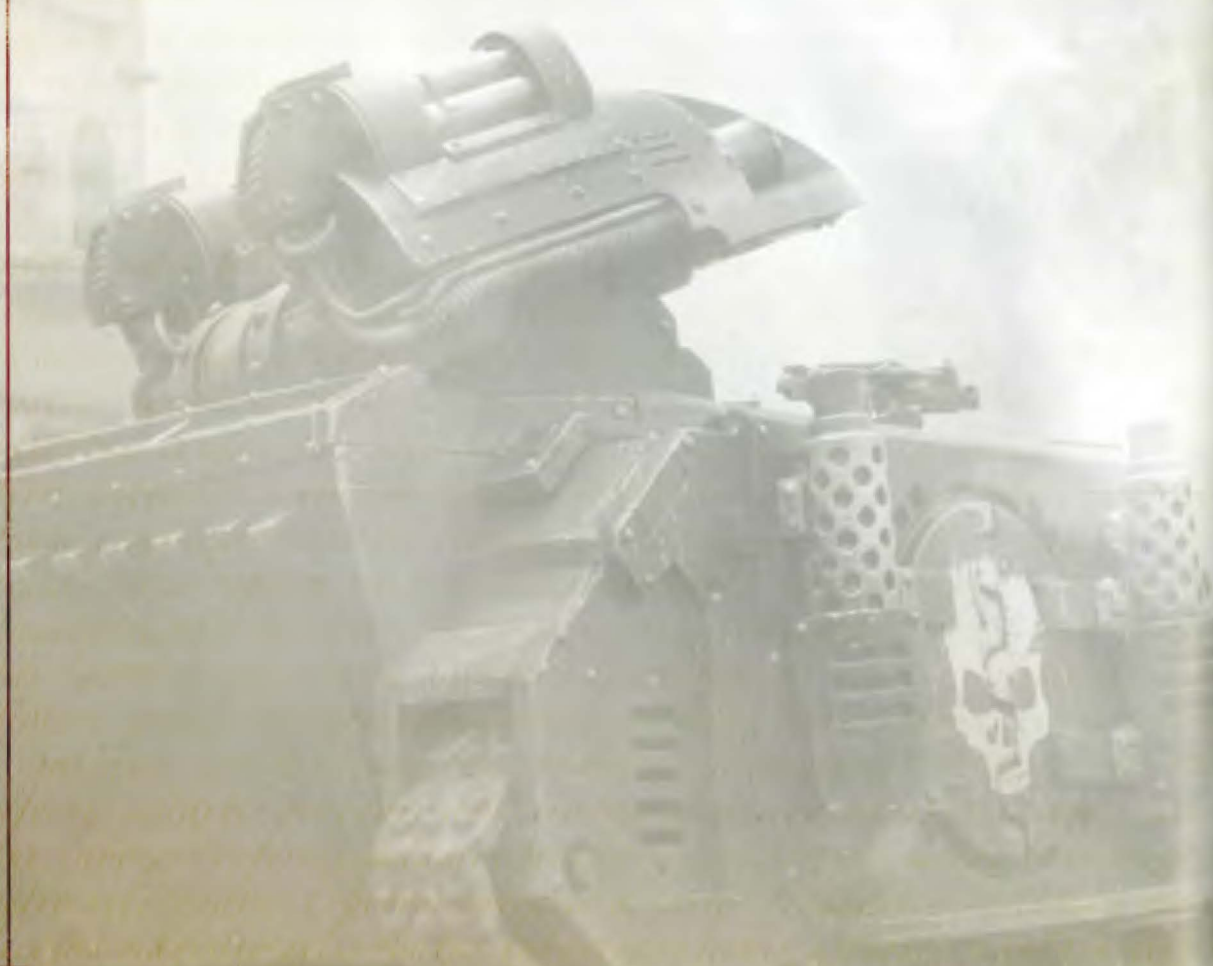
Unit Composition
- 1 (Unique)

Unit Type
- Infantry (Character)

Wargear
- Artificer armour
- Refractor field
- Volkite serpenta
- Nostraman flay-whip
- The Devil's Due
- Trophies of Judgement

Special Rules
- Legiones Astartes (Night Lords)
- Independent Character
- Master of the Legion
- Counter-attack
- Valour's Shadow

This unit may only be taken as part of a Traitor faction army.



Valour's Shadow
Time and time again Nakrid Thole would survive death and defeat by fleeing the field of battle and leaving others to die in his place. What other Legions might have named cowardice, the Night Lords praised as wisdom, a wisdom that Thole had long since mastered. Even overwhelming force could not guarantee his demise and from even the most grievous defeats he would return to plague the victors, his anger only stoked to greater extremes by his past failures.

Nakrid Thole may not be targeted by means of the Precision Strike/Precision Shots special rules. In addition, when Nakrid Thole is reduced to 0 Wounds, the controlling player must roll a D6. If the result is a 5+ then the model is still removed from play, but does not count as being destroyed for the purposes of scoring Victory points or achieving Objectives. Once removed from play due to this rule, Nakrid Thole may not re-enter play for any reason.

Nostraman Flay-whip
A length of electro-charged steel links studded by viciously-hooked spikes, this weapon is difficult to master but deadly in the hands of a skilled warrior. Cutting arcs through the air with every blow, this advanced whip can be used to torment and entangle a single foe, lacerating them as it unleashes high-voltage charges, or to hold masses of weaker foes at bay. Some few of the Night Lords still practise the skills needed to master this weapon, now otherwise vanished from the galaxy with Nostramo's destruction.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Flay-whip	-	User	4	Melee, Rending, Electro-charge, Web of Steel, Specialist Weapon

Electro-charge: Any model that suffers an unsaved wound from this weapon reduces its Initiative value to 1 until the end of its controlling player's next turn.

Web of Steel: A model equipped with a melee weapon with this special rule may choose to forfeit all of its normal attacks in order to make a single attack against each enemy model from a unit that it is locked in combat with and within 2" of the wielder, using the Flay-whip's profile. If this option is used then the Electro-charge special rule cannot trigger from unsaved wounds.

The Devil's Due
A short-handled hatchet of black metal, one side sports a curved moon-shaped blade and the other a long, wickedly-hooked spike. In battle its surface is super-heated by a miniature atomantic coil, allowing it to cut through even the thickest armour with ease despite its small size. Nakrid Thole wielded the Devil's Due in his left hand, keeping it hidden from his opponent until the moment of the target's weakness and then striking a fatal blow from surprise.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
The Devil's Due	-	+2	2	Melee, Unwieldy, The Devil's Due, Murderous Strike, Master-crafted

The Devil's Due: If an enemy model in base contact with this model has its Initiative value reduced by the effects of any other weapon or special rule then this model may make a single additional attack against the enemy model. This additional attack is made immediately before the enemy model would attack and uses the profile for The Devil's Due shown above.



HQ

Within the span of half a century Nakrid had reached the upper echelons of the Legion, commanding a company of killers of his own and well-respected by the masters of the Night Lords. Yet he could not but feel trapped by the rules placed upon him by the Imperium, limiting when and where he could flay and kill for such arbitrary goals as strategic value and civilian morale.

