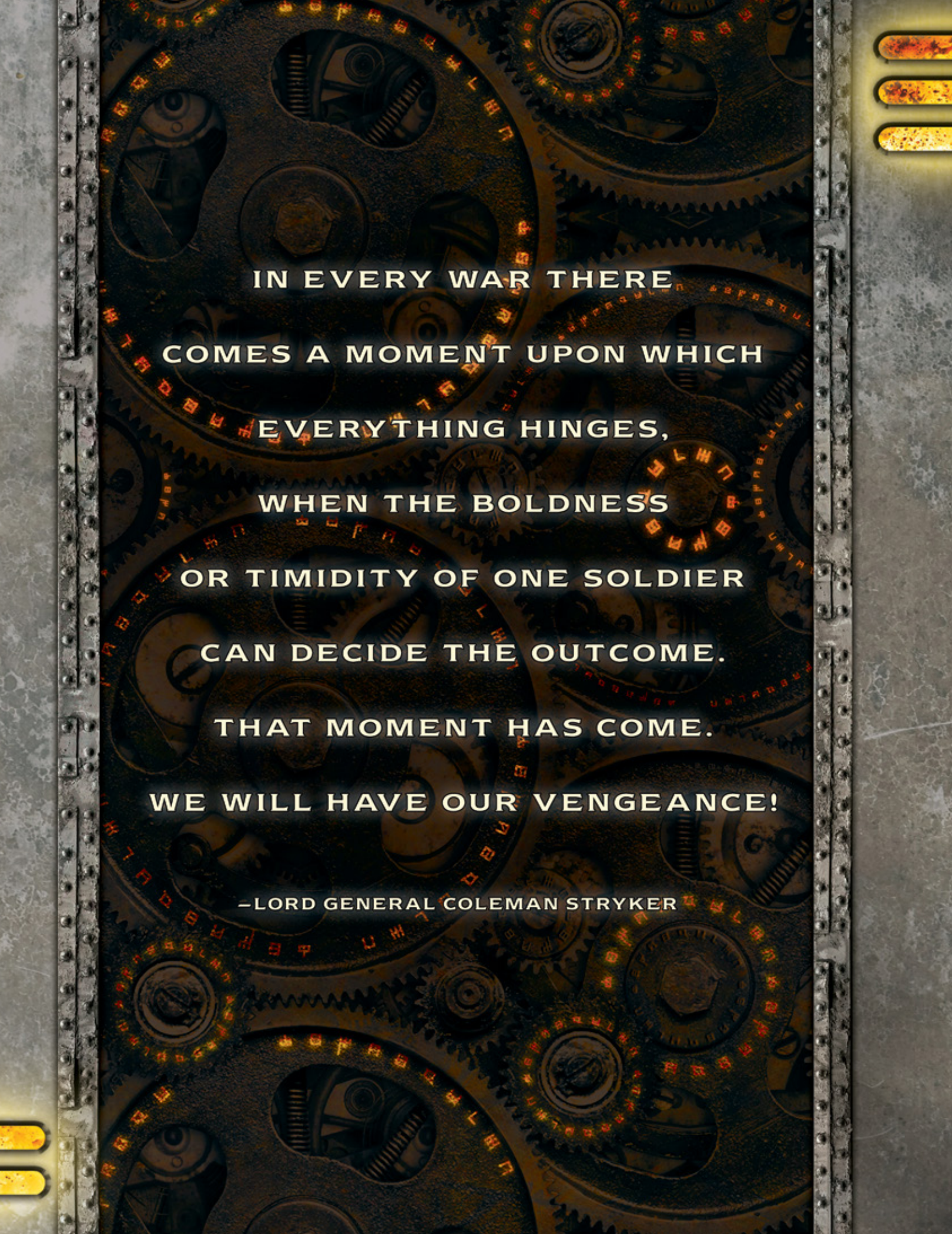




WARMACHINE®



VENGEANCE

The background is a complex, dark, and textured image featuring numerous interlocking gears of various sizes. The gears are rendered in shades of brown, black, and dark grey, with some parts highlighted in a glowing orange-red. The overall aesthetic is reminiscent of steampunk or industrial machinery. The text is centered and overlaid on this background.

IN EVERY WAR THERE
COMES A MOMENT UPON WHICH
EVERYTHING HINGES,
WHEN THE BOLDNESS
OR TIMIDITY OF ONE SOLDIER
CAN DECIDE THE OUTCOME.
THAT MOMENT HAS COME.
WE WILL HAVE OUR VENGEANCE!

—LORD GENERAL COLEMAN STRYKER

The background of the cover is a dark, intricate mechanical landscape filled with various sized gears, cogs, and pistons. The gears are dark grey or black with some orange-brown highlights, suggesting heat or fire. The overall aesthetic is industrial and steampunk. The title 'WARMACHINE' is prominently displayed in the upper center, and 'VENGEANCE' is below it in a larger, more stylized font. A mechanical, armored figure is positioned between the two titles, appearing to be part of the machinery.

WARMACHINE[®]

VENGEANCE

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FULL STEAM AHEAD

Over ten years ago, WARMACHINE embarked on a journey into the unknown. A new edition, a stack of expansion books, scores of warcasters, and hundreds of models later, here we are with what we think is the best miniatures game on the planet supported by the best community. In that time, WARMACHINE has seen old armies grow and new armies rise, modern colossals change the face of war, and western Immoren's most powerful soldiers evolve as the epic events of the setting mold their destinies. WARMACHINE has also smashed the barriers of its medium, and the saga continues to unfold through Skull Island eXpeditions' digital fiction publications, the upcoming *WARMACHINE: Tactics* video game, and games like *WARMACHINE High Command*.

And we have no intention of slowing down. Vengeance isn't just the name of this book. It's also a state of mind. We're charging into the next decade of WARMACHINE *with a vengeance*. We've already seen more power and more armor. *Vengeance* ushers in more speed. The Iron Kingdoms' most fearsome warcasters are now more mobile than ever, and

lightning-fast cavalry are yours to command. With these new forces at your disposal no objective is out of your reach; there is no bridge too far.

Such is the scope of war that now there is a place on the battlefield for even more arcane support than ever. And so a new generation of novice warcasters rises. Springing from the pages of this book, these characters will one day play a pivotal role in the fate of the Iron Kingdoms. We can't wait to see how the crucible of war shapes these remarkable men and women, but their impact on the tabletop will be immediate. With more arcane support to call on, you'll have more spells to unleash, more combinations to discover, and of course more warjacks to command.

WARMACHINE is rumbling down the tracks at full speed, and we've got no use for brakes. Join us as we barrel headlong into the next decade of WARMACHINE. This is *Vengeance*, and we will have ours!

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BREAKING POINT

PART ONE

POINT BOURNE, ASHTOVEN 25TH, 608 AR

Constance Blaize had marked the partially collapsed residential building during their initial survey, and now the knights and soldiers under Stryker's command converged on it. She could not have explained how she knew undead were lurking there, but every time she suspected their presence in one of the damaged buildings in the abandoned districts of Point Bourne, she had been correct. She could feel their hatred of all living things like a chill upon her skin, distinct from the bite of the early winter air.

At her signal one of her armored knights swung his battering ram at the door, splintering wood and sending it crashing inward. He stepped back just as thralls poured out from the yawning darkness. Each emerged with vacant eyes and a bloated, rotting body inscribed with twisted runes. They rushed toward the nearest soldiers to rend them limb from limb. Blaize opened her hand, and a ring of gleaming golden-white runes came into being. Light exploded amid the undead, searing through their unnatural forms and leaving them twitching on the pavement. Still more came, and long gunner rifle volleys dropped the next throng. The smoke of blasting powder filled the street as even more came forth. Given the lack of visibility, the lieutenant ordered the long gunners to hold. Blaize's knights stepped up, protected by shields emblazoned with the Radiance of Morrow and leveraging blessed maces to shatter the skulls of the unliving.

It was solemn and bitter work, as the rune-inscribed corpses had been Cygnaran citizens just weeks before. Each had been defiled by unholy energies, and Blaize's only comfort was knowing that with each bullet another of her countrymen could receive a proper burial. Just two streets away the lord commander and his escort were conducting similar work on another structure. She could hear rifle fire from that direction even as her men cautiously entered this building to check for remaining undead.

After the city had been reclaimed by the Cygnaran Army many displaced families had begun to return, seeking to pick up the shattered pieces of their lives. The people of the city had been through horrors no one should endure—their willingness to return and work to restore their old lives was a testament to the Cygnaran spirit. All the more terrible, then, when the first had encountered horrific traps left by Cryx.

Amid the ruined neighborhoods, secreted inside barricaded buildings, thralls had waited. Endlessly patient, unmoving, they betrayed no sign of their presence until the living came within reach. Then they sprang forth to kill and destroy.

Blaize's grip tightened on the haft of her weapon at the thought of those who had been killed this way after having

survived so much hardship. After the first casualties, the army had begun systematically sweeping the abandoned neighborhoods and allowing civilians access only once they were declared safe. Blaize had been working ceaselessly alongside other volunteers, soldiers who had just returned to the city after their defeat deep in the Thornwood. All had fought in that terrible battle and witnessed the full horror of Cryx unleashed. They deserved a reprieve but were driven by a profound sense of duty; they could not rest while others faced this danger. The overall number of thralls hidden here did not appear to be high, but their impact on morale for an already war-torn people was devastating. It was vital Point Bourne be made safe again so its long-suffering people could return, grieve, and resume their lives.

"Look out behind!" a voice shouted.

Blaize turned to see a scrap thrall rushing forward from a dark alleyway. Her eyes widened as she anticipated its explosive payload unleashed on the nearest soldiers. Even heavy armor did not always suffice against such a blast. She saw Gallant was nearby and had barely formulated the thought before the warjack moved to intercept, putting its iron bulk in front of the nearest knights. It swung its sword through the thrall, which detonated with a deafening roar. Gallant suffered only some scraped paint and bits of flesh across its armored exterior, while the knights escaped the worst of the blast thanks to its swift intervention.

"Lieutenant Larson, clear those alleys!" Blaize ordered, and the red-faced soldier rushed to obey, barking orders to his subordinates. He had been responsible for clearing that sector, and his expression suggested he was cognizant of his oversight. Under other circumstances she might have pulled him aside for a tongue-lashing, but they were so weary that mistakes were inevitable. After the knights checking the building gave the all-clear, they marked it with a white slash of paint and moved on.

Blaize saw Lord Commander Stryker gathering his men after clearing the building opposite and raised her hand in a salute, which he returned before continuing on. They both knew morale had been poor across the army since the withdrawal from the Thornwood. The Precursor Knights, bolstered by faith, had held up better than most, but even they were subject to fatigue and doubt.

She stumbled slightly as she stepped down the next street, her armored boot catching on one of flagstones torn loose by the heavy tread of warjacks. Precursor Chaplain Corley stepped alongside her and took her elbow to steady her. He said, "Why don't you call it a night and get some shut-eye? There's nothing here that requires a warcaster. We can carry on."

Blaize stood straighter and shook her head. "If my men aren't sleeping, neither am I." She said it lightly, but he knew her well enough to tell when she was in no mood to argue.

"Well then," he said with a tired smile, "let's see what other surprises Cryx left for us."

POINT BOURNE

The next morning Stryker tried to allow himself a few short minutes to relax after rising before he submitted to the day's many obligations. But even as he ate breakfast his mind went to the reports awaiting his review and he began to read through them. He was determined to see Point Bourne made safe, a goal that was still out of reach. Even after they eliminated the undead there was the matter of repairing the breached wall and restoring the city's defenses.

Already army engineers were at work, but he knew the damage was particularly bad in the northern city, past the locks on the north shore of the Dragon's Tongue. That region had been the first evacuated, the first to endure the Khadoran onslaught, and the first beset by Cryx. It had served its purpose in delaying the foe but had paid a price; no civilians would be living north of the river for the foreseeable future. Beyond the state of the city, too many of those on patrol and on watch were walking wounded. Their injuries were more superficial than those of the men recuperating in the hundreds of hospital tents scattered around the southern part of the city, but he knew the city was vulnerable in the event of another significant assault.

The First Army had withdrawn to multiple encampments after the defeat in the Thornwood, with the largest segments going to Corvis, Stonebridge Castle, and here, although others had been separated from the rest of the army during the withdrawal and still remained in the forest. Many of those men were uneasily encamped alongside their Khadoran allies, a development equally uncomfortable to both sides. Stryker knew each blamed the other for their defeat.

Pushing his plate aside at the low wooden table, Stryker went to the hook on the wall that held the dozens of dog tags he had kept as his personal responsibility. They were only a few of hundreds that had been hastily collected from the battlefield by fellow soldiers before they had retreated, in some cases all that could be recovered of the fallen. So many dead, many subjected to Cryxian weapons that left no bodies for burial. The least he could do was inform their families of their heroism. Every day he wrote at least three letters to the families of the slain.

He waved to his adjutants, who were already making ready with the complex pieces of his blue-and-white enameled armor. It was a comfortable and familiar routine, and with the strapping of each buckle he felt more alert and alive. It had gotten such that he felt strange out

of his armor, although the inner padding itched and the entire rig made him sweat.

Even as they adjusted the straps and he reached for Quicksilver, Stryker knew a part of him was stalling in a different way. The sweeps through Point Bourne were reassuring to the returning populace but did not address the main problem. Soon they would need to determine how to confront Asphyxious at the heart of the Thornwood. This was the thought that had haunted his nightmares and made sleep fitful at best. His mind could conceive of no clever stratagem, no leveraging of raw force, that would have fared them better in that battle than the combined Khadoran and Cygnaran might they had already brought.

Better to have a goal he could achieve—houses he could clear, buildings he could see marked with the white paint signaling they were safe to inhabit once more. He could bring some measure of normalcy to Cygnaran citizens here in this one place, until Cryx came again.

There was a rapid knock on the wooden door just moments after his adjutants activated the storm chamber of his armor. At his nod, Captain Hamesworth went to check. The lord commander had regular meetings with his senior officers, so random visitors suggested an emergency of some sort. Stryker could feel himself tensing, and a twinge in his back prompted a wince of pain he fought to conceal. The old injury from Sul had become an unwelcome but continual companion.

**SO MANY DEAD, MANY
SUBJECTED TO CRYXIAN
WEAPONS THAT LEFT NO
BODIES FOR BURIAL.**

Hamesworth returned escorting a familiar figure, a short and slender man with piercing brown eyes who was wearing civilian attire except for the small gold Cygnus pin on his lapel. This told the soldiers standing watch and patrolling the military quarter to let him pass unremarked.

While he did not look like an officer, this small man was one of the highest-ranking members of the Cygnaran Reconnaissance Service in the region. His function had little to do with the military rangers that served as the eyes and ears of the army, being primarily responsible for overseeing spies and informants. Stryker had only interacted with him at intelligence briefings.

Extending a hand, Stryker asked, "Major Kline, is there news on Major Brisbane?"



Kline shook the lord commander's hand but seemed slightly abashed at his question. "I'm afraid not. We still do not know the major's whereabouts."

Stryker felt strong disappointment. There had been no word about Brisbane since he and the Khadoran legion coordinating with him had inexplicably vanished prior to the attack on Asphyxious' base. Rumors had begun to circulate that Siege was dead, but Stryker refused to believe that. "I see. What news brings you here?"

Kline got right to the point. "There's someone you should meet, an Ordsman who just arrived in town. He would have tried to find you on his own, but I expedited matters by sending my men to fetch him."

Stryker asked, "Someone important?"

Major Kline seemed amused by the question. "He wears the uniform of an Ordic corporal, probably to try to avoid drawing attention, but it's a lie."

"A spy of some sort?"

"One of King Baird's most trusted agents; in the Ordic capital he goes by Thane Brand Fylan. He's likely not here to pry into our secrets, though, at least directly. I expect he has information for sale."

"I don't have time for intrigue, Major," Stryker said warily. King Baird of Ord had a reputation for being devious and enigmatic. Whereas other sovereigns left intelligence gathering to a trusted spymaster, Baird insisted on doing that job himself.

The major shrugged. "It's quite rare for King Baird to share intelligence. I'd recommend listening to what his man has to say."

"Very well," Stryker said. He would have preferred to defer such matters to General Nemo, but that old war horse had left Point Bourne with a small detachment to investigate reports of clockwork soldiers led by Cyriss cultists invading a small town to the southwest. "But if he starts haggling," he warned, "I'm leaving him to you."

Although Ord and Cygnar had a long history of friendly relations, that stubbornly neutral kingdom refused to get involved in wars abroad other than a few joint naval expeditions against

Cryx. Efforts to cement larger military agreements had failed.

Stryker followed Kline from his chamber to a first-floor room in another building of the Strategic Academy complex, one borrowed for regular military briefings. The Ordic "corporal" was slouched in his chair while a pair of rangers watched him from either side of the door. They saluted as Stryker and the major entered the room. The Ordic soldier smiled and stood, offering a small bow. Pale and freckled with thinning red hair, he looked the part of a disheveled career soldier who had been passed over for indolence. He certainly did not look like an Ordic noble, let alone one of Baird's top operatives.

"Lord Commander Stryker," he said cheerfully in a thick Thurian accent, "just the man I wanted to see! Hoped we might meet somewhere warmer and friendlier, like a tavern."

"You've caught the city at a bad time," Stryker said. "And it's a bit early for drinking. Please get to why you're here, Thane Fylan. I have much to do."

The Ordsman looked startled at hearing that name and turned to incline his head in respect to Major Kline, who had moved to the other side of the room, where he now leaned against the wall. Fylan smiled and said, "Well, that saves the trouble of explaining my credentials. Came to fill you in on some . . . *unusual* troop movements in the Thornwood." In a moment his demeanor changed entirely; his posture straightened, his tone shifted, and he seemed a different person entirely.

His words prompted Stryker to wonder what Ord made of the combined Cygnaran and Khadoran troop movements. Ord had been threatened by Khador for centuries, and together with Cygnar they had fought several costly wars against the northerners. Cooperation between red and blue was unusual enough to create a stir in the Ordic court. After a thoughtful pause he said, "Go on."

"Our scouts have discovered a lot of Cryx where they shouldn't be."

Stryker offered a humorless smile and shared a look with Major Kline. "If that's your news, it's a bit out of date. We're rather familiar with Cryx's occupation of the Thornwood."

Fylan chuckled. "No, no, I don't mean that ugly business. It's clear you've been fighting long and hard. Not even my senile Uncle Killian could miss all the hospital tents here. No, I'm talking about other Cryxians, now within Ord. They recently crossed into the Wythmoor and are taking extra precautions not to be seen. A sizable force, I understand, though we've had some difficulty appraising their numbers. They're also moving slowly, maybe burdened with something. A little ominous, to be honest."

Stryker felt a chill. Another Cryxian army advancing near Point Bourne? His forces had swept the Thornwood, destroying as many Cryxian burrows as they could find on their advance, but they had been hurried. Point Bourne was still vulnerable, with its defenses in disarray and his forces only partially recovered.

"The Wythmoor? So Ord has been invaded?" That region was the southeastern grav of Ord, a swampy area adjacent to the Thornwood on the east and the Dragon's Tongue River on the south.

"The Thorn Division attempted to stop them, of course, but it wasn't enough. I'm afraid it'll be up to you to deal with them. We felt it only proper to warn you. A favor you can repay later, when the opportunity arises."

Stryker glanced at Major Kline, who frowned and shook his head slightly from behind the Ordsman to indicate he'd heard no such reports. It seemed highly unlikely the Ordic Army had fought the Cryxians at all. Given the Wythmoor was a haunted swamp with limited resources and only

a few isolated towns, the Ordic military was probably avoiding confrontation, at least until the Cryxians neared something more vital.

Stryker asked, "You're looking to Cygnar to defend your people? How is that a favor to us?"

Fylan sighed. "We've done what we can. Many lives have already been lost. Our soldiers—brave souls every one—lack for advanced weapons. You know the state of our armed forces. And we haven't had as much experience fighting Cryx as your army has." He tapped locations on the map. "Once they cross the Dragon's Tongue they'll be back in Cygnar. I'll bet they're after something a lot juicier than Tarna."

Stryker stepped to a nearby rack, took a heavily annotated map of the nearby forest, and unrolled it on the table between them. He then slid a graphite stylus across the table. "Show me their course."

The spy marked four small X marks along a path: two in the Thornwood and two more on the Ordic side of the border. "Also, our scouts discovered a large number of strange corpses north of here." He lightly circled a spot above the northernmost X. "Looked like there had been a large clash between blackclads and an army with dragonspawn. Could be they follow the Cryxians. Allies? Enemies?" He shrugged.

"You see a connection?" Stryker asked. Reports of dragonspawn fighting together with blighted soldiers were on the rise, and the CRS did not believe these forces were directly affiliated with Cryx. They had yet to threaten Cygnar directly, though, and the last thing the nation needed was new enemies.

Thane Fylan shrugged. "If I were a betting man, I'd wager there's something big happening that we don't fully understand. In the spirit of our mutual defense, I brought you this information at considerable risk. What you do is up to you, but I recommend intervention while you can still seize the initiative."

There was an urgent knock on the door and Stryker frowned. He walked to the door and opened it to find Captain Hamesworth, who looked pale and flustered. "I'm sorry, Lord Commander," he said hurriedly in a low voice. "King Leto and his retinue are in the city and have requested you join them." Stryker's expression was not lost on the captain, who shared his surprise.

"Well, Lord Commander, it seems you have more important guests," Fylan said, having apparently overheard despite their low voices. "I'll just take my leave . . ."

He made as if to go, but Stryker put a firm hand on his shoulder. "Major Kline," he said, "see that our visitor is given proper accommodations for the duration of his stay."

The Ordsman sighed but offered no protest as Kline came forward to ensure he made no move to slip away. Ord and Cygnar were on friendly terms, but Stryker wasn't about to let a spy hurry back with news of King Leto's unannounced visit. Cursing under his breath, Stryker followed the captain, wistfully recalling a sleepless night of chasing undead from abandoned houses.

BENEATH THE THORNWOOD

Kommander Oleg Strakhov hunkered down in an alcove set into the side of the damp and freezing tunnel, his trench sword in hand. Darkness was his ally, and he wrapped it around himself employing the magic of occultation, which rendered him all but invisible.

HE WOULD FIND A WAY TO RECOVER KOMMANDER KARCHEV AT ANY COST.

He knew he could not expect this power to protect him completely in this place, however. He was not certain how well his magic would function against the self-aware walking dead, particularly those that had spent untold centuries perfecting their own malevolent arcane arts. Living minds were easier to fool; they sometimes preferred it. When he used his magic to sneak through city streets or to bypass sentries, the eyes of witnesses simply slid past him, seeing nothing of interest. The beings he was likely to encounter within the Cryxian tunnels, however, were either supremely intelligent or too mindless to be inattentive.

He could hear metal-booted footfalls approaching and steeled himself. First he saw approaching shadows, shapes thrown onto the walls by the sickly green illumination of the sconces along the tunnel. He held his breath as the creatures walked by without pause: a line of misshapen drudges, mindless battle-slaves of the cephalyx. After waiting several seconds without hearing anything more or seeing any sign of their masters, he cautiously poked his head from the alcove to look the way they had come. He saw nothing.

Quickly, he stepped forth behind the drudges. The steel-helmeted monstrosities showed no sign of noticing. He struck as he neared the one at the rear—a single powerful thrust into its back, to the left of the spine but angled upward so the mechanically augmented point of his sword cut through the heart. He pulled the muscled creature back with him, away from the others. It had died instantly, without a sound, its living blood spattering across his blade, his hands, and the cold stone floor. The others marched on, unaware their number was diminished.

Strakhov pulled the corpse back into the alcove and set to work removing pieces of its armor and connective hosing, a messy and unpleasant business. Extracting the weapons from the arms was a simple bit of butchery, as they were fused directly to the flesh. The helmet was the worst part—despite its outward simplicity he found its interior affixed with a disturbing assortment of hoses, hooks, and barbed clamps. The head of the once-human drone had been reshaped: segments of skull had been sawed away to expose the brain; the nose, the lips, and many teeth had been removed; the outer ears had been sliced off; and countless other horrific and bizarre changes had been made by cephalyx surgeons. Once he'd cleared the interior of the helmet it fit over his head easily and settled onto his shoulders. He felt claustrophobic in the disgusting armor, but his breathing was not much impaired.

He wiped and sheathed his trench sword and took the drudge's weapons. Carrying them was awkward and he would not be able to fight with them, but even a crude disguise aided his concealing magic. Among the Cryxian tunnels no one paid drudges or thralls any mind. Anyone who could penetrate his magic would not be fooled, as his Khadoran warcaster armor and weapons were evident, but the helmet and weapons might give most observers sufficient excuse to look past him.

The entire endeavor was fraught with peril. He had made a life's work of penetrating enemy territory, but usually he had a plan of action and some degree of information. This time he was operating entirely by instinct deep within the bowels of a Cryxian stronghold.

The battle on the surface had begun to turn against them while he had been directing his battlegroup close to the unholy structure, allowing him to watch its inexplicable rise from below the earth to become a massive tower. After the Cryxian forces poured from its base, he had seen his chance. The entrance had been left open and unguarded. Knowing Kommander Karchev was held somewhere within, Strakhov had taken only a moment to consider his course; he had not spent time to reason or plan but had cloaked himself in shadow, sent his warjacks against the enemy, and rushed into the structure. As he had darted deeper through the tunnels, he had focused entirely on avoiding the enemy.

His soldiers had likely given him up for dead. He could imagine Irusk cursing his name for the folly of adding to the loss of Karchev. There was no excuse he could offer, as it had not been logic that had guided him, only a career that had honed him to seize opportunities. When they had marched from Point Bourne to follow the Cryxians north, he had decided he would find a way to recover Kommander Karchev at any cost. He seemed to be the only one willing to do so.

Making his way through the underground passages it was easy to lose track of time, and he was occasionally forced to find somewhere he could hide and rest. He dozed in small intervals where he could, wedged into crawl spaces behind machinery or metal barrels. Thirst and hunger gnawed at him; he had to avoid any inhabitants that looked intelligent, and progress was slow. Once again it was the drudges that solved the problem.

He saw several line up to a peculiar apparatus attached to one of the corridor walls. Thick piping along one of the walls led to a narrow nozzle. Each drudge by turns detached a length of tubing connecting its torso and helmet and attached this to the wall nozzle. There followed a sloshing sound as thick liquid pumped through. The drudge would detach, step back, and reattach the tubing to its helmet before continuing on. After they had all taken their turn, Strakhov approached the mechanism. He discovered it produced a foul, lumpy paste. Despite misgivings, he tasted it and found it edible—barely—tasting like yeasty gruel mixed with strong fish oil. As horrible as he found the mixture, it obviously sustained the drudges. If they could live on it, so could he.

Strakhov's strange lurking existence amid the dead and mindless of the Cryxian facility quickly became something of a routine. He grew accustomed to the various noises amid the tunnels, which constantly echoed with the churning of distant engines and gears, the rushing of liquids through creaking pipes, and unspecified metal grinding and groaning.

He was startled, then, when he realized he was hearing something new, some kind of low, almost rhythmic chanting. It was intermittent and barely perceptible, but something about it stirred his blood. He followed the sound down another level, and as he neared it he felt a spark of excitement. Were those tones Khadoran? He could not make out words at first, but the sound was tantalizingly familiar. Soon he felt the tickling sensation in the back of his mind that suggested a warcaster. He remained cautious, but he was hopeful. Then he found it, the source of the chanting. The chamber was as dark as the others he had seen and filled with an array of strange machinery. At the center rose two tall metal posts, connected by a configuration of pipes, bellows, and pistons to an apparatus hanging between them. Kommander Alexander Karchev was there, encased in a twisted mockery of his old life-sustaining apparatus.

There was little to see of the kommander in the dim light other than the top of his slumped head. Though his voice was rough and the words thickly slurred, he was chanting an old Khadoran military song—one Strakhov hazarded had not been sung in decades. As heart-rending as it was to see the great warrior so reduced, Strakhov felt pride, resolve, and hope in his faltering singing of that old song. Whatever the state of his body, Alexander Karchev's spirit remained unbroken.

Strakhov approached cautiously but saw no evidence of traps or security. This deep within the facility the enemy clearly had no fear of intruders. "Kommander Karchev," he said urgently. "Can you hear me?"

The chanting trailed off, and Karchev lifted his head as if doing so required a great effort. His face bore new scars and the lines of fresh cuts, and his eyes took too long to focus. He frowned and said hoarsely, "Oleg? Oleg Strakhov? Is that really you, or is this some new form of torment?" The way he struggled to enunciate his words reinforced Strakhov's suspicion that he was being subjected to some form of sedative.

"It's me," Strakhov confirmed. Being recognized and hearing his name spoken by the great hero of the Motherland deepened his conviction about the choices he had made. "I have come to free you, somehow."

"Where is Irusk? Is Cryx defeated?" Karchev asked. His voice had become stronger, his eyes sharper.

"I am alone. Cryx . . . They are not defeated, nor will they be. Our army will have withdrawn." A difficult confession. He saw the light in Karchev's eyes dim.

"Leave here." Karchev suddenly stared into his eyes with fiendish intensity, now showing no sign of whatever drug kept him quiescent. "But first . . . you must kill me. They intend to transform me into a weapon against the Motherland. That cannot happen."

Strakhov shook his head. "No! I will get you free."

He felt keenly how ill-prepared he was to accomplish this task. His eyes traced along the machinery inextricably connected to what remained of Karchev's ancient body. He knew he would require some sort of machine to have a hope of getting the kommander away from here. He had been keeping an eye out for anything he could use or modify toward that end.

Karchev bared his teeth. "Do what must be done!"

Strakhov heard the sound of approaching footsteps in the corridor and quickly moved back into the rear of the chamber, behind the thick banks of shuddering machinery there. He drew his concealing magic about himself as strongly as he could. His mind spun through plans, finding flaws in all of them.

LLAEL, NORTH OF MERYWYN

Beneath Great Prince Vladimir Tzepesci, his war horse Vsada pawed the earth and snorted, eager to charge, powerful muscles tensed. The point of Vlad's spear was lowered directly at Hierarch Severius as he asked, "Will you listen? Or are you eager for death?"

The great prince knew he was on the knife's edge and that time was against him. All the hierarch had to do was stall or withdraw toward his approaching soldiers, and his threat would be negated. Not that he intended to throw his life away by killing the leader of the Protectorate of Menoth while he and his escort were surrounded and his warjacks paralyzed.

Severius stepped toward him, but Vlad remained ready, aware that the aged hierarch could summon tremendous divine power in an instant. Severius replied in perfect Khadoran, "This is not the day I will face death. Let us talk."

Turning toward his approaching soldiers he raised his staff and lifted his other hand in a gesture of forbearance. Seeing their great prince was not about to attack, Vladimir's Iron Fang uhlans also relaxed somewhat, raising the tips of their lances skyward to a resting position.

Severius said to a hierophant waiting on him, "Our forces are to disengage for now." The man rushed to convey the order to the nearest officers.

Vlad made a gesture to the ranking uhlan kapitan, who raised a green pennant overhead. Slowly a wave of quiet spread from their position as those who had been embattled stepped back from enemies they had been intent on killing. Soon the fighting died away and all attention turned to the hill where the two leaders faced each other warily.

Severius said, "I presume you have come before me to confess your many heresies and return to the proper service of the Creator? If that is the case, I am certain we can find a fitting place for you in the Great Crusade."

"That is not my purpose," Vladimir began. "I speak to you now as the great prince of Umbrey, a Menite sovereign speaking to a leading priest of his faith as well as a sovereign of his own nation. This battle between us must end. Unholy abominations threaten not just this region, but all mankind. I have no doubt there will be time for war between us regarding these lands. Let that be another day. The threat before us is larger than any one nation or people. The extinction of all faiths rests in the balance."

The scrutator mask made it impossible to gauge Severius' reaction. He said, "Our Crusade is already greater than any nation. If you bend knee, your people will be spared much suffering."

"That will not happen. I bow only to the empress. But I serve the Creator as best I am able, despite what Vindictus may have told you. Our faiths are not as dissimilar as you think."

"There is only the True Law," Severius intoned. "All else is blasphemy."

It was a familiar refrain that set Vlad's teeth on edge. "The True Law acknowledges the rule of kings, especially in war.

In those times the priest caste is subordinate to and separate from the ruler."

"That aspect of the True Law has been difficult for northerners to understand," Severius said condescendingly. "The perfect king is both sovereign and priest. There is no distinction between those who govern and those who intercede for the Creator, and it is the duty of the flock to obey the shepherd."