So, when the Night Haunter laid Dorn low and fled into the hinterlands of the Imperium Thole did not weep, but rather cheered for the beginning of a new era. With a bloody-minded ferocity he sought to bring the Legion further into the shadows, to a place where he and those like him might control their own fate without the sneering disdain of the other Legions. When Curze took a ship to Thramas, Thole saw his moment and mustered those that had supported him in the past, ready for the dawn of a new era where the Night Lords would kill and reave as they pleased.

HQ

Jago Sevatarion is said to hold the dark honour of being the first Traitor to utter the words "*Death to the false Emperor*", although in truth this was but one in a long line of crimes and blasphemies committed by the First Captain of the Night Lords over many years. Sevatar is known as one of the most lethal warriors of the entire Legiones Astartes, his name and skill as well known as those of Abaddon of the Sons of Horus, Corswain of the Dark Angels, Raldaron of the Blood Angels or Eidolon of the Emperor's Children.

As arrogant as he is gifted, Sevatar is a supremely ruthless, even dishonourable, combatant. This demeanour is carried through to his appearance, which is contrived to inspire fear in all who look upon him. His midnight blue power armour is wreathed in flayed flesh and his helm is wrought in the form of a leering skull. Beneath that deathly visage lies not just the soul of a murderer, but one gifted with latent, if repressed, psychic powers which, although unwelcome, serve to increase Sevatar's already fearsome capabilities to preternatural levels.

Sevatar — 175 points

Jago Sevatarion, The Prince of Crows, First Captain of the Night Lords and Master of the Atramentar

	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Sevatar	7	5	4	4	3	6	4	9	3+

Unit Composition
- 1 (Unique)

Unit Type
- Infantry (Character)

Wargear
- Power armour
- Iron halo
- Frag and krak grenades
- Master-crafted Nostraman chainglaive
- Bolt pistol
- Trophies of Judgement

This unit may only be taken as part of a Traitor faction army.

Special Rules
- Independent Character
- Legiones Astartes (Night Lords)
- Master of the Legion
- Master of the Atramentar
- Dirty Fighter
- Repressed Psyker
- Precision Strike
- Warlord Trait (if Sevatar is the army's Warlord, he automatically has the Master of Ambush trait – see page 137 of the *Horus Heresy: Age of Darkness Rulebook* – rather than rolling randomly.)

Options
- To represent Sevatar when he assumes control of the Night Lords in the wake of the Battle of Sheol, his power armour and master-crafted Nostraman chainglaive may both be exchanged for the following for +35 points:
  - Artificer armour & Night's Whisper



Night's Whisper

One of several weapons the Night Haunter had long since discarded in his gore-spattered sanctum, Sevatar appropriated it for his final battles against the Dark Angels, whose armour had proved resistant to the teeth of his old glaive. In form it was an elegant chainglaive of archaic make, its archaeotech motor tuned to a sibilant purr rather than the discordant roar of more commonplace weapons.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Night's Whisper	-	+1	2	Melee, Two-handed, Duellist's Edge, Master-crafted

Master of the Atramentar

Night Lords Terminator squads, Terminator Command squads and Contekar Terminator Elite from the same detachment as Sevatar who Deep Strike will not scatter as long as they are placed within 6" of Sevatar as they deploy.

Dirty Fighter

Sevatar is one of the most dangerous hand-to-hand combatants in his or any other Legion. He gains the Instant Death special rule for his attacks (in addition to any from his weapons) when fighting in a Challenge.

Repressed Psyker

Sevatar is a Level 1 Psyker with the Precognition Psychic Power from the Divination Discipline. However, he has long repressed such abilities, which are more often in use subconsciously rather than by direct will. The controlling player may not use more than 2 Warp Charges from their pool in order to use Sevatar's Repressed Psyker ability, and a modified Leadership value of 7 is used should he become subject to Perils of the Warp.

"Of all the cousins I have shed blood alongside and danced with in the pit, none have I met with such nihilistic despair in their hearts as Captain Sevatarion. He once told me he does not laugh while he kills in the manner of my brothers; rather he simply kills and kills, and will only be moved to laughter in battle on the day when it is he that is to be given death."

From Memoirs of the Hunt, a Remembrancer's record of the words of Muqalai Khan of the V[th] Legion



HQ

Even among the Night Lords Legion, there were those who overstepped the bounds of what even they considered sane. One such individual was the Apothecary Mawdrym Llansahai, or '*Bloody Bones*' to give him the nickname granted him without irony by his Legion. A Nostraman by birth and a child of that benighted world's ruling class, Llansahai registered as both highly intelligent and psychologically stable, and showed great aptitude and ability for the Apothecarion in which he was placed. The Night Lords Apothecaries were charged with other arts than mere healing; they were needed to oversee interrogations, contrive inventively malignant punishments and keep their 'subjects' alive and lucid far longer than they wished to be. Having risen to be a Primus Medicae, Llansahai was master of these twisted surgical arts and those who wielded them, and slowly and surely they began to corrode his sanity.

Soon it was discovered that he was performing numerous unsanctioned vivisections and surgical experiments. Dragged in chains to his Primarch for judgement, Llansahai was released under suspended sentence of death. Although afterwards a shunned and dreaded pariah among his Legion, he survived, a monster among monsters, and on Isstvan V he worked unspeakable horrors upon the wounded and the dying of friend and foe alike.

Flaymaster Mawdrym Llansahai

Fallen Primus Medicae of the Night Lords, The Smiling One, Bloody Bones

135 points

	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Llansahai	5	4	4	4	2	5	2	9	3+

Unit Composition
- 1 (Unique)

Unit Type
- Infantry (Character)

Wargear
- Power armour
- Refractor field
- Frag & krak grenades
- Archaeotech pistol
- Red Jaqa
- Narthecium

This unit may only be taken as part of a Traitor faction army.

Special Rules
- Independent Character
- Fearless
- Legiones Astartes (Night Lords)
- Fear
- The Devil's Luck
- Unfit for Command

Red Jaqa
Llansahai's custom-wrought scalpel is a long-bladed knife of unknown origin, whose edge can cut cleaner and deeper than any power blade. Although no true combat weapon, in Flaymaster Llansahai's hands it is a terrifying and deadly thing.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Red Jaqa	-	-1	3	Melee, Murderous Strike, Specialist Weapon

Murderous Strike: Attacks with this special rule cause Instant Death on a To Wound roll of 6. Roll any viable saves against this Instant Death-causing wound separately to any other wounds the attack inflicts.

The Devil's Luck
Feared and distrusted, even among his own Legion, Llansahai has survived both enemy action and attempts on his life by his comrades, seemingly often by sheer chance alone. This has only enhanced the Primus Medicae's dark renown. Llansahai may re-roll failed Look Out, Sir and Feel No Pain rolls.

Unfit for Command
Llansahai may not be taken as a compulsory HQ selection for the army and may never be its Warlord – even the Night Lords have their limits of toleration for madness.

Kheron Ophion of the Kyroptera

Master of the Shroud of Eventide, Captain of the 39th Company, The Coward

165 points

	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Kheron Ophion	6	5	4	4	3	5	4	10	3+

Unit Composition
- 1 (Unique)

Unit Type
- Infantry (Character)

Wargear
- The Bloody Aegis
- Power axe
- Refractor field
- Volkite serpenta
- Power armour
- Melta bombs
- Frag & krak grenades

This unit may only be taken as part of a Traitor faction army.

Special Rules
- Legiones Astartes (Night Lords)
- Master of the Legion
- Independent Character
- The Coward
- Warlord (if Kheron Ophion is the army's Warlord, he has the Aberrant Bravery Trait rather than rolling randomly)

The Bloody Aegis

Crafted from fragments of the broken hull plating of Ophion's first command, the Killing Whisper, which was destroyed over Pragus as it sought to stand off an entire Fra'al conclave hounding the retreat of the 67th Expeditionary Fleet, the Bloody Aegis stands as a personal reminder from the Praetor of the 67th of the cost of such bravery. As much a mark of shame and cruel jest as a trophy of glory, the Bloody Aegis bears few marks of expert craftsmanship, but forged of the same metal as the hulls of void craft and covered in vicious barbs of serrated ceramite, it presents a dire obstacle to a foe.

The Bloody Aegis increases Ophion's Invulnerable save to 3+ in close combat. In addition, any model that targets Ophion with one or more attacks in an assault and scores an unmodified 1 on at least one of those dice, has its WS halved when targeted by any of Ophion's close combat attacks until the beginning of the next game turn.

The Coward

Once Ophion has lost at least a single wound, he gains the Feel No Pain (4+) special rule. When reduced to a single remaining wound, Ophion replaces Feel No Pain (4+) with Feel No Pain (3+).

Warlord: Aberrant Bravery

If Kheron Ophion is the army's Warlord then as long as Ophion's controlling player has less Victory points than their opponent, Ophion and any Night Lords units within 12" of him gain the Stubborn special rule. Additionally, the controlling player may always choose to re-roll, or have their opponent re-roll, any failed dice roll to determine if the game continues for another turn.

HQ

A long-serving member of the Night Lords Legion raised up from the gutters of Nostramo to captain and set loose among the stars, for seven decades Ophion fought the wars of the Great Crusade, forging a legacy of solid service. Such stubborn bravery was an aberration amongst a Legion dedicated to practicality and the subtle, if gruesome, prosecution of war, and many of his peers saw him as flawed.

At the bloody end of the Thramas Crusade, as the Dark Angels vented their wrath against the unprepared fleet of the Night Lords, it was the intervention of two ships that allowed so many of their kin to escape. One was the *Nightfall*, the VIIIth Legion's flagship, the other was the *Shroud of Eventide*, a line cruiser that, under Ophion's command, turned annihilation into mere decimation. This unexpected bravery saw him appointed to the ranks of the restored Kyroptera, the shadowy council who ruled the Night Lords in their Primarch's absence. Ophion led his contingent, some 9,000 warriors, to the Nostramo sector. There he intended to rally those scattered by the Night Lords' defeat and bring them back into the greater war, to join the final push on Terra. Yet these plans were to be upset by the arrival of an unexpected foe and with Ophion lost and presumed dead, the Nostramo sector fell back into chaos and strife.

Called the 'Night Haunter' by the people of his home world of Nostramo, Konrad Curze was from his earliest days a figure of dark renown. Growing to maturity upon benighted city streets ruled by criminals while corrupt overlords enjoyed lives of luxury, Curze took it upon himself to exert his own bloody brand of justice. Instituting a reign of terror that cowed criminal and tyrant alike, the Night Haunter brought order, of a kind, to Nostramo. When at last the Emperor came, Curze had already foreseen the fate that lay ahead of him, his role as Primarch and his ultimate end, his sanity ever stretched taut by grim visions of the horrors soon to overwhelm the galaxy.

Having been granted command of the VIIIth Legion, which the Primarch named the Night Lords, Curze set about imposing his particular notions of order and justice upon the wider galaxy. World after world fell to the Night Haunter's bloody campaigns of conquest, the Primarch becoming so feared that the mere word of his approach was often sufficient to suppress rebellion.

Konrad Curze

The Primarch of the Night Lords, The Night Haunter, The Last Judge, The King of Terrors

435 points

	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Konrad Curze	8	6	6	6	6	7	5	10	2+

Unit Composition
- 1 (Unique)

Unit Type
- Jump Infantry (Character)

Wargear
- The Nightmare Mantle
- Mercy & Forgiveness
- The Widowmakers
- Frag grenades

Special Rules
- Primarch (Independent Character, Master of the Legion, Eternal Warrior, Fear, Adamantium Will, Fleet, Fearless, It Will Not Die, Precision Strike, Precision Shot)
- Sire of the Night Lords
- The King of Terrors
- Shrouded
- Stealth
- Bulky

This unit may only be taken as part of a Traitor faction army.



Sire of the Night Lords
A dark and haunted figure, obsessed by death and judgement, and unshakable in his belief in the fundamental fallibility of Mankind and the agency of fear as the only true means of controlling humanity's failings, Konrad Curze and his Legion were shaped by the terror and darkness of Nostramo just as much as they were by the gene-craft of the Emperor.

Konrad Curze has the Night Vision and Acute Senses special rules, and a force containing him as its Warlord may always elect to have the first turn of any game use the Night Fighting rule. A Night Lords force with Konrad Curze as its Warlord gains the Fear special rule for all of its units with the Legiones Astartes (Night Lords) special rule, and affected units which already have the Fear special rule now impose a -1 penalty on the Leadership value of enemy units when testing for Fear against them.

The King of Terrors
Such is Curze's aura of preternatural malice and sinister intent, Fear tests taken against him are subject to a -3 Leadership penalty. In addition, should he be part of an assault where an enemy unit is destroyed outright, all other enemy units subject to Fear within 12" and with line of sight to the combat must take an immediate Morale check or fall back.

The Nightmare Mantle
Curze's raiment of war was a customised artificer suit, bedecked in grisly trophies of judgement and the flayed skins of those whose sins he saw as particularly egregious or noteworthy. It provides a 2+ armour save and a 4+ Invulnerable save, and grants the Hit & Run special rule. When the Night Haunter charges, he gains the Hammer of Wrath special rule, inflicting D3 Hammer of Wrath attacks rather than the usual +1 additional attack.

Mercy & Forgiveness
This pair of murderous artificer lightning claws, unknown in origin, which Curze favoured as his personal weapons were given the doleful names 'Mercy' and 'Forgiveness' by the Night Lords; though what their wielder named them, if anything, remains as with so much about their master, unknown.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Mercy & Forgiveness	Melee	User	2	Melee, Shred, Specialist Weapon, Murderous Strike, Paired (+1 attack)

Murderous Strike: Attacks with this special rule cause Instant Death on a To Wound roll of 6. Roll any viable saves against this Instant Death-causing wound separately to any other wounds the attack inflicts.

The Widowmakers
Based on the micro-serrated throwing blades utilised for signature-kills by certain Nostraman assassin-cults, Curze favoured the use of these vicious, yet highly precise weapons over more conventional firearms in battle, using them to disable and maim as he willed.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Widowmaker volley	12"	4	5	Assault 3, Lethal Precision

Lethal Precision: Wielded by Curze, these weapons inflict precision strikes of a 4+, and on To Wound rolls of a 6 ignore both armour saves and Invulnerable saves.



Recruiting from the strongest of Nostramo's population, the ranks of the Night Lords were swelled by killers every bit as brutal as their Primarch, his conquests increasingly fought not to deliver the benighted from the horrors of the Age of Strife, but to shed the blood of those he judged wanting. By the time the Warmaster's treachery was revealed to an appalled Imperium of Mankind, Konrad Curze and his Legion were already renegades in all but name, on the verge of censure by the highest authorities in the Emperor's domains.