The great prince held his tongue. He would not be led down the path of debating theology with a Sul-Menite, a futile endeavor in the best of circumstances. He had to prove that the apparent gulf between their ideologies was not impossible to bridge. Vlad dismounted, secured his war spear and flail, and walked unarmed toward the hierarch. Doing so surrendered both his mobility and his chance of fighting free from here: a risk, but one that demonstrated his sincerity.

Grand Exemplar Kreoss rode up the hill on his own steed. The leader of the Knights Exemplar also dismounted and approached, but he kept his weapon in hand, his eyes locked on Vladimir. Behind him rode a dozen Exemplar vengers, who stood ready to counter Vlad's uhlan escort.

Vladimir ignored Kreoss and kept his eyes focused on Severius. "Your Great Crusade will be meaningless if the civilizations descended from Priest-King Cinot are enslaved and systematically eradicated. *This* is the imminent danger we face. The Cryxians lurking in the Thornwood are at a crucial juncture. Before long there will be no chance of reversing their hold. It may already be too late. Cryx will soon be able to send armies wherever they wish, heedless of our interference. Recent battles have been manipulated for that purpose, to keep us occupied while they multiply in the shadows, feasting on our dead."

Severius listened in silence and paused before responding. "Cryx has been a malignant cancer for sixteen centuries. You speak as if there were a particular urgency now."

"Things have changed, Hierarch, as you have already seen. Cryx grows bolder and more numerous each passing week. They assail every town and village left unprotected on both sides of the Black River. They must be dealt a heavy blow or the time of their dominance will be upon us."

Severius turned to Kreoss. "Intercessor, what is your opinion? You are fresh from victory against one of Cryx's greatest generals."

The exemplar inclined his head and said, "There is truth to the Umbrean's words. The army we faced at Rhydden emerged seemingly from nowhere. While we triumphed, I lost many brothers in the battle. Lich Lord Terminus clearly viewed his army as disposable. They have bolstered their numbers with thousands fallen in recent battles."

Severius considered this and then said to Vladimir, "I will not deny the Cryxian activity in the region is troubling. Still, I wonder whether you are truly here for the reasons you state. Are you acting as sovereign of Umbrey and envoy of your empress or as a lackey of a more insidious power? Vindictus informed me how closely you heed the advice of the Crone of Crows, a creature of the Wurm and an enemy of the faithful. Was it she who set you on this course?"

Vlad knew it would undermine his cause to deny it outright. "Zevanna Agha warned me what was to come, but I do not serve her. She delivered this warning before recent events confirmed the extent of the Cryxian threat. Had I been able to speak with you when originally planned, we might have changed everything. All that she said has come to pass."

"Her words are trickery and lies. Long has she manipulated Khador and the Khardic Empire."

"She strives only to protect and strengthen the people of the north," Vlad insisted. "She is not the ally of the Beast of All Shapes you believe her to be."

Severius' voice increased in intensity. "Her longevity, and indeed her very existence, is unnatural. I should abandon our crusade on the advice of such a creature? I think not."

"I do not ask you to abandon your crusade but to turn it against its greatest foe. So long as Cryx festers in the Thornwood and sends its armies abroad, any gains you make elsewhere are meaningless. Who will be left to persuade or convert when western Immoren belongs to the lich lords? Until our shared foe is defeated, lesser enmities must be put aside."

There was a lengthy pause during which Vladimir felt the eyes of both hierarch and grand exemplar upon him as if weighing his soul. He did not waver or look away from Severius. It was clear the hierarch did not truly underestimate Cryx. He saw the pragmatic necessity that Vlad recommended but had to reconcile this with his rigid beliefs.

At length Severius said, "It would be easier for me to consider a shared military endeavor were you to open Umbrey to missionaries. If the beliefs of your people are not so divergent from the True Law, this can only bring more souls to the rightful worship of the Creator."

Vladimir knew the Sul-Menites too well; there could be no simple missionary expeditions from a theocracy on active crusade. Nonetheless, this proposal suggested negotiation was possible. "Such a request could only be sanctioned by the empress," he said. He did not like invoking her authority, but accepting what Severius had suggested would have been outright treason.

"Every choice I make and every action undertaken by this army must advance the Great Crusade," Severius said. "We will be entering Umbrey in the near future, and I would

prefer to do so invited. Forging peace between our peoples will not happen in a day. Let us postpone this discussion until after this conflict. We can reconvene then in Laedry, where you will receive me as your guest and together we can give this matter due attention and consideration."

Vladimir felt a sinking feeling in his stomach. The notion of inviting the hierarch to Laedry filled him with alarm. Severius had been banished from Khadoran soil decades ago, deemed dangerous for his persuasive appeal among those of the True Faith, but his status as sovereign changed things. In theory Severius was offering to put himself in their hands, but the truth was considerably more perilous. Still, Vladimir had no grounds upon which to refuse a foreign sovereign offering to negotiate peace, however short-lived such a peace might be.

Vladimir asked, "If I agree to this summit, you will join my army in marching against Cryx?" When Severius inclined his head, Vladimir said, "Then we shall meet in Laedry after our victory."

Severius made a benevolent gesture, opening his arms. "You have persuaded me that the Great Crusade was brought here at this time to purge the greater threat at its source. Let us discuss our plans."

"THERE IS ONLY THE TRUE LAW," SEVERIUS INTONED. "ALL ELSE IS BLASPHEMY."

LERYN, SEAT OF THE NORTHERN CRUSADE

High Executioner Servath Reznik dutifully answered the summons of the Harbinger and climbed the long flight of steps leading to the entranceway of what had once been the Thunderhead Fortress. It had been transfigured into a great temple dedicated to Menoth, a reception hall for Hierarch Severius and the leaders of the Northern Crusade, most of whom were absent. A large portion of the army had marched south with the hierarch, headed toward Merywyn, the heart of Khador's territory within the conquered nation.

The Harbinger had been left in charge of the city, as was only proper, but Reznik had chafed at being left behind by both Severius and Intercessor Kreoss. He understood they wished to grant his soldiers a reprieve after the battle at Riversmet and also that the city's security and the safety of the Harbinger were important. Still, he felt impatient and useless. Within him burned the fire that demanded he bring final justice to those enemies of the faith marked for death by the priesthood. He sought no rest from the Great Crusade.



His thoughts returned to the outcome of his clash with the Khadorans at Riversmet, which had not gone as planned. These were difficult times, and enemies of the faith were myriad. Reznik hoped the imminent return of Vice Scrutator Vindictus might offer him opportunities to be sent forth to battle once more.

Why the Harbinger should desire to speak with him now he did not know. Having had little direct contact with the conduit of the Creator, he felt a mild trepidation he never felt on the battlefield.

It was impossible not to feel awe when beholding the Harbinger, who floated serenely at the summit of the stairs with the gleaming temple lit by the setting sun behind her. Her white and gold armor and vestments were illuminated so brightly it was almost blinding. In her presence, the armor he bore easily every day suddenly felt a burden. It was a relief to kneel before the blindfolded prophet.

"Arise, Servath Reznik, faithful servant of the Creator of Man," she said, extending an open hand to bid him stand.

He did so, though with surprising difficulty. It felt as though the very sunlight from behind her pressed upon his shoulders. "I come at your request, Harbinger," he said after a moment. He felt awkward addressing her directly, not knowing the protocols. He had never been discomfited in this way before any other temple leader.

She inclined her head toward something behind him. He turned and looked down on the city. In the distance his war chariot was just being pulled from a large and smoke-bellowing workshop in one of the lower quarters. The setting sun gleamed along its armor. She said, "The chariot you commissioned from our artificers is ready." Reznik considered the providence required for her to have timed his arrival to coincide with its emergence.

"I am ready to drive against our foes," Reznik said respectfully.

"So you shall, and soon." Her words sent a thrill of anticipation through him.

Suddenly the Harbinger tensed and arched her back, throwing her arms wide as a light brighter than the sun suffused her entire body. Reznik was transfixed but had to avert his eyes against the pain. This time when she spoke her voice was deeper, sonorous, with the multiplicity of a chorus. "Too long have the faithful of the northern lands languished without the affirmation of the True Law. Show them they are not forgotten by their Creator!" Reznik had never witnessed her speaking the words of Menoth, which only she and the Reclaimant Order could hear. The notion of the god's eyes directly upon him was terrifying.

Then the light faded from her, leaving the sun's radiance feeling somehow diminished. When she spoke again her voice was her own. "We must fulfill the crusade's purpose by going unto the northerners and restoring to them proper reverence for the Creator. We shall begin with Umbrey. You will journey with me as an embodiment of Menoth's wrath, annihilating any who would forestall our righteous endeavor."

The words stirred his blood, and he felt joy at the thought of blazing a trail back to his homeland. He was eager to mount his chariot and drive it through ranks of unbelievers, bathing them in blood and committing them to the flames. Still, he felt some apprehension. The Harbinger was beloved of the people for her kindness. He did not know if she would allow him to perform his function. He looked to the great doors of the temple, where paladins of the Order of the Wall stood like statues. For bodyguards she favored that order, men who tempered conviction with mercy. He had been shaped to be a weapon of the scrutators and of the hierarchy.

He hesitated at the thought of launching such an endeavor without direct orders from Severius. As soon as the thought came to him, he rejected it—with his own eyes he had seen Menoth speaking through the Harbinger. Even the hierarchy answered to the Creator.

The Harbinger spoke again, as if his thoughts were as clear to her as everything else that transpired in the city. "Even now Hierarch Severius meets with the leader of the Umbreans to discuss their compliance with the crusade. The armies that would have stood in our way are elsewhere. Any resistance to our coming will be scattered like leaves in autumn. Gather your soldiers, Reznik, Wrath of Ages."

Reznik did not know what she meant in regards to Severius, but the thought that their actions might be in tandem with the hierarchy's plans eased his uncertainties. He bowed, then marched swiftly down the stairs, eager to escape the peace of Leryn.

TOWN OF MONTHURST, WESTERN MIDLANDS OF CYGNAR

"This meeting is a risk none of us can afford to take lightly," Archduke Fergus Laddermore said solemnly. "Nevertheless, it was necessary that we meet face-to-face to finalize our plans. Matters will soon reach a point of no return. Let no man here forget—with a single stray word, we will all hang."

He looked across the dozens of nobles gathered in the wide hall, mostly older men. Only a few wore the elaborate attire that was their usual custom, but their eyes held the self-assurance of those who had been born to rule. It was an impressive assortment of many of the most influential nobles of northern Cygnar. By the simple act of attending they had confirmed their willingness to commit treason.

"We understand all that," said Duke Mayhew Dergeral with a lazy smile and an expansive wave of his hand. "Why begin with such gloom? I have ensured we will have the best attentions during our brief stay. A sumptuous feast is prepared, and none of you need concern yourselves with security. Relax, speak freely, and enjoy the company of friends." Mayhew was among those who had not bothered to hide their wealth; besides silks and a thick ermine coat, he wore gem-encrusted rings, bracelets, and a thick gold chain from which hung the seal of Ceryl. Laddermore was not fooled. Duke Dergeral enjoyed a hedonistic reputation, but he was among the shrewdest politicians in the kingdom. As Duke of Thuria and Lord Mayor of Ceryl he was the second-most powerful noble present. It was by Dergeral's maneuvering that Cygnar's Fourth Army stood ready for their call.

"I had hoped this council meant we were finally prepared to strike!" This from Baron Hambly, one of the most vocally discontented nobles in this province. "I am tired of waiting. Are we going to discuss the problems endlessly or do something about them? We all know what needs to happen."

Laddermore raised a cautionary hand. "Indeed we do, but we cannot play our hand too early. We have only one chance. Caution must be our byword."

"What of your partnership with the Sul-Menites to deal with the Earl of Grives?" Duke Dergeral asked with a snide smile. He referred to the murder of one of Laddermore's enemies by Protectorate assassins, a plot facilitated by agents in Laddermore's employ. Although the earl had been killed, the action had been sloppy and had brought unforeseen complications that had embarrassed the archduke's standing as the foremost supporter of Vinter IV.

"Yes, that incident demonstrates the stakes," Laddermore said smoothly. "The smallest error can jeopardize our plans. Everything must be arranged perfectly when we arrange for

Leto's fall." Many sets of eyes darted into shadowy corners and over shoulders.

"I have information regarding that!" The interjection was from Baron Rothton, one of Laddermore's own vassals, an annoying but unfortunately useful man who had been trying to insert himself in the proceedings. The weasel-like noble had sought out Laddermore repeatedly since they had shared a train here. Had Laddermore known the man would embarrass himself here, the archduke would have pulled him aside to lay down some rules. Rothton was useful for his wealth, his private arsenal, and his rather robust network of informants, but he was insufferable.

"One thing at a time—" Laddermore began, but the excitable sycophant kept on.

**NEWS OF KING LETO'S VISIT TO
POINT BOURNE WILL BE CONVEYED
TO VINTER RAEALTHORNE, AND WE
WILL ACT AS HE DEMANDS.**

"I have it on good authority that King Leto is no longer in Caspia," he said in a rush. "My informants tell me his retinue took a train north, and witnesses have seen him in Point Bourne."

Laddermore growled in his throat; he had intended to reveal that information cautiously. Rothton saw his displeasure and sat back quickly, his face pale, but it was too late. The room erupted with excited murmuring. "We should get to him." "We won't happen on a better chance." "The city is in chaos, with refugees and army personnel coming and going." "Surely we have people in position there?"

Dergeral's voice rose above the din. "There are Fourth Army garrisons in Point Bourne—including some of my most reliable associates. We could end this with a single command." This statement further inflamed the nobles, who were excited at the prospect of bringing the matter to an immediate conclusion.

Laddermore stood. "Silence!" His voice rang out with the tones of a man accustomed to obedience. The gathered nobles stopped and stared. "We are here in the service of our true king, and only by his command do we act. A botched assassination attempt now would reveal us. What we work toward requires more than simply spilling royal blood in the streets; we must ensure the transition of the government and secure the throne. I understand your impatience, but you indulge it at your peril. I will not abide anyone acting prematurely."

"Of course," Dergeral acceded with an indulgent smile. He waved toward the full platters and goblets arrayed across the tables between them. "Have a drink to settle your nerves, Archduke." His eyes then opened wide and he snapped his fingers. "I nearly forgot! There is one bit of unpleasant business to resolve."

The Duke of Thuria gestured, and a pair of his armed retainers stepped from the shadows. They strode past a number of nervous nobles to close on an older, thin-haired man at the periphery, whose slender arms they seized. Baron Foley blinked in surprise and stuttered protests as he was lifted from his chair. "What is this? Unhand me! I won't stand for this!"

"As Archduke Laddermore said so eloquently, it is too late for any of us to get cold feet, Baron Foley." Dergeral looked across the startled faces of the other nobles with the same lazy expression. Foley was one of his own vassals, with lands along the Cloutdown Fens. "I was greatly dismayed to hear that one of my agents in Foley's household had intercepted a letter intended for Earl Harlan Mosley of Cloutdown. A man who is *not* one of our number." He lifted a piece of folded parchment bearing a wax seal, now broken.

Foley's face drained of blood, and he would have fallen if he had not been held by Dergeral's men. The duke continued, "This letter expresses misgivings about a conspiracy the baron admits to having been invited to join and suggests he will return from an upcoming meeting with information of interest to the CRS. Admittedly the letter lacks specifics, but we can presume he intended to deliver the details later in exchange for favors. After he had betrayed us."

"No!" Foley protested, some of his energy returned as he struggled against those who held him. "That's a forgery, Your Grace!"

Dergeral sighed and waved toward one of the guards, who drew a wide-bladed knife from his belt. With appalling efficiency, he drew it across the baron's throat, opening a widening red line that soon gushed with blood. Foley gurgled, his eyes round with shock, but then quietly expired, collapsing. The men in livery calmly hauled him from the room. The other nobles sat frozen with shock, several staring at the blood pooling on the otherwise immaculate floor.

Laddermore had to admit that Dergeral knew how to stage a drama. He shared a look with the duke, who inclined his head graciously. Laddermore spoke into the silence. "We must be vigilant. The threat to one of us is a threat to all. News of King Leto's visit to Point Bourne will be conveyed to Vinter Raelthorne, and we will act as he demands. There are many details to discuss related to the tasks ahead for each of us. Let us enjoy the food and drink set before

us by our host as we discuss our plans and reaffirm our commitment to the realm."

"Yes," Duke Dergeral agreed. "Happily, Baron Foley's absence leaves more for the rest of us."

POINT BOURNE

Stryker was intercepted by Constance Blaize on the way to greet King Leto. He invited her to accompany him, knowing their sovereign had a close relationship with the Church of Morrow and made it a priority to get to know the warcasters defending the realm. They found the king near the bridges that crossed the locks over the river, listening to descriptions of recent battles. He wore his military uniform and was in the company of several senior army officers, excepting those who were wounded and recuperating, including Lord General Duggan.

The sight was disconcerting, as the king stood at the very ground where both Khadoran warjacks and Cryxian abominations had poured across the bridges just weeks earlier. His escort included members of the palace Stormguard as well as a detachment of the Silver Line, whose chromed armor gleamed in the harsh winter sunlight. Stryker was also able to spot several other guards positioned more discreetly, including gun mages on the nearby rooftops. But whatever his protection, the king was exposed and vulnerable here.

"What I need to see," King Leto was saying to the senior officers, "are the neighborhoods afflicted the most by Cryxian deprivations."

"Your Majesty, some of those regions have yet to be secured," General Shay Terswell warned. With the lord general absent, she was the ranking officer present, a distinguished woman in her mid-forties recently promoted to general after many years as chancellor of the Point Bourne Strategic Academy. She had retired from active duty after an impressive military career when she lost her right arm to Tharn in the Thornwood, turning down offers to have the limb replaced with a mechanical prosthetic. Stryker considered, not for the first time, that it had not been so long since he had attended officer training here in Point Bourne, and how Terswell had been the stern head of the academy even then.

As the warcasters approached, the king's escort acknowledged them by stepping aside. Stryker interjected, "General Terswell, I believe we can guarantee the king's safety."

Both king and general turned to greet them. General Terswell smiled and inclined her head. "I imagine that would be acceptable, if His Majesty is willing."

"Lord Commander, it is good to see you." Leto clasped his hand firmly, his smile showing genuine warmth. Stryker

introduced him to Constance Blaize, and he clasped her hand as well. "Well met, Dame Commander. I have heard nothing but praise for your efforts to protect the realm."

"Please, call me Constance, Your Majesty." She bowed deeply.

They turned southwest away from the Dragon's Tongue River to head toward one of the regions where Cryx had done their worst, rounding up the people of the city like cattle to be slaughtered and then transforming their corpses into thralls. Both ahead of them and behind them, the king's escort advanced and continued to watch for any threats.

As they followed Stryker's lead, Blaize began to fall behind, likely to allow them to speak privately. The king noticed this and invited her to join them. He prompted her to tell him of recent battles, since she was relatively new to the northern front. Stryker listened to how she described their engagements against Cryx and was impressed with both her insight and her ability to cut to the heart of the matter.

Abruptly Leto turned to Stryker and said, "You have the pensive expression of a man with troubling news."

In truth Stryker had hoped to use this time to mull over the information brought to him by the Ordic spy. The notion of giving the king a report and counsel on limited and unverified information made him uncomfortable. "Ordinarily I'd want to consult with Scout General Rebal before burdening you."

"That sounds ominous." King Leto hesitated and then added, "But I would prefer to hear from you directly. I have learned that Rebal has been keeping certain things from me." He saw Stryker's startled expression and waved a hand dismissively. "Likely he, too, fears burdening me. It is his job to filter the intelligence his office receives, but a king must be informed to make the right decisions. He underestimates me."

"I have seen no hint of that, Your Majesty," Stryker said.

They had arrived at a street that had once been a thriving and bustling market, a hub of trade from merchants passing in both directions along the river. Once it would have been difficult to hear above the din, with Ordic and Cygnaran vendors hawking their wares and hundreds of citizens pushing through to barter with one another. Now it was all but silent, the buildings shattered and crumbling, the street pocked with the scars of fighting.

Leto looked across this somber tableau and said, "When I first arrived I visited Lord General Duggan. He admitted the state of the army was poor. Beyond the casualties, he said morale is lower than he has ever seen it. He described the First Army's fighting readiness as appalling."

"That is unfortunately true," Stryker confirmed. "The defeat in the Thornwood was a heavy blow in every respect. Even fighting alongside the Khadorans, with colossals at our side, we were crushed. We did not underestimate Cryx, but they still surprised us."

"What would you recommend we do now?" Leto turned to him with a hard stare. "Duggan says no action is possible until the army is reinforced and given time to recuperate. He believes the Khadorans are as bad off as we are."

Stryker weighed his words carefully, feeling torn. His instincts were telling him one thing, the more thoughtful and analytical part of his mind something else. "The lord general isn't wrong. We're in no condition to try another assault against Asphyxious."

"Reinforcements will be sent, including additional colossals," Leto said. "The other armies are stretched thin, but I intend to authorize reallocating reserves from both the Third and First Armies here. It will take some time, though, even expedited."

Stryker wanted to take comfort in this course. Logically, it made sense to stay fortified and secure their border while risking as little as possible. The army had been pushed to the breaking point. "That would be the pragmatic solution, Your Majesty. But there is another matter I have not yet told Duggan about." He described what he had learned from the Ordic agent. This did not take long, since it amounted to little in the way of facts. "We could ignore this information until we send our own people to confirm it. Little of it is definitive."

"That seems prudent," Leto said. "King Baird has his own agenda."

Stryker could tell that waiting was clearly the course his king would prefer. It suited his style of leadership, which inclined toward deliberation and caution, fortifying rather than attacking. Leto did not like making choices without the proper information. But he had asked for help with making these difficult decisions, and Stryker knew that part of his value to the king was his willingness to be decisive.

"The other course," Stryker said, "one that would be far riskier, would be to march immediately to intercept this strange Cryxian column and end their ambitions, whatever they are."

"Is that your recommendation?" Leto asked with a frown.

Stryker hesitated as he felt the impetuosity he had once displayed at odds with the caution and prudence he had learned as a senior commander responsible for tens of thousands of lives. He looked to Blaize. She nodded now and said in a low voice, "We must trust our instincts." It might have been a banal statement at any other time, an

easy aphorism. But at this moment it dispersed the doubt lingering in his mind.

"Yes, Your Majesty." As he began to talk, his voice gained strength. "Despite our ignorance we can't afford to prevaricate. Whatever these Cryxians are about, it will be to do harm to us or those who cannot defend themselves. They have taken pains to move unseen, hoping they could accomplish their goal in darkness. So we shine a light on them."

"As simple as that?" Leto seemed bemused.

"No, it isn't simple," Stryker admitted. "But the army's morale will not return without action. The very soul of the First Army is mortally wounded. We need a tangible victory against Cryx, however small. We are not ready to march on Asphyxious, but if these other Cryxians are hiding, that suggests vulnerability. I will take all the able-bodied soldiers I can gather, including veterans of the Storm Division, and intercept. It is the right thing to do."

Blaize added her voice. "I agree, Your Majesty," she said. "The armed might of the Church of Morrow stands with you. After our retreat I requested additional knights and warjacks from the Exordeum. The first reinforcements should arrive by rail within the day, and then I will join the lord commander on this excursion." Stryker had not expected this sort of endorsement and felt profoundly grateful, but he kept his eyes on the king, who looked thoughtful.

At length Leto responded, "The church's support is greatly appreciated, and your own bravery is commendable. Even so, we know so little about the situation." He shook his head and looked at Stryker. "You have my leave to follow this course. I trust your judgment. Which brings us to the other matter that brought me here. The time has come to retire the King's Marque granted when you were named Lord Commander. As you are aware, the unique nature of this rank has caused strain and confusion within the chain of command. The generals dislike it."

Stryker was startled by this but quickly collected himself, standing straight. He nodded and said, "I understand, Your Majesty." He had become accustomed to the authority and freedoms associated with this special rank, but he had known it might not last. He had thought he would retain the office until the end of the current crisis, though.

"I don't think you do," Leto said. He faced Stryker squarely and said, "I have decided, since you have already been operating at that capacity for some time, there is no need to maintain a complicated exception. You are promoted to the rank of Lord General, effective immediately. I had hoped to wait until Nemo was back, but if you are intent on launching this expedition, it seems the time is now."

Stryker was stunned. "Duggan—"

"Lord General Duggan will retain control of the First Army, and I hope he recovers quickly. Your Storm Division has been operating with complete autonomy and requires the proper infrastructure. This rank should eliminate certain obstacles and reinforce the standing you have already earned." A small gleam of humor lit his eyes. "I was far younger than you are now and less experienced in war when I was made a general of my brother's armies. You will find most of the other generals are old and set in their ways. It's time they had the insight of youth, from a soldier who is directly engaged in battles and daily reminded of their stakes. The ceremony will await our return, but I thought you should know. This way, if you turn me down we can avoid a public embarrassment. What do you say, Coleman? Will you accept this responsibility?"

Stryker smiled and bowed deeply. "Yes, Your Majesty. It is an honor. I will not fail you."

"That's a relief," Leto said. "For my part, I promise to keep you out of meetings in Caspia and busy on the battlefield. I have a feeling we will both prefer things that way."



When Lord General Coleman Stryker called together his senior-most officers, including the warcasters under his command, he felt keenly aware of his new rank and station. It should not have mattered, yet somehow it did. There was no denying rank had as much symbolic power as real authority among those who had dedicated their lives to military service. Those he summoned were tense, aware their short reprieve from fighting was about to end.

As he took in the faces of those gathered in a lecture room of the Strategic Academy, he was aware of several notable absences. Most significantly: Major Markus Brisbane, who was missing in action; Major Victoria Haley, whose inexplicable malady had forced her to be taken off active duty; Captain Allister Caine, who had been transferred somewhere on secret orders; Captain Dominic Darius, who had joined those withdrawing to Corvis; and of course Artificer General Sebastian Nemo. The only warcasters present were Captain Kara Sloan, Constance Blaize, and Captain Jeremiah Kraye.

The last was here on request and was seated in a special reclining chair where he would hopefully not strain his injuries. Kraye was unready for active duty, having suffered severe wounds during the Thornwood battle when he was slashed by a Slayer and thrown from his horse. He looked uncomfortable, and Stryker knew he would soon need to return to his hospital bed. His army surgeon stood behind

him, a stern older woman who was staring at Stryker with a dark expression, clearly unfazed by his rank. Otherwise a number of Stryker's senior officers were present, including Commanders Bradher, Montfort, and Gant.

**"THE TIME HAS COME TO RETIRE
THE KING'S MARQUE GRANTED
WHEN YOU WERE NAMED LORD
COMMANDER."**

"I'll make this short," Stryker said. "There's a vital and urgent mission I will be leading against a sizable Cryxian column we've become aware of that's moving south toward the Dragon's Tongue. This force is apparently unrelated to those we fought in the central Thornwood."

"Another threat to Point Bourne?" This question came from Commander Bradher, leader of the valiant 18th Brigade, one of Stryker's most stalwart subordinates and an expert in storm knight tactics.

"Perhaps," Stryker allowed. "Although if that's their goal they are being circumspect." He indicated the detailed map hanging on the wall next to him. "This force came south through the western Thornwood but recently passed into the Wythmoor. We were told they were engaged by the Ordic Army, but I expect they are still at full strength. Their route should take them near Tarna where the Molhado River feeds into the Dragon's Tongue. Tarna could be their goal, or maybe they seek to cross into the Gnarl's or to come at Point Bourne from an unexpected direction. Whatever they intend, we're going to stop them."

"On Ordic soil?" asked Captain Sloan.

"Yes. Our intelligence came by way of an agent of King Baird. We have tacit permission to cross the border. Expect no military support from Ord."

"Of course not," Bradher muttered.

"Furthermore, we have no useful information on this column, including its size, leadership, or composition. We'll be sending rangers ahead to find out what we can, but we know it's been actively screening its advance. Clearly this is risky and we need to assemble as strong a force as we can, but only from those who are uninjured or fully recuperated. I'll be relying on each of you to assess the soldiers and assets under your command and assemble as versatile and battle-ready a force as we can manage without compromising the defense of Point Bourne." Stryker turned to Kraye. "Captain Kraye, fill us in on the region. What can we expect?"

Kraye sat up, wincing. "Well, we know the Thornwood is a dense and unpleasant place. The Wythmoor is similar, only add in a boggy swamp with obstructing fog and sinkholes that can swallow a 'jack whole. It's not too different in some respects from Bloodsmeath Marsh, except even more poorly mapped. Moorfolk like to keep their secrets. I'll describe the basic lay of the land and the approach I recommend."

After they were apprised of the local geography, Stryker said, "As most of you know, the Cryxian invasion of Point Bourne was part of a larger coordinated action. There's been an upsurge of attacks across northern Cygnar in the last month, particularly near the Dragon's Tongue. Unfortunately we haven't had the manpower to keep every village and hamlet safe. One of the hotspots, near the Gnarl's across from Tarna, coincides closely with the projected course of this recently discovered Cryxian army." He tapped on the map to indicate the area.

**HE SAW A MATCHING FIRE IN
THEIR EYES, A READINESS TO
MARCH AGAINST THE ENEMY
NO MATTER THE COST**

"Kraye offered the theory that this activity might represent Cryxians awaiting the main column I'll be intercepting. We need to know who they are and whether they could be a reinforcing army that will wind up on my flank at a bad time. Accordingly, I'll be sending a small recon force in that direction, south of the river, while we advance on our target north of the river. Ordinarily this task would be perfectly suited to Captain Kraye."

Kraye grimaced. "Give me a few days and I'll be right as rain."

Stryker gave him a sad smile. "No, we need you rested and recovered. Captain Sloan will undertake this mission in your place. Sloan, you can take your commandos from the 87th, some of our best rangers, and whatever snipers we can spare, along with a detachment of Hunters. I'll want Kapitan Ulchev's Widowmaker teams to join you as well." He saw her frown at that addition and added, "I want them out of the city and kept busy, particularly with King Leto here." The presence of foreign soldiers in the city had been something no one had been particularly happy about, although Lord General Duggan had ordered them treated with courtesy. It was thought they were here as convenient spies for Irusk, which was not an unreasonable assumption.

"Trust me," Kraye said to Sloan, "you'll be glad they're on your side. Those boys can shoot."

"They know how to hide in the trees and hit their targets, that's for sure." Kara clearly was not happy with the situation but was a good enough soldier not to argue.

Stryker continued, "I'll be putting you in a difficult spot, Captain Sloan. I need to know what sort of threat the Cryxians south of the river represent, if any. They might be inconsequential, and perhaps you can neutralize them, in which case you should do so and rejoin me as quickly as you can. If you find a substantial force threatening to move on my position, however, I'll need you to find a way to divert them. You may have to get creative, but your priority will be to keep them off my flanks. Either way, let me know what you find. We have too many unknowns as it is."

"Understood, General." Sloan did not seem troubled by the gaps in the mission parameters. Such missions were the sort that warcasters were frequently asked to tackle.

Commander Gant asked, "I take it we won't be bringing other Khadorans in on this expedition?"

The newly promoted lord general shook his head and said, "It would take too long to coordinate and let them muster from deeper in the Thornwood. We have to move now, while we know where the Cryxians are."

He looked around at his gathered leaders. "I know this is bad timing. Every soldier in the division has just survived a difficult ordeal, and casualties have hit everyone hard. But all we've been through together, both in the Caspia-Sul War and now in the Thornwood, has forged our men and women into the greatest fighting force in western Immoren. It is for that reason that King Leto looks to us to secure a victory here against Cryx, not only to stop them but to restore the fighting spirits of the entire army. I have promised him I will see this done. I'll be counting on each of you in the days ahead to gather our men, to inspire them, and to lead them to victory. By your efforts, the Storm Division will succeed—of that I have no doubt."

He saw a matching fire in their eyes, a readiness to march against the enemy no matter the cost, and knew they were with him, whatever happened in the days ahead.

THEME FORCES

WARCASTER UNITS

WARMACHINE: *Vengeance* includes **warcaster units**. In a warcaster unit, the model with the **Officer** advantage is the warcaster and is the only model in the unit that has the special rules of a warcaster. The warcaster controls a battlegroup, has a feat, can spend focus, etc. If the warcaster is destroyed, his upkeep spells expire and his warjacks become inert as normal.

A warcaster unit is always a character unit because the warcaster is a character. Unlike other warcasters, however, a warcaster in a unit is not an independent model. He is the unit commander, and as such, he activates as part of the unit.

GRANTED: FEARLESS

A warcaster that is part of a warcaster unit always has the Granted: Fearless ability. While the warcaster is in play, the models in its unit gain Fearless ☒.

BATTLGROUP

The other models in a warcaster's unit are part of its battlegroup.