The Night Haunter and his dark kin committed themselves fully to the treachery unveiled at the Isstvan V dropsite. Ordered by the Imperium to serve in the second wave of Legions committed to bringing the rebel Sons of Horus, Death Guard, World Eaters and Emperor's Children to heel for their deeds at Isstvan III, the Night Lords' thirst for justice was tragically misjudged. Curze had already thrown in his lot with Warmaster Horus, his cruel ire directed not against the Traitors but against his own brothers and their Legions. Amidst the carnage unleashed at the height of the massacre, Konrad Curze came face-to-face with his hated brother Corax of the Raven Guard, and it was only capricious fate that averted the death of a second of the Emperor's sons upon the cursed ground of Isstvan V.



Army Lists Additions

Legion Hussar Squadron

150 points

	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Legion Hussar	4	4	4	5	1	4	1	8	3+
Legion Hussar Sergeant	4	4	4	5	1	4	2	9	3+

Unit Composition
- 4 Legion Hussars
- 1 Legion Hussar Sergeant

Unit Type
- Legion Hussar: Bike
- Legion Hussar Sergeant: Bike (Character)

Wargear
- Bolt pistol
- Chainsword or combat blade
- Frag and krak grenades
- Power armour
- Legion Space Marine Bike with twin-linked bolter

Special Rules
- Legiones Astartes
- Hit and Run
- Support Squad

Legion Hussar Squadrons may be taken as a Troops choice in a Space Marine Legion detachment, as found in The Horus Heresy Legiones Astartes – Age of Darkness Army List book.

Options
- The squad may take:
  - Up to 5 additional Legion Hussars ..... +30 points each
- The entire squad may replace their twin-linked bolters with:
  - Twin-linked snub rotor cannon ..... +10 points per model
- The squad's Legion Hussar Sergeant may exchange their bolt pistol for one of the following:
  - Hand flamer ..... +10 points
  - Plasma pistol ..... +10 points
- The squad's Legion Hussar Sergeant may exchange their chainsword or combat blade for one of the following:
  - Power weapon ..... +10 points
  - Power fist ..... +15 points
  - Single lightning claw ..... +15 points
- The squad's Legion Hussar Sergeant may take:
  - Melta bombs ..... +5 points

Snub Rotor Cannon

Unlike the more common rotor cannon carried by Space Marine support troops, the snub rotor cannon sacrifices range for a vastly increased ammunition capacity and greater rate of fire. It generates such a hail of projectiles that even heavy armour is not fully proof against the weight of firepower these weapons can produce.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Snub rotor cannon	12"	3	6	Salvo 4/5

TROOPS

Armoured bikes have seen use within the Legiones Astartes since their origins on Terra, fulfilling a variety of roles from reconnaissance to assault. Legion Hussars serve as an auxiliary force to the formations of heavy infantry that are the core of the Legions, screening their advance and pursuing the foe once their volleys of boltgun fire have set them to flight. They stand as the first line of defence for a Legion host, ready to mount an assault into the teeth of the enemy to buy their brothers time to take up position before retreating back to open a line of fire for the Tactical squads at their back.

Only the most steadfast and disciplined of a Legion's assault cadre are assigned as Hussars, warriors that can be relied upon in the heat of battle. For overzealous assaults can easily leave a Hussar squadron outnumbered and overwhelmed by the foe, or worse can leave the infantry they shield vulnerable to counter-assault. Those that serve amongst their number and excel are counted amongst the elite of the Legion, and many officers of the Legiones Astartes have borne the title Hussar.

Legion Jetbike Sky Seeker Squadron

100 points

	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Sv
Legion Sky Seeker	4	4	4	5	1	4	1	8	3+
Legion Sky Seeker Sergeant	4	4	4	5	1	4	2	9	3+

Unit Composition
- 2 Legion Sky Seekers
- 1 Legion Sky Seeker Sergeant

Unit Type
- Legion Sky Seeker: Jetbike
- Legion Sky Seeker Sergeant: Jetbike (Character)

Wargear
- Bolt pistol
- Chainsword or combat blade
- Frag and krak grenades
- Power armour
- Legion Space Marine Estoc Jetbike with twin-linked bolters and Oracle array

Special Rules
- Legiones Astartes
- Scout
- Support Squad

Legion Sky Seeker Jetbike Squadrons may be taken as a Troops choice in a Space Marine Legion detachment, as found in The Horus Heresy Legiones Astartes – Age of Darkness Army List book.

Options
- The squad may take:
  - Up to 7 additional Legion Sky Seekers ..... +25 points each
- The entire squad may replace their twin-linked bolters with one of the following:
  - Heavy rotor cannon ..... + 5 points per model
  - Grenade launcher (with frag and krak grenades) ..... +10 points per model
- The squad's Sky Seeker Sergeant may exchange their bolt pistol for one of the following:
  - Hand flamer ..... +10 points
  - Plasma pistol ..... +10 points
- The squad's Sky Seeker Sergeant may exchange their chainsword or combat blade for one of the following:
  - Power weapon ..... +10 points
  - Power fist ..... +15 points
  - Single lightning claw ..... +15 points
- The squad's Sky Seeker Sergeant may take:
  - Melta bombs ..... +5 points

Oracle Array
A model equipped with an Oracle array counts as having an augury scanner. In addition, a unit which has at least one model equipped with an Oracle array may designate a single enemy unit within 12" and line of sight of the unit at the start of the controlling player's Shooting phase. Until the start of the controlling player's next turn, all friendly units with the Legiones Astartes special rule may add +1 to all To Hit rolls made against the designated unit during the Shooting phase. This benefit is not cumulative, and if multiple units mark the same target, it has no additional effect. Designating a target unit counts as a Shooting attack for the entire Sky Seekers unit in that Shooting phase.

Heavy Rotor Cannon
The heavy rotor cannon is an improved version of the humble rotor cannon that fires larger calibre ammunition and possesses more robust motors for the barrel assembly. While still not matching the power of the assault cannon that would render it obsolete, it was superior to the standard rotor cannon and its lighter weight allowed it to be attached to the small Estoc pattern jetbikes without compromising their agility.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Heavy rotor cannon	30"	4	6	Salvo 3/4

Space Marine Estoc Jetbike
A Space Marine Estoc Jetbike follows the standard rules for Jetbikes as found in *The Horus Heresy: Age of Darkness Rulebook*. Note that the benefit to the riders' Toughness has already been included in the Sky Seeker's profile.

The light Estoc jetbike is an uncommon sight amongst most Legions, renowned for its speed, advanced optics and augur systems but lacking the robust armour of the larger Scimitar pattern Jetbikes. Those companies fortunate enough to field squadrons of Sky Seekers use them as advanced reconnaissance units, securing a vital advantage on the field of battle with an ease few other vehicles can match. Capable of outrunning most foes they are unable to defeat, Sky Seekers determine the enemy's most dangerous assets and direct fire from heavy weapons at the rear of the Legiones Astartes' advance to annihilate them.

The Achilles heel of the Estoc is its onerous maintenance routine and tendency to mechanical failure in harsh environments, leading many Legions to see them as much of a liability as an asset. Many of the Tech-Priests assigned to the Legions claim the Estoc houses a rebellious machine spirit, and often insist they be housed in separate vaults of the armoury to other vehicles. Despite these flaws, the Estoc remains in use in many of the Legions that serve the Emperor, its operators prone to indulging in a number of odd rituals intended to defeat the supposed curse of their mounts.