ATTACHMENTS

Warcaster units cannot have unit and weapon attachments, but warcaster units can have warcaster attachments like standard warcasters. If a warcaster unit has a warcaster attachment, the attachment remains an independent model and does not become part of the warcaster unit.



LORD GENERAL COLEMAN STRYKER RIDERS ON THE STORM

WARJACKS: Cygnar non-character heavy and colossal warjacks with SPD 5 or greater, Ol' Rowdy

UNITS: Cygnar cavalry units

SOLOS: Storm Knight solos, Arcane Tempest solos

BATTLE ENGINE: Storm Strider

TIER 1

Requirements: The army includes only the models listed above.

Benefit: Increase the FA of Storm Lances by 1.

TIER 2

Requirements: The army includes Katherine Laddermore.

Benefit: Models/units in the army gain Pathfinder ☑ during your first turn of the game.

TIER 3

Requirements: The army includes two or more warjacks.

Benefit: Warjacks gain +2 SPD during your first turn of the game.

TIER 4

Requirements: The army includes two or more cavalry units.

Benefit: Reduce the point cost of cavalry units by 1.



SERVATH REZNIK, WRATH OF AGES

WEIGHED AND FOUND WANTING

WARJACKS: Protectorate non-character warjacks

UNITS: Choir of Menoth, Exemplar units, Holy Zealots

SOLOS: Exemplar solos, Reclaimers, Vassal solos, Wracks

BATTLE ENGINE: Vessel of Judgment

TIER 1

Requirements: The army includes only the models listed above.

Benefit: Wrack solos become FA U. Additionally, Reznik can remove 1 focus point from any number of Wracks in his control area during your first turn of the game.

TIER 2

Requirements: The army includes one or more units of Exemplar Cinerators.

Benefit: Medium-based units in the army gain Advance Move. (Before the start of the game but after both players

have deployed, a model with Advance Move can make a full advance.)

TIER 3


Requirements: The army includes two Reclaimer solos.

Benefit: Models with Cenotaph or Gatekeeper begin the game with one soul token.

TIER 4

Requirements: The army includes two or more huge-based models.

Benefit: Reduce the cost of non-warcaster huge-based models by 1.



KOMMANDER ZOKTAVIR, THE BUTCHER UNLEASHED

BLOOD IN THE SNOW

WARJACKS: Khador non-character warjacks

UNITS: Doom Reaver units, Winter Guard units

SOLOS: Fenris, Manhunters, War Dog, Winter Guard solos, Yuri the Axe

BATTLE ENGINE: Gun Carriage

TIER 1

Requirements: The army includes only the models listed above.

Benefit: Increase the FA of War Dog solos by 1 for each warjack in Zoktavir's battlegroup. Zoktavir can have any number of attached War Dog solos.

TIER 2

Requirements: The army includes Yuri the Axe.

Benefit: Models/units in the army gain Pathfinder 🐾 during your first turn of the game.

TIER 3

Requirements: The army includes one or more Gun Carriages.

Benefit: For each Gun Carriage in the army, place one 4" AOE completely within 20" of the back edge of Zoktavir's deployment zone after terrain has been placed but before either player deploys his army. These AOE's are rough terrain. Rough terrain AOE's cannot be placed within 3" of a terrain feature or another rough terrain AOE.

TIER 4

Requirements: Zoktavir's battlegroup includes two or more warjacks with Pathfinder 🐾.

Benefit: Reduce the point cost of warjacks with Pathfinder 🐾 by 1.



GORESHADE, LORD OF RUIN

CHILL OF DEATH

WARJACKS: Cryx non-character warjacks

UNITS: Bane units, Thrall units
SOLOS: Bane solos, Thrall solos

TIER 1

Requirements: The army includes only the models listed above.

Benefit: Increase the FA of Bane Riders by 1.

TIER 2

Requirements: The army includes one or more Bane Rider units.

Benefit: You gain +1 on your starting roll for the game.

TIER 3

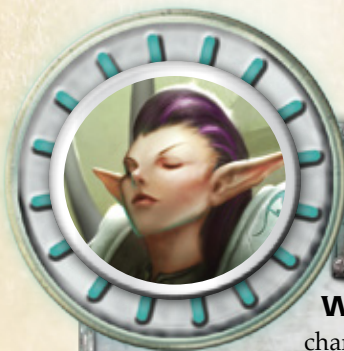
Requirements: The army includes one or more Desecrator helljacks.

Benefit: Reduce the point cost of helljacks with Amphibious and colossals with Amphibious by 1.

TIER 4

Requirements: The army includes one or more Kraken colossals and one or more Mechanithrall units.

Benefit: Krakens begin the game with one corpse token per Mechanithrall unit in the army.



ISSYRIA, SYBIL OF DAWN

DAWNBRINGERS

WARJACKS: Retribution non-character myrmidons with Field Generator systems

UNITS: Dawnguard Invictors, Dawnguard Sentinels, Houseguard units

SOLOS: Arcanists, Dawnguard Scyirs, Houseguard solos, Syls Wyshnalyrr the Seeker

TIER 1

Requirements: The army includes only the models listed above.

Benefit: Increase the FA of non-character solos by 1.

TIER 2

Requirements: The army includes one or more Houseguard Thanes.

Benefit: Warrior models/units gain +2 SPD during your first turn of the game.

TIER 3

Requirements: The army includes two or more Dawnguard units.

Benefit: Add an attachment to one Dawnguard unit free of cost. This attachment does not count toward FA restrictions.

TIER 4

Requirements: Issyria's battlegroup contains one or more warjacks with Arc Node ⚡.

Benefit: Roll two dice for your starting game roll and keep the higher result.



CYGNAR

LINE OF SIGHT

SOUTH OF THE DRAGON'S TONGUE RIVER

Captain Kara Sloan watched flashes of red flitting through the thick pines ahead. Instinct told her to seek cover, put Spitfire against her shoulder, and target the enemy. The problem was that they were no longer the enemy. The Widowmakers ranging in front of her troops were allies now, despite the fact that she had put every Khadoran sniper she could find in an early grave during the siege and initial invasion of Point Bourne. Desperation makes strange bedfellows, though, and Cryx had brought desperation and destruction to both Khador and Cygnar, putting an end to their conflict—at least for now.

Fanned out through the trees with Sloan was a small force of rangers, trencher snipers, and trencher commandos from the 87th. The rest of the 87th, including her adjutant, had been left in Point Bourne with the rest of the army and her Defenders. Among the soldiers moved half a dozen Hunters, hulls painted in muted greens and browns to blend into the landscape. She had chosen their route to loosely follow the south bank of the Dragon's Tongue River but keep as much to the hills and trees as possible. If stealth weren't their top priority, it would have been faster to take this first leg by boat.

Kapitan Ulchev fell back to speak with her, his Vanar Liberator cradled in his arms. She had noticed he and his Widowmakers rarely slung their rifles. The kapitan was a large man for a sniper, but he moved with grace and confidence. "Captain," he said. "The path to Oldlow looks clear."

"Good," she replied. Oldlow was a village along the Dragon's Tongue that included a small group of volunteer militia irregulars who helped patrol the river for the Cygnaran Army. She had decided it was worth visiting to see if the locals had seen or heard anything about attacks in the area by the Cryxians they were seeking.

Ulchev made no move to return to his forward position. She had already discovered the Widowmaker kapitan was surprisingly talkative, apparently taking perverse enjoyment in conversing with a former enemy. Or he was really a spy for Irusk. He said, "I have wanted to tell you it

is an honor to join you in this. All Widowmakers know and fear the great Kara Sloan."

"Just doing my job, Kapitan. You've certainly cut down your share of my men." She tried to keep the edge from her voice.

"Twenty-five during the assault on Point Bourne," he said with a smile. "Yet you have personally accounted for twelve of my Widowmakers and at least three times that many Winter Guard." He chuckled. "I am behind."

"I haven't been keeping score," Sloan said shortly.

"No doubt your edge has much to do with your weapon," he said, glancing at the massive mechanikal rifle slung over Sloan's shoulder. "And your other talents."

Her warcaster abilities did give her an edge she was not ashamed to use against the enemies of Cygnar, among whom Ulchev had recently numbered. Yet she had to work with the Khadorans, and she saw no need to dwell on animosities.

"We all have our gifts," she said with a sour smile. "Let's put ours together to get this job done."

Ulchev returned her smile. His teeth looked vaguely predatory through the black tangle of his beard. "Of course, Captain," he said. "What enemy could stand before the two greatest riflemen in western Immoren?"

Sloan ignored that. There was no denying Ulchev's skill, but she did not care for being classified with a man who had recently applied his talents to killing civilians repairing the walls of Point Bourne.

They resumed their march, but in less than an hour she saw what looked to be heavy smoke in the direction of the village. The Widowmakers had also seen it, and Ulchev joined her again. "Take your men ahead to see if anything is wrong," she said. He nodded and moved off.

Sloan pushed her mind into one of the Hunters ranging behind her. Through the warjack's eyes she saw Lieutenant William Raddick, the officer in charge of the trencher commandos, moving with his men. Sloan guided the Hunter

toward the lieutenant, stopping it in his path. She urged it to point its axe to the north, where she was walking. Raddick nodded, motioned to his men, and then took off at a jog.

After a moment she turned to see his tall, lanky form coming through the brush. William was handsome, but in an unconventional way. His face was long and very lean, but his eyes were kind and it seemed to her his mouth was always on the verge of a smile.

"Captain Sloan," Raddick said as he saluted. His smile was warm, familiar.

Her grim expression sobered him. She said, "There's smoke in the direction of Oldlow. Kapitan Ulchev and his Widowmakers are moving up to scout. I want you to pull your men up, spread out, and hold this position until they return."

"Snipers on the flanks?"

She nodded, then asked, "How are the men dealing with working with Khador?"

He took a deep breath and grimaced. "They don't like it. Most have lost friends to the Khadorans. But they are professionals, so they keep their misgivings to themselves."

"What about you?" she asked.

"You know me," he said. "I do my job." He lowered his voice. "At least they're living men. The Cryxians . . ." He shuddered. "They make war with the Khadorans seem petty in comparison."

Sloan said, "I know exactly what you mean. I only hope whatever we find out there isn't more bad news."

"We'll see soon, I wager. Any other orders?" Raddick said. When Sloan shook her head, he saluted. Before he could go, she reached out and took his hand briefly. He said nothing but squeezed once before pulling away and moving off into the scrub.

She watched him go, feeling a familiar trepidation. She'd grown accustomed to losing men in battle, but her relationship with William meant she had much more to lose if he fell. She didn't want to think about that—couldn't.

The CRS had uncovered intelligence indicating a force of Cryxians were operating somewhere in this region. These represented only some of the many Cryxian attacks across northern Cygnar in the last few months, but the location and timing of these specific reports had prompted her mission. Sloan was to find them and keep them from flanking Lord General Stryker's army, neutralizing them if possible. Kapitan Ulchev had agreed to assist her in the interest of the alliance; she suspected he also wanted to stay apprised of Cygnaran troop movements.

The rest of her force emerged from the trees behind her. They were quiet, even the six Hunters, whose efficient boilers and furnaces made far less smoke and noise than those of other warjacks. Sniper teams moved along the periphery of her vision, setting up to cover the approach. Raddick and his commandos were directly behind her, crouched down, carbines in hand. Behind them, the Hunters were spread out, positioned where they were obscured by trees or rocks.

They waited.

Sloan checked ahead every few minutes with her scope, just as her snipers were surely doing. Then she saw a blur of movement through the trees ahead. She crouched down and held up one hand, alerting the men behind her that something was coming their way. She saw several moving shapes, each with the telltale red of Khador.

Ulchev appeared first, raising his rifle to indicate he was not an enemy. "The town has been attacked," he said bluntly once he had approached. "We are too late to do much more than count the dead. The villagers have fled, though there might be survivors in the houses that were not set afire. I saw some Satyxis and what might be Scharde Islanders. Definitely Cryx, but no undead that I could see."

"Satyxis? Are you sure?" Sloan asked.

"No mistaking those horns," he answered, smiling.

"Very strange to run into them so far inland," she said. Thinking aloud, she added, "Why are they on the Dragon's Tongue?"

Raddick said, "This has to be related to our mission."

"There were not many. Perhaps enough to fill a small boat," said Ulchev.

"They'd have no reason to make a raid so close to Point Bourne unless something else is going on," Sloan said. "They must be part of a larger force." She shook her head, putting aside the mystery. "It doesn't matter. We should eliminate them and check for survivors. Stay alert as we move in. Don't underestimate the Satyxis, however few there may be."



The village of Oldlow had held a few dozen buildings perched above the small docks along a curve in the river. To Sloan it looked like it had once been a picturesque community, quaint and inviting. Now it was ravaged, although not every building had been destroyed. The destruction seemed worst near the docks, which were littered with corpses. Peering through her scope as they neared the village, she saw shapes moving between the burning buildings.

"I saw people fleeing into the trees," Ulchev said, pointing to the southwest. "Others with weapons stayed back, perhaps to buy time for the rest to escape. The raiders may be preoccupied with the last defenders. That can work to our advantage."

Ulchev's cold assessment struck a nerve. Sloan said, "Kapitan Ulchev, I understand these villagers are not your countrymen, but they don't deserve this."

He shrugged. "War is a hard business. Sometimes innocents perish. For the moment their deaths grant us a tactical advantage."

The Khadoran's matter-of-fact tone was infuriating, particularly since she could see the logic in his thinking. "Your Khadoran battle doctrine is noted, Kapitan."

Anger flashed in Ulchev's eyes. "Do not think I have no sympathy for these people. I am not heartless. I have seen the Cryxians at work in my own land. You must accept that you cannot save everyone."

Sloan opened her mouth to reply, but Lieutenant Raddick cut in. "He's right. But I'll be damned if I'm going to stand here and let any more of those people die."

She felt a sudden wash of gratitude and wished she could acknowledge William's bravery. Instead she simply nodded. "Ready your men to move around to the western side of the village, Lieutenant. We'll attack from two directions at once."



As they moved closer to the buildings, they saw Cryxians carrying supplies toward the pier, apparently looting now that they had eliminated most resistance. Sloan spotted a man hiding with a spear in his hands, using the cover of a house to keep from being seen. He lunged for a Satyxis as she passed, trying to catch her unaware.

He was too slow. The Cryxian easily stepped to the side and caught the spear shaft near the head, then yanked the weapon from his hands. He stared at her in horror as she unrolled her bladed whip and seemed to savor letting him watch as she prepared to cut him down.

Sloan had wanted to get closer before revealing her presence, but she could not simply watch the man die. She brought Spitfire to her shoulder and fired after taking only an instant to confirm the target through her scope. Her bullet went through the Satyxis' head even as the report of the shot echoed loudly through the despoiled town.

The villager quickly picked up his spear and ran out of sight between the buildings. She cursed under her breath as she saw another fleet silhouette on his heels, gone before she

could reload and raise her rifle. It left a bitter taste in her mouth to consider he would likely be murdered anyway. Other Cryxians, hearing her shot, had dropped what they were carrying and ducked out of sight.

They seemed to be few enough that Sloan was confident her force would eliminate them easily; the trick was doing it without losing any men. She did not want so much as a single needless casualty. Wary of feedback from laceration whips and knowing her warjacks would be the most likely thing to give them away, she had kept her Hunters well behind her. Now that stealth was no longer an option she summoned the two nearest in hopes of using their supremely accurate guns and additional eyes to spot lurking enemies.

Ulchev and his Widowmakers were also keeping to hidden positions behind her, while the rest of her force converged from the other side of town. Now that she had fired, the other snipers felt at liberty to shoot at targets of opportunity. Periodic rifle fire sounded as they spotted movement. Sloan hoped they could identify friends from enemies.

She advanced swiftly, feeling urgency now that they were revealed. She hoped to save any remaining civilians. As she entered the village proper, Sloan spotted a heavily tattooed Scharde who had climbed onto a nearby rooftop with a rifle. The next moment he was dead, a bullet powerful enough to penetrate warjack armor having split his head through the middle.

As she had done countless times before, she plucked a new cartridge from her belt and worked Spitfire's bolt to eject the spent casing. She felt it seize and twisted her finger painfully as she pulled on the unyielding mechanism. The shell had gotten stuck on release—a fluke jam. She swore and yanked on the lever harder, trying to free the mechanism from the crumpled casing.

A flash of steel and red drew her attention. A pair of Satyxis had seen her predicament and rushed toward her. A bullet fired from behind her took one of them down instantly. The other came at her in bursts of unpredictable motion, knowing she was being targeted. Sloan's two nearest Hunters saw this enemy's approach and fired. The warcaster's eyes widened as she saw that *both* had missed the swiftly darting warrior, against all odds.

With a start, she saw that the horned woman was actually going to reach her. The attacker was attired in red silk cloth and gold adornments, and Sloan realized she must be an officer or even a captain. She was armed with a long, bladed whip just as the other Satyxis had been, but it was a hand cannon the Cryxian raised and fired even as Sloan tumbled aside. Not for the first time, the captain felt grateful she had chosen lighter warcaster armor to allow herself better range of motion. The Satyxis' shot narrowly missed to kick up dirt just behind her.

Sloan threw Spitfire aside unceremoniously and drew the sword sheathed at her side. She turned to face her attacker just as the bladed whip flickered out to catch her. Its serrated edges smashed Sloan's power field in a blue-white shower of arcane sparks but did not penetrate. It had been a close call, however, and the horned woman was drawing the weapon back for another strike.

Her sword seemed woefully inadequate against the lashing steel whip of the Satyxis. She had done passably well during her general training in swordsmanship at the Strategic Academy, but she knew she had no particular aptitude with a blade—for her, it was a weapon of last resort. Her opponent, on the other hand, showed comfortable ease and mastery with her weapon. Sloan took up a basic defensive stance: legs wide apart, the sword's hilt at waist level, the point angled toward her attacker. She considered using her magic to blast the Satyxis but knew doing so would be an extreme risk. It would drain most of the energy from her armor's power field—possibly the only thing that had kept her alive on the first strike.

The Satyxis closed and circled her, aware of the warjacks that were nearing and aiming cannons at her. Her proximity to the warcaster was what kept them and the snipers from firing. The horned woman had to know she was dead either way but seemed determined to take her foe with her. She even smiled as she lashed her whip through the air again. Sloan barely evaded it, and her power field sparked as the weapon cut the air where her head had been.

Sloan spared a quick glance over her shoulder and saw Ulchev running toward her, sword in hand. Similarly, her Hunters were closing with axes raised. The Satyxis saw this too and knew her window of opportunity was closing.

With a flick of her wrist, the Cryxian sent her whip slashing through the air, this time at the nearest Hunter. Her expertise with the weapon was demonstrated as its metal edge perfectly sliced through exposed pistons of the machine's right arm, damaging its axe hand. The lacerator whip was no ordinary weapon, and as soon as it cut through the steel of her machine, Sloan felt blinding pain explode in her head across her mental link to its cortex. Reeling from this and seeing spots before her eyes, she staggered awkwardly to the side as the next slash of the whip came for her. She raised her sword to deflect it, but the weapon wrapped around the blade and cut through both power field and armor to score her left shoulder. The wound was painful but not severe. The Hunter swung its axe in retaliation, but the Satyxis stepped quickly to the side and the strike missed.

Sloan could feel her other machines closing, but she knew a solid hit from that lacerator whip could cripple her. She gritted her teeth as she decided to forego defense entirely.

She summoned her magic, pushing every ounce of her will into the spell. Runes formed around her outstretched sword. Raw arcane power shot from the tip of the blade and struck the Satyxis with an explosion of blue-white light. The blast was large enough to catch Sloan herself in its outer edge, but it washed across her warcaster armor without harm to her. The Satyxis captain was left lying in a smoking heap, the whip tangled around her charred body.

Sloan turned at the sound of heavy footsteps behind her. Kapitan Ulchev had reached her, breathing heavily. "Captain, are you wounded?" he asked.

She shook her head. "A scratch. I'm fine."

"I apologize. By the time I reloaded, the horned witch was too close and I feared to take the shot." He seemed sincere, and she put aside the thought that maybe he had refrained from firing on purpose, seeking to deprive Cygnar of a warcaster. He looked at the scorched corpse. "It seems I had nothing to worry about."

RAW ARCANES POWER SHOT FROM THE TIP OF THE BLADE AND STRUCK THE SATYXIS WITH AN EXPLOSION OF BLUE-WHITE LIGHT.

Sloan said nothing as she retrieved Spitfire and finally managed to clear the jammed mechanism. Then they swept through the village, cautious of potential ambush. They found that Raddick and his commandos had eliminated the rest of the Cryxian raiding party and had also secured the attackers' small boat.

As Sloan met up with Raddick he was helping assist an injured villager away from one of the buildings. The man moaned as he was lowered to a resting position, and Raddick began to bind his wound as best he could. The man wore light armor with an armband that identified him as one of the town's militia, and his side was dark and wet with blood where a lacerating strike had penetrated.

She could not help but quickly look over Raddick himself, as he was also covered in blood. With guilty relief she saw that he was intact, the blood not his own. The two of them shared a brief look, just enough to acknowledge appreciation of their mutual survival.

Raddick said, "Most of the fighting took place at the docks before we got here. According to him,"—he indicated the injured man with his head—"the Satyxis prioritized the boats and those manning them. I expect the boatmen saw something the Cryxians didn't want them to see. Most of

the villagers may have escaped, but he seems to be the only militia survivor." He finished cinching a piece of tan cloth around the villager's side, and they watched it darken with blood.

Sloan leaned down and took the injured man's chin in her hand so he would look at her. "What did you find?" she asked. Seeing that his eyes were vaguely unfocused, she slapped his cheek lightly. "Your patrols ran into something—what was it?"

"Captain—" Raddick said with a strained voice. "He's not doing well."

She ignored him and concentrated on the militia man, whose eyes focused on hers. He coughed weakly and said, "Boats, big ones, anchored downriver. Looked suspicious. We came back to send word, but . . ." His voice faded as his eyes rolled back and the lids closed. He continued breathing, but it was weak.

"SOLDIERS HAVE A DUTY TO PROTECT THE ORDINARY FOLK, SOMETHING YOUR PEOPLE HAVE NEVER UNDERSTOOD."

"We have to get him help," Raddick said. "There's another village a half-day's hike to the south. They might put up the rest of the survivors."

Looking past him Sloan saw that some of the other villagers had emerged from hiding and had approached the commandos, appearing extremely grateful. An older woman hugged an embarrassed commando sergeant tightly, tears on her face. Other people were moving to check the bodies on the pier with expressions of shock and horror. She saw several other wounded among them.

"There are more than I would have thought possible," Raddick said. "I'll see about tending to the injured and giving them what food we can spare. We should provide them an escort, in case there are any other Cryxians in the area."

"We must move on, Lieutenant," Ulchev said, coming up behind Sloan. "We've done all we can for these people."

Raddick squared off with the Khadoran, his eyes narrowing. "It is our duty to help them. I wouldn't expect you to understand."

"I understand perfectly," Ulchev said with a sour face. "I am humbled by your merciful soul. But this is not our mission."

"Not everything is about our mission," Raddick said. "Soldiers have a duty to protect the ordinary folk, something your people have never understood."

Sloan felt conflicted, particularly looking at the survivors and their obvious relief at being rescued by the Cygnaran Army. Her force had not been swift enough to stop the attack in the first place, but they could still see to the safety of those who were left. She considered whether they could spare the time, but she had no idea how long the enemy would stay where they had been spotted. For all she knew those boats had offloaded their soldiers, and they were flanking Stryker right now. She had to find out their disposition and armament and send word to her superiors. Far more rested in the balance than the people of this one town.

"Should we prepare them to march or wait until they bury their dead, Captain?" Raddick asked her. He nodded at the man she had questioned. "I'm worried about this one. That injury should be sewn up. Maybe one of these villagers—"

"Get your men ready to move, Lieutenant," Sloan said wearily, cutting him off. "Kapitan Ulchev is right. We've done all we can."

"What!? Kara—" Raddick began, then stopped himself, realizing his mistake instantly.

"Captain Sloan, Lieutenant!" Sloan barked, anger surging through her.

"Yes, sir. I'm sorry." He stepped nearer to her and spoke in low tones. "This man was helping the army with his patrols. He's an irregular, but we can't leave him like this. It's winter, with their houses burned, their stores plundered, their boats destroyed. They can't stay here, and he'll never make it on the road without our help."

She stared at him unflinchingly. "Get your men ready, Lieutenant. Right now. You can advise these people where to go for help, but we can't escort them. We have a job to do. Understood?"

Raddick stared at her for a moment, his mouth working. The hurt in his eyes cooled her temper, but she said nothing. Finally, he snapped a crisp salute. "Yes, sir," he said flatly before stalking away.

She turned and saw Ulchev watching, his face unreadable. She met his gaze and held it. After a few seconds he nodded almost imperceptibly, then slung his rifle over his shoulder and went to rejoin his Widowmakers, leaving Sloan to her thoughts.



The Dragon's Tongue River was a massive, angry thing, a broad slash of steel-grey water flowing swiftly westward. Sloan's force was situated among the trees along a short cliff overlooking the river from the southern shore. From here she could easily survey the three riverboats anchored on the other bank. Landing on that side was clearly easier, as a gradual incline led to an open stretch of land before an area of denser trees and swamp beyond. She knew that was the Wythmoor, though that part was almost indistinguishable from the Thornwood to the east. She was struck by the number of Cryxians she saw crawling across the decks of the boats—many more than she had anticipated, more than her own force could neutralize quickly.

Through Spitfire's scope she watched Scharde pirates going about a variety of ordinary tasks. From the patches of worn paint on the boat hulls, she could see that the riverboats themselves had once been disguised in bright colors so they might pass as simple merchant boats. Considering the Satyxis walking openly on deck, it was clear that all pretense of secrecy had since been dropped.

"Too many for a direct assault," Ulchev said beside her. His right eye was pressed against the scope of his Vanar Liberator.

"Perhaps," she said. "But we've got a good firing position." The Cryxian boats were just in range of her Hunters' cannons if she helped them with her magic. She would be able to rain down shells on the Cryxians, and it would be difficult for the enemy to cross the river for a counterattack.

Ulchev suddenly drew in a sharp breath and cursed in Khadoran. The world through her scope spun as he abruptly pulled Spitfire's barrel toward what he wanted her to see. The scope stopped on one of the riverboats, the one farthest from the shore. A massive construct of black iron had stepped out from beneath a black awning. Its crab-like legs, heavy pincer, and spiker cannon marked it as a Leviathan, one of Cryx's amphibious helljacks. Another Leviathan followed. Then she saw the armored female figure with them.

"That is a problem," Sloan whispered. She'd never actually seen Skarre Ravenmane in person, but the smoking stacks fitted to the armor the woman wore left little doubt that this was indeed the infamous Cryxian warcaster and pirate.

"I agree," Ulchev said. "And she likely has more 'jacks in the holds of those boats."

Sloan took Spitfire from her shoulder and motioned to two trencher snipers standing nearby. "Watch the boats," she said. "If Skarre or either of those helljacks disembarks, find me

immediately." The two nodded and took up positions behind trees, pointing their scoped rifles down at the Cryxians.

"Come with me, Kapitan," Sloan said and moved into the woods. A short distance in, she found Lieutenant Raddick and the rest of her small force. She called the lieutenant over to join her and Ulchev and then quickly apprised him of the situation.

"Opinions?" she asked.

"I'd say we've confirmed this force intends to rendezvous with the army Lord General Stryker is moving to intercept," Raddick answered. "There are enough of them that it might turn the tide, especially with Skarre in the mix."

"There are many more than I had hoped," Ulchev said. "If we engage we could hurt them, as we have a good position and they are unaware of us. But Ravenmane's presence is not good."

"My men won't be able to do much until the enemy is close enough to be a real problem," Raddick said.

"I could likely do quite a bit of damage to their vessels, at least," Sloan said. "Also take out some of their helljacks. But I don't see how we could defeat them entirely, not with Skarre down there." She sighed, frowning.

Sloan's orders were clear. It was tempting to gamble with attacking the enemy now, but she had no great confidence they could neutralize these Cryxians. If they tried and failed they would give up their advantage, forewarn the enemy, and likely be forced to flee with casualties.

She said, "So long as they sit tight here, so will we. I'll send a runner to General Stryker to inform him of what we've discovered. We'll maintain firing positions and keep a close eye on the boats, but we'll intervene only if ordered to do so or if it appears they're on the move. If that happens? Then we kick the hornet's nest." The others nodded their agreement.

Ulchev scratched at his beard. "We may have a long wait, with limited supplies, always knowing the enemy might notice us at any time."

"Then I guess we'd better get comfortable and be ready to fire at a moment's notice." Sloan gave him a rueful smile. "By my count we've killed three Cryxians apiece, Kapitan. I'm sure we can both do better than that."

Ulchev looked surprised and then chuckled. "Warcaster or not, Captain Sloan, you are a sniper at heart."

LORD GENERAL COLEMAN STRYKER

CYGNAR EPIC CAVALRY WARCASTER

The toll of these dark times has fallen heavily on our soldiers. It is the duty of every leader to accept a greater share of that burden.

—Lord General Stryker

STRYKER

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
8	6	7	6	15	16	10



QUICKSILVER BLAST

RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
8	1	—	14



QUICKSILVER MK III

POW	P+S
8	14



MOUNT

POW
10

FOCUS	6
DAMAGE	18
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
WARJACK POINTS	+5
LARGE BASE	

FEAT: LIGHTNING CHARGE

Ordered forward by General Coleman Stryker, the Storm Division becomes a sweeping tempest of destruction. Whether advancing on foot or galloping on horseback, Stryker's knights rush forward while the air darkens with black clouds. They impact the enemy line as a galvanic inferno of arcing lightning and booming thunder.

When a friendly Faction model makes a mount attack or a charge attack while within Stryker's control area, the attack automatically hits and gains an additional die on

the damage roll. Lightning Charge lasts for one round.

STRYKER

Immunity: Electricity

Elite Cadre [Storm Lances] – Friendly Storm Lance models gain Reform. (After all models in a unit with Reform have completed their actions, each can advance up to 3".)

Field Marshal [Assault] – Models in this model's battlegroup gain Assault. (As part of a charge, after moving but before making its charge attack, a model with Assault can make one ranged attack targeting the model charged unless they were in melee with each other at the start of this model's activation. When resolving an Assault ranged attack, the attacking model does not suffer the target in melee penalty. If the target is not in melee range after moving, this model can make the Assault ranged attack before its activation ends.)

Plasma Nimbus – If this model is hit by a melee attack, immediately after the attack is resolved the attacking model suffers a POW 10 electrical damage roll unless this model was destroyed or removed from play by the attack.

QUICKSILVER BLAST

Damage Type: Electricity

Magical Weapon

QUICKSILVER MK III

Magical Weapon

Reach

Disruption – A warjack hit loses its focus points and cannot be allocated focus or channel spells for one round.

MOUNT

Thunderous Impact – After resolving this model's impact attacks, if one or more impact attack rolls hit an enemy model, lightning arcs from this model to d3 consecutive models. The lightning arcs to the nearest model it has not already arced to within 4" of the last model it arced to, ignoring this model. Each model the lightning arcs to suffers a POW 10 electrical damage roll .

SPELLS

	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
ARCANE BOLT	2	12	—	11	NO	YES
Magical bolts of energy streak toward the target model.						
CHAIN BLAST	3	10	3	12	NO	YES
After determining the point of impact for this attack, roll deviation for an additional 3" AOE from that point. Models in that AOE are hit and suffer a POW 6 blast damage roll.						
ESCORT	2	SELF CTRL	—	—	YES	NO
Warjacks in this model's battlegroup beginning their activations in its control area gain +2" movement. This model gains +2 ARM while one or more warjacks in its battlegroup are within 3" of it.						
FURY	2	6	—	—	YES	NO
Target friendly model/unit gains +3 to melee damage rolls but suffers -1 DEF.						
IRON AGGRESSION	3	6	—	—	YES	NO
Target friendly warjack can run, charge, or make slam or trample power attacks without spending focus and gains boosted melee attack rolls.						

TACTICAL TIPS

ESCORT – Modifiers to movement apply only to a model's normal movement.

FIELD MARSHAL – This includes this model.

THUNDEROUS IMPACT – The lightning will still arc to a model with Immunity: Electricity; it just cannot damage that model. Damage from Thunderous Impact is not considered to have been caused by a hit or by a melee or ranged attack. Thunderous Impact may allow this model to continue charging even if the impact attacks themselves did not fully clear the charge lane.

Coleman Stryker has long shouldered the greatest responsibilities for his beloved nation and king. While he committed to the call of duty with seemingly inexhaustible reserves of stamina, recent events have included trials that have tested his very soul. Indeed, many thought Stryker lost during the campaign in Sul, in both spirit and body. It was with great relief that they saw the lord commander rise from the proverbial ashes, his body still broken but his belief in the noble ideals of Cygnar renewed.

Since that time, Stryker has been at the center of every major Cygnaran conflict, tasked by his king with keeping the Storm Division ready for any battle where the expertise of its veteran soldiers can be brought to bear. Created to be separate from Cygnar's primary armies and to serve in support of them, this force quickly became one of the nation's most powerful offensive assets. Stryker led his division north to liberate Point Bourne from Cryxian invasion and then to fight alongside the Khadoran Army confronting the Nightmare Empire deep in the Thornwood. Through it all, Stryker has remained a bastion of courage for the Cygnaran Army.

Stryker's promotion to lord general sent a clear message to the king's general staff. The freedoms granted to the lord commander had raised some concerns among the War Council about the impact of this special rank on Cygnar's chain of command. King Leto responded by demonstrating utmost confidence in this warcaster and his judgment. As lord general, Stryker's place among the preeminent commanders of the nation is reinforced, and his Storm Division receives the support of a full army. He stands as the greatest hope of his king and his country in these increasingly dark times.



RELIANT

CYGNAR HEAVY WARJACK

The storm dictates the battle, and the Reliant dictates the storm.

—Storm Chaser Caitlin Finch

RELIANT

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
5	11	7	6	12	18	—



STORMBRINGER			
RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
12	1	3	13



PULSE HAMMER	
POW	P+S
6	17

DAMAGE

1	2	3	4	5	6
	L			R	
L	L	M	C	R	R
	M	M	C	C	

FIELD ALLOWANCE	U
POINT COST	8
LARGE BASE	

RELIANT

Immunity: Electricity

STORMBRINGER

Damage Type: Electricity

Electro Field – The AOE remains in play for one round. Models entering or ending their activations in the AOE suffer a POW 10 electrical damage roll .

PULSE HAMMER

Critical Thunderclap – On a critical hit against an enemy model, center a 4" AOE on the model directly hit. Models in the AOE without Immunity: Electricity become Stationary for one round.

Whether enveloping the enemy with crackling electrical fields at range or driving the opposition to its knees with titanic

blows in melee combat, this hulking machine delivers the virtues of combat versatility to Cygnar's storm arsenal. As the count of smoking and shattered bodies has grown, it has become clear that the Reliant marks the beginning of a new era for Cygnaran battlefield technology.

When the Cygnaran Armory set about designing the Reliant after the Llaelese War, it was with the goal of expanding Cygnar's storm-based weaponry to fill different battlefield roles. Just as the older Defender and Ironclad perfectly complement one another, the Reliant was engineered to complement the close-fighting Stormclad by delivering a longer-ranged storm-generating attack platform without entirely sacrificing melee capability.

Key to this would be the Stormbringer, the powerful new ranged weapon for the Reliant, designed to generate storms at considerably longer range than the storm glaive-based generator blade wielded by the Stormclad. A team of the armory's most ingenious stormsmith mechaniks set about engineering the weapon and its integral storm chamber. Since the machine would be given range of movement rather than being expected to fight in close proximity to

HEIGHT/WEIGHT: 12'3" / 6.7 TONS

ARMAMENT: STORMBRINGER (LEFT ARM), PULSE HAMMER (RIGHT ARM)

FUEL LOAD/BURN USAGE: 650 LBS / 5.5 HRS GENERAL, 55 MINS COMBAT

INITIAL SERVICE DATE: 607 AR

CORTEX MANUFACTURER: CYGNARAN ARMORY

ORIG. CHASSIS DESIGN: CYGNARAN ARMORY

Storm Knights, this generator was not created to draw on the energy of other lesser storm generators that are nearby. The various weapon systems of this new chassis were finalized and successfully integrated in 607 AR after a series of field tests to fine-tune its complex mechanisms.

The Stormbringer is a remarkably effective weapon capable of generating and projecting electrical fields at some distance—fields that linger as swirling storms of crackling power. This gives Cygnaran commanders considerable control over the battlefield, keeping enemy infantry at bay while the insulated Storm Knights can charge through the localized storms without hindrance. The Reliant can wreak havoc on even the most well-conceived of enemy battle plans, causing charges to falter for fear of electrocution, diverting enemy units into choke points, and providing a crackling buffer between lightly armored Cygnar units and the enemy. Stopped in its tracks, an enemy army is vulnerable to the gunfire erupting from Cygnar's trenches and battlements.

The pulse hammer is a less complex but tremendously effective mechanical melee weapon. Connected by long conduits to the Stormbringer's integral storm chamber, the pulse hammer can generate a powerful electrical discharge and thunderclap. Those in the proximity are so stunned by the noise and the surge of voltaic energies that they are incapable of acting or reacting to threats, making it easy for the Reliant or other allies to finish them off. As the Reliant continues to earn a name for itself throughout Cygnar's campaigns, it is quickly securing its place on the battlefield, its reign heralded by the crackle of raw energy and the scent of smoke on the wind. With each passing year Cygnar improves its ability to muster an entirely galvanic army against its enemies, evolving the state of warfare itself.



TEMPEST BLAZERS

CYGNAR ARCANES TEMPEST LIGHT CAVALRY UNIT

Glory blazes from the barrels of our guns.

—Arcane Tempest Captain Tolver Lormey

LEADER & GRUNTS

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
9	4	5	7	15	13	8



MAGELOCK PISTOL

RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
10	1	—	10



MOUNT

POW
10

DAMAGE 5 EA

FIELD ALLOWANCE 1

LEADER & 2 GRUNTS 6

LEADER & 4 GRUNTS 10

LARGE BASE

- **Electro Leap** – When a model is hit with this weapon, you can have lightning arc to the nearest model within 4" of the model hit, ignoring the attacking model. The model the lightning arcs to suffers an unboostable POW 10 electrical damage roll ⚡.

MAGELOCK PISTOL

⚡ Magical Weapon

LEADER & GRUNTS

🔫 Gunfighter

🗺 Pathfinder

Attack Type – Each time this model makes a normal ranged attack, choose one of the following abilities:

- **Brutal Damage** – Gain an additional die on this weapon's damage rolls.
- **Blessed** – When making an attack with this weapon, ignore spell effects that add to a model's ARM or DEF.

TACTICAL TIP

ELECTRO LEAP – The lightning will still arc to a model with Immunity: Electricity; it just cannot damage that model. Damage from Electro Leap is not considered to have been caused by a hit or by a melee or ranged attack.

Few sounds inspire patriotism in a faltering line like the thunder of hooves coupled with the sharp report of arcane gunfire. The premier light cavalry division of the Order of the Arcane Tempest, the Tempest Blazers traverse the battlefield at great speeds, leveling their magelock pistols to unleash devastating volleys on those who threaten the crown.

A small number of Tempest Academy initiates who score highly for cavalry aptitude are invited to train with both gun mage instructors and light cavalry drill sergeants from the Cygnaran Reconnaissance Service. Lessons range from crafting rune shot to the implementation of cavalry tactics. Steeds, viewed by riders as an extension of themselves, are drawn from the swiftest and most durable stock, including Cardovars from southern Ord.

With practiced hands these gunslingers can adroitly select the proper rune bullets to reload even at a full gallop amid the chaos of battle. Their role forces them to be ready to reposition at a moment's notice and requires focused concentration and discipline. While they excel at hit-and-run tactics, the Tempest Blazers have no qualms about snapping off point-blank shots at any who close with them.



STORMBLADE CAPTAIN

CYGNAR STORM KNIGHT SOLO

As thunder follows lightning, so your company follows its captain.

—Training Sergeant Brenn Falger



CAPTAIN

★ Jack Marshal

★ Commander

⚡ Immunity: Electricity

Tactician [Storm Knight] – While in this model's command range, friendly Storm Knight models ignore other friendly Storm Knight models when determining LOS. Friendly Storm Knight models can advance through other friendly Storm Knight models in this model's command range without effect if they have enough movement to move completely past them.

Leadership [Storm Knights] – Friendly Storm Knight models activating while in this model's command range gain Relentless Charge that activation.

Quick Work – When this model destroys one or more enemy models with a melee attack during its combat action, immediately after that attack is resolved this model can make

one normal ranged attack.

Attacks gained from Quick Work do not count against a weapon's ROF.

Relentless Charge – This model gains Pathfinder during activations it charges.

NEXUS BLAST

⚡ Damage Type: Electricity

NEXUS BLADE

👉 Reach

🔧 Weapon Master

CAPTAIN						
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
5	6	8	6	12	16	10

NEXUS BLAST			
RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
8	1	—	14

NEXUS BLADE	
POW	P+S
7	13

DAMAGE	5
FIELD ALLOWANCE	2
POINT COST	2
SMALL BASE	

Rising from both honored houses and the ranks of the Storm Knights in equal number, Stormblade captains are among Cygnar's most proficient and professional officers. These combat veterans have spent years developing their combat skills in the field, and it is only after attaining the rank of captain that one is bestowed with true knighthood, securing a title and lands for his family.

A Stormblade captain strides into battle wearing the armor of a Storm Knight and armed with a shield and a mechanical nexus blade. This sword, a limited-issue improved variant of the storm glaive, emits powerful voltaic charges at even greater range and intensity than its standard-issue predecessor.

Stormblade captains lead companies of Storm Knights comprising as

many as two hundred fifty or more troops divided into platoons, which are in turn led by lieutenants. Calling upon knowledge gained through focused study at the Strategic Academy, Stormblade Captains command their soldiers with authority, cognizant of the individual merits of every one of their brothers and sisters in arms. Led by such a captain, the knights move relentlessly and in perfect order, undaunted by ordinary battlefield chaos and confusion.



TACTICAL TIPS

TACTICIAN – This includes this model.

QUICK WORK – This model cannot make the additional attack if it is still in melee.

LIEUTENANT ALLISON JAKES

CYGNAR CHARACTER SOLO

She does not think of what she cannot do but always of what she can.

—Commander Dalin Sturgis

JAKES	SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
	6	5	6	5	15	13	7

HAND CANNON	RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
	12	1	—	12

MECHANIKA BLADE	POW	P+S
	5	10

DUELING DAGGER	POW	P+S
	2	7

FOCUS	4
DAMAGE	5
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
POINT COST	3
SMALL BASE	

JAKES

☒ Fearless

Journeyman Warcaster –

This model is not a warcaster but has the following warcaster special rules: Battlegroup Commander, Control Area, Focus Manipulation, Power Field, and Spellcaster.

Parry – This model cannot be targeted by free strikes.

Sprint – At the end of this model's activation, if it destroyed one or more enemy models with melee attacks this activation it can make a full advance.

MECHANIKA BLADE

☒ Magical Weapon

DUELING DAGGER

☒ Magical Weapon

SPELLS

COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
ENERGIZER	*	SELF CTRL	—	NO	NO

This model spends up to 3 focus points to cast Energizer. Models in its battlegroup that are currently in its control area can immediately advance up to 1" for each focus point spent. Energizer can be cast only once per turn.

SIDEKICK	3	6	—	—	YES	NO
Target warjack in this model's battlegroup cannot be knocked down, pushed, placed, or slammed and gains +2 DEF. While this model is B2B with target model, it cannot be knocked down, pushed, placed, or slammed and gains +2 DEF.						

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TACTICAL TIPS

JOURNEYMAN WARCASTER – This model is a non-warcaster model and is not affected by special rules that specifically affect warcasters. Models with the Attached rule cannot be attached to this model.

A consummate duelist, Lieutenant Allison Jakes moves across the war-torn battlefields of western Immoren with deadly poise, striking down foes and then darting away in preparation for her next attack. She utilizes her arcane abilities to impart the same fluidity of movement to the warjacks in her battlegroup, granting them a burst of speed at the critical moment or imbuing them with the grace of a duelist.

Having discovered her warcaster talent at a young age, Allison Jakes learned early in life that her destiny was to serve her country and protect those who cannot protect themselves. When she entered warcaster training at the Strategic Academy in Caspia, her vibrant energy and youthful determination, combined with her burgeoning sorcerous talents, made her stand out to her instructors. But it was her reflexes, athleticism, and natural affinity for a blade that made her a perfect candidate for the academy's elite dueling school.

Something of a holdover from an older era, Caspia's Strategic Academy has long maintained its esteemed dueling tradition, favored in particular by officer candidates of noble birth and those aspiring to join the sword or storm knights. Given their more generalized instruction,

it was rare for warcaster apprentices to be welcomed, but Jakes soon proved herself among them. It was here that the young Jakes defined her personal approach to combat and warfare. She became enamored of the precision and exacting execution required by the graceful fighting style as well as its ability to grant lethal force to the lightest blow through speed and accuracy. Not only was it well suited to her frame, but it was also a good match for her personality.

At her core, Allison Jakes is a perfectionist. Few among her peers can match her determination and unwavering dedication in the pursuit of a goal once she sets her sights on it. While this uncompromising spirit has the potential to have an isolating effect due to the strain it puts on those around her, Jakes' positive and upbeat nature paired with her deep sense of responsibility and caring for the welfare of those serving with and under her have earned her the respect and loyalty of her fellow soldiers. She is always the first to volunteer for any assignment, and she actively takes the most dangerous positions on the battlefield in order to spare the soldiers under her command from harm.

While Lieutenant Jakes is proud to serve her beloved homeland, her fierce dedication stems from something far greater than a sense of obligation or national pride: she believes to the very core of her soul that it is every person's duty to make the most positive difference they can in the world. For Jakes, that work will be done amid the mud and blood of Cygnar's war-ravaged borders.





PROTECTORATE OF MENOTH

THE LAWBRINGER'S MERCY

FEDORGRAD, EASTERN UMBREY

Posadnik Dmetri Loktev walked confidently through Fedorgrad's market district, his hand entwined with that of his wife, Tahni. His attention, however, was focused on the diminutive form that dashed from stall to stall in front of them, brightly bowed pigtails flying.

"That girl has more energy than a Pozdyov colt," he said.

He felt Tahni squeeze his hand. "It's been months since we've been to the market."

Dmetri nodded, a slight pang of guilt hitting his chest at his wife's words. "I know my obligations to Great Prince Tzepesci have affected you both."

Tahni pulled his hand back, stopping their stroll. With her other hand she gently turned his head until his gaze went to her emerald-green eyes. "I will not lie and say it hasn't. But your position is important. Our homeland is finally whole once more, but any fool can draw lines on a map. Only great men can make those borders real." She smiled and leaned in to kiss his lips.

It had been too long since he had been able to enjoy the simple pleasures of life. Since the empress had sanctioned the unification of eastern and western Umbrey as a single volozk under Great Prince Tzepesci, Dmetri—like all the prince's hardworking vassals—had known little rest. Altogether he felt lucky his role had allowed him to remain with his family rather than marching to war.

It had been necessary to put new infrastructure in place, from proper Khadoran government to *kayazy* trade agreements to military conscription, not to mention the massive reconstruction required in many areas following the conquest of Llael. The most notable effort was underway in Riversmet, but almost all the eastern Umbrean cities had suffered damage from the Khadoran expansion and the numerous conflicts since. There was also the tricky business of smoothing over tensions between the eastern and western Umbreans themselves.

Plentiful external threats added to the strain. First had been the efforts of the so-called Llaelese Resistance, but more

recently Cryxian attacks had been occurring seemingly at random across Umbrey, straining the depleted Khadoran garrisons. Fedorgrad was teeming with refugees from several of the surrounding communities. The disruption to farming concerned Dmetri most; the town was one of the region's primary centers for grain storage and distribution. His position within Tzepesci's administration afforded him a unique perspective on the razor's edge the new Umbrey walked.

Because of its importance to the area, the town retained a sizable garrison drawn from the 1st Army. Ordinarily it would also have been protected by more of the great prince's own soldiers, but most of those had been summoned to join him in his march south. For the hundredth time Dmetri offered a prayer to Menoth for the mission's success. He did not know many details, but Tzepesci had promised to seek a more permanent solution to the Cryxian dilemma.

Dmetri felt a tug on his trouser leg. He looked down, and his gaze was met by another set of emerald-green eyes as his young daughter thrust a small wooden doll up toward him. "Papa?" she asked expectantly.

"Sasha, you already have a room full of dolls," Dmetri said sternly, though he knew how the conversation would end.

"But Papa," the little girl said, her tone serious, "this one has a yellow dress and blue eyes." Her gaze never wavered from his as she waited, her explanation clearly irrefutable. Dmetri could sense his wife's amusement as she watched her husband, a man who cowed *kayazy* and their *bratya* thugs, completely defenseless against the request of a four-year-old. "Please?" the girl said, thrusting the doll as high as she could.

Dmetri chuckled as he shook his head. "Of course, my little *droygaya*."

Sasha squealed in delight and clutched the doll to her chest. "Oh, thank you, Papa! Thank you!"

Dmetri patted her head and moved toward the stand to pay for the doll. He could hear Sasha excitedly talking to her mother. Just like every other time, he heard "my most favorite *ever*" repeatedly. Even as he handed the copper

coins to the merchant he knew the sentiment would last only a few days, but such joy was well worth the paltry cost.

A sudden commotion drew his attention, and instinctively his hand went to the blade he kept at his waist. He quickly made his way back to Tahni and Sasha as he scanned for the cause of the disruption. He caught sight of a trio of Winter Guard pushing their way through the crowd. He shared a brief look with his wife before moving to meet the soldiers.

"What is the meaning of this?" he asked, making sure to stand at his full height. He was not an exceptionally large man, but years of navigating both the battlefield and political circuits had taught him how to take immediate command of a situation.

"Master Loktev," one of the guardsmen began, inclining his head slightly, "Kovnik Provsk requests your presence immediately." The man looked around quickly before leaning closer and saying in a low voice, "A grave matter requires your attention."

Dmetri frowned, knowing there were only a handful of circumstances that would lead to such a summons. "Cryx?" he asked, keeping his own voice quiet.

The guardsman shook his head. "Worse. The Northern Crusade, led by their high executioner. And Master—" He swallowed, clearly unsettled. "The Harbinger of Menoth is with them."



It had been nearly two weeks since the Protectorate interdiction had left Leryn. At the Harbinger's command their escort was limited; she did not wish to reduce the city's defenses unduly. She was clearly relying more on Reznik than on force of numbers. As was proper none had questioned her mandate in taking whatever soldiers and warjacks she required. The escort included a phalanx of Temple Flameguard, two detachments of Exemplar bastions and cinerators, and a substantial number of zealots and priests. Both warcasters led sizable battlegroups, supported by several wagons for coal and supplies. The Avatar of Menoth had also joined them, having remained in Llael of its own volition when Severius marched south. The mighty warjack stayed close to the Harbinger, who was also escorted by a pair of senior paladins of the Order of the Wall.

Their progress had been slowed by the difficulties in crossing the powerful Black River. Though Riversmet presented the best crossing in the vicinity, it also held the largest Khadoran force north of Merywyn, led by Kommander Izak Harkevich. Reznik burned for the opportunity to face the Iron Wolf in battle once more, but the Harbinger had led the Protectorate force south to another crossing. They had easily put down the token Khadoran force guarding the

bridge there and had continued into the interior of former eastern Llael, now western Umbrey.

Servath Reznik rode upon his war chariot, his massive polearm held loosely in his right hand with the butt of the weapon resting on the carriage floor. The ground crunched beneath the weight of the chariot and rider as a pair of powerful warhorses pulled the cart forward at a slow trot. Through the tension in the reins Reznik could sense their desire to unleash their full strength. They were creatures bred for war, well deserving of their place as the vessels that would deliver his wrath to the Creator's enemies. Reznik, too, yearned to fulfill his holy duty and mete out Menoth's judgment on his enemies. Menoth had set him on this course, and he felt assured he would taste battle soon.

Despite the holy fire that burned within him, a niggling thought remained in the back of Reznik's mind. He had spoken little to the Harbinger since his audience in Leryn where he had heard Menoth speak through her. In truth, her presence still unsettled him. For as long as he could remember he had never known doubt and certainly never fear or trepidation, yet on this journey he had not felt the stillness of absolute resolve.

He turned slightly to look once more from the corner of his eye on the holy visage of the Harbinger, who floated serenely above the rolling plain where their combined force marched. She remained connected to the earth only through the efforts of her devoted acolytes, who were able to speed her where she desired to go with her anchoring chains. Sunlight gleamed off her armor, and he relied on observing her indirectly so her holy radiance would not overwhelm him.

It was not the aura of holiness that caused him such unease. While he did not doubt he had heard Menoth voice his will through the Harbinger, this expedition had been organized without the hierarch's knowledge or consent. It was the hierarch's duty to interpret the will of the Creator and decide their course; it was by his command that the faithful took action. Doing so without his authority, even at the Harbinger's mandate, made Reznik uncomfortable.

The sight of a sizable town on the horizon broke him from this mood. He scowled beneath his mask as he sensed what might be the faint hint of unclean warjack cortexes in the distance. It seemed an army awaited them.

He spurred his steeds and turned them about to ride toward where several members of the Vassals of Menoth marched, watching over the wagons that carried the heavy frames of the army's warjacks. He nodded in satisfaction as he saw thin trails of smoke emanating from their stacks. The vassal mechaniks had kept their heartfires burning but banked low so that they might be quickly ready for action, as he had commanded.

He did not bother to acknowledge the vassal who came forward to greet him but only said, "The town nears. Prepare our warjacks for battle." Then he snapped the reins once more and turned his chariot back toward the front line.

He slipped his consciousness into each of his idling warjacks, readying them for battle as the mechanics stoked their furnaces to full steam. While each machine answered his mental touch with the righteous spirit he expected from vessels consecrated to Menoth, none compared to that of his personal warjack, Scourge of Heresy. The desire instilled in that machine to cleanse the unbelievers rivaled Reznik's own burning drive.

As he rode to the head of the army he saw the resplendent form of the Harbinger awaiting. She was facing the town but her voice rang out, pure and clear, speaking to him. "Our holy work begins, here at the town of Fedorgrad as Menoth wills. Like the mountain spring that becomes the raging river, here shall we begin the work that will see a rebirth of the worship of the Creator across the north." The Harbinger turned her blindfolded visage to him. "There can be no compromise. For too long has man strayed from the proper and righteous path. Too long has he failed to show proper obedience to the Creator. No longer." Her voice stoked his eagerness for battle. She continued, "By fire or faith all shall bow before him. This is our calling, the reason for our mission. I shall stand as the faith. And you, Servath Reznik, shall be the fire."



Dmetri clenched and unclenched his fists as he watched the two Protectorate warcasters approach the Khadoran Army picket set up on the outskirts of Fedorgrad. The Protectorate soldiers had raised a flag of truce, which was unusual as far as he knew. A Menite priest had brought word that his superiors requested a parley with the military commander of the town.

Following reports of the approaching enemy force, Kovnik Provsk had immediately arrayed his people defensively. A company of Winter Guard now took up positions around the town, backed by two units of Iron Fang Pikemen. Most impressive, though, was the pair of massive Juggernauts that flanked the kovnik as he strode forward to meet the Protectorate warcasters, clad in his Man-O-War armor. The sound of the powerful machines thundered in Dmetri's ears as he followed close behind. In addition, a pair of Destroyers remained concealed behind buildings on the edge of the town beside a battery of mortars, each 'jack marshaled by a capable battle mechanic. Together with the mortar crews, they would serve as a deadly surprise for the Protectorate army if negotiations turned to hostility.

It was an outcome Dmetri feared was all too likely given Kovnik Provsk's resistance to even speaking with the Protectorate leaders. Though Provsk was a good officer, his years of service had made him intractable and uncompromising. It had taken no small measure of effort to convince him to meet with the Menites. Even so, Dmetri suspected the kovnik would not accept anything less than the full and immediate retreat of the Protectorate forces.

His own anxious thoughts went once more to Tahni and Sasha. The two were safe for the moment within their modest estate, far from the area where the fighting would be fiercest. Still, he had heard plenty of stories concerning the actions of the Protectorate's interdictions into enemy lands. He had arranged protection and evacuation for several families, including his own, with one of the local bratyas whose leader he knew and trusted—as much as one could.

At a signal from Provsk the group came to a halt just beyond the Khadoran front line, and Dmetri was able to get a good look at the approaching warcasters. His heart hammered in his chest as his eyes shied away from one to look at the other, whom he knew from recent reports from Riversmet. Servath Reznik, the Protectorate's high executioner, was every bit as terrifying as Dmetri's imagination had painted him, a huge monster of a man clad in plate armor that rivaled the size of that worn by Man-O-War. None of the reports, however, had mentioned the war chariot he now rode. The rear of the chariot boasted several brutal wracks, and to Dmetri's horror he realized they were not empty; each held an emaciated wretch of a man, his arms and legs bound by chains and his head encased in an iron mask. As the chariot neared, Dmetri could hear the men's soft, agonized moaning. He fought down the fear that tore at his chest. He turned his attention to the other warcaster and all other thoughts fled his mind.

Dmetri had never been fervently pious. His belief in the teachings of the Old Faith was strong, but he had never experienced a true moment of rapture or believed himself to have seen the active hand of Menoth on Caen. He knew, of course, what the Sul-Menites claimed. He was even old enough to remember a time, long before the invasion of Llael, when Protectorate missionaries had been allowed to preach within Khador's borders.

Before him now, he had no doubt, was a vessel of the Creator. He could see Menoth's radiance pouring from her like rays from the summer sun. Her divinity was irrefutable. It was at once glorious and painful to look upon the young girl who had been chosen as the Harbinger of Menoth on Caen. He thought for a moment his entire being might be overwhelmed, and he could tell from the murmurs of the soldiers behind him that he was not alone in this. Fedorgrad, unlike most of its neighbors, was a town where Menites were in the majority.

As overwhelming as the sight of the Harbinger was to him, it was simply a prelude to hearing her voice. "Kovnik Ivan Provs, I bid you greeting in the name of the Creator and request that you part your forces to allow me entry to speak with the faithful of Fedorgrad." Though soft, the Harbinger's voice reached surprisingly far, its tones ringing as pure as the peal of a silver bell. Dmetri heard the unmistakable command behind her words.

Kovnik Provs showed no surprise that she knew his name. His reply lacked any politeness, feigned or otherwise. "You must think me simple. I will not allow entry to an invading army." He turned his gaze to Reznik. "I'm well aware of what you bring to the faithful."

If the Harbinger was offended by his words, her voice betrayed no sign of it. "We are not here to conquer or to occupy, but only to speak. I must bring the words of Menoth to the faithful. Whether there will be violence is entirely in your hands."

Provs replied, "If you do not seek violence, why have you brought an army? Are your words such that they can only be delivered at the point of a sword?"

"The forces that accompany me are for protection and to remove obstacles in our path. If you allow me entry I promise you by the Creator they will stay outside your gates. Only I and my closest escort will enter Fedorgrad."

Dmetri felt a surge of hope. He leaned forward to Provs and whispered, "Surely you should take her offer. Fedorgrad is too important to risk destruction if violence can be avoided, and—" Provs cut him off with a gesture. Though Dmetri's position as posadnik placed him in charge of civil matters here, the kovnik had military authority, giving him precedence in matters of defense.

"I will not engage in the appeasement of an invader," Provs said to him. "Regardless of their stated intentions, their presence here violates Khador's borders."

Dmetri felt the spark of hope within him die. Though he knew the man was right, he thought of his family within the town, and then of the four thousand other souls who called Fedorgrad home. Other than the garrison, most of the town's able-bodied men had either gone with the great prince or been enlisted in the Winter Guard elsewhere. What remained were families, the old, the young, and those who had served and then returned to other work.

"You will receive no entry here, nor anywhere else protected by the Khadoran Army." Provs's words rang in Dmetri's ears as a death sentence. "By order of the empress, I am giving you this one warning. Return east or face destruction!"

Dmetri looked back toward the face of the Harbinger, fighting past the awe to gauge her reaction. Her expression was calm, though slightly sad, and her blindfolded head bowed slightly. Her next words shook him to his core. "No, Kovnik Provs. You, whose father took your family from the Temple when you were but six years old to avoid paying his tithe. I am sorry for the path that has led you to this. You have sealed your own destruction. By fire your sins shall be cleansed."

The Harbinger reached out a hand, and one of her acolytes, recognizing her need, extended the sheath of her blade to her. She drew Providence from its scabbard, the steel ringing in a pure note that reminded Reznik of the peal of the bell at the Great Temple of the Creator in Sul.



The thunder of hooves mixed with the sounds of explosions as Reznik charged across the battlefield, commanding his warjacks to keep pace. The lamentations of the wretches upon the wracks at the back of his chariot filled the air, not only fueling his righteous anger but creating a warding of holy protection that prevented mundane fire from finding a mark against him. So shielded, Reznik thundered across the battlefield, eager to close with the Khadorans who had dared oppose the will of the Harbinger, and therefore Menoth. Fire from Destroyers and mortars exploded around him, taking a toll on the Flameguard and zealots, but such was the price of battle.

**"YOU HAVE SEALED YOUR OWN
DESTRUCTION. BY FIRE YOUR SINS
SHALL BE CLEANSSED."**

Reznik could feel the awesome power of the Harbinger even as he raced forward, her divine prayers lending speed to their forces even as she accepted onto herself many fatal injuries meant for others. Her instructions to him had been simple and explicit. He was to show the Khadorans the meaning of the name she had given him in Leryn: the Wrath of Ages.

Arcane runes encircled his hand before moving to encircle Scourge of Heresy, the spell urging it on and imbuing its strikes with uncanny accuracy. As he closed on the line of Khadoran soldiers, he looked for the impertinent kovnik. Reznik intended to make an example of the man so all might learn the consequences of his blasphemy.

Reznik shifted his attention to his Vanquisher and impelled its powerful flame belcher to fire upon a line of Iron Fang Pikemen. Guided by his will, the Vanquisher's shot impacted perfectly amid the red-armored warriors, and the superheated blast of Menoth's Fury turned armored plate to red-hot slag, transforming their very protection into the instrument of their agonizing demise.

With the Khadoran line faltering, Scourge of Heresy charged, its blazing star whirring in a deadly arc. Burning bodies were sent flying, broken limbs flailing limply as they came crashing back to the earth. Scourge of Heresy unleashed a roar of superheated steam, sounding like an enraged bull. The few remaining pikemen struck back at the unstoppable warjack, but Scourge of Heresy shattered the shafts of their pikes with a powerful blow from its sword Punisher. The unarmed men had little time to react as the 'jack's follow-up strike eviscerated all three in a spray of bright crimson.

**AS THE HERETICS' LIVES WERE
EXTINGUISHED, THEIR BODIES
BECAME CONDUITS FOR THE
CLEANSING FIRE OF MENOTH**

As the warjack finished its grisly work, several units of Temple Flameguard ran through the gap, their charge benefiting from the power the Harbinger bestowed on them. Reznik spurred his chariot to bring himself closer to the frantic melee that soon consumed both lines with the familiar sounds of battle. He spoke prayers of vengeance to Menoth. Runes once again surrounded his free hand and encircled a number of the Flameguard to grant them tireless resolve. Reznik's prayers of battle became louder as he drove his chariot into the center of the unfolding battle, scattering men like leaves as he barreled toward his target. His prayer reached a crescendo and Reznik felt himself flush with power. The entire battlefield was bathed in fiery orange runes. In a miracle as ancient as it was terrible he channeled the power of raw destruction harnessed only by the most zealous persecutors of heresy.

This power bound Reznik's enemies even as it guided the weapons of the faithful. As the heretics' lives were extinguished, their bodies became conduits for the cleansing fire of Menoth, white-hot flame bursting forth to consume those struck and those fighting alongside them. In moments the battlefield blazed like the sun itself. The enemy line became a pyre of holy flame. Reznik reveled in the execution of his holy duty as the Khadorans realized the sentence their blasphemy carried. The result of his work only fueled his righteous wrath. He summoned Scourge of Heresy to join him as he fought his way toward the kovnik.

Reznik saw the towering form of the Avatar of Menoth cutting through the rapidly dwindling press of Khadorans to engage one of Provsk's Juggernauts. The Avatar blocked a single blow from the Juggernaut's frost axe before hewing the red-armored giant to scrap with three powerful blows from its blessed blade. Provsk responded by sending his second Juggernaut to slow the Avatar.

A lupine grin split Reznik's face beneath his helm as he reached the kovnik. Leveling his weapon Verdict in challenge, he roared to Provsk, "Menoth's judgment is upon you!"