Legion Sabre Strike Tank

65 points per model

	Armour			
	BS	Front	Side	Rear	HP
Sabre Strike Tank	4	12	11	10	3

Unit Composition
- 1-2 Sabre Strike Tanks

Unit Type
- Vehicle (Tank, Fast)

Wargear
- One hull-mounted Anvilus snub autocannon
- One hull-mounted heavy bolter
- Smoke launchers
- Searchlight
- Auxiliary drive

Legion Sabre Strike Tanks may be taken as a Fast Attack choice in a Space Marine Legion detachment, as found in The Horus Heresy Legiones Astartes – Age of Darkness Army List book.

Options
- Any Sabre Strike Tank may exchange its Anvilus snub autocannon for one of the following:
  - Neutron blaster ..... +20 points
  - Volkite saker ..... Free
- Any Sabre Strike Tank may exchange its heavy bolter for one of the following weapons:
  - Multi-melta ..... +25 points
  - Volkite culverin ..... +15 points
  - Heavy flamer ..... Free
- Any Sabre Strike Tank may take a pintle-mounted weapon:
  - Twin-linked bolter ..... +5 points
  - Combi-weapon ..... +5 points
  - Havoc launcher ..... +15 points
- All Sabre Strike Tanks in the squadron may take any of the following options – all vehicles must select the same upgrades:
  - Up to four Sabre missiles ..... +5 points each
  - Armoured ceramite ..... +20 points
  - Extra armour ..... +10 points

FAST ATTACK

Fast, rugged and heavily armed, the Sabre serves the Legiones Astartes as a strike tank, attacking key enemy targets and destroying them long before they can pose a threat to any army. Fitted with a number of advanced weapons systems, from rapid fire autocannon to exotic beam weapons, there were few foes that could resist the firepower of a full squadron of these swift hunters. Once the foe is annihilated, the speed of these fleet vehicles allows them to evade any counter-attack and reform to strike at the vulnerable flanks of the enemy army, keeping the heavy armour suppressed as the Space Marine infantry advances to crush the foes of the Emperor.

The Sabre is the first of a new breed of Space Marine armoured vehicles, much like the prototype Sicaran, the result of the distilled experience of the Great Crusade. It carries a variety of technological wonders newly forged by the adepts of the Mechanicum, from advanced cogitator arrays to multi-axle drive cores, all intended to allow the tank to be operated by a single Space Marine. It embodies a new, mobile style of war; a departure from the static gun lines of the early Great Crusade.



Anvilus Snub Autocannon
Compact and powerful, the autocannon constructed on the Forge World of Anvilus are known to surpass all others. The Sabre mounts an example of the masterful work of those forge-wrights, its short barrel and complex feed system allowing it to fit within the small chassis of the strike tank and still provide exemplary anti-armour firepower.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Anvilus snub autocannon	24"	8	4	Heavy 2, Twin-linked, Sunder

Neutron Blaster
Constructed in the same manner as the larger neutron cannon employed by the Sicaran Venator, these weapons are capable of slicing apart armour and frying delicate circuitry with ease. However, the radiation emitted by the capacitors and charge packs of the cannon is so deleterious that it will eventually degrade the Sabre's control systems.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Neutron blaster	24"	9	2	Heavy 1, Concussive, Shock Pulse

Volkite Saker
A modified volkite culverin, the saker provides a maximised spread of high energy particle beams while the Sabre manoeuvres at high speed. While it cannot penetrate heavy armour, it is more than capable of cutting a swathe through heavy infantry and shredding the hulls of lighter vehicles.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Volkite saker	24"	6	5	Heavy 6, Deflagrate

Sabre Missiles
Early prototypes of the Sabre experimented with racks of hunter-killer missiles as a secondary weapon, but their launch velocity proved too severe for the Sabre's small chassis. These are re-engineered missiles with a lower launch velocity, but a more advanced shaped warhead to compensate. They are often carried in large numbers by Sabre squadrons to ensure a kill on primary targets.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Sabre missiles	36"	6	4	Heavy 1, One Use, Missile Lock, Rending

"The galaxy burns, yet amid the chaos, carnage and disaster, squadrons of Sabre tanks remain resolute, wheeling through the smoke at speed to find their mark. They are the perfect strike tank, embodying the Legions in ferocious nature."

Lord Castellan Varakian of the VII[th] Legion, at the height of the Siege of Inwit, 012.M31



Terrax Pattern Termite Assault Drill

Points: Varies

FAST ATTACK

Originally designed on Terra for the task of rooting out burrowing xenos species during the Great Crusade, canny commanders quickly found use for the Terrax pattern Termite Assault Drill in tearing through the foundations of enemy bastions or emerging behind barricades or trench lines to lay waste to their defenders. A specialised transport vehicle, the Termite is capable of bringing a full squad of warriors to the battlefield whilst bypassing enemy auspex and atmospheric scanners. Similar in design to the boarding torpedoes launched from starships, the Termite safely transports its passengers thanks to gyroscopic stabilisation harnesses which limit impact and acceleration trauma.

Above ground, it is sluggish and vulnerable to enemy fire, and is usually carried to its launching point some distance from the actual battle zone by a dedicated cargo platform. However, underground it is capable of tunnelling rapidly through even the densest of materials at speeds comparable to surface transport craft. Rock, earth and even hardened plasteel offer little hindrance to its grinding drill, which utilises a linked array of melta cutters and phase-shield generators to aid the vehicle's progress. Once at its target location, it emerges onto the surface, or even directly into the lower level of macro-fortifications, scattering nearby enemies with its melta cutters before disgorging its cargo.

		Armour			
	BS	Front	Side	Rear	HP
Termite Assault Drill	4	12	12	10	3

Unit Composition
- 1 Termite Assault Drill

Unit Type
- Vehicle (Tank)

Wargear
- Two twin-linked bolters (Legiones Astartes)
- Two heavy flamers (Mechanicum Taghmata, Solar Auxilia, and Imperialis Militia & Cults)

Special Rules
- Deep Strike
- Subterranean Assault
- Death from Below
- Melta Cutters
- Crawling Advance

Access Points
- Two access hatches. In practice a player may choose to open and embark/disembark from a single hatch on either side of the hull.

Transport Capacity
- The Termite Assault Drill has a Transport capacity of 12 models (Termite Assault Drills may not carry models with the Bulky, Very Bulky or Extremely Bulky special rules).

A Termite Assault Drill may be taken as a Dedicated Transport option for Legion Destroyer Squads, Scyllax Covenants, Imperialis Militia Grenadier Squads, Veletaris Storm Sections and Auxilia Flamer Sections comprised entirely of infantry and numbering no more than 12 models.

Designer's Note: *The Terrax Pattern Termite Assault Drill can be taken as a Fast Attack choice for the points cost stated in the following army lists:*

- Legiones Astartes 80 points
- Mechanicum Taghmata 85 points
- Solar Auxilia 80 points
- Imperialis Militia & Cults 75 points

Depending on what list it is taken in, the Terrax Pattern Termite Assault Drill has different Wargear and different Options.