To his credit Provsk did not flinch beneath the fury of the Wrath of Ages. The kovnik brought his massive shield in front of him and raised his axe behind, ready to lash out over the wall of steel. Reznik used the crushing weight of his chariot's momentum to drive straight into the kovnik, knocking the man off balance. Verdict flashed forward, its keen point piercing straight through a gap in the Khadoran's defense as he fought to regain his stance in his bulky armor. The weapon sheared through steel and flesh to erupt out Provsk's back, pinning him to the ground as it speared the earth behind him. Reznik had aimed the attack precisely to only incapacitate his target, however. Death would come to the kovnik, but not before Reznik had made an example of him.

He wheeled his chariot about, returning to the pinned kovnik. In the momentary respite, he took stock of the battle. With their leader down and the majority of their number dead or dying, the fight had already left the Khadorans. Many had cast down their weapons, more than was typical of the notoriously stalwart Khadorans. The battle had been won—those that lived had no heart to stand against the clear favor of Menoth.

Khadoran and Menite alike looked up at the Harbinger as her voice rang out over the battlefield, golden light spilling from her levitating form. "Faithful of Menoth, stay your hands! We have not come to deliver the sword to this land. We only bring a message to those who follow the old ways—and a warning to those who choose to ignore them."

Reznik saw the man who had accompanied Kovnik Provsk when they had first parleyed with the Khadorans emerge from the cover of a nearby building. His voice, though slightly trembling, carried strength and authority. "I am Posadnik Dmetri Loktev. How can we know the truth of your words, given the death you have wrought?"

The Harbinger turned slowly, her chains clinking gently. "Behold! That which Menoth takes he may also return." She raised her blade Providence above her head in a two-handed grip as her head tilted to face skyward. Reznik could hear the sounds of her prayers but not the words. The radiance about her deepened until it was blinding, its

dazzling opulence causing all standing to cry out and fall to their knees. The world became the purest white.

Suddenly the light disappeared, returning the world to its dull existence. Reznik blinked the stars from his eyes as he adjusted to the normal sunlight once more. To his shock he realized many—but not all—of the injured Khadoran soldiers were slowly standing, their wounds mended by the Harbinger's divine power. Each looked about with a mixture of awe and shock. There before him also stood Kovnik Provsk, his mended flesh visible through the rent in his armor.

For a moment Reznik felt confusion reign within him. Why had the Harbinger restored so many enemies of the faith?

The Harbinger said clearly, "Menoth has restored those whose faith has been purified by fire. Will you continue to rebuke the Creator? Or will you open your hearts and souls to his message?"

To Reznik's shock, every last Khadoran, including Provsk, prostrated themselves before the Harbinger.

The voice of Posadnik Loktev trembled as he spoke with reverent awe. "Fedorgrad's gates are open to Menoth and his Harbinger."



Reznik watched as the townspeople of Fedorgrad assembled within the central market. Posadnik Loktev had gathered the entire population to hear the words of the Harbinger, a task made easier by how quickly word of her miracle had spread. As the people crowded the central square, every eye was fixed on the serene image of the Harbinger floating at its center. An unnatural and expectant quiet prevailed as all waited to hear her words.

"People of Fedorgrad," she began, her voice carrying to every ear, "I have brought a message from the Creator of Man. Menoth has guided me here to continue my divinely mandated mission because so many among you remain strong in your faith and reverence of him." She turned slowly, as if sweeping her gaze across the whole audience. "You have been guided by priests torn between two masters, but your hearts are pure. You are ready to hear the truth. Too long has Menoth tolerated mankind's failures to revere him. Too long have upstarts sought to usurp reverence that is rightfully his. Mankind dangles like a spider above a raging wildfire, a single thread of silk held by the Creator himself keeping him from oblivion. The day of reckoning approaches. Only those pure of faith shall be spared his wrath and be invited within the safety of the walls protecting the City of Man. Those who have been deemed unworthy will be left to descend into the blazing, all-consuming fire."

Reznik watched the Harbinger's message wash over the assembled mass. Many faces were downcast, thinking of that fate. Others nodded in agreement. Some had tears streaming down their faces from her holy presence alone. None that he could see, however, showed any doubt about the truth of her words. The simple presence of the Harbinger brooked no argument.

The Harbinger continued, "The Protectorate of Menoth seeks to restore the kingdoms of man to the righteous path, to mend the rift that apathy, greed, and lust for power has created between us and Menoth. It is only by joining together in a single faith that we may right the wrongs of our past and earn back the favor of our Creator. Our salvation rests on this." She paused, and when she spoke again her tone was stronger, urgent. "This is the will of Menoth. This is the message I bring as his vessel on Caen. Now is your chance for redemption, your chance to return to his embrace and stay his divine wrath. Menoth commands. The Northern Crusade awaits." The Harbinger's voice resounded across the square as she finished.

A man stood from the kneeling crowd. Reznik recognized him as Kovnik Provsk, and a scowl furrowed his brow. The Harbinger had stayed his hand, absolving the kovnik and several others from their just sentence of execution. There was something in the man's expression that to Reznik suggested he was unrepentant. Reznik hefted Verdict and was about to move over to him, but a raised hand from the Harbinger stopped him.

"You have something you wish to say, Ivan Provsk."

The Khadoran officer looked back, his features defiant. He said, "I will answer for my father's sins. I hear my Creator's call. My life is yours."

A tremor of shock rolled through the assembled audience, and even Reznik felt surprise at this display of faith. Slowly at first, but then with greater frequency, more of the townspeople stood, each proclaiming willingness to answer the call.

As he watched the power of the Harbinger's words sweep through the people of Fedorgrad, Reznik realized the true purpose of the path Menoth had set him on. His strategic intellect quickly began to assess the impact the Harbinger's proselytizing would have for the Northern Crusade, and more importantly on the Khadoran Empire.

"All praise to the Lawbringer and his mercy," the Harbinger intoned. "All praise Menoth."

A chorus of voices answered, including Servath Reznik's. "All praise Menoth."

SERVATH REZNIK, WRATH OF AGES

PROTECTORATE EPIC CAVALRY BATTLE ENGINE WARCASTER

Pity not those who would abuse the Gifts of Menoth, for their reckoning is at hand.

— The Canon of the True Law

REZNIK	SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
	7	7	7	4	13	17	7



VERDICT	POW	P+S
	6	13

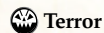


MOUNT	POW
	12

FOCUS	7
DAMAGE	20
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
WARJACK POINTS	+4
HUGE BASE	

that model from play. Enemy models in the AOE are hit and suffer an unboostable POW 12 fire damage roll . Purge the Unbelievers lasts for one turn.

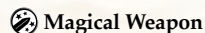
REZNIK



Lamentations of Suffering – While this model has 1 or more focus points, non-magical ranged attacks targeting it automatically miss.

Take Down – Models disabled by a melee attack made by this model cannot make a Tough roll. Models boxed by a melee attack made by this model are removed from play.

VERDICT



Flame Burst – When this model boxes an enemy model with this weapon, enemy models within 1" of the boxed model suffer the Fire continuous effect .

FEAT: PURGE THE UNBELIEVERS

Atop his blessed chariot, Servath Reznik has been authorized to dispense summary judgment in the name of Menoth. He brings the fire of the Creator to consume and obliterate all those who blaspheme by defying the Great Crusade.

While within Reznik's control area, enemy models suffer -2 DEF. When an enemy model is boxed by a melee or ranged attack in Reznik's control area, center a 4" AOE on the boxed model, then remove

SPELLS

	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
CREATOR'S WRATH	2	SELF	-	-	YES	NO
This model gains an additional die on melee attack and melee damage rolls. When making a melee attack, it ignores spell effects that add to the target's DEF or ARM.						
DEATH MARCH	3	6	-	-	YES	NO
Target friendly unit gains +2 MAT and Vengeance. (During your Maintenance Phase, if one or more models in a unit with Vengeance were destroyed or removed from play by enemy attacks during your opponent's last turn, each model in the unit can advance 3" and make one normal melee attack.)						
IRON AGGRESSION	3	6	-	-	YES	NO
Target friendly warjack can run, charge, or make slam or trample power attacks without spending focus and gains boosted melee attack rolls.						
LAMENTATION	3	SELF	CTRL	-	YES	NO
Enemy models pay double the focus or fury point cost to cast or upkeep spells while in this model's control area.						
THE FLESH IS WEAK	3	8	4	12	NO	YES
Living and Undead models hit by The Flesh is Weak cannot run or charge for one round.						

TACTICAL TIP

TAKE DOWN – Because a boxed model is removed from play before being destroyed, it does not generate a soul or corpse token.

Perhaps no man so perfectly expresses the spirit of the Great Crusade as Servath Reznik, a living weapon of his faith. Fanatical even by the standards of the Sul-Menites, he stands as an embodiment of absolute devotion. For Reznik the world is a crucible of flame, and humanity stands at the precipice of self-inflicted annihilation. And yet Reznik is no mere man. He is a furious legacy of the ancient world, a pitiless instrument of Menoth's divine justice and the reckoning of heresies from ages long past.

Reznik has served the will of the hierarchs for decades, seeking neither glory nor recognition in his deeds. In Menoth's name he has slain or broken thousands, and without question he will continue to do so as long as he draws breath.

The Great Crusade has unleashed this fury upon the iniquities of the faithless who would seek succor in science, misguided philosophy, and the words of false prophets. He has taken it upon himself to serve as the standard bearer of the faith, an emissary of righteousness ready to ignite the fires of truth across the whole of Immoren. Woe to those who would defy the True Law!

Reznik is a spirit of wrath bound to the flesh of a man. Mounting his iron chariot like an angry god, he is a vision out of a time when the dominion of Menite priest-kings stretched across western Immoren and the word of Menoth was the very fabric of civilized order.

Despite the singular purposefulness with which Reznik conducts his duty, he awaits the day when he will be given sanction to blaze a path of destruction through all heretics that stretches from the world of the living to Urcaen. There he will at last join his Creator in the City of Man, and will fight on in the War of Souls in his name.



INDICTOR

PROTECTORATE HEAVY WARJACK

Some doubted whether such machines could ever truly be turned to Menoth's glory. With the Indictor we have ended all doubt.

—Visgoth Ark Rezek

INDICTOR							
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD	
4	11	6	5	10	19	—	



SHIELD		
POW	P+S	
1	12	



BANISHER		
POW	P+S	
6	17	

DAMAGE						
1	2	3	4	5	6	
	L				R	
L	L	M	C	R	R	
	M	M	C	C		

FIELD ALLOWANCE	U
POINT COST	8
LARGE BASE	

INDICTOR

Consecration – While within 5" of this model, enemy models cannot cast spells, channel spells, or upkeep spells.

Sacred Ward – This model cannot be targeted by enemy spells.

SHIELD

② Shield

BANISHER

② Magical Weapon

Blessed – When making an attack with this weapon, ignore spell effects that add to a model's ARM or DEF.

Over the last two decades, Sul-Menite Artificers have grown increasingly adept at converting the unholy technologies originally invented by other nations into sanctified extensions

of their god's incontrovertible will. The sanctification process whereby warjacks are made clean and pure to join the Great Crusade has become an essential aspect of their fabrication. Yet among many glorious machines of war, the Indictor stands apart from the rest, having been created to be itself a bastion of spiritual power against which the foes of the Protectorate must tremble in fear. The Indictor stands as an implacable reminder that the effrontery of Caen's unholy arcanists will no longer be tolerated. To enact its purpose, this warjack has been meticulously crafted to be the bane of spellcasters wherever the leaders of the Great Crusade confront them.

It is no coincidence that the Indictor was built on the venerable Crusader chassis, the oldest warjack design still in service among the armies of the Protectorate. Crusaders have been marching alongside the faithful since the earliest of the Protectorate's battles against the heretics of neighboring nations. Many of these machines have been repeatedly and painstakingly sanctified over the decades, attaining a degree of purity unmatched by newer fabrications. A portion of those most loyal of machines was set aside to be transformed into something still greater by the Sul-Menite Artificers. Though starting with an

HEIGHT/WEIGHT: 12' 1" / 8.4 TONS

ARMAMENT: SHIELD (LEFT), BANISHER (RIGHT)

FUEL LOAD/BURN USAGE: 253 LBS / 4 HRS GENERAL, 50 MINS COMBAT

INITIAL SERVICE DATE: 607 AR

CORTEX MANUFACTURER: VASSALS OF MENOTh

ORIG. CHASSIS DESIGN: ENGINES EAST / KHADORAN MECHANICS ASSEMBLY (MODIFIED BY THE SUL-MENITE ARTIFICERS)

ancient frame, each Indictor becomes a marvel of modern engineering as old elements are painstakingly replaced with those constructed from the finest materials purified under the blessing of the Menite clergy. Imbued with disruptive mechanika and covered in passages from the Canon of the True Law, the Indictor has a discordant presence that fouls the blasphemous magics set against the faithful. Woe betide a foe relying on such misplaced faith in battle with an Indictor, for he will see his true impotence illuminated by the inferno of Menoth's judgment.

Projecting a nimbus of arcane suppression, this warjack can stop nearby enemies from casting spells and rends those already in effect. At the same time, the machine itself is immune to the profane incantations of enemy warcasters and warlocks. Allied warriors blessed enough to serve alongside an Indictor derive both courage and satisfaction from knowing that the arcane curses of their foes are destined to fail when directed against the Indictor's hallowed shell.

In addition to its mystical defenses, each Indictor is equipped with a massive shield and a blessed blade. The Banisher's holy runes empower the weapon to penetrate arcane defenses erected to shield the enemies of the True Faith from the Creator's wrath. The heretical hopes of those who oppose the Indictor are quickly dashed when its powerful blows pierce through all such protections.

In all respects the Indictor was devised to nullify defenses, rob arcanists of their unholy power, and demoralize the faithless: in short, to turn strength into weakness. Some leaders, such as Visgoth Ark Rezek, even consider the mighty Indictor proof of the concept that it is possible to move beyond merely cleansing these fighting machines. Such leaders envision a future with these warjacks serving as integral and sacrosanct elements of the Protectorate's holy crusades, an inspiration to the faithful as well as a terror on their enemies.



FLAME BRINGERS

PROTECTORATE FLAMEGUARD LIGHT CAVALRY UNIT

The soil welcomes those behind us; our blades welcome those ahead.

—Flame Bringer Bersaba Norwood

LEADER & GRUNTS

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
9	5	6	4	14	15	9



SWORD

POW	P+S
4	9



MOUNT

POW
10

DAMAGE 5 EA

FIELD ALLOWANCE 1

LEADER & 2 GRUNTS 6

LEADER & 4 GRUNTS 10

LARGE BASE

hit by this weapon loses Tough, cannot heal or be healed, and cannot transfer damage for one round.

LEADER & GRUNTS

☞ Pathfinder

Side Step – When this model hits an enemy model with an initial melee attack or a melee special attack that is not a power attack, it can advance up to 2" after the attack is resolved. This model cannot be targeted by free strikes during this movement.

SWORD

☞ Weapon Master

Critical Grievous Wounds –

On a critical hit, the model

TACTICAL TIP

SIDE STEP – An initial attack with a light cavalry Mount will trigger Side Step.

Those who see flame bringers in action for the first time are struck by their astonishing dexterity. A combination of swift steeds and light, expert riders allows the flame bringers startling speed and maneuverability. Enemies who think themselves out of reach are soon surrounded and set upon by these blade experts. Flame bringers bring the tremendous athleticism and acrobatics of their sisterhood to horseback, able to evade blows by dangling from the sides of their steeds or vaulting off to strike down an enemy before swiftly leaping back astride their mounts to race away. The mortal wounds they deal are invariably lethal, opening arteries and damaging internal organs so victims can take no benefit from surgical or even mystical intervention.

Flame bringers are notorious for circling behind the enemy line to strike an army's vulnerable flanks, a terror to lightly armored troops who thought themselves safe. A unit of flame bringers is more than capable of sowing chaos and confusion among even the most disciplined opponents.

A detachment of flame bringers crosses the field of war like a raging wildfire, each wielding two razor-sharp swords and gaining momentum with every foe claimed by her insatiable assault. Serving as the light cavalry of the Daughters of the Flame, these trick riders are nimble combatants atop their war horses, which are bred on the southern Idrian plains and thoroughly vetted for temperament, endurance, and speed.



EXEMPLAR BASTION SENESCHAL

PROTECTORATE SOLO

It is with the same hand that Menoth shields the faithful and smites their enemy.
—Intercessor Kreoss



TACTICAL TIP

LEADERSHIP [EXEMPLAR BASTIONS] – Affected models heal only 1 damage point regardless of the number of Bastion Seneschal command ranges they activate in.

Exemplar bastion seneschals radiate Menoth's favor, their resplendent faith shining like a beacon to their fellows in arms. Their pious example allows brother bastions to endure impossible punishment while firmly holding the line against the Lawgiver's enemies.

Serving as ranking officers of the Protectorate's crusading Exemplars, bastion seneschals are pillars of endurance, working tirelessly to embolden their soldiers. An Exemplar bastion seneschal operating in the tempest of battle so inspires his brothers that they are impelled to fight through injuries that would easily overwhelm the apostates that

SENESCHAL

- ☛ Jack Marshal
- ☛ Commander
- ☛ Fearless

Defensive Strike – Once per turn, when an enemy model advances into and ends its movement in this model's melee range, this model can immediately make one normal melee attack against it.

Iron Wall – This model gains +2 ARM for each warjack it controls B2B with it. When this model is directly hit by an enemy ranged or magic attack, you can choose to have one of those non-incorporeal warjacks to be directly hit instead. That model is automatically hit and suffers all damage and effects.

Leadership [Exemplar Bastions] – Friendly Exemplar Bastion models heal 1 damage point when they begin an activation in this model's command range.

CONSECRATED HALBERD

- ☛ Magical Weapon
- ☛ Reach
- ☛ Weapon Master

Blessed – When making an attack with this weapon, ignore spell effects that add to a model's ARM or DEF.

SENESCHAL							
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD	
4	7	8	4	11	16	10	

CONSECRATED HALBERD			
POW	P+S		
5	12		

DAMAGE	8
FIELD ALLOWANCE	2
POINT COST	3
MEDIUM BASE	



oppose them. Through the manifestation of his unshakable faith and devotion, injuries sustained by the seneschal and his bastions close on their own accord, a miracle made possible through piety and sheer strength of will. The fire of his faith can quickly transform a once-battered bastion to wholeness, the sight of which can shake the confidence of enemies who see this as proof of divine intervention.

In addition to keeping bastions on their feet, these seneschals are trained to command warjacks in battle. The sight of an Exemplar advance bearing down is all the more terrifying when a bastion seneschal marshaling the imposing warjacks of the Protectorate charges relentlessly into the ranks of the enemy.

Wielding blessed halberds that ignore the defensive wards of the faithless, Exemplar bastion seneschals can respond to advancing attackers with a celerity that belies the crushing weight of their armor. Few foes ever get the chance to implement their intended strikes, being instead cut to the ground as examples to any who would dare defy the True Law.

INITIATE TRISTAN DURANT

PROTECTORATE CHARACTER SOLO

Every misfortune we endure is but a brick set upon our shoulders that tests the strength of our conviction. To the faithful, those bricks become a wall of devotion nothing can shatter.

—Visgoth Delcon Veshar

DURANT						
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
5	5	5	5	14	15	7



BATTLE STAFF	
POW	P+S
6	11

FOCUS	4
DAMAGE	5
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
POINT COST	3
SMALL BASE	

BATTLE STAFF

Magical Weapon

Reach

Blessed – When making an attack with this weapon, ignore spell effects that add to a model's ARM or DEF.

DURANT

Fearless

Journeyman Warcaster –

This model is not a warcaster but has the following warcaster special rules: Battlegroup Commander, Control Area, Focus Manipulation, Power Field, and Spellcaster.

True Sight – This model ignores concealment, Camouflage, and Stealth.

SPELLS

	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
FORTIFY	2	6	–	–	YES	NO
Target warjack in this model's battlegroup gains +2 ARM. The affected model and any friendly model B2B with it cannot be knocked down, pushed, or slammed.						
IMMOLATION	2	8	–	12	NO	YES
Immolation causes fire damage . On a critical hit, the model hit suffers the Fire continuous effect .						

TACTICAL TIP

JOURNEYMAN WARCASTER – This model is a non-warcaster model and is not affected by special rules that specifically affect warcasters. Models with the Attached rule cannot be attached to this model.

Initiate Tristan Durant stands ready to lead his battlegroup in defense against any who threaten the faithful of Menoth. He is gifted with the ability to see beyond the physical and intends to relentlessly pursue those deemed heretics or blasphemers. Once this warrior of the Creator locates his quarry, he will not hesitate to cleanse the battlefield of them with the might of his blessed warjacks and holy fire. He acts from the knowledge that his faith is under attack and requires resolute hearts to see it restored.

There has never been any question in Tristan's mind or heart of his purpose on Caen: he was created to serve Menoth. From an early age he felt the calling to a spiritual life, although for most of his youth he was uncertain how to answer this imperative. Raised in a family of farmers in a small Menite community southeast of Laedry, he was taught that simple labor was an offering to the Creator. His father discouraged him from leaving to join the priesthood, saying that his obligation was to his family. He accepted this but longed to do more. In his own time he studied the True Law, and he frequently sought out the local priest to clarify and discuss what he had read.

Tristan's life was forever changed by the invasion of Llael, when war ravaged the idyllic countryside. Thrust into the chaos that followed the initial invasion and bereft of their home and livelihood, his family joined those fleeing to Leryn. Rather than dwelling on his misfortunes, the young Tristan did what he could for the other refugees. Soon

he was ignoring his father's disapproval to preach to his countrymen despite a lack of formal training, seeking to bring meaning to their suffering.

The arrival of the Northern Crusade forced Tristan to reevaluate all he knew and all he was. He witnessed Grand Scrutator Severius walk through the gates of Leryn unopposed, bolstered by his shining faith. In this Tristan finally beheld the true power of Menoth when wielded by a resolute devotee, and his path became clear. Over the vehement objections of his father, who insisted he was abandoning his family in their greatest time of need, Tristan dedicated himself to the Sul-Menite faith and answered the calling he had felt since he was a young boy. He knew to his bones that his place was marching alongside those in service to the Northern Crusade.

The veracity of his faith was clear to the scrutators who questioned him, as was the untapped warcaster gift that awaited within him. He was initiated into the priesthood in Leryn and undertook an intensive regimen of combat training, where he demonstrated both natural talent and an eagerness to learn. Tristan is quite young and far from mastery, his face still bare of the mask of authority worn by full priests and his warcaster armor an unfamiliar burden. He has been thrust onto the battlefield quickly, as the needs of the crusade are pressing. Deep down he fears he might not be ready for his responsibilities, yet within him is the soul of a true believer and a desire to prove himself worthy of the power Menoth has bestowed upon him.





KHADOR

OFF THE LEASH

THE THORNWOOD, FIFTH ASSAULT LEGION ENCAMPMENT

"Ensure he lives a little longer," Orsus Zoktavar said, glowering at the Winter Guard field medic who had reluctantly approached him. Their march through the forest was nearly at its end. The last several days he had pushed the men on despite their fatigue. They were close, and he would not wait another night.

"It's a miracle he's alive at all, Kommander," the man protested feebly. "I think it's just a matter of time."

"He lives," Orsus growled, "until we reach the supreme kommandant. Is that clear?" With that the man withered and retreated from the glare of his superior officer.

Initially Orsus had thought he had inflicted only a flesh wound to the Cygnaran, but the cut had been deep. His field medics had staunched most of the bleeding, but the wound had developed an infection during their journey. If Orsus did not feel so strongly that he needed to bring the warcaster to Irusk, he might have left him with the surgeon they had found to tend to Kommander Leichvich's severed hand.

The mood of his soldiers had been dour, and Orsus himself felt a simmering anger and confusion about his bloody return to the Khadoran Army. He could still feel the rage at seeing the Cygnarans walking blithely into the encampment, welcomed by his own countrymen. His mind could still not accept the orders presented to him by what he had thought to be a traitorous kommander. The world had gone mad.

It had been too long since he had a simple course ahead of him, a battle to fight, an enemy to vanquish. Ever since the Siege of Fellig, the world and his place in it had become murky. There had been brief moments of certainty, such as the sheer, brutal joy he had felt as he had led his small force against the garrisons of that city to annihilate all who came before him. Again he considered how that would have been a good day to die.

His head pounded and his thoughts were scattered as he neared the largest Khadoran encampment in the Thornwood, one he had been directed to after several missteps at nearly

abandoned resupply points. He had hoped to catch up with his countrymen and join them in whatever great battle for which they had clearly mustered. Eventually he had met a limping portion of a Winter Guard kompany, in full retreat and marching the other direction. They told him of the failed attack deeper in the Thornwood; he had missed the entire battle. The dark forest around him had conspired to take him from where he should have been.

A small voice whispered in his mind that he was also to blame. The Khadorans he had most recently slain had been preparing to march, likely for that same conflict. He might have joined them had he not called them out as traitors. He gritted his teeth and mentally throttled that voice, seeing it as weakness and doubt. He could not be to blame for defeats in battles where he was not present. The army had given him up for dead; they were at fault, not he. He focused on this as he put one foot ahead of the other, ignoring deep-seated fatigue. His officers asked for a brief rest, but he only plodded on.

The outer sentries of the massive encampment did not challenge him, but they sent a runner ahead. The atmosphere felt dreamlike, unreal. A hush had fallen over the hundreds of tents and the hastily erected earthworks protecting them. He felt countless eyes staring at him. There seemed to be an oppressive hostility and judgment attached to the faces of those he passed, far different than the usual fear and avoidance. It was as though they disapproved of his return. He had to clamp down on his rising rage, gripping Lola's haft tightly. None of the soldiers met his eyes when he turned his own baleful glare upon them, but he could feel their stares behind him.

He heard savage barking nearby, rising above the murmurs of those discussing his passage, and spotted a pair of furious war argus, each armored in similar barding as his old war dog. They were massive brutes on heavy leashes, barely held in check by the handlers who struggled against them. Four thrashing heads looked at him, and their eyes seemed to reflect his inner demons as they barked and sought to break free. He had no doubt they would leap to tear out his

throat if they got loose. He could not blame them, since he was plainly viewed as an intruder here. None looked on him as a returning hero.

The men ahead parted as he made his way to the command tent. His warjacks and soldiers solemnly marched behind him. With them was the half-empty supply wagon bearing a delirious and severely wounded Cygnaran warcaster, Major Markus Brisbane—Orsus' prisoner.



Supreme Kommandant Irusk vastly preferred the tedium and diligent attention required for planning an attack over the similar monotony required to guide an army through recovery from a costly battle. Overall the withdrawal had not been elegantly executed. He had already had words with his subordinates and they knew precisely where their failings lay.

The situation had been complicated by the fact that his forces had yet to establish permanent fortified positions in the central forest. The Cygnarans had been even sloppier in their withdrawal, scattering in multiple directions, although most had eventually turned south toward the river and their cities. It would be easier for those battalions to reconnect with supply lines and to begin the necessary process of reinforcement. Other Cygnarans had not joined the general retreat and remained in pockets around the Thornwood, some even forced to look to Khadoran hospitality. Morale in the wake of the defeat was poor, and the prospect of hostilities arising between the once-bitter foes was a very real threat anywhere the two nations shared quarters.

Irusk fielded a dozen couriers every hour, trying to coordinate communications between widely scattered forces and restore central authority. The Thornwood was not an ideal place for such efforts. The large fortified encampment that the 4th Assault Legion and much of the rest of the surviving 9th Kommand had made its home was still attracting additional stragglers. There were at least five other sizable encampments scattered across the region, each of them vulnerable to counterattack amid the general disruption. So far they had been lucky in that the Cryxians seemed disinclined to mount punitive excursions.

He was sorely aware of the gaps that remained in his knowledge of the army's status, with the soldiers of too many kompanies counted among the slain or missing. He had no accurate count of the wounded and expected his Cygnaran counterparts had similar difficulties. Many of his senior officers had suggested retreat toward better supply lines, pulling back to Ravensgard. To Irusk this was tantamount to surrendering the Thornwood. He was not yet willing to let that happen.

It was amid these concerns that the supreme kommandant was told that Kommander Zoktavir approached their encampment. He sighed heavily and braced himself for what was to come. He told his senior aide, "Allow him to reach me, and put all other matters on hold." He then turned to readying himself, going so far as to don his warcaster armor for the first time in days. The top of his tent had slits to let the small trickle of smoke from the arcane turbine escape, but he generally preferred to wear the armor only when anticipating battle. No man was less predictable than the Butcher of Khardov, though. Even as Irusk adjusted the straps he was aware that his armor and power field would not suffice to save him from Orsus Zoktavir should the berserker attack with murderous intent.

Without opening the flap to his tent he heard the sounds of the bustling encampment change and knew Zoktavir was approaching. The general noise quieted, while rising above it was the sound of war hounds barking and howling. He waited with his hands folded behind his back, and at the sound of a heavy tread on the gravel path outside his tent he said, "Enter!"

It had been long enough since Irusk had stood face-to-face with the Butcher of Khardov that he found the man's bulk startling, particularly in the confined space of the command tent. The long-missing warcaster had to stoop to make it through the opening, which was barely wide enough to allow his armored form inside. He bore his axe Lola in one hand, and though this was not surprising, Irusk found himself particularly aware of the axe and the potential threat it represented. The entering warcaster looked wilder and more unkempt than Irusk had ever seen him, his armor pitted and scarred and filthy with layers of grime. The smell of him was as powerful as his physical presence, the earthy and sweaty reek of someone who had spent months away from civilization.

Looking into Zoktavir's eyes as the larger man faced him was also shocking. Outside of battle the Butcher often seemed almost subdued, even vacant, with a far-away look not uncommon among veterans who had spent too long killing. Right now, though, his eyes were simmering and intense and altogether present. His nostrils were flared and his knuckles whitened on the axe. More than at any time in the past, Irusk realized he was facing a madman.

"Irusk. This alliance—is it true?" The large man said it without preamble, as a challenge.

The expressions of Irusk's other subordinate officers in the tent betrayed their fear. They stepped back against the sloping canvas walls, as if wishing to hide from view.

"First," Irusk said sharply, "you will address me as 'Kommandant.' I am your superior officer. Did you forget? I will be the one making demands."

Zoktavir's blazing eyes stared murderously into his own, and Irusk saw the muscles of the arm holding Lola twitch, as if the man fought contradictory impulses. But after a moment the fire behind his eyes faded and his posture shifted slightly, leaning back. His expression suggested the slight confusion and disorientation of a man awaking from sleep. "Yes, Kommandant."

Irusk had never enforced strict military discipline on Zoktavir, as he was a different sort of soldier. Each weapon in an arsenal had its function and required different handling. Now that Orsus had gone feral, Irusk felt the need to reassert his authority. Ignoring the initial question, he asked, "Where is Major Brisbane?"

"Outside, on the wagon. He is my prisoner."

Irusk glanced sharply at one of his aides, who followed as they stepped outside, there to the supply wagon. Major Brisbane was attempting to sit up from where he had lain across blankets stacked in the back, although he looked ashen and unfocused. His warcaster armor was partially removed, and blood seeped through the bandages that swathed his torso. He gritted his teeth and seemed about to take to his feet, but Irusk stopped him with a gentle hand on his shoulder. "Wait, Major Brisbane. You are gravely injured. Please, accept my apologies and our hospitality. You are not a prisoner but a guest. Our best surgeons will see to your needs."

He was not entirely sure if the Cygnaran warcaster was lucid enough to understand his words until the man grimaced and whispered, "I can stand." But he did not struggle against Irusk's gloved hand.

The supreme kommandant signaled to one of his trusted kovniks. Speaking aside to him in a whisper, Irusk said, "Ensure he recovers. Place him under the highest security, for his safety. I want no one in our camp speaking of his presence here to anyone. See it enforced."

"Yes, Kommandant!" The kovnik saluted and rushed to obey.

Irusk escorted Orsus back to the command tent. Meanwhile he weighed the ramifications and the possibilities of the situation. Already the Cygnarans had sent several urgent requests for news about Brisbane, to which he had not replied. It would be difficult to keep the matter a secret indefinitely, but Irusk knew it would be wise to keep the warcaster in their custody. The alliance with Cygnar could not last indefinitely. Markus Brisbane, commonly referred to as "Siege" among his own soldiers, was one of the greatest warriors fighting for Cygnar, a man with decades of experience. It had been his assault that had cracked Kragvold Fort and reduced the Great Bears of the Gallowswood to three men. It would be reckless to return such a man to Cygnar, and his injuries provided an opportunity for delay.

He did not reveal any satisfaction for this turn of events to Orsus Zoktavir, since in truth he saw this merely as a chance to mitigate a series of severe missteps by the Butcher. He directed the rest of his subordinates to leave the tent and faced the axe-wielding giant alone. "Do you have any apprehension of the position you have put me in, Kommander? I am at a loss. I need to know: do you still consider yourself a soldier?"

The brief reprieve had reignited the fire in Orsus' eyes, and at this question he growled and stepped closer. "I fight for the empress. Do you? I see you are in bed with our enemies. Show me the decree from the empress confirming this supposed truce!"

Irusk did not intend to argue that point. In truth, he may have technically exceeded his authority by entering into an alliance with the Cygnarans. That matter was being handled through reports to the capital and was of no concern to his subordinates, however.

"You do not make demands of me, Kommander. The empress named me supreme kommandant to direct her battles abroad, and it is my responsibility to make difficult decisions for the army. An army only functions when the chain of command is intact. Orders *must* be obeyed. Do you tolerate disobedience from the officers under your command? I think not. I am not unsympathetic to your confusion, your outrage. But your reactions to recent events have been wrong at every turn. This fiasco began when you disobeyed direct orders at Fellig. I told you to surround the city and keep its garrison bottled up, not to attack. Then you disappeared for months without a single communication. You abandoned your responsibilities and let us believe you were dead."

"That is not true," Orsus growled through clenched teeth, although his initial rage had bled away in the face of Irusk's accusations. "I was cut off. I have not once abandoned my responsibilities."

Irusk continued, "Let us ignore your extended absence for the moment. Your first action on your return was to launch an unprovoked attack on your fellow Khadorans, including maiming a senior officer!" Now it was Irusk's face that was livid. He could feel his temper rising as he imagined the scene as it had been described to him in an urgent letter sent from a survivor. "How many of your innocent countrymen did you murder during your attack on Kommander Leichvich's legion? How many more died because those forces and those of Major Brisbane were not present during our battle against Cryx? We needed every man."

"I thought them traitors," Orsus said, his voice somewhat choked. There was something other than anger in his eyes now. Doubt. Perhaps even guilt. "I sought only to destroy our enemies."

"You were ignorant and ill-informed, I grant you. They were extraordinary circumstances." Irusk stepped back and lowered his voice now that he had reached whatever conscience remained in the Butcher's shattered mind. "Consider: did you seek to discover why the Cygnarans were there, or was your first impulse to kill? You did not stop to ponder that important negotiations might be taking place. What if the Cygnarans had been negotiating a surrender? You did not think. You did not behave as an officer. I ask again: are you still a soldier? Can you obey?"

Orsus still glowered, but he no longer seemed on the verge of attacking. "I serve and obey the empress."

It was not an ideal answer, but perhaps it was enough. Irusk had always known any control he exercised over Orsus Zoktavir was tenuous and part of a delicate balancing act. It grated on his sense of discipline and order, but he could not pretend the man was other than what he was. He said, "Your wages will be garnished to compensate the families of those soldiers you killed. Whether there will be other consequences for your crimes I will leave to the High Kommand when this war is over."

It was a hollow threat, as money meant little to Zoktavir and he would likely be shielded by the empress from additional repercussions, as had happened before. More than anything Irusk wanted to truly punish Orsus, to make an example of him. Exceptions were poisonous to army discipline, and the souls of those murdered soldiers cried out for justice. Despite that, Irusk required the Butcher in the days ahead, particularly with Karchev lost and Strakhov missing in action. In their reckoning against Cryx, he could not afford to cast such a weapon aside.

"Go clean yourself up," Irusk ordered. "You are dismissed." Though overall Irusk felt his reprimands had been feeble, they seemed to carry some weight with Zoktavir, whose shoulders were slumped as he left the tent. He reminded Irusk of a scolded hound.



Forward Kommander Sorscha Kratikoff had been checking on the status of warjack repairs when word spread through the encampment of the arrival of Orsus Zoktavir. She felt an icy knot in the pit of her stomach. She put aside her tasks and was walking toward the command tent before she even realized what she was doing. She had to see him with her own eyes.

Talk of his arrival was clearly the most exciting event since their withdrawal and was on the lips of nearly every soldier she passed. She lingered momentarily just beyond a group of Winter Guard who were discussing the horror of what had

happened in the south when the Butcher first emerged from the forest. Her officers must have shielded her from these rumors. Hearing how Zoktavir had killed dozens of Winter Guard only intensified the cold rage growing within her. Some part of her mind still refused to believe he had not died in that stream outside Fellig after she had turned her back on him. The iniquity of his survival sent her mind reeling.

As she walked up the path toward the command tent she passed several senior officers she would have expected to be with Irusk, and their expressions showed they were distinctly uncomfortable. There was a loose perimeter cleared around Irusk's tent, whether on someone's orders or simply because no one wished to be close to that confrontation. Nearing the tent she heard raised voices but could not discern the words. Suddenly the Butcher emerged, and she froze. He took a few long strides while looking at the ground, nearly running into her.

**ANY CONTROL HE EXERCISED
OVER ORSUS ZOKTAVIR WAS
TENUOUS AND PART OF A
DELICATE BALANCING ACT.**

The sight of him so close was like a punch to her stomach. She had to stop herself from gathering her power to freeze him solid and then strike him down where he stood, and she could feel the blood drain from her face. He seemed oblivious to her wrath, only startled to find anyone in his path. On recognizing her his troubled expression cleared somewhat and he gave her a welcoming nod.

"Kommander Kratikoff," he greeted her, his eyes distracted. "This alliance is an outrage! After all our fighting against those southern dogs."

"You— You should be dead!" she said, her breath expelling from her mouth in a plume of condensation. The words had emerged without thought, a product of deep, crystalized anger.

He blinked and seemed stunned, even taking a step back. "What?"

His confusion enraged her further. "You should have bled out your last in that stream, alone. Though even that would have been too good for you." She spoke spitefully and stepped forward to poke a finger into his breastplate. Again he stepped back with a bewildered look, though he out-massed her by four times or more.

She had never dared confront him on this matter, but now she could not stop the words. It was as though a floodgate had crumbled before the rush of long-repressed emotions. "My father was a loyal soldier and sought nothing but the

best for our nation, but you slaughtered him like an animal! He was a good man. He deserved better. *I* deserved better."

Zoktavir shook his head, frowning deeply. "Your father? I do not know what you mean. What are you saying?"

She snarled at that. "Look at you! You have murdered so many that you do not even remember. The Boarsgate Massacre, twenty-one years ago. I was thirteen, and he was my world. You took him from me, thoughtlessly, as you stole the lives of so many others. Did you for even one second think of their families? No. You never do."

His right eye flinched but he drew himself up. "If your father was at Deshevek, he was a traitor."

The temperature of the already cold air dropped noticeably in an instant, and frost formed along the Butcher's armor and weapon. "My father was no traitor," she said in a low but intense voice. "He was one of your soldiers. A good and honest man. His name was Korporal Luka Kratikoff."

**"YOU ARE NOT A MAN;
YOU ARE A MONSTER!"**

Zoktavir frowned as if trying to recall the name. "I don't remember him."

Sorscha saw spots before her eyes from the effort of holding her rage in check. She felt like it would burst out of her chest at any moment. "His life was your responsibility, and he meant nothing to you! You may have excused your acts by calling those you killed traitors, but many were just soldiers. Ordinary men, like those you murdered to the south just days ago. You are not a man; you are a monster!"

He lurched toward her, and for a moment she thought he would attack her with his axe. But staggered past as if eager for air, his expression more haunted than angry. Had her words actually affected him? It did not seem possible. Above her own ragged breathing she heard a whistle of steam and the rumbling of warjack engines from beyond the nearest tents and wondered if they were his and were reacting to his inner turmoil.

"Forward Kommander." Irusk had opened his tent flap to address her. "Come here, please."

She was taken aback to see him there, although she did not think she and Zoktavir had been speaking loudly enough for him to hear what had been said. Regardless, he would certainly have noticed her hostile tone. She swallowed and took a deep breath.

Entering the command tent, she did her best to collect her wits and control her emotions. She said as neutrally as possible, "It was startling to see Kommander Zoktavir here, Kommandant."

"I'm sure it was," Irusk said. His expression was inscrutable, but he was watching her closely. "Particularly since you reported you were certain he had fallen at the end of the Siege of Fellig. It was by your account that we listed him among the dead. There seems to be a discrepancy."

She stiffened and regulated her breathing. "I saw him overwhelmed by sword knights, as I reported. How he survived is beyond me. I have nothing more to add."

He nodded slowly. "I will not pry into the facts at this time. While I did not expect to see him, on some level it was a relief. I must admit that I may have been doing you a disservice." She gave him a quizzical look and he continued, "Since the Siege of Fellig, some part of me wondered if you had surrendered to the desire for retribution, forsaking your officer's oaths and your duty as a soldier. The thought saddened me, given your otherwise impeccable service record. I am relieved to know it was all an uncharitable thought on my part. Please, accept my apology."

"You owe me no apology, Kommandant," Sorscha insisted, feeling her cheeks burn with shame. "I will admit I was not . . . saddened to witness him overcome, as I thought he was."

"An entirely human reaction," Irusk allowed kindly. "I will not fault you for it, given your history." He paused and then continued in a brisker tone, "You know the battle that lies ahead of us. Can I trust you to put your feelings aside and fight alongside him?"

"Of course," she said coolly. She stood at attention. "For the Motherland!"

"Yes, for the Motherland," Irusk said. To her eyes he seemed suddenly weary and much older than he had been the day before. He waved to dismiss her and returned to his maps.



Orsus Zoktavir staggered away from the command tent feeling torn and drained, like his soul had been heated white-hot before being hammered on a blacksmith's anvil. This sort of confusion and despair was foreign to him, worse in its way than when his flesh felt the bite of enemy steel. No specific thoughts occupied him, only a sense of being unmoored, adrift. Everywhere he looked were unfriendly eyes and whispers. He had never paid such things any attention, but now they harried him relentlessly, and there was no escape. While wandering the dark forest he had thought the isolation a nightmare, but now he

longed for it. Battle would restore him, he knew, but there was no enemy here.

He was not in the mood to rejoin his men, and he trusted his subordinates to see to their integration into the camp. He knew he should do as Irusk asked and see to his personal appearance, make himself presentable as an officer rather than a savage, but he could not settle his mind. Instead he wandered the camp aimlessly.

Eventually he found himself drawn to the familiar sound of savage barking and growls. They were followed by the angry shouts of deep voices. Feeling his blood stirring, Orsus walked in that direction, picking up his pace when he heard a sudden sharp-pitched yelp and whining. He thought of his favored hound—the war dog lost to him at Fellig when it loyally leaped to intercept an enemy closing on him from the side.

The small cleared area where the legion's beasts were kenneled carried the distinct stench of wet fur and filth. A row of sizable thick-barred cages along the perimeter held the war dogs, most secured and quiet, well used to their confines. The ruckus came instead from the center of the clearing, where the dog handlers were dealing with a pair of unruly argus. Far more difficult to train than dogs, argus were rare in the army, and Orsus leaned forward, interested.

One of the beasts was hunkered down after apparently suffering a lash from a whip along its snout, but the other stood defiantly, its fur bristling as it growled and bared its vicious teeth. Seeing its example, the other one regained its feet and also growled. Each beast was bound with a variety of thick lashes held by assistants on either side of the clearing who had to strain to keep ahold of them. Orsus eyed the two argus appreciatively. The fighting spirit of the beasts was admirable: pure, simple, strong.

The senior dog handler cursed as he inspected a bloody gash along his arm where the beast's jaws had torn through the thick leather. He was nearest to Orsus and had his back to the warcaster.

"That's it!" the handler exclaimed. He dropped the whip and unstrapped his sidearm. He drew the heavy pistol, opened its breech, then found a cartridge and loaded the weapon. "This pair is too much! Untrainable! No more!"

The handler had begun to lower the pistol toward the nearest argus when Orsus grabbed his arm. His yell of startled protest quickly turned to one of pain as Orsus squeezed. There was a sickening cracking noise as the bones in the man's forearm shattered. The pistol dropped from his numb fingers and he fell to the ground whimpering like one of his charges. When he looked up to see who assaulted him, the dog handler's expression of pained shock was replaced by one of terror. Orsus turned

from him as he scurried back on his haunches, clutching his shattered arm.

Orsus set Lola aside and walked closer to the nearer argus. The assistant dog handlers exchanged frightened, unsure looks. The nearest shouted, "Careful! They're dangerous!"

"Let this one go," Orsus said. The handlers hesitated, but when he stared at them they did as he bid.

Growling deeply the argus leaped, its great jaws slavering. Braced with his right foot back, Orsus leaned forward and offered up his left forearm, which the beast latched onto fiercely, clamping down on the armored vambrace with powerful jaws and shaking its head side-to-side in a frenzy. Its other head swung around past his fist to seek a softer target, but Orsus swatted it sharply on the nose with his open gauntlet, startling it.

Even as its right head wrestled with the warcaster's arm, trying to shake him off his balance, the left growled fiercely. He stared into its eyes and loosed a growl of his own from deep in his throat, showing it his teeth. The growls of the left head quieted, though it continued to stare at him. Before long the right head stopped pulling and also looked to him, and he switched his focus to it. After a moment the beast released his arm and stepped back, cowed. It sat on its haunches, both heads watching him fixedly. The assistant handlers stared with open mouths.

"Release the other," Orsus directed, and they did. That argus approached him more warily, and he stared it down as well. When it sat beside its brother, the Butcher went to them and unclasped the multiple lashes attached to their halters, making a low, rumbling sound as he did. The beasts perked up their ears, and a single tongue lapped his hand. He looked to the assistant handlers and then to their supervisor, who still huddled on the ground cradling his broken arm. He threw the lashes down disdainfully in front of him. "These hounds are mine," he said. "No one will lay a hand on them. Understood?" They hastened to assent.

The warcaster reached over the injured dog handler to the hunting horn dangling on a nearby post and took it for himself. He next retrieved Lola, then turned and walked away. He did not need to look back to know that the argus followed. Experiencing the first sense of true satisfaction he had felt in weeks, Orsus Zoktavir decided he would spend one more evening amid the trees.



KOMMANDER ZOKTAVIR, THE BUTCHER UNLEASHED

KHADOR EPIC WARCASTER UNIT

Since he returned from death his eyes are filled with something savage and inhuman.

—Kapitan Stoyan Kroshevich, 5th Border Legion

ZOKTAVIR						
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
5	8	9	5	14	18	7



BLUNDERBUSS			
RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
8	1	—	12



LOLA	
POW	P+S
8	16

FOCUS	6
DAMAGE	20
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
WARJACK POINTS	+4
MEDIUM BASE	

FEAT: RED HAZE

Many consider Kommander Zoktavir the empress' mad dog, a brutal beast to loose upon her enemies. When the red haze overcomes his vision, every foe before him becomes a loathsome thing he feels compelled to obliterate. Facing this cyclone of blood and suffering, enemies have but a moment to flee or perish.

Zoktavir gains up to 6 focus points. He cannot have more focus points than his current FOCUS as a result of Red Haze. Enemy models/units in Zoktavir's

melee range automatically fail command checks for one round.

ZOKTAVIR

⚔ Officer

☠ Terror

Granted: Vengeance – While this model is in play, models in its unit gain Vengeance. (During your Maintenance Phase, if one or more models in a unit with Vengeance were destroyed or removed from play by enemy attacks during your opponent's last turn, each model in the unit can advance 3" and make one normal melee attack.)

Warcaster Unit – This unit is made up of Zoktavir and two War Argus.

LOLA

⚡ Magical Weapon

👁 Reach

🔧 Weapon Master

Orsus Zoktavir is a dark legend walking among men, a barbarous killer whose name is whispered with trepidation even as he is mentioned alongside the other heroes of the frozen north. His story is savage and brutal; his name, synonymous with slaughter and madness. Those who have seen him fighting side-by-side with his pair of two-headed hounds are convinced these ferocious beasts are an apt reflection of the untamable darkness inside the man known as the Butcher of Khardov.

Though his countrymen are awed by his strength, seeing him as an elemental force to be unleashed on their enemies, he is feared by them as much as by his foes. None of those who serve with him do so without constant awareness of his volatile nature. Though his patriotism is without question, its fanatical extent has caused him to turn on any he suspects of acting against his nation—a precarious standard, given

SPELLS

	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
ENERGIZER	*	SELF	CTRL	—	NO	NO
This model spends up to 3 focus points to cast Energizer. Models in its battlegroup that are currently in its control area can immediately advance up to 1" for each focus point spent. Energizer can be cast only once per turn.						
FLASHING BLADE	1	SELF	—	—	NO	NO
This model immediately makes one normal attack with one of its melee weapons against each enemy model in its LOS that is in the weapon's melee range. These attacks are simultaneous.						
IMPENDING DOOM	2	SELF	*	—	NO	NO
Enemy models within 5" of this model are pushed 5" directly toward it in the order you choose.						
OBLITERATION	4	10	4	15	NO	YES
The force of this attack blasts apart the earth itself.						
SILENCE OF DEATH	2	6	—	—	YES	NO
Target friendly model/unit's melee weapons gain Grievous Wounds. (When a model is hit by a weapon with Grievous Wounds, for one round it loses Tough, cannot heal or be healed, and cannot transfer damage.)						

TACTICAL TIPS

GRANTED: VENGEANCE – Models move after continuous effects have been resolved during the step of the Maintenance Phase that says "Resolve all other effects that occur during the Maintenance Phase."

RED HAZE – Automatically failing a command check does not cause models that never flee (such as models with Construct ☠, Fearless ☠, or Undead ☠) to flee.

that he is sometimes subject to delusions. For Zoktavir, any movement that does not bring a soldier closer to the enemy is cowardice and any action that does not bring death to his nation's enemies is treason. And he is a man all too ready to mete out justice to traitors.

Even those who have only seen Zoktavir turn his fury on enemies of the Motherland are left scarred by the sight of the Butcher transformed by battle rage into a tireless berserker. His killing prowess and tremendous potency as a warcaster have combined to make him nearly invulnerable when swept up in one of his frenzies of destruction, and yet his single-minded assaults on the enemy seem less like the actions of a soldier than those of a mad beast seeking its own destruction.

This apparent self-destructive impulse might have been what finally laid him low when Zoktavir defied his orders during the Siege of Fellig. Not content to stand outside the walls and keep that city's inhabitants terrified and contained, the Butcher let himself be goaded into charging headlong into the enemy. Despite being outnumbered by as many as a hundred to one, he nearly succeeded in his brazen attack. He committed to an orgy of slaughter against the horrified defenders, who fought desperately to keep him outside their gates. Despite the number of





defenders he had slain, his treacherous soldiers broke and fled, leaving Zoktavar alone. He fought to exhaustion before being surrounded and battered from all sides. Bleeding from numerous wounds, he killed the last of his enemies and wandered off in a delirious haze, eventually collapsing in eastern Ord.

Death would have been a certainty if not for an unexpected kindness. He was discovered by a young Ordic servant girl who took pity on the unconscious giant and tended his wounds. His feverish awakening coincided with the discovery that his rescuer was being mistreated by her masters. Zoktavar lashed out at them in an arcane rage, demolishing their estate and leaving only the girl unscathed. Not knowing what else to do for her, Orsus plunged back alone into the Thornwood to return to the Khadoran Army. While her kindness had saved his life, Orsus realized he had left his savior worse off than he had found her. His efforts to do the right thing had once again gone awry, and he felt more isolated than ever.

Before Fellig, Orsus had always been able to find stability amid the order and discipline of the army, fighting in the service of his empress and nation. His return through the Thornwood, abandoned and disoriented, was a nightmare descent into the visions of his warped mind. This was exacerbated when he at last found a Khadoran encampment only to discover its soldiers welcoming a Cygnaran warcaster and his troops into their midst. Zoktavar immediately turned on the traitors. He learned too late that during his long absence Khador had entered into an unthinkable alliance with Cygnar to deal with Cryx.

Stunned from the news of his nation's capitulation, Zoktavar was thrown further into mental chaos when confronted with accusations of criminal misconduct. These allegations bit deep into his troubled mind. While walking the army camp to quiet his thoughts, the Butcher discovered an overwhelmed dog trainer about to put down a pair of argus and saved them from destruction. Man and beasts quickly developed a rapport extending beyond verbal commands, based on something deeper and more primal.


Though even his own comrades had shunned him, in these untamable beasts Zoktavar found companionship and acceptance unknown to him in his life as a soldier of the Motherland. In turn the argus gained an uncompromising master every bit as fierce and feral as they are. Zoktavar can freeze them in their tracks with but a glance and summon them back to his side with a blast on his hunting horn. He has found their unspoken loyalty reassuring at a time when he feels unmoored from the army and caught up in circumstances that make it difficult to discern friend from foe.

WAR ARGUS

Terror

Circular Vision – This model's front arc extends to 360°.

Gang – When making a melee attack targeting an enemy model in melee range of another model in this unit, this model gains +2 to melee attack and melee damage rolls.

Granted: Relentless Charge – While this model is in play, models in this unit gain Relentless Charge. (Models with Relentless Charge gain Pathfinder  during activations they charge.)

Sprint – At the end of this model's activation, if it destroyed one or more enemy models with melee attacks this activation it can make a full advance.

BITE

Combo Strike (★Attack) – Make a melee attack. Instead of making a normal damage roll, the POW of the damage roll is equal to this model's STR plus twice the POW of this weapon.

WAR ARGUS							
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD	
6	7	5	4	14	14	6	

BITE		
POW	P+S	
4	11	

DAMAGE	8 EA
MEDIUM BASE	





GROLAR

KHADOR HEAVY WARJACK

The Grolar is an emissary of the Motherland. It has the speed of the avalanche, the fury of the winter wind, and the power of the great bear.

—Miro Pastukh, assistant mechanik

GROLAR							
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD	
4	12	6	4	10	20	—	



AUTO CANNON			
RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
8	5	—	12



OPEN FIST	
POW	P+S
3	15



PISTON HAMMER	
POW	P+S
6	18

DAMAGE						
1	2	3	4	5	6	
	L			R		
L	L	M	C	R	R	
	M	M	C	C		

FIELD ALLOWANCE	U
POINT COST	9
LARGE BASE	

from this model. If it is pushed, this model can immediately advance directly toward the pushed model up to the distance that model was moved.

GROLAR

Gunfighter

Pathfinder

Fleet – At the start of this model's activation, it can spend 1 focus point once to gain +2" movement for one turn.

Virtuoso – This model can make melee and ranged attacks during the same combat action. When this model makes its initial attacks, it can make both its initial ranged and melee attacks.

AUTO CANNON

Double Strike – This model can make two additional attacks for each focus point spent to make additional attacks with this weapon.

OPEN FIST

Open Fist

PISTON HAMMER

Ram – When an enemy model is hit by this weapon, it is knocked down and can be pushed 1" directly away

TACTICAL TIPS

AUTO CANNON - Double Strike does not ignore ROF, so you can make up to 5 total attacks using the initial attack and spending 2 focus for additional attacks.

FLEET – Modifiers to movement apply only to a model's normal movement.

HEIGHT/WEIGHT: 11' 11" / 11.8 TONS

ARMAMENT: AUTO-CANNON (LEFT), PISTON HAMMER (RIGHT)

FUEL LOAD/BURN USAGE: 1,050 LBS / 6 HRS GENERAL, 70 MINS COMBAT

INITIAL SERVICE DATE: 605 AR

CORTEX MANUFACTURER: GREYLOARDS COVENANT

ORIG. CHASSIS DESIGN: KHADORAN MECHANIKS ASSEMBLY

Though the Kodiak has long been touted as one of the finest achievements in Khadoran engineering, and rightfully so, the Grolar is renowned for its integrated advanced weapon systems. The machine pairs a rapid-fire cannon and devastating melee capabilities with a powerful steam engine, enabling it to reach the best possible vantage point to rain down heavy fire into the opposition.

While the Grolar is under the control of a dedicated warcaster, its cannon is capable of a truly withering rate of fire, even in close combat. Its thunderous piston hammer strikes with the force of a falling comet, rendering anything it hits into scrap or stringy pulp. The concussive force of the hammer is more than enough to knock aside any target, leaving it vulnerable to the full fury of the warjack's auto-cannon.

The Grolar is used as a swift deterrent when objectives need to be claimed quickly rather than as a replacement for 'jacks like the Juggernaut and the Destroyer, which will surely continue to be produced for generations to come. Most often, this mighty warjack is deployed as part of warcaster battlegroups at the head of Khadoran advances and along the edges of the nation's disputed borders, where its mobility and sheer firepower can be put to greatest use. The Grolar has been especially valuable to the Motherland's forces in the Thornwood and other particularly difficult landscapes, as its ability to quickly traverse any terrain greatly increases Khadoran mobility.

Unhindered by terrain, this deceptively fast machine is often the first to charge into the enemy line. The mighty boiler it bears is the same design as that of the vaunted Kodiak, but the version employed by the Grolar features significant improvements to output. With these advancements, the heavy warjack is capable of charging across—or through—any obstacles in its way with bursts of speed unseen in anything of its size and weight. Though such capabilities put increased demands on the will of a warcaster, they make the Grolar ideal to support fast-moving Khadoran forces. Since this warjack first entered service in 605 AR the Mechaniks Assembly has begun to produce the design in greater numbers to bolster the capabilities of the nation's fighting forces in far-flung regions across western Immoren.





GREYLORD OUTRIDERS

KHADOR LIGHT CAVALRY UNIT

One cannot escape winter.

—Khadoran aphorism

LEADER & GRUNTS							
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD	
9	5	5	4	13	15	9	



RUNE AXE	
POW	P+S
5	10



MOUNT	
POW	
10	

DAMAGE	5 EA
FIELD ALLOWANCE	1
LEADER & 2 GRUNTS	6
LEADER & 4 GRUNTS	9
LARGE BASE	

2" of the target model, the enemy model becomes stationary for one round. Winter's Wind lasts for one round.

Snow-Wreathed – This model always has concealment.

RUNE AXE

Magical Weapon

LEADER & GRUNTS

Immunity: Cold

Pathfinder

Magic Ability [6]

- **Frostbite (★Attack)** – Frostbite is a RNG SP 8 magic attack. Models hit suffer a POW 12 cold damage roll ❄️.
- **Winter's Wind (★Action)** – RNG 5. Target friendly Faction model with Immunity: Cold . When an enemy model without Immunity: Cold ends its activation within

TACTICAL TIP

MAGIC ABILITY – Performing a Magic Ability special action or special attack counts as casting a spell.

their training they are taught to deliver their dispatches no matter the cost. Those who survive and relish this role become leaders among the outriders, but most will step down to serve the order in other ways.

At an outrider's command, dizzying flurries of snow and ice hide the squad from opposing eyes, allowing them to charge past even the most severe opposition unhindered. Cold seems to flow from their very spirits and can be directed into blasts of frozen air capable of shattering iron and stopping enemy soldiers in their tracks.

An arcane order is only as strong as its lines of communication, and none are better at ensuring vital missives reach their destinations than the Greylords Covenant. The majority of its outriders are lower-ranking members who serve the order by keeping lines of communication open between far-flung strongholds. Bearing the courier badge, these skilled horsemen have the right to travel throughout Khador without hindrance and quickly learn the terrain in every corner of the empire.

As a neophyte, or *uchenik*, each Greylord undergoes a battery of tests to find his place, while senior members guide him to reach his full potential. Those who show an aptitude for riding and who prefer work outside the confines of a stronghold may be cultivated into outriders by the time they become *rastoviks*—Greylords who have completed their training. These young warriors learn to survive across some of the harshest landscapes in western Immoren. They are shown how to find food, escape detection, and use their innate gifts. Veterans drill them in hit-and-run tactics so that they learn how to avoid being caught in the middle of a battle. Above all, throughout



IRON FANG KOVNIK

KHADOR SOLO

These men are the true sons of Khador. They are living embodiments of the Motherland: cold, unyielding, and deadly.

—Kommander Dahlrif Strasvite of the 4th Assault Legion



Fur-lined capes billowing behind them and axes in hand, the fierce and hardened veteran Iron Fang kovniks can be seen commanding thousands of troops wherever Khador marches to war. Their lives are dedicated to the discipline of battle, and every one of them has witnessed decades of war. There is no feint, no charge, no tactic the kovniks have not seen. Bellowing commands, they maneuver the forces arrayed under them into precise formations capable of withstanding any foe. These imposing officers refuse to remain safely at the rear of their force and lead from the front, striking where the fighting is the thickest and giving backbone to any force they lead.

Though considered elite warriors within the Khadoran military, these kovniks see themselves as Iron Fangs first and foremost, brothers to the rest of that tight-knit fellowship.

KOVNIK

☉ Jack Marshal

☉ Commander

No Sleeping on the Job

[Iron Fang] – This model and friendly Iron Fang models in its command range cannot be knocked down.

Shield March (★Action) –

RNG 5. Target friendly Faction unit. If the unit is in range, when it receives the Shield Wall order, the models in the unit gain +2" movement that activation. Shield March lasts for one turn.

Unyielding – While engaging an enemy model, this model gains +2 ARM.

GREAT AXE

☞ Reach

☞ Weapon Master

KOVNIK							
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD	
6	7	7	4	13	15	10	



GREAT AXE

POW

P+S

5

12

DAMAGE	5
FIELD ALLOWANCE	2
POINT COST	2
SMALL BASE	

They eschew the comforts of rank to live the life of the Iron Fang, sleeping in their armor and marching alongside their forces for days at a time. Yet this filial spirit is not the same as fraternization, and there is no doubt that military discipline is always maintained. As the army marches, Iron Fang kovniks inspect the troops regularly, checking their supplies and general morale while also keeping subordinate officers on their toes.

Overseeing entire battalions or even legions, kovniks rely on their kapitans, lieutenants, and sergeants to ensure the men under their command are properly trained in shield wall effectiveness, battle formations, and obeying their kommanders' orders without a second's hesitation. Having commanded men, women, and 'jacks alike, a seasoned Iron Fang kovnik knows just how hard a unit can be driven and where its breaking point lies.

These men have fought all there is to fight and have emerged wiser, ready to bring new tactics to each engagement. Together with the other senior officers of the Khadoran Army, kovniks representing separate forces often meet between battles to compare notes on battlefield experiences, to assess the state of their combined forces, and to plan the next great conquests to strengthen the Motherland.





KOVNIK ANDREI MALAKOV

KHADOR CHARACTER SOLO

Some were born to follow, others to lead. This is not arrogance but natural law.

—Kovnik Andrei Malakov

MALAKOV							
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD	
6	6	6	4	14	13	8	



HAND CANNON			
RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
12	1	—	12



MECHANIKA BLADE	
POW	P+S
5	11

FOCUS	4
DAMAGE	5
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
POINT COST	3
SMALL BASE	

automatically hit and suffers all damage and effects.

MECHANIKA BLADE

Magical Weapon

MALAKOV

Fearless

Journeyman Warcaster –

This model is not a warcaster but has the following warcaster special rules: Battlegroup Commander, Control Area, Focus Manipulation, Power Field, and Spellcaster.

Sucker! – If this model is directly hit by an enemy ranged attack, choose a friendly living non-incorporeal warrior model within 2" of it to be directly hit instead. That model is

SPELLS

	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
RAZOR WIND	2	10	—	12	NO	YES

A blade of wind slices through the target model.

REDLINE	2	6	—	—	YES	NO
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Target warjack in this model's battlegroup gains +2 STR and SPD and can run, charge, or make power attack slams or tramples without spending focus. When it ends its activation, it suffers d3 damage points.

TACTICAL TIPS

JOURNEYMAN WARCASTER – This model is a non-warcaster model and is not affected by special rules that specifically affect warcasters. Models with the Attached rule cannot be attached to this model.

SUCKER! – This ability is not optional.

A star among the rastoviks of one of the most recent classes of the Druzhina, Kovnik Andrei Malakov pushes the warjacks under his control to crush those who dare oppose him. His desire to succeed regardless of the consequences sometimes demands a high cost from his men and machines, but to Malakov, such is the price of victory.

Born the son of a Khardic count and raised near the city of Rorschik, Malakov is comfortable amid the intrigue of Khadoran politics. He was taught the superiority of noble blood and learned early on to apply his intelligence to improving his position whenever possible. When that requires his inferiors to fall in his place, he sees it as the natural order of things.

With his family standing, there was no question Malakov would enter the military as an officer. The Grey Lords at Rorschik detected his arcane aptitude immediately, and he went to their stronghold for the early portion of his training. By the time he transferred to the Druzhina for officer training, his confidence in his abilities only added to his ambition. For someone of lesser birth or talents his arrogance might have been a hindrance, but for Malakov it enhanced his aura of command. He demonstrated excellence in the most essential qualities demanded of a Khadoran officer.