Options (Legiones Astartes)
- A Termite Assault Drill may take any of the following:
  - Auxiliary drive ..... +5 points
  - Extra armour ..... +5 points
  - Armoured ceramite ..... +20 points
- A Termite Assault Drill may exchange either or both of its twin-linked bolters for one of the following options:
  - Twin-linked volkite charger ..... +5 points each
  - Heavy flamer ..... +5 points each

Options (Mechanicum Taghmata)
- A Termite Assault Drill may take any of the following:
  - Blessed autosimulacra ..... +5 points
  - Extra armour ..... +5 points
  - Armoured ceramite ..... +20 points
- A Termite Assault Drill may exchange either or both of its heavy flamers for one of the following options:
  - Twin-linked volkite charger ..... Free

Options (Solar Auxilia)
- A Termite Assault Drill may take any of the following:
  - Extra armour ..... +5 points
  - Armoured ceramite ..... +20 points
- A Termite Assault Drill may exchange either or both of its heavy flamers for one of the following options:
  - Twin-linked volkite charger ..... +5 points each

Options (Imperialis Militia & Cults)
- A Termite Assault Drill may take any of the following:
  - Extra armour ..... +5 points

Subterranean Assault
Should the Termite Assault Drill, and any unit it transports, enter play using the Deep Strike special rule, they count as being a Subterranean Assault vehicle for the wider use of the Subterranean Assault rule for your army. At the beginning of the controlling player's first turn, they must choose half of their Subterranean Assault vehicles held as Reserves for the purpose of Deep Striking (rounding up) to make a Subterranean Assault. These units arrive on the controlling player's first player turn. The arrival of any remaining Subterranean Assault vehicles in the player's force is rolled for as usual for the mission.

This rule, while similar in function to the Drop Pod Assault special rule, does not interact with it for the purposes of calculating how many units may arrive on the table by Deep Strike. Armies may consist of units with both the Drop Pod Assault and Subterranean Assault rules unless otherwise noted.

Death from Below
Instead of the usual rules for Deep Striking, when a Subterranean Assault vehicle enters play via Deep Strike, place a Large Blast (5") marker on the table and scatter this to determine the final position of its arrival as per the Deep Strike special rule. The initial placement of this marker, before rolling for scatter, may not be on top of impassable terrain or within 1" of any unit.

Should this marker scatter on top of impassable terrain, a building, ruin, fortification, vehicle or any unit engaged in combat, reduce the scatter distance by the minimum required to avoid the obstacle. If the marker representing the arrival of the Termite was displaced in this way by a vehicle or fortification, the closest vehicle or fortification to the marker immediately suffers a Str 10 AP- hit – vehicles are hit on their Side armour. If the arrival of the Termite was instead displaced by any units engaged in close combat, all units in that combat suffer D6 Str 6 AP 4 hits. After the final position of the marker is determined, if the marker covers or touches any enemy or friendly unit then that unit also suffers D6 Str 6 AP 4 hits.

After all damage is resolved, the Subterranean Assault vehicle may be placed in any orientation so long as the centre of the Large Blast (5") marker is underneath part of the vehicle's hull and it remains 1" away from any fortification, vehicle or unit engaged in combat. The area under the Large Blast (5") marker is now difficult terrain for the rest of the game. Players may, should they wish to, instead represent this area with a piece of crater terrain.

Should a Subterranean Assault vehicle be placed on top of any unit which does not pose an obstacle to its arrival as described above, the Death from Below special rule allows it to be placed as though the unit was not there. If some models in the unit would end up underneath the Subterranean Assault vehicle when it reaches its final position (it makes no difference whether the unit is Falling Back or not), these models must be moved by the controlling player out of the way by the shortest distance, leaving at least 1" between them and the Subterranean Assault vehicle (and indeed any other unit) whilst maintaining unit coherency and staying on the tabletop. Any models that cannot manage this are crushed and removed from play as casualties with no saves allowed.

Melta Cutters
A Termite Assault Drill ignores Difficult terrain and Dangerous terrain. In addition, it adds +2 to its Strength when making ramming attacks against fortifications.

Crawling Advance
A Termite Assault Drill may never move faster than Combat Speed or move Flat Out.

FAST ATTACK

The Termite is widely used by several branches of the Imperial Host, primarily among specialised regiments of the Imperial Army and within the ranks of the Legiones Astartes – although some Taghma of the Mechanicum also specialise in their use, especially among certain clades of the Autokrator. Among the Imperial Army, these vehicles are generally issued only to specialist siege regiments, such as the famed Caronid Sentinels, or to units mustered from worlds whose conditions or aberrant populations require their use. Several of the Legiones Astartes, most notably the Imperial Fists, Iron Hands and Iron Warriors, maintain large numbers of these vehicles and are known to deploy them en-masse against dug-in enemy formations, while the Salamanders are renowned for their use of this vehicle to engage enemy forces in hostile environments.

Legion Arquitor Bombard

140 points per model

HEAVY SUPPORT

The Arquitor pattern Bombard is a heavy artillery platform designed to operate at the forefront of a Legiones Astartes advance. Equipped with a reinforced chassis and brutal short range firepower, it is called upon to break the most stubborn of fortifications or to annihilate massed enemy infantry and armour. The heavy guns and missiles most often carried by the indomitable Arquitor Bombard are more than capable of removing any obstacle to the advance of a Space Marine host in a series of devastating explosions.

As an infantry support platform, the Arquitor lacks the sheer speed of some of the other heavy armour employed by the Legiones Astartes, an intentional feature of the vehicle that keeps it locked in formation with the infantry it supports. The Space Marines of any infantry force take heart from the sight of an Arquitor squadron, knowing the hulking artillery pieces will see them through the most ferocious firefights without pause. Indeed, many of these vehicles have built lasting legends of valour among the warriors that fight in their shadow, tokens of praise and icons of victory adorning their heavy plate.

		Armour			
	BS	Front	Side	Back	HP
Arquitor Bombard	4	12	12	10	4

Unit Composition
- 1-3 Arquitor Bombards

Unit Type
- Vehicle (Tank, Heavy)

Wargear
- One hull-mounted Morbus heavy bombard
- Two sponson-mounted heavy bolters
- Smoke launchers
- Searchlight
- Auxiliary drive

Legion Arquitor Bombards may be taken as a Heavy Support choice in a Space Marine Legion detachment, as found in The Horus Heresy Legiones Astartes – Age of Darkness Army List book.

Options
- Any Arquitor Bombard may exchange its Morbus heavy bombard for one of the following:
  - Graviton-charge cannon ..... Free
  - Spicula rocket system ..... Free
- Any Arquitor Bombard may exchange both its sponson-mounted heavy bolters for:
  - Two sponson-mounted autocannon ..... +10 points
- Any Arquitor Bombard may take a pintle-mounted weapon:
  - Twin-linked bolter ..... +5 points
  - Combi-weapon ..... +5 points
  - Havoc launcher ..... +15 points
- All Arquitor Bombards in the squadron may take any of the following options – all vehicles must select the same upgrades:
  - Armoured ceramite ..... +20 points
  - Extra armour ..... +10 points



Morbus Heavy Bombard

Patterned on the more common Demolisher cannon, the Morbus heavy bombard was developed to deploy the insidious carcass shell during trench and siege warfare. Carcass shells exchange the sheer explosive power of more regular munitions in order to pack the shell casing with short-lived but deadly phage contaminants. These horrendous bio-weapons are capable of rendering an unarmoured warrior to little more than gore-spattered bones in a few seconds.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Morbus bombard				
- Explosive shells	24"	10	2	Ordnance 1, Barrage, Large Blast (5")
- Carcass shells	24"	2	4	Ordnance 1, Barrage, Large Blast (5"), Fleshbane, Ignores Cover, Pinning

Graviton-charge Cannon

An exotic application of graviton technology, the graviton-charge cannon fires energised canisters that impact among the enemy's ranks, emitting a graviton field of such strength that it binds infantry to the earth and crushes delicate circuitry and electronics. Adept not only at destroying the enemy, but also critically disrupting their advance, these weapons are highly valued among the Legiones Astartes.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Graviton-charge	24"	*	4	Ordnance 1, Large Blast (5"), Barrage, Concussion, Graviton Pulse*, Haywire

Spicula Rocket System

The Spicula is a very simple weapons system, a large rack of unguided rockets set to fire in rippling salvos at point blank range where their inaccuracy is of little consequence. The space that might otherwise have held guidance electronics is instead used for larger, more destructive warheads, sheer firepower making up for its lack of sophistication.

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Spicula rockets	24"	7	3	Ordnance 1, Blast (5"/7"), Rocket Salvo, Sunder, Wrecker

Rocket Salvo: When firing the Spicula rocket system, choose a target point within range (note that the target point does not have to be on a model's base) and place a Blast marker of one of the following sizes: 5" or 7". Once placed, scatter the Blast marker as normal. Each unit under the Blast marker's final position suffers a number of hits based on the Blast marker size as shown on the table below. If the 7" Blast marker is used and a '6' is rolled on the D6 then the weapon has exhausted its ammunition and may no longer be fired.

Blast Marker	Hits
5" Blast	5 Hits
7" Blast	D6+4 Hits

"The Spicula is the father of death, its child a rocket barrage to blot out the very stars."

Perturabo, Lord of Iron



Deredeo Pattern Dreadnought — 185 points

	Armour								
	WS	BS	S	Front	Side	Rear	I	A	HP
Deredeo Dreadnought	4	5	6	13	12	11	4	1	3

Unit Composition
1 Deredeo pattern Dreadnought

Unit Type
- Vehicle (Walker)

Wargear
- One twin-linked Anvilus pattern autocannon battery*
- Torso-mounted twin-linked heavy bolter
- Smoke launcher
- Searchlight
- Extra armour

**Note that this single weapons system encompasses both autocannon mounts, and it may be disabled by a single Weapon Destroyed result.*

Special Rules
- Atomantic Shielding
- Helical Targeting Array

Options
- The Deredeo may exchange its twin-linked Anvilus pattern autocannon battery for a:
  - Single twin-linked hellfire plasma cannonade ..... +35 points
  - Volkite falconet battery ..... +20 points
  - Single Arachnus heavy lascannon battery ..... +50 points
- The Deredeo may exchange its twin-linked heavy bolter for a:
  - Twin-linked heavy flamer ..... Free
- The Deredeo may be equipped with:
  - Armoured ceramite ..... +20 points
- The Deredeo may be equipped with one of the following carapace-mounted systems:
  - Aiolos missile launcher ..... +35 points
  - Atomantic pavaise ..... +50 points
  - Four Boreas air defence missiles ..... +24 points

A Deredeo pattern Dreadnought may be taken as a Heavy Support choice in a Space Marine Legion detachment, as found in The Horus Heresy Legiones Astartes – Age of Darkness Army List book.

Heavy Support

Rather than being a general assault unit like others of its kind, the Deredeo pattern Dreadnought is a dedicated heavy weapons platform, intended to combine superior firepower with the flexibility and durability of a Dreadnought chassis. Originally used as a test-bed platform for a number of advanced Legiones Astartes weapons systems, each Deredeo Pattern Dreadnought is operated by a mortally-wounded veteran of the Legion hard-wired into its life-support systems, combining their hard-won wisdom with the Dreadnought's lethal heavy weapons.

Deployed in limited numbers to each of the Legions, the Deredeo was treated as a specialist unit as it proved highly-resource intensive to manufacture and maintain. Despite this, its undoubted survivability and killing power saw a resurgence in the pattern's use after the initial wave of internecine strife during the Horus Heresy, and it was in high demand by Traitor and Loyalist forces alike from the few Forge Worlds able to produce it.



Special Rules

Atomantic Shielding

The Deredeo pattern shares the Contemptor pattern's system of defensive field generators mounted inside its armour plating and is powered by the enhanced atomantic power core within.

A Deredeo Dreadnought has a 5+ invulnerable save against shooting attacks and explosions, and a 6+ invulnerable save against attacks suffered in close combat. In addition, if the Deredeo suffers a Vehicle Explodes damage result, add +1" to the radius of the blast.

Helical Targeting Array

The Helical array's advanced augurs and sophisticated banks of combat-cogitators allow the Deredeo to track and destroy even the swiftest of targets with ease. However, due to the Helical array's delicacy and ravenous consumption of power, the Deredeo must be immobile while the system is in operation.

If the Deredeo chooses to neither move nor Run in its turn it may, if its controlling player wishes, gain the Skyfire and Interceptor special rules for that entire game turn (ie, both the controlling player's turn and their opponent's following player turn) for all of its weapons except its heavy bolters/heavy flamers.

Atomantic Pavaise

A highly-experimental system developed by the Clave Nuathac sub-cult magos of the Forge World of Anvilus, the atomantic pavaise was created with Zone Mortalis operations in mind, turning the Deredeo pattern Dreadnought into a mobile bulwark against the heaviest enemy weapons fire.

This reinforced shield increases the Deredeo's own invulnerable save to 4+ against shooting attacks, and grants friendly infantry models within 3" of the Deredeo's base an invulnerable save of 6+ against shooting attacks or boosts an invulnerable save they already possess by +1 (5+ becoming 4+, etc) to a maximum of 3+.

Note that the pavaise's bonus has no effect on invulnerable saves in close combat, and its benefits do not stack with the effects of other atomantic pavaises, or other special rules, psychic powers or items of Wargear which boost an existing invulnerable save.

A Deredeo Dreadnought with an atomantic pavaise adds +D3 to its Blast radius, rather than +1, if it explodes, and has an explosion Strength of 5.

Deredeo Weapons Systems

Anvilus Autocannon Battery

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Anvilus autocannon battery	48"	8	4	Heavy 4, Sunder

Arachnus Heavy Lascannon Battery

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Arachnus heavy lascannon battery	48"	10	2	Heavy 2, Exoshock

Hellfire Plasma Cannonade

	Range	Str	AP	Type
- Sustained fire	36"	7	2	Heavy 4
- Maximal fire	36"	7	2	Heavy 1, Gets Hot, Large Blast (5")

Volkite Falconet Battery

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Volkite falconet battery	30"	7	5	Heavy 6, Deflagrate, Pinning

Aiolos Missile Launcher

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Aiolos missile launcher	60"	6	3	Heavy 3, Pinning, Independent Tracking

Boreas Air Defence Missiles

	Range	Str	AP	Type
Boreas air defence missile	48"	8	2	Heavy 1, Heat Seeker, Independent Tracking, One Use

Independent Tracking: This weapon may fire at a different target to that of the Deredeo's other shooting attacks if desired and ignores intervening obstacles to line of sight in open terrain. When firing at vehicles, it attacks their Side Armour value.