Though he received the highest scores in his evaluations, Malakov was a bit of a loner among the cadets, which he blamed on his classmates' jealousy. The only one worthy of his companionship was the senior cadet Levanid Trevanik, whose father was the great prince of Dorognia volozk and Count Malakov's liege. The two cadets became fast friends

despite their strongly differing personalities. When Great Prince Trevanik was later executed for treason, young Levanid became the region's ruler, a situation Malakov could not help but consider in terms of how he might eventually benefit from it. He graduated from the Druzhina primed to stand in the upper echelons of Khadoran society, as is his birthright. All that remains now is to prove himself in battle and commence a glorious military career.

After his graduation Malakov was promoted to kovnik and given the arcane standing of rastovik, the rank at which traditionally a junior-ranking warcaster is sent into the field before earning the responsibilities of a full kommander and magzhev. At this stage, every warcaster must prove capable in combat alongside a battlegroup and leading subordinates while operating without direct supervision. Malakov's standing and reputation earned him the singular honor of a special mission: delivering the first new Conquests to Supreme Kommandant Irusk deep in hostile territory. Though he handled himself well, the mission's complications provided a lesson on the gulf between theoretical training and the realities of war. Malakov is more determined than ever to make his mark and earn his kommand.

In many ways Malakov views people the same way he sees his warjacks: as disposable means to an end. Friendship and loyalty have little direct value to him. He is an adroit manipulator, able to switch smoothly from charm to intimidation in any situation. Malakov's ruthlessness is also reflected in his cold intellect in battle. No sacrifice is too great in the attainment of his victory, and it is likely many soldiers will find themselves placed in the path of bullets meant for him. His superiors might overlook his apparent disregard for those serving under him, however, so long as he brings victory to the Motherland.





CRYX

HOMECOMING

THE NORTHWESTERN OUTSKIRTS OF IOS

Goresshade galloped as swiftly as his undead steed would take him through the foothills along the southeastern edge of Rhul's mountainous border. He was followed by an escort of bane riders, and together they comprised a ghostly posse skirting the fringes of civilization and racing across the snowy landscape like shadows. Tremendous peaks soared up toward the night sky to his left, the great outer wall of that impregnable kingdom. He passed the Silvertip Peaks and saw farther to the northeast the greater mountains called the Skybridge.

To minimize the chance of detection he had initially traveled only at night, but for the last several days they had continued through night and day in order to exploit the endless stamina of their unliving mounts. The region he crossed was mostly ignored by Rhul and Ios alike, as there had never been conflicts along their shared border. The primary threats in this region were from the wilderness, in the form of winter trolls or argus dwelling in the nearest mountains. He became cautious again as they crossed the frozen Fleetsfill River and veered up into the mountains nearest the region overseen directly by the Gate of Storms, that Iosan fortress emplaced to watch against danger from the northwest.

In past centuries a trickle of trade had passed through that gate between Ios and Rhul, but it had been sealed for decades and the road left in ill repair. The gate had been closed at the outset of the War of the Houses, the Iosan civil war ignited by Goresshade when he was Narcissar Ghyrrshyld Vyre. Those events now felt as if they had happened to another entity entirely, someone whose memories he had inherited.

The battlements of the ancient Gate of Storms were no less impressive for never having been tested in war. The gate was controlled by one of the Five Great Military Houses, House Issyen, famed for their swift cavalry forces. They were among the most responsive and wary of Ios' border defenders, taking advantage of their mobility to intercept any intruder. There were good reasons why the human nations viewed the Iosan borders with superstition, as

mystical methods were in place to alert the scyirs of the military houses to any intrusion. Goresshade knew, however, that Ios' Homeguard Coalition relied too much on these methods. His plan hinged on that fact.

The stars and moons shone down brightly from the night sky as he approached the northwestern border of the nation of his birth. The cold of winter's first days meant nothing to his force, who followed silently. Banes were incapable of fear, but Goresshade sensed their eyes upon him—they were intelligent, and this was unknown territory to all of them, even the ancient malevolent spirit Suneater, who led them. No Cryxian had ever been in Ios, so far as Goresshade was aware. None of the banes knew the details of his plans. So long as they were given leave to slay the living, they were content. Indeed, it had taken some effort for Goresshade to convince them not to kill their six Iosan captives but instead bind them and throw them over the hindquarters of several of the dead steeds. Even now he could sense the banes' desire for murder, but he held them in check. He required those people alive for a vital ritual he would soon conduct.

His escort was quite limited, in part because his forces had been whittled down since his first attempt to interfere with the return of Nyssor. He had left behind most of his remaining minions except these bane riders so he could move with the speed, mobility, and secrecy he required. He had not brought any warjacks with him, although years ago he had arranged to secret a small arsenal in a forgotten cave amid the mountains north of the border, between Aeryth Dawnguard and the Gate of Storms. One of a number of Cryxian stockpiles scattered across western Immoren, this one was his alone, unknown to the lich lords. Before approaching the border directly he visited this sealed and hidden repository to check its inventory. He activated several Stalkers but left the other machines for later. He did not anticipate battle; if he was forced into a clash with the border defenders it would mean his plans had failed.

To the naked eye there was little to demark the dividing line between Ios and Rhul other than the trees beyond

a short plain after the Rhulic foothills. These were the Frostpines, an inconsequential woods much smaller and less formidable than the Mistbough in southern Ios. Spread along the borders stood towers and fortresses, and the regions between were patrolled regularly. The real secret to Ios' seemingly impregnable borders, though, was the work of the sibyls.

The sibyls of the great houses were powerful arcanists who specialized in divinatory techniques by which they safeguarded the insular nation. These included rites to view and listen to events from afar, but that skill was only supplemental to their first line of defense. They did not have the time or inclination to spend all their waking hours in meditative reflection, remotely peering along the borderlands. Those powers were only brought to bear once they had been alerted to an intrusion by the latent energies woven along Ios' borders like an invisible shroud of gossamer webs. As soon as any significant force broke through those intangible strands, the sibyls connected to them would know. Once alerted, they could use other means to pinpoint the threat and coordinate with Homeguard Coalition garrisons for immediate and overwhelming retaliation.

Houses Nyarr and Issyen had especially powerful sibyls, among the greatest of those practicing those arts. Were Goreshade and his bane riders to simply race into the forest ahead, the general alarm would be raised and the swiftest cavalry in Ios would converge on his position. Fortunately, he was well aware of these protective measures and had long ago considered means to circumvent them.

As Goreshade neared the trees he slowed his steed to a steady walk. Staring ahead and allowing the world to become unfocused, he entered a trancelike state. His surroundings took on a grayish tinge, the sky above deepening to a pitch-black field devoid of stars and moons. Ahead he could now perceive a complex pattern of energy, the different colored strands crisscrossing the air in front of him. The gossamer lines were difficult to perceive even in his altered state; in daylight he could not have seen them at all. After several minutes he was at last able to locate the nearest permanent anchor point. He marked this in his mind and came out of his trance. He then summoned his banes and withdrew to a nearby tree he had identified earlier, its naked branches stretching outward in the early winter air.

The banes assisted him in positioning their captives, climbing up the thick trunk and using the rope binding the prisoners' feet together to hang them head-down from high branches. The Iosans thrashed futilely against their bonds, their eyes wide in alarm, any cries muffled by cloth gags. During the last part of the ride they had been largely quiet,

whether out of exhaustion or resignation to their fate, but now they could not help but struggle for life.

Each had been either a mage hunter or a soldier who had volunteered to fight alongside the Retribution; Goreshade had taken them alive just before his last clash with Dawnlord Vyros. Each had served Ios and their cause well, but now in being of use to Goreshade they would contribute to the salvation of their race, which seemed fitting. It was unfortunate he could not expect them to understand that fact. His undead visage and the curse bestowed on him by Nyssor made it impossible for them to regard him with anything but horror and loathing. His was thankless work.

The midnight hour was at hand, and the three moons were in auspicious positions. He used Voass to inscribe a frozen line in the earth around the tree and then carved complex sigils into its trunk. Goreshade felt no malice toward his victims, and his ritual did not require them to suffer, so he conducted matters expeditiously. He gestured to the waiting banes, and they raised their weapons as one and cut the throats of the Iosans. The cuts were precisely as he had instructed—not too deep, so exsanguination would proceed slowly. Blood dripped down while the gagged captives thrashed instinctively, only hastening their deaths. Soon they fell unconscious.

Goreshade rode beneath them, through their limp, hanging arms, letting the warm and fresh Iosan blood drip down upon him and across the flanks of his steed. He gathered and manipulated the mystical energy flowing from the escaping life essence. The blood clung to him and his steed and spread as a thin film, still warm and vibrant.

One by one the banes followed suit, showering in the blood of those who had been Goreshade's countrymen. Several of the undead hissed in distaste and glared at their master accusingly, though they were too strongly dominated to speak an objection. It was not the blood they disliked, but the lingering aura of life now coating them, a force antithetical to their nature.

This grisly procession concluded, Goreshade used the peerless edge of Voass to cut through the nearest victim's wrist and took the severed hand. He directed one of the banes to stay behind to dispose of the corpses, and the rest returned with him to the border. This would be the test of the efficacy of his work.

He guided his horse toward a section of the mystical invisible weave where a second series of lines split off from the rest and dipped to converge behind the main lattice, bound to something in the soil. He felt nothing as he passed through, and his sensitive eyes did not witness any sudden flaring in the lines that would have suggested

they were signaling an alarm. He urged his followers to pass through as well and to go past him to the next wooded hill. They made it without incident, falsely identified as living Iosans.

This would suffice for their intrusion, but he needed a longer-lasting but easily overlooked breach. He leapt down from his undead steed at the spot where the ward lines converged. With his metal boot he scraped the grass and dirt away to reveal a thick bronze plate two feet wide by a foot across that was inscribed in mystical runes. It was bolted into a block of stone sunk into the earth. Similar rune-inscribed and mystically empowered plates located at intervals along the border served to maintain the alarms.

Once more he gathered necromantic energy, which he poured into the severed hand. This he placed palm-down at the center of the bronze plate. He dipped his finger in the blood oozing from the stump and swept a circle around it, then added several Cryxian sigils. Around him the glowing lines faded, still present but muted and less responsive. He sent his Stalkers through and watched, tense, but again he saw no evidence of an alarm. It helped that Stalkers were inherently stealthy machines. His efforts to weaken the wards would not guarantee that any reinforcements he summoned later would escape detection, but they should greatly improve the odds. He pushed the surrounding vegetation back over the metal plate to conceal the severed hand. His alterations should pass unnoticed; this system of wards had been set in place thousands of years ago, and decades could pass between inspections.

EVERSAEL

They rode as ghosts through the forest, passing through trees and underbrush with equal ease, their dead flesh ephemeral. They managed to avoid a border patrol entirely as they made their way into the interior. Goreshade led the banes with some haste, knowing they were much more likely to be spotted after daybreak. His Stalkers followed behind them. Their supply of necrotite should suffice for his immediate needs.

The group's course took them through the northernmost section of Ios, across the secure but sparsely settled lands north of Shyrr, the capital, but well south of Aeryth Dawnguard, the stronghold and headquarters of House Nyarr's Dawnguard. The region was lightly forested and included scattered farmlands and pastures alongside several small towns. Over the centuries Ios had gradually given up much of its settled lands and allowed them to revert to wilderness, with the population concentrated in its last great cities.

The Dawnguard controlled the most remote and secluded of Ios' major fortresses, erected to stand against any threats

that might have followed the elves on their crossing from eastern Immoren. While a number of lesser houses held lands in Nyrrothyl, Ios' northernmost *ithyl*, or province, House Nyarr governed the region and the Dawnguard kept up regular patrols.

Goreshade did not intend to confront the masters of that northern fortress; he and his escort steered clear of the Dawnguard's watchtowers and southern holdings. His goal was instead an abandoned and overgrown region in the far east of their territory. He raced toward that forbidden place, one whose very name had become taboo and associated with betrayal and blasphemy. This was Eversael, a ruin that had once been the thriving city of the god Nyrro, Arsyrr of Day. As they galloped across the night-shrouded landscape, Goreshade remembered the day a quarter of a century ago when he had first come here. Then he had been soaked in his own blood, suffering from a mortal wound dealt him by Dawnlord Vyros. He had sought refuge in Eversael since it held the only means he knew to evade death.

Of his memories from his living days, those last during his defeat in the War of the Houses were the most bitter. He had been so close to rousing Ios from fearful denial of their approaching doom. Under his leadership things would have been very different. He was convinced the other great houses had united against him less from horror of his deeds and more from a prideful unwillingness to accept a single master. Those nobles who led the myriad houses were too arrogant, too addicted to their own self-importance, a product of their debased and vainglorious culture.

They soon reached the outskirts of the ruin. Over the long centuries since it had been abandoned, it had become surrounded by dark and looming trees, its buildings crumbled and consumed by moss and vines. Goreshade's bonejacks went ahead of him, scuttling from shadow to shadow on sharp metal legs. The banes guided their steeds into the broken and obstructed streets of what had been one of the greatest cities of Ios thousands of years ago.

The streets were utterly silent. Nevertheless, Goreshade knew Eversael was inhabited by its own masters, who preferred to remain below the surface. Intruders would be dealt with, but those dwelling here did not like to stir themselves needlessly. Most often the dreadful reputation of the place and its palpable aura of malevolence was enough to frighten off the living.

Only the looming Fane of Nyrro, which Goreshade rode directly toward, was important to its cursed inhabitants. It was the only great structure of ancient Eversael still entirely intact, its stones eerily free of vegetation and showing almost no wear or decay. Nyrro's divine sigil was prominently carved into the high, sloping walls that

flanked the great opening; below that shone an intricate and complex pattern of sacred runes created by a mosaic of polished glass shards. Flanking the great opening were titanic stones, each of a single piece, and broad steps ascended to it from the main avenue. Goreshade stepped from his steed and began the climb, followed by his banes.

Nearest him, the bane knight Suneater rasped, "This is holy ground?"

"Long ago, it was." Goreshade smiled. "A god lived below this building and from this high vantage addressed the people of the city. Now that god is dead, and all he sought to create and protect has crumbled to dust. It has been more than a thousand years since this place was holy."

As they ascended the steps, Goreshade reflected on the rest of the fane's history, which he had not bothered to relate to his bane knight. The dead god's priests had sought to retain their power and orchestrated a hoax, claiming that Nyrro had returned. Many pilgrims were lured here, and most were sacrificed in dark rites. *Knowledge always requires sacrifice*, the eldritch thought. So Nyrro's cult had learned. They had lost their god, but they found another power, another means to preserve themselves from death. Eventually the Dawnguard tried to purge this place by blade and fire, but they killed only pawns. The true masters of Eversael remained hidden. The Dawnguard had never returned, for they feared this place for its secrets, not least among them the evidence of their own ancestors' culpability in its desecration.

Dawn broke as they climbed the stairs, and it was under that light that the glory of the Fane of Nyrro was revealed. The building had been positioned perfectly to collect the sun's rays and send them forth from its polished stones and the glass inlaid into its runic patterns. The stone and glass gleamed like a mirrored lantern that once would have been a shining beacon to the inhabitants of the city. Now only the dead witnessed its splendor. After reaching the summit of the steps, they found another set of wide stairs leading to the vast underground complex beneath the surface fane. They descended into cold and darkness.

Flickering torches at the base of the staircase threw weak, mottled light on a closed pair of heavy doors laden with sacred runes. On either side of this doorway stood an armed and armored undead Iosan, pale and willowy. These were *sythyss*, lesser beings created by eldritch to protect them and serve their needs. Like skarlocks, they lacked imagination and the spark of will but were not mindless. As Goreshade and Suneater reached the bottom of the stairs these guardians stepped forward and drew slender, gleaming swords. Suneater hissed and raised his larger bane blade, but Goreshade held him in check.

The *sythyss* at the fore said, "Hold! Who dares enter the Fane of Nyrro?"

"It is Ghyrrshyld, formerly of House Vyre. Tell your master I have come."

The *sythyss* tilted his head slightly as if listening to a voice only he could hear. Then he said, "Begone, Ghyrrshyld. You are not welcome here."

The creature had barely finished speaking before Voass separated his head from his shoulders and the pale body toppled amid a clatter of armor. The severed neck oozed brackish ichor. Goreshade deflected the blade of the next creature even as Suneater hacked into its shoulder, the heavy blade slicing down into its chest with no difficulty despite the creature's steel spaulder and cuirass. The nearest banes moved up to engage and destroy the last two. Goreshade sensed a mystical seal laid upon the doors but shattered it with a crude burst of arcane power and threw them open. The group proceeded into a long, wide stone tunnel, its walls lined with tattered remnants of ancient tapestries.

**THE CREATURE HAD BARELY
FINISHED SPEAKING BEFORE
VOASS SEPARATED HIS HEAD
FROM HIS SHOULDERS**

They heard the sound of clattering feet and hissing voices ahead. Goreshade paid this no mind as he advanced, Nyssor's sword naked in his hand. The hallway soon opened into a wide room with a vaulted ceiling—the great entry chamber where priests had once greeted important visitors to the fane. It had long ago been transformed into a gathering hall for the eldritch of Eversael.

A large raised dais occupied the center of the far wall, situated between archways leading to other corridors extending deeper into the fane. A row of tables stretched out to either side. Countless sconces burned brightly, their light reflecting off a dizzying array of golden decorations around the chamber. Both on the dais and behind the tables eldritch awaited, their rotted faces a contrast to their elegant robes and gleaming armor. Many of them wore the ancient sigils of houses long forgotten, but the more familiar symbol of House Nyarr was emblazoned on several. Atop the throne on the dais was an eldritch in the golden vestments reserved to the auricants of Nyrro, the highest priests who in ancient days had attended to the god's needs.

Standing with weapons drawn were two rows of battle-ready sythyss wielding glaives, who had apparently rushed forward to intercept any intruders after hearing the commotion outside the outer fane doors. An eldritch in thick fluted steel armor and wielding a long, ornamented spear stood at their center, leading the room's guardians. Goreshade recognized him as Lothvyn, once an exiled noble of House Silowuyr. His gleaming eyes stared balefully at the warcaster and took in the banes arrayed to either side of him and the Stalkers not far behind.

Goreshade said, "Auricant Tyrios, is this how you greet me on my return?" He spoke loudly enough for his voice to ring out across the chamber as he addressed the eldritch in priest robes on the dais. "Am I not welcome at your table?"

**"I CAN DESTROY HIM IN AN
INSTANT IF YOU DO NOT CAST
DOWN YOUR BLADES."**

The former priest stood from his throne, his eyes blazing. His body was surrounded by an aura of black and purple energies. He said, "You enter my hall uninvited, armed, and with machines of war, and you expect a welcome? To be treated as a guest?" His resonant voice carried an accent suggestive of antiquity.

Confronting them aggressively had been a risk, but it had been a calculated one. The eldritch in this room were not all equivalent in power; several were truly formidable. The auricant was a repository of occult knowledge and a dangerous necromancer over a thousand years old. It had been Tyrios who preserved Goreshade's soul from passing to the Veld a quarter of a century ago. Though he owed the priest a debt, he knew these eldritch to be paralyzed and as reluctant to act as the Fane of Scyrah. The oldest, like Tyrios, no longer marked the passing years as they brooded here in their forgotten hall. They were resigned to waiting out the extinction of their race.

"I am not here as a guest," Goreshade said, "but to demand your fealty and obedience. Your time of hiding from the world is ended."

"Insolent cur!" This from Lothvyn, who stood closest. "I will teach you respect!" He lunged forward to jab his spear at Goreshade's heart, executing the move flawlessly and with unnatural speed and strength. Goreshade's power field surged with a crackle of energy to slow the strike, and the weapon's point was deflected off his breastplate rather than punching through. Lothvyn was a formidable combatant, but he was no warcaster.

The sythyss surged forward to fight alongside their master and were met by Goreshade's banes, and the hall rang with the chaotic clash of steel. Several of the eldritch stood from their tables and runes surrounded them as they invoked various protective rites. The others simply watched, their dead eyes glowing with interest at the spectacle. Goreshade recognized among them several that had sworn promises to him which he intended to see kept. His Stalkers rushed swiftly through the fray toward the dais, nimbly evading strikes directed at them.

The warcaster knocked Lothvyn's spear aside and, his adversary overextended, cut into the exposed area below his armpit. Lothvyn was too heavily armored for the blade to penetrate far, but the strike sufficed for the sword of winter to bite. The former noble's gleaming armor was rimed in frost and ice, freezing him in place.

"Hold!" Goreshade shouted to the sythyss as he placed the edge of his sword against the frozen eldritch's throat. "I can destroy him in an instant if you do not cast down your blades."

Three of Goreshade's banes had fallen to the initial rush of the sythyss, but twice as many of the sythyss had been cut down. The others backed away and dropped their weapons with a clatter on seeing their master at Goreshade's mercy. Most of the eldritch stood unmoving, watching to see what would transpire next, but one of the younger ones hissed in anger. He pointed a clawed finger at Goreshade and with a burst of spell runes sent an orb of greenish fire racing toward him.

Once again the warcaster's power field absorbed the energies, leaving him unscathed. With a snarl Goreshade opened his left hand toward their progenitor, and green runes appeared to circle his wrist. He instantly gathered and redirected the arcane energies just hurled at him and used them to fuel his counterattack. A bolt of pure darkness sped from his palm into the twisted face of the attacking eldritch, who hissed again as his face melted and the bones of his skull collapsed inward. The entity toppled onto a table, destroyed. The others stared at the husk of his body mutely, as if unsure how to react.

With his left hand Goreshade yanked the spear out of Lothvyn's grasp and tossed it down behind him. He kicked the former noble to send him tumbling to the marbled floor even as the ice and frost along his armor began to weaken and break. Two Stalkers had leapt onto the dais and stood poised with long metal legs raised within inches of Auricant Tyrios. A third crouched before the throne, ready to spring upon him. The ancient eldritch stood as though also frozen, his face a rictus of rage.

In truth, Goreshade was uncertain if even three Stalkers would suffice to destroy the auricant, but the threat posed by their proximity was enough to prevent Tyrios from acting. It was as Goreshade had predicted. The ancient eldritch did not react well to surprises; he had moved too quickly for them to gather their torpid wits. Had all of the arcanists here focused their power to obliterate him, he would not have endured.

"I am not here to destroy you, but I will do so if I must!" He raised Voass before them. "Do you recognize this blade? Surely before so many sages of our people, its nature should be obvious. I hold Voass, Summerbane, the weapon of the Scyr of Winter, forged by the Grand Crafter in the Veld!" The normally impassive eldritch shuffled and murmured in shock.

Goreshade continued, "How can this be? As you rot here doing nothing, you are ignorant of a fact known to every Iosan celebrating in the streets of Shyrr, Iryss, and Lynshynal: the Winter Father has been found and restored to Ios! I have faced him, taken his weapon as my own."

He had their full attention.

He walked to the center of the room, and the sythyss backed away. Lothvyn had regained his feet and glared at Goreshade, but he also stepped back, weaponless and cowed. The warcaster's voice rang out as he addressed them.

"When I left here, I promised I would return only once I had a solution to the deepest woes plaguing our ailing race. At that time many of you vowed to assist me in restoring the balance that was shattered along with the Bridge of Worlds. Perhaps you thought I would fail or discover the task to be impossible. I know that deep down you hoped I would find a way as much as you feared it.

"All of you share a single quality: you fear death, with good reason. The Veld is a wasteland, the gates of Lyoss shattered, the palace of the gods plundered, and the souls of the dead set upon by horrors from the hellish wilds of Urcaen. Those who die are hunted and subjected to endless torment. This is the only afterlife afforded us. So we have gone down dark paths to forbidden knowledge in order to cheat death. Hiding here, though, you have squandered the years stolen from mortality. It is time to rectify that. We know better than the living that solutions can be found in atrocity and that sacrifices are necessary to bring about true change.

"The solution is in our grasp. It requires the slaughter of the gods lingering among us. They cling tenaciously to their corporeal forms on Caen and would drag all of Ios down with them. Their bodies must be rent and destroyed, their ineffable essence released and allowed to depart this

realm. Only then will the balance be restored. Nyssor and Scyrh are the last, and both are positioned where we can reach them.

"Together we can march into the Fane of Lacyr in Shyrr and give these last two of our gods a merciful end. Delivering them from their suffering will be the salvation of our people. Bow to me now, vow to obey me, and we who have been accursed and shunned will put an end to this."

Around the room one by one the eldritch knelt, although in the eyes of several he saw lingering fires of prideful defiance. He did not require their enthusiasm, only their obedience. After the others had bowed only the auricant remained. Goreshade turned to the fallen priest and beckoned to him.

"Your assistance is vital, Auricant Tyrios. Only you know the secrets of the inner fanes. I will need your counsel in the days ahead."

The Stalkers lowered their scything limbs. Moving in a stilted fashion as though it pained him, Tyrios stepped down from the dais and knelt before Goreshade, who strode past him to ascend the throne of Eversael.

GORESHADE, LORD OF RUIN

CRYX EPIC CAVALRY WARCASTER

Only one would speak as his life's blood soaked the earth. "Seek not to punish us for the crimes of the gods. It is they who have abandoned us. They have brought this doom upon our people."

—Avryss Vyre in his account of the Rivening, ^3826

GORESHADE						
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
8	7	7	4	14	17	8



VOASS	
POW	P+S
8	15



MOUNT	
POW	
12	

FOCUS	7
DAMAGE	17
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
WARJACK POINTS	+5
LARGE BASE	

FEAT: WINTER'S GRASP

As proof that he is truly the Lord of Ruin, Goresshade reaches inside Voass to steal the Father of Winter's divine power for his own profane use. With a sweep of the frozen blade his enemies are seized in an unyielding grip, rendered helpless and vulnerable.

Center a 3" AOE on any number of friendly non-warcaster warrior models currently in Goresshade's control area. Enemy models without Immunity: Cold within one or more AOE's

become stationary for one round. Then the models the AOE's are centered on are destroyed.

GORESHADE

Terror

Undead

Ghostly – This model can advance through terrain and obstacles without penalty and can advance through obstructions if it has enough movement to move completely past them. This model cannot be targeted by free strikes.

Spell Vortex – If a living enemy model cast a spell in this model's control area last turn, this model can cast one spell without spending focus during its activation this turn.

VOASS

Magical Weapon

Reach

Freeze – A model hit by this weapon becomes stationary for one round unless it has Immunity: Cold.

Unquestionably the most influential Iosan to have ever lived, the eldritch and would-be god slayer Goresshade seeks nothing less than the salvation, restoration, and liberation of his people from the gods themselves. For decades he sought to amass the knowledge and raw power necessary to shake the people of Ios from their death spiral of apathy and spiritual dissolution. Though Goresshade was dealt a mortal blow in the civil war that followed, he was able to sustain himself not out of the fear of his own destruction, which impels so many of the craven eldritch to seek to extend their lives past death, but out of an overpowering need to see his work complete.

After turning the machinations of the Nightmare Empire to his own ends, Goresshade has come closer than ever to achieving his mission, thwarted only by the efforts of ignorant mortals who cannot fathom his purposes. In a

SPELLS

	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
INFERNAL MACHINE	2	6	–	–	YES	NO
Target warjack in this model's battlegroup gains Terror and +2 MAT and SPD.						
MOCKERY OF LIFE	2	CTRL	–	–	NO	NO
Return one destroyed friendly Faction Undead Grunt to play with one unmarked damage box. It must be placed in this model's control area in formation and within 3" of another model in its unit. The Grunt must forfeit its action the turn it is returned to play.						
OCCULTATION	2	6	–	–	YES	NO
Target friendly model/unit gains Stealth.						
SCYTHING TOUCH	2	6	–	–	YES	NO
Target friendly model/unit gains +2 to melee attack damage rolls. Affected models gain Critical Corrosion on their normal melee attacks.						
SIPHON BOLT	2	8	–	12	NO	YES
When this spell hits an enemy model with 1 or more focus or fury points on it, that model loses 1 focus or fury point and this model gains 1 focus point.						

TACTICAL TIP

MOCKERY OF LIFE – Remember, the Grunt can activate with its unit this turn. If all models in the Grunt's unit have been destroyed, it cannot be placed within 3" of a model in its unit and therefore cannot return to play.

desperate attempt to restore his plans he has been forced to turn to some of his most deeply hidden contingencies.

Though the loss of Nyssor to Retribution forces might have seemed a setback to Goresshade, his service to Cryx has taught him to see beyond matters as trivial as victory and loss. By bringing Nyssor into Ios and to the Fane of Scyrh, the Retribution has laid the foundation for the god's ultimate destruction. With a single fateful strike Goresshade can bring an end to both Nyssor and Scyrh, which he believes will dispel the doom consuming his people. He expects their destruction will open the Veld to the children of the gods so that they may assume its dominion, forming an empire in Urcaen to outlast the world of the living and with himself as immortal ruler.

In another, such messianic ambition might seem like madness, but Goresshade is a unique being. More than any mortal arcanist, he has come to understand the nature of the threshold between the worlds of the living and the dead. Armed with mystical secrets terrifying in their implications, Goresshade has the instruments required to see his plan to fruition, including powerful relics he has tainted and corrupted for his own ends, such as the sword of Nyssor. All that remains is to assemble the pawns necessary to reach his objective and complete his ultimate blasphemy. Even at this crucial moment, Goresshade himself recognizes his plans are not without risk. The die is cast, and all his plots rush toward an uncertain conclusion.



INFLECTOR

CRYX HELLJACK

Compulsion is every bit as effective as loyalty on the battlefield—and far easier to engineer.

—Lich Lord Morbus

INFLECTOR							
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD	
6	10	7	5	13	17	—	



SHIELD CLAW	
POW	P+S
3	13



STINGER	
POW	P+S
6	16

DAMAGE						
1	2	3	4	5	6	
	L			R		
L	L	M	C	R	R	
	M	M	C	C		

FIELD ALLOWANCE	U
POINT COST	8
LARGE BASE	

additional die on this weapon's damage rolls against living models.

INFLECTOR

Shield Guard – Once per round, when a friendly model is directly hit by a ranged attack during your opponent's turn while within 2" of this model, you can choose to have this model directly hit instead. This model is automatically hit and suffers all damage and effects. This model cannot use Shield Guard if it is incorporeal, knocked down, or stationary.

Soul Drive – This model is allocated 1 additional focus point during your Control Phase.

SHIELD CLAW



 Shield



STINGER



Critical Poison – On a critical hit, gain an

The Inflictor is a dark sentinel among Cryx's helljacks, a machine that combines all the deadly cunning of its counterparts with a twisted compulsion to protect the master enslaving it. Unlike most helljacks, however, the Inflictor has more than a cortex at its core, for it contains the tormented essence of those slain and bound after death to empower it. These souls lend their anger and madness to the machine, giving it an unpredictability and malice that can take its enemies by surprise.

Soon after the discovery of Verrick Kurr's Seether helljacks, Cryx's necrotechs tried and failed to unlock the secrets of the mysterious soul drives empowering the rage-haunted machines. Those involved found themselves unable to follow Kurr's mad logic and convoluted designs. For a time the project was forgotten by most, but Lich Lord Morbus continued to brood on the puzzle. As master of Cryx's war production efforts he took personal umbrage at the difficulties in replicating these vicious machines. After the Seethers were unleashed on the battlefields of western Immoren to considerable success, the other lich lords made unraveling the mysteries of the soul drive a general mandate.

TACTICAL TIP

SOUL DRIVE – A warjack cannot exceed normal focus allocation limits as a result of Soul Drive.

HEIGHT/WEIGHT: 11'11" / 6.8 TONS
ARMAMENT: SHIELD CLAW (LEFT), STINGER (RIGHT)
FUEL LOAD/BURN USAGE: 100 LBS NECROTITE, 270 LBS COAL / 12 HRS GENERAL, 2 HRS COMBAT
INITIAL SERVICE DATE: 606 AR
CORTECH MANUFACTURER: NECROTECH CABAL OF LICH LORD MORBUS
ORIG. CHASSIS DESIGN: NECROTECH CABAL OF LICH LORD MORBUS

Lich Lord Morbus set a team of his most diabolical and unhinged necrotechs to the effect. Amid their combined madness, their collaboration at last replicated Kurr's genius and Cryx soon began efforts to successfully reverse engineer the soul drive. Countless mainlanders were captured by Scharde raiders and brought to Cryxian necrofactoriums to be subjected to cruel and torturous experiments, each designed to bring forth some specific resonance from their mistreated souls. The project was eventually successful, giving rise to the Inflictor.

The torment and rage of the souls within Kurr's original Seethers fed the helljacks a continuous flow of power that caused the machines to lash out indiscriminately, creating frenzied killing machines that required effort to control. The tortured souls bound within the Inflictor are brought to a narrower, more useful derangement. They are conditioned to obsessively safeguard the master that controls them. A blend of obsequious servitude and jealous rage informs the Inflictor's behavior on the battlefield, making it easier to control and equally useful as both killer and bodyguard.