Exoshock: If this weapon successfully scores a penetrating hit on a target, roll a D6. On a 4+, a second automatic penetrating hit is inflicted on the same target against which cover saves cannot be taken.

Heat Seeker: Jink saves may not be taken against attacks with this special rule.

Deflagrate: After normal attacks by this weapon have been resolved, count the number of unsaved wounds caused on the target unit. Immediately resolve a number of additional automatic hits on the same unit using the weapon's profile equal to the number of unsaved wounds – these can then be saved normally. Models in the targeted unit must still be in range in order for these additional hits to take effect. These additional hits do not themselves inflict more hits.

Created with the authorisation of the Fabricator-General as the Imperial Host expanded into the galaxy during the Great Crusade, the design philosophy behind the Aurox is similar to that of the Legion Rhino Armoured Carrier. It is designed to be mass-manufactured, reproducible and easily serviced by units in the field. In addition, the Aurox has a modular design which allows for additional armour and weapons configurations.

An armoured troop transport tank, it is primarily used by various arms of the Imperial Army, which includes the Imperialis Militia, to carry veteran grenadier units to battle or to protect their commanders while dictating the course of battle. A further variant of the Aurox is used by the Solar Auxilia, which is re-fitted for extreme environmental conditions.

Saturnyne Pattern Aurox Armoured Transport (Solar Auxilia) — 35 points

		Armour			
	BS	Front	Side	Rear	HP
Aurox	3	11	11	10	3

Unit Composition
- 1 Aurox

Unit Type
- Vehicle (Tank)

Wargear
- Heavy stubber

Special Rules
- Explorator Adaption

Fire Points
- Two models may fire from the Aurox's top hatch.

Access Points
- The Aurox has one access point on each side of the hull and one at the rear.

Transport Capacity
- 10 models (the Aurox may not carry models with the Bulky, Very Bulky or Extremely Bulky special rules).

Options
- An Aurox may take extra armour ..... +5 points
- An Aurox may exchange its heavy stubber for one of the following options:
  - Heavy flamer ..... +5 points
  - Multi-laser ..... Free

A Saturnyne Pattern Aurox may be taken as a Dedicated Transport option for Auxilia Tactical Command Sections, Veletaris Storm Sections and Auxilia Flamer Sections comprised entirely of infantry and numbering no more than 10 models.

Aurox Armoured Transport (Imperialis Militia & Cults) — 25 points

		Armour			
	BS	Front	Side	Rear	HP
Aurox	3	11	11	10	3

Unit Composition
- 1 Aurox

Unit Type
- Vehicle (Tank)

Wargear
- Heavy stubber

Fire Points
- Two models may fire from the Aurox's top hatch.

Access Points
- The Aurox has one access point on each side of the hull and one at the rear.

Transport Capacity
- 10 models (the Aurox may not carry models with the Bulky, Very Bulky or Extremely Bulky special rules).

Options
- An Aurox may exchange its heavy stubber for a:
  - Heavy flamer ..... +5 points

An Aurox may be taken as a Dedicated Transport option for Imperialis Auxilia Platoon Command Cadres and Imperialis Militia Grenadier Squads comprised entirely of infantry and numbering no more than 10 models.

Saturnyne Pattern Carnodon Strike Squadron (Solar Auxilia) — 65 points per model

	Armour				
	BS	Front	Side	Rear	HP
Saturnyne Pattern Carnodon	3	12	11	10	3

Unit Composition
- 1-3 Saturnyne Pattern Carnodon Tanks

Unit Type
- Vehicle (Tank)

Wargear
- Volkite culverin
- Two sponson-mounted volkite calivers
- Searchlight
- Smoke launchers

Special Rules
- Explorator Adaption

A Saturnyne Pattern Carnodon Strike Squadron may be taken as a Heavy Support choice in Solar Auxilia detachments.

Options
- The entire Saturnyne Pattern Carnodon Squadron may be upgraded to take extra armour ..... +5 points per model
- Any Saturnyne Pattern Carnodon may exchange its volkite culverin for one of the following options:
  - Twin-linked multi-laser ..... +5 points per model
  - Twin-linked autocannon ..... +5 points per model
  - Twin-linked lascannon ..... +20 points per model
- Any Saturnyne Pattern Carnodon may exchange both of its sponson-mounted volkite calivers for either of the following sets of two sponson weapons:
  - Heavy flamers ..... +2 points per model
  - Heavy bolters ..... +2 points per model
  - Multi-lasers ..... +5 points per model
  - Autocannon ..... +10 points per model
  - Lascannon ..... +30 points per model
- Any Saturnyne Pattern Carnodon may take one of the following pintle-mounted weapons:
  - Heavy stubber ..... +5 points per model
  - Multi-laser ..... +10 points per model

Explorator Adaption
Vehicles with this special rule have an invulnerable save of 6+ against any attack with the Blast or Template special rule, and count as Void Hardened in games where this might have an effect. Failed Dangerous Terrain tests by vehicles with this special rule must be re-rolled.

Carnodon Strike Squadron (Imperialis Militia & Cults) — 60 points per model

	Armour				
	BS	Front	Side	Rear	HP
Carnodon	3	12	11	10	3

Unit Composition
- 1-3 Carnodon Tanks

Unit Type
- Vehicle (Tank)

Wargear
- Twin-linked autocannon
- Two sponson-mounted heavy flamers
- Searchlight
- Smoke launchers

Options
- Any Carnodon may exchange both of its sponson-mounted heavy flamers for either of the following two sets of sponson weapons:
  - Heavy bolters ..... Free
  - Autocannon ..... +5 points per model
- Any Carnodon may take one of the following pintle-mounted weapons:
  - Heavy stubber ..... +2 points per model

A Carnodon Strike Squadron may be taken as a Heavy Support choice in Imperialis Militia & Cults detachments.

Heavy Support

The Carnodon is a versatile medium battle tank which acted as the lynchpin for many of the storied successes of the Imperial Army during the Great Crusade. As a premier mobile fire platform, it was regularly adapted to combat a wide variety of foes and respond to any number of battlefield conditions. At Gamma-Incunablar, a squadron of the 43rd Veradan's Carnodons, fitted with las weaponry, brought down the first of the great Basemekanic beasts which had subjugated that world, their concentrated firepower surpassing even the Predator tanks of the III[rd] Legion to punch through the vast creature's thick metallic hide. On Hektun, the 3rd Saturnyne Rams earned their reputation as the 'Incinerators' of the Solar Auxilia when their Carnodons, fitted entirely with volkite weaponry, were used to strategically ignite the hydrogen-rich vents of the Phenaem's tunnel structures, eradicating the foul xenos within.

The battle tank was foremost of many initiatives undertaken to exploit the modular design of the relatively new Aurox chassis by creating variants based on it. During the early years of the Great Crusade, it rapidly became a byword for conquest amongst the Expeditionary fleets, a legacy that led to the production of the dedicated Imperial battle tanks of latter days. As the Great Crusade moved ever outwards and supply of the Aurox chassis peaked, it is thought that many Carnodon tanks entered a strategic reserve and were distributed to muster worlds behind the front lines; with over 200,000 examples thought to have been stored pending secondary mobilisation in the warrens under Tallarn.

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