Toward this end, the helljack's left arm ends in a shield-like claw which, while more than capable of issuing crushing melee strikes, is excellently suited to warding off attacks. Affixed to the construct's right shoulder is a segmented extensible stinger that can strike from above or behind to pierce a vulnerable side or back and inject a dose of lethal poison that will obliterate a living creature's internal organs amid agonizing pain. The Inflictor also possesses surprisingly quick reflexes for a machine of its size, enabling it to interpose its bulk between its master and any potential threat at a moment's notice.

With the necrotechs ever pushing the boundaries of this new technology and expanding soul drives in new directions, this horrifying helljack is likely only the first in a new generation of cruel instruments of war.





BANE RIDERS

CRYX CAVALRY UNIT

Nothing can outride death.

—Bane Lord Tartarus

LEADER & GRUNTS

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
7	7	6	4	12	18	8



CLEAVER

POW	P+S
6	13



MOUNT

POW
12

DAMAGE 5 EA

FIELD ALLOWANCE 1

LEADER & 2 GRUNTS 7

LEADER & 4 GRUNTS 11

LARGE BASE

and obstacles without penalty and can advance through obstructions if it has enough movement to move completely past them. This model cannot be targeted by free strikes.

GRUNTS

☠ Undead

Ghostly – See above.

CLEAVER

👉 Reach

Brutal Charge – This model gains +2 to charge attack damage rolls with this weapon.

LEADER

☠ Undead

Curse [Bane Riders] – RNG CMD. Target enemy model/unit. If the model/unit is in range, it is cursed. A friendly Bane Riders model charging a cursed model gains +2" movement. Friendly Bane Riders models gain +2 to attack rolls against cursed models. Curse can be used once per activation and lasts for one turn.

Ghostly – This model can advance through terrain

TACTICAL TIP

CURSE – This model also gains these benefits when charging or attacking a cursed model. Modifiers to movement apply only to a model's normal movement.

Adorned in heavy plate armor and riding tireless undead steeds, bane riders serve as Cryx's unholy counterparts to the mounted knights of mortal nations. They tear across the battlefield like a scream on the wind, riding down every living soldier in their path. Bane riders fixed upon a foe are implacable and relentless, passing like ghosts through trees, walls, and other barriers until they bury their blades in the backs of those desperately seeking refuge.

All banes are dangerous foes of the living, being tormented spirits of ancient warriors who were killed and restored as unliving soldiers in service of the Dragonfather. Bane riders are made more terrible by the rotted steeds they ride, which have none of the frailties of living mounts. Their commanders hurl profane curses at foes, empowering the riders to close swiftly, heedless of obstacles, to hack them down.



SKARLOCK COMMANDER

CRYX THRALL UNIT ATTACHMENT

*They need not wait for my direction in order to fulfill my will,
for they are extensions of my very desire.*

—Warwitch Deneghra



TACTICAL TIP

MAGIC ABILITY – Performing a Magic Ability special action or special attack counts as casting a spell.

Relentless and devoid of passion but clever enough to be unpredictable, skarlock commanders serve as vital intermediaries between Cryx's generals and its teeming hordes of mindless thralls, wielding those lesser thralls as a knife to ease into the vital organs of opposing armies. Under the protection of the commanders' necromantic powers, the mindless ranks of bile thralls and mechanithralls reach their full potential.

Attachment [Mechanithrall or Bile Thrall] – This attachment can be added to a Mechanithrall or Bile Thrall unit.

SKARLOCK

☞ Officer

☠ Undead

Battle Wizard – Once per turn, when this model destroys one or more enemy models with a melee attack during its activation, immediately after the attack is resolved it can make one Magic Ability special attack or special action.

Magic Ability [6]

- **Dark Fire (★Attack)** – Dark Fire is a RNG 10, POW 12 magic attack. When a living enemy model is destroyed by Dark Fire, this model gains its soul token regardless of the proximity of other models.

- **Disbinding (★Action)** – Enemy upkeep spells on this model and /or its unit immediately expire.

Soul Taker – This model gains one soul token when a living enemy model is destroyed within 2" of it. This model can have up to three soul tokens at a time. During its activation, this model can spend soul tokens to gain additional attacks or to boost attack or damage rolls at one token per attack or boost.

FELL SPEAR

☞ Magical Weapon

☞ Reach

SKARLOCK						
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
6	4	6	3	14	12	8



FELL SPEAR

POW	P+S
6	10

DAMAGE	5
FIELD ALLOWANCE	2
POINT COST	1
SMALL BASE	

Intricate runes painted upon flesh and etched into bone by necromancers lend the spark of unlife that places the skarlock commanders among the most complex thralls of Cryx. While lacking true self-will, these advanced thralls possess a cold intelligence as well as unwavering devotion exceeding any mortal commander's. They have no need of valor, for their dedication is crafted into their very bones.

Each commander carries a fell spear, an accursed weapon crafted in the charnel forges of Cryx, and wields potent magic capable of scouring enemies in gouts of black flame or unraveling the spells of enemy arcanists. As they lead the march across the field, the commanders tear free the souls of those overtaken by their thralls, each victim fueling another blast of dark magic to drive the masses of fetid flesh and machine deeper into the heart of enemy lines.



AIAKOS, SCOURGE OF THE MEREDIUS

CRYX CHARACTER SOLO

It is that moment my enemy realizes his death has come that I savor.

—Aiakos

AIAKOS						
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
6	6	6	5	14	14	7



HARPOON			
RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
6	1	—	10



BLADE	
POW	P+S
6	12

FOCUS	4
DAMAGE	5
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
POINT COST	3
SMALL BASE	

within 5" of its current location. Any effects that prevent it from charging also prevent it from using Jump.

HARPOON

Magical Weapon

Drag – If this weapon damages an enemy model with an equal or smaller base, immediately after the attack is resolved the damaged model can be pushed any distance directly toward this model. After the damaged model is moved, this model can make one normal melee attack against the model pushed. After resolving this melee attack, this model can make additional melee attacks during its combat action.

BLADE

Magical Weapon

Having honed his skills through years of piracy upon the Meredius, Aiakos moves with his battlegroup like a specter of death both at sea and on land, striking down foes with wicked effectiveness. Nowhere is his cruelty more apparent than in his weapon of choice, a chained harpoon he uses to impale his victims before reeling them in to deliver the death blow.

Aiakos' reputation is a credit to his cunning, ruthlessness, and indomitable will. He began as a lowly Scharde Islander trying to carve out a place for himself on the unforgiving streets of Blackwater. All who lived there aspired to the free life of a raider, and when Aiakos saw his chance to secure a position aboard a raiding ship he took it, ruthlessly making an example of those who tried to stand in his way. By the time his warcaster ability manifested, he was already feared and respected among his vicious peers.

Though he knows his way around a ship, for Aiakos this life has never been about the simple joys of plunder or even the excitement of chasing prey at sea. Being a raider affords him endless opportunities for battle. A silent stalker

AIAKOS

Fearless

Stealth

Journeyman Warcaster –

This model is not a warcaster but has the following warcaster special rules: Battlegroup Commander, Control Area, Focus Manipulation, Power Field, and Spellcaster.

Jump – After using its normal movement to make a full advance but before performing an action, you can place this model anywhere completely

SPELLS

DEATHBRINGERS 2 SELF CTRL – NO NO

While within this model's control area, the melee weapons of models in this model's battlegroup gain Grievous Wounds. (When a model is hit by a weapon with Grievous Wounds, for one round it loses Tough, cannot heal or be healed, and cannot transfer damage.)

ESCORT 2 SELF CTRL – YES NO

Warjacks in this model's battlegroup beginning their activations in its control area gain +2" movement. This model gains +2 ARM while one or more warjacks in its battlegroup are within 3" of it.

TACTICAL TIPS

DRAW – "Any distance" means "as much as necessary," not "any distance the player chooses."

ESCORT – Modifiers to movement apply only to a model's normal movement.

JOURNEYMAN WARCASTER – This model is a non-warcaster model and is not affected by special rules that specifically affect warcasters. Models with the Attached rule cannot be attached to this model.

who exploits an enemy's fears to his advantage, he eagerly anticipates being dropped ashore to terrorize mainlanders under the cover of darkness. It is blood sport he most enjoys, along with the freedom he has found as part of the fleet led by Admiral Axiara Wraithblade. Other raiders on any ship he chooses to join give him a wide berth, knowing he is not truly one of them. Captains of the fleet obey him, as he has earned the favor of their admiral, who rarely deigns to speak the praises of anyone.

Aiakos has already earned infamy through deeds both brazen and savage. He took part in Pirate Queen Skarre Ravenmane's raid on Port Vladovar, where he helped break the port garrison by slaughtering officers in front of their men. His name is whispered in dread among coastal communities from northern Khador to southern Cygnar, where he has left grisly trophies at the husks of villages he has burned to the ground. His deeds have started to draw the attention of Cryx's generals, who wonder if he might be shaped into something more interesting than simply cannon fodder.

More than anything, Aiakos prizes his autonomy. He answers when called to battle but takes his leave as soon as his responsibilities are fulfilled. This aloofness extends into his approach on the battlefield. He prefers to strike from the shadows, separate from the main force, using his arcane power and physical agility to catch his prey unaware. It is in those moments when he feels his opponents' lives torn away by his blade that he feels his own freedom most keenly.





RETRIBUTION OF SCYRAH

IMPAIRED VISION

Issyria sat unmoving, her eyes closed. The Sibyl of Dawn was a picture of serenity as she floated several feet above the ground. Arcane energy radiated from her as she attempted again to extend her mystic perception and view the enemy that plagued the border of Ios. While she could perceive segments of the skorne force, it was like looking through frosted glass. Clarity was frustratingly elusive.

This was an experience Issyria had never encountered until surveying this threat. The skorne army had some means of interfering with her vision, though it was likely only a secondary effect of another mystical process. After repeated attempts she had become convinced this interference was related to the animated statues that marched with them. She hoped in the coming conflict to acquire the remains of one or more for study. Ios had gathered intelligence on the skorne by observing them in battle and interrogating several captives but knew very little of this enemy's arcane capabilities.

Issyria opened her eyes and looked out from her position within the observation post on the southern battlements of the Gate of Mists. She began puzzling through possible counters to the formidable Iosan defenses, putting herself in the position of the invading army. To focus her mind she often challenged herself with theoretical engagements, thinking through the action from both sides.

She imagined the entire battle unfolding and anticipated the response of House Rhyslyrr's forces alongside the mixed forces of the Homeguard Coalition manning the Gate of Mists. This fortress complex was the domain of the Rhyslyrr, one of the Five Great Military Houses of Ios and esteemed for its archers and riflemen. Every time she had envisioned this scenario the skorne assault had failed unless she afforded them knowledge they could not possess. Their motives eluded her.

The exercise restored Issyria's mental stillness, allowing her to refocus on the events at hand. She chided herself for allowing her difficulties in divining the extent of the skorne forces to affect her. It was simply another strategic obstacle, albeit one that limited the most important tool in her arsenal.

She felt ill-prepared for the upcoming war council she had convened, which was timed to coincide with the arrival of Incissar Vyros from Shyrr, the capital.

She had been tracking Vyros' progress since he had set out after the celebrations in honor of his triumphant return to Ios with the vault of Nyssor. That event had sent shock waves throughout the nation, restoring hope to many. It had also tremendously strengthened support for the Retribution of Scyrah and the houses allied with it. Vyros had remained at the forefront, the victorious general.

Those celebrations had been dampened by the news of hostile skorne on the border. Vyros had set out at once for the Gate of Mists, the apparent focus of the aggression. Issyria, already stationed on the western border alongside a small detachment of the Dawnguard set aside to fulfill House Nyarr's obligation to the general defense, had put herself at the disposal of the Gate of Mists. So far the skorne had destroyed several outlying watchtowers on their way toward the main fortress.

On her arrival she had expected to find House Rhyslyrr leading a force to wipe out the skorne, but that was not the case. The Rhyslyrr-led Homeguard Coalition at the Gate of Mists planned instead to wait for the skorne to approach the larger fortifications and then annihilate the invaders by ambush. In truth she had gauged that their plan was sound. The riflemen and archers of House Rhyslyrr could pick apart nearly any force from the vantage of their high walls, and the skorne army was the largest to threaten the border in thousands of years. Their caution was understandable. Nonetheless, Issyria had determined a way she could parlay the situation into a political gain for House Nyarr. She had started to gather support among the lesser houseguard forces by casting doubt on Rhyslyrr's plan, implying they lacked the resolve to risk their lives in an offensive campaign.

Perhaps Vyros' presence would be enough to tip the balance of opinion. To the Rhyslyrr commanders his arrival was a clear threat to their authority. They held dominance here, but recent events made it impossible to turn him away, particularly when he was offering to

contribute his forces to the defense of Ios. The situation had become highly politicized.

Vyros' position as incissar of House Nyarr gave him the clout to make demands of his counterparts, putting their honor at stake. Whereas by protocol a sibyl could only make requests or offer advice, Vyros could be strident. No one could doubt the commitment or devotion of his Dawnguard. His every action and word put Fayln Rhyslyrr on the defensive; as the ranking *arsyr* and commander of the Gate of Mists, Fayln did not take well to such interference.

The incissar's imperiousness played into Issyria's strategy. The dichotomy of their approaches would make her suggestions appear all the more rational. She might seem to be compromising, when in fact her words would be furthering the interests of House Nyarr—and by extension those of Vyros.

Issyria opened her eyes and let her feet touch the floor as Incissar Vyros entered the observation post followed by Lord Arcanist Ossyan and the senior officers of the fortress, led by Arsyrr Fayln Rhyslyrr.

Vyros smiled at Issyria and offered her the courtesy of a small bow, even though their respective positions did not require it. "Cousin, it is good to see you."

Issyria bowed more deeply and replied, "And you, Incissar. We are most grateful you have returned. I am only sorry I was unable to attend your arrival in Shyrr to honor your elevation to this new station."

Vyros nodded. "Your duty required your vigilance here on the border. House Rhyslyrr is fortunate to have your counsel, even if they refuse to heed it."

The jibe was not lost on Arsyrr Fayln. "We have sound reasons for our course, Incissar, as I will be happy to explain. Perhaps you are not fully aware of the situation," she said.

Vyros turned to the arsyrr. "The situation is that you have done nothing while skorne jackals pick apart our outer defenses. You claim to have Ios' defense at heart, yet instead of meeting hostility with force you have offered only meekness. I expected more from the warriors of House Rhyslyrr."

In his heavy warcaster armor Vyros loomed over the slighter form of Fayln, who wore the armor preferred by Rhyslyrr riflemen. Despite his more imposing physical presence Fayln was not cowed. She said, "We are already implementing a plan for their utter destruction, without leaving the Gate of Mists vulnerable. We have prepared a killing field, and when they march into our sights they will be annihilated. If we sallied forth now to confront them we would sacrifice every advantage—though I should not be surprised that such strategic considerations would be lost on a warrior of House Nyarr."

Vyros turned his fierce gaze to the assembled *issyrs* behind Fayln. "And is this 'strategic' assessment shared by you all? Is there not one warrior among the senior officers of this fortress who wishes to take more active measures to end the threat that harries our borders and spills the blood of our people? The security of Ios relies as much on our reputation as on our martial force. Other kingdoms fear to intrude because they know retaliation will be swift. Apparently now we simply surrender our holdings and wait out the enemy."

Fayln calmly replied, "There is a difference between decisive retaliation and being goaded into engaging on the enemy's terms." Vyros made to respond, but she cut him off. "The skorne force is sizable, with at least three cohorts comprising thousands of medium and heavy infantry and numerous beasts. They also have even larger creatures of great durability and strength, several bearing cannons. Our plan will ensure those are contained and eliminated, whereas what you advise is riskier by far with no greater assurance of success. Additionally, we have sent word to the Gate of Storms, the Twilight Gate, and Aeryth Ellowuyr. Many additional soldiers are mustering to lend support to our attack. You can witness the effectiveness of our power unleashed firsthand. Your soldiers can even join in the slaughter, if you wish."

Vyros growled and said, "I weep for Ios if this is the measure of its defenders. You have yet to fight and are already defeated. By the time your larger army is assembled, the enemy will have already struck. Very likely they martial their own forces with growing numbers. You cannot predict their movements. This is a time for decisive action."

Sensing the time was right, Issyria directed her words to Fayln. "Maintaining your forces in reserve, ready to annihilate any invaders, is prudent given the assets and disposition of your forces."

Vyros turned and raised one eyebrow at her comment. She was one of the few within House Nyarr who could contradict him without earning his immediate wrath. He knew she was not done.

"This is your territory," she continued, "and you have every right to defend it as you see fit, but with Incissar Vyros leading the Dawnguard combined with the retinue I have gathered, our strength will suffice to meet the foe without you. There will be risk, of course; we will lack the numbers to rely solely on brute force, but that is the realm of tactics, where none can match House Nyarr. You can remain in your position in case we are overwhelmed or the enemy slips past our lines. We will march to meet them immediately, with your permission."

Vyros nodded. "Yes. We will relieve you of your burden, Arsyrr Fayln. Allow us this day to fight and die for Ios."

Whether we succeed or fail, you lose nothing. Your sibyls can observe the battle and gain insight thereby."

Issyria watched the assembled Rhyslyrr commanders absorb this and noted a subtle shift in several of them. They realized what Issyria had managed. They could not refuse Vyros his request to put his own forces at risk, and so now their house was left the duty of garrisoning their fortress well away from the action. He had offered them the chance to observe the possible failure of House Nyarr and thereby had guaranteed the exclusive right to engage the skorne, leaving Rhyslyrr no share of the glory from their destruction. Of course, there was real risk to this plan; Vyros might fail. But should he succeed, House Nyarr would gain considerable support among the rank and file of the Homeguard Coalition and Vyros' legend would only grow.

**"HOUSE NYARR SHALL MEET THIS
ENEMY AND TEACH THEM THE
FOLLY OF PROVOKING IOS."**

These facts were not lost on Fayln, who saw she had been outmaneuvered. "Of course, House Rhyslyrr gives you permission to cross our lands and engage the enemies of Ios. We shall stand ready should you fall. May Scyrath preserve you." She gave Vyros a sharp look as she continued, "It is too bad so much of the military might of Ios and your house were scattered far from our borders. If they were here, you would be at far less risk."

Lord Arcanist Ossyan had been watching the exchange with curiosity. He now interjected, "Those of us who put our lives on the line to march from Ios and fight on foreign soil did so to return Nyssor. Hopefully this will contribute to eliminating the doom facing our people. Risk is not something we fear." He said it mildly, but his words had impact. His interrupting a discussion between two ranking military leaders was a severe breach in etiquette, but this was outweighed by the heroic events to which he was attached. All had seen Ossyan standing beside Vyros as they passed through this very gate with Nyssor's marble vault, and they knew he had suffered a nearly fatal wound to accomplish that. No one could speak ill of him.

Vyros proceeded as if there had been no interruption, saying to Fayln, "House Nyarr shall meet this enemy and teach them the folly of provoking Ios." He turned, his cloak whipping, and marched toward the exit. Ossyan followed not far behind. Issyria took one last look at the assembled Rhyslyrr nobles and officers before turning to follow her incissar and prepare for war.



When they were among their own people, Vyros asked Issyria detailed questions about the disposition of the enemy, so far as she knew it. Once more she felt chagrined that she could give so little beyond what Arsyrr Fayln had already said, but Vyros took it in stride.

"What of their goals?" he asked. "Have you been able to ascertain their strategy?"

"Their force, while significant, is insufficient for an invasion. We have rough estimates of their full strength in the Bloodstone Marches, and the army attacking the Gate of Mists is only a fraction of that. Their reticence to attack the gate lends credence to the possibility that they are seeking engagement on more favorable ground."

Ossyan said, "The future is never clear, but I do not believe this is a trap. More likely it is a preliminary attack to test our responses before they commit to full assault."

Issyria replied, "That might be true. Regardless, I am certain the skorne are not fools, and until we know their true purposes we are at a disadvantage." She turned to Vyros, bowing her head in deference. "I will be able to make a better assessment in battle."

Vyros nodded. "Your skills will be most useful, as will those of the lord arcanist. Expect no support from the Gate of Mists."

"Their choices will only condemn them in the eyes of the people when victory is ours. Such is always the price of complacency," Ossyan muttered.

Issyria considered for a moment and then said, "Luckily, such flaws can be compensated for by those with greater vision."

Ossyan said nothing, but Issyria saw that he stood a little straighter and his gaze toward her warmed slightly. His deep-seated need to redeem his house for old sins was painfully obvious.

Good, she thought. His skills will undoubtedly prove useful in the battles to come.



Thanks to reconnaissance by the mage hunters in Ossyan's escort, Issyria had been able to determine the skorne were moving to assault another watchtower on Ios' perimeter about thirty miles southwest of the Gate of Mists. Their combined Dawnguard and houseguard force had marched quickly to intercept. Vyros' elevation to incissar had stoked the fires of his ambition, desires that not only made his

actions easy to predict and guide but that would also enable House Nyarr to rise in prominence.

Issyria allowed her mind's eye flicker to various points of the battlefield and almost instantly gained a precise appraisal of the battle lines forming ahead. While all warcasters had some degree of instinctive awareness of their surroundings, augmented by their ability to look through the eyes of their machines, Issyria's power went well beyond this, giving her a superlative perspective on unfolding events. Though they were outnumbered by the skorne army, Vyros' force boasted three warcasters including herself, each with a full complement of myrmidons. Two Hyperions were among those machines; Issyria controlled one and, on her recommendation, Ossyan controlled the other. She had watched him struggle for a moment with the thought of controlling the powerful Shyeel myrmidon and had understood at once that its existence likely meant something else to him than it did to House Nyarr. Its weaponry had been employed against House Vyre during the War of the Houses to devastating effect. Whatever his qualms, he had put them aside and now ably directed the colossal machine alongside his other myrmidons.

Issyria turned to see Vyros and his personal retinue of destors lining up and preparing to charge, flanked by several fleet-footed Griffons along with one of the Vyre Banshees and Vyros' personal myrmidon, Imperatus. She took a moment to examine the Shyeel myrmidon built to her cousin's exacting specifications. She had initially advised against its construction, on the basis of its great cost, but she had to admit it was an impressive machine representing a significant technical achievement. Issyria had given over to Vyros' command most of the Dawnguard company that had been relegated to her in defense of the border, and these soldiers stood ready and undaunted despite the superior numbers of the foe.

With so much of House Nyarr's strength still tied up with the Retribution forces outside of Ios, the remainder of their army comprised several companies of houseguard drawn from the lesser houses Issyria had convinced to join them. The only mage hunters present were those who had returned with Ossyan and Vyros.

Against them stood three distinct cohorts, though two bore markings distinguishing them as having been drawn from the same house. The third cohort contained mostly medium infantry, primarily wielding swords and polearms. Focusing her mind, Issyria could sense several units cloaked in magic in front of the apparent vanguard. The cohort also included a number of warbeasts clearly controlled by a warlock. Her sight allowed her to find him, an impressively large skorne wielding a double-bladed polearm and wearing the armor of the skorne heavy infantry with elaborately

carved tusks rising from his back. He certainly conveyed the look of a skorne warlord. Although his position at the rear was unexpected given what she knew of their ways, she sensed his significant arcane power and knew better than to underestimate him.

Her attention was diverted by the other, more impressive, cohorts. Among their ranks were massive beasts the skorne had brought across the Stormlands and armed for war. Two were quadrupeds that bristled with weapons, each creature crewed by soldiers who both steered the beast and fought from its back. In addition to those living weapon platforms, the cohorts contained a number of armed titans.

For all its deadly splendor, the entire skorne army was yet dwarfed by the elephantine monstrosity that rose above the skorne line. The bipedal, titan-like creature stood as an avatar of an ancient and more primal time, its raw physical power augmented by an array of powerful cannons on its back. The presence of these beasts, combined with the larger number of soldiers, told her the warlock commander must be the leader of the army itself, but when she found him she was startled. He was also at the rear of his soldiers, and he was the least physically fit skorne she had ever witnessed, a creature so grotesquely fat he had to be lifted on a divan and carried across the battlefield by young titans. She had no idea how to reconcile this creature with what she knew of skorne warrior culture. Clearly his standing and powers over beasts sufficed to give him preeminence.

With a shout Vyros raised his blade and spurred his warhorse into a gallop. His destors followed with perfect precision. Alongside them raced a trio of Griffons, with Vyros empowering their arcantrik engines. His heavy myrmidons, including Imperatus, ran just behind the mounted contingent, ready to act as a powerful second wave to clean up any opposition not immediately swept away. Behind those ran his invictors and sentinels.

Ossyan, meanwhile, led his houseguard contingent into position per her instructions. Runes swirled around Issyria as she tapped into her arcane power. Reaching out through her Chimera, she surrounded their halberdiers with powerful protective magic. Between her spell and their heavy interlocked shields, Issyria was confident the Iosan troops could hold the center, giving the riflemen and Ossyan's battlegroup time to break the advancing line.

A quartet of thunderclaps sounded across the battlefield as the gigantic beast's mighty cannons opened on the advancing houseguard. The stalwart Iosans were bathed in fire and shrapnel. When the smoke cleared, however, the line of halberdiers remained unbroken.

The skorne soldiers began marching toward their enemy, swordsmen moving in step behind the locked shields of their

vanguard. The massive siege beasts let out a rumbling bellow before moving forward with a speed belied by their size. Squads of Venators sent hails of needle fire into the Iosans.

Issyria commanded her Hyperion to target an advancing group of skorne pikemen and swordsmen who were moving to flank her houseguard forces and the few Dawnguard she had kept as personal guards. With a building whine of accumulating energy the arcantrik generator of the Hyperion's starburst cannon began its firing sequence and then, with blinding arcane power, discharged. All sound was engulfed in a moment of eerie silence, and the area where the power had been directed was filled with a blaze of searing blue-white light that expanded and then disappeared in a heartbeat. Where once had stood ten skorne, nothing but blackened earth and ash remained.

Issyria felt a swell of arcane power from Ossyan's line. Her acute senses could feel the sudden shift in pressure as the lord arcanist bent vast fundamental forces to his will. Even to someone familiar with the arcane, it was impressive to see him draw on his magic. The firepower from his line increased tenfold, while that of the skorne was reduced in kind. Issyria watched as Ossyan's Hyperion unleashed its thresher cannons to rip apart one of the skorne siege beasts in a hail of shot. The center cohort was withered but pressed on nevertheless.

**WHERE ONCE HAD STOOD TEN
SKORNE, NOTHING BUT BLACKENED
EARTH AND ASH REMAINED.**

Issyria had not expected Ossyan to be able to break the skorne by himself, however. She had positioned him to apply pressure to their center and thereby disrupt the cohesiveness of the advancing lines. The center of the line now faltered and shrank back, while the enemy at either flank pressed on and forward, bowing their advance. The once-ordered ranks splayed and separated, leaving gaps she could exploit. To Issyria's eyes the effects of her orchestration rippled throughout the skorne army in ways she knew would require precious moments to correct. Order on the battlefield, so crucial to victory, was a tenuous thing.

Runes blazed about Issyria before coalescing around the entire Retribution force, the powerful enchantment granting them speed. With a resounding battle cry, Vyros' and Issyria's forces charged into the oncoming skorne from either side, seeking to capitalize on the disruption Ossyan had caused.

The battlefield became a tempest of steel, flesh, and bone. With calm precision Issyria directed her myrmidons to critical points on the battlefield, like pieces on a vast game board. Through them and her soldiers she could indirectly control the outcome of the clash. She also sent her mind out among her subordinates, whispering commands in the ears of officers so they could respond with great fluidity to the changing situation. One risk of this disembodied state was that it was easy to overlook dangers to her own person. Several skorne swordsmen sought to charge her even as she smoothly directed her Chimera to intercept and strike them down.

Ossyan's forces pushed too far forward and were suddenly beset by the hulking muscle of several titans as well as the onrushing fury of the towering skorne warbeast. Her own troops were in danger of breaking from the assault of the remaining siege beast. Issyria commanded her Hyperion to charge the beast, feeling some satisfaction when the myrmidon's initial blows caused armor to buckle and bone to shatter while her mystical shielding protected it from the creature's return blows.

The Hyperion finished off the beast and its crew as she moved that direction, guiding her Banshee's strikes against a heavily armored titan as she went. When she reached the Hyperion, she directed the force of her will through the machine to empower its starburst cannon and fire it into a group of skorne swordsmen threatening Ossyan's flanks. The blast provided him a short reprieve, but Issyria had put herself too far forward and was now in danger. Drawing on her remaining arcane reserves, she gave herself a burst of speed and repositioned behind the center of the Iosan force, simultaneously directing the soldiers around her who were not already engaged to close the gaps that had opened in their lines.

The towering warbeast crashed into Ossyan's Hyperion. The colossal's force field flared as the hulking warbeast's tusks slammed into it. With a bellow the monster slammed its gauntleted fists into the machine, whose field cracked and failed. The titanic myrmidon swung its bladed fist, scoring a deep rent in the beast's pauldron. The next blows from the great creature shattered the myrmidon's armor plating and crushed through the mechanisms beneath.

Issyria knew that once the Hyperion fell, the gargantuan warbeast would turn on Ossyan's exposed force. If she rushed to help him, though, her own flank would falter. She needed to end the towering monstrosity—and this fight—quickly. Surveying the battlefield once more, Issyria turned her attention to Vyros. His charge had taken him deep into enemy lines, and though he was acquitting himself well, his actions would not carry their force to victory. She knew there was an answer. She simply needed to look beyond the pieces to find the greater whole.

Issyria closed her eyes. Time seemed to stand still as her perspective froze through an effort of will. For a lengthened moment she could view everything at once, from the individuals to the complete chaos of the battlefield. Here in the thick of the fighting she was no longer troubled by the distortion that had blocked her vision from afar. As she contemplated each element and considered its place in the battle, a realization hit her. This was not a single army with a cohesive chain of command; it was *two* armies, each answering to a separate master. The warrior-warlock was not a subordinate of the bloated one. They were bitter rivals, and the positioning of the troops, the way the two flanks moved, suggested a deep distrust. This was a vulnerability.

She spoke in Vyros' ear from a distance. "Vyros, the commanding warlock is on the left flank." He was accustomed to this and did not startle as her voice emerged as if she stood directly beside him. "You must eliminate the great beast and engage him or this battle is lost." Referring to him as the commanding warlock was only a small deception, as the one she sent him toward did control the majority of the enemy forces.

Issyria was confident the appeal to the incissar's martial prowess and the thought of a personal challenge to the enemy commander would be more than enough to convince Vyros to alter his path. She directed her battered battlegroup toward the warrior-warlock. Perfectly timing the moment of action, Issyria conjured her most powerful magic to bathe the battlefield in a warm, radiant light that granted her own awareness of the enemy positions to her soldiers, allowing them for a moment to see as if with her eyes. By this guidance, every attack gained accuracy and deadly precision.

Issyria watched as Vyros unleashed Imperatus on the towering beast that had nearly destroyed the Hyperion. The machine charged, its twin thermal blades streaming blue fire as they slashed into the monstrous warbeast's legs to sever tendons and sinew. Bellowing in pain and rage, the beast tried to turn to the new threat, but its mutilated legs gave out, sending it tumbling heavily to the ground. As it struggled to rise, Imperatus strode over, raised both its blades, and buried them to the hilts in the warbeast's eye sockets.

While his myrmidon finished off the beast, Vyros and his remaining destors crashed into a line of skorne pikemen. The incissar hewed through the enemy warriors and warbeasts with great sweeps of his blade, his eagerness to clash directly against the skorne warlock clear. Issyria knew, however, he would never get the chance.

Already she could see that the pressure of his unexpected assault had caused the skorne cohorts to falter. The warlock Issyria had set Vyros against fell back, just as she had sensed he would. Everything about that cohort's disposition had

suggested its commander was utterly unwilling to place himself in danger. He would put his welfare above anything else—including both victory and the lives of his soldiers.

As a result, Vyros' assault pushed the skorne force apart and into disorder, with two of the cohorts scrambling to withdraw and protect their master. This left Ossyan's force and Issyria's remaining soldiers to act as a wedge against the smaller cohort, which was isolated and in danger of being encircled. Seeing the retreat of the majority of their numbers, this smaller cohort also stopped pressing the attack despite the battered state of Ossyan's men. The warrior-warlock was bolder and willing to take risks, but he was not suicidal. She wondered for a moment what might have occurred had Vyros and this warlock met in combat. While it might have meant a glorious death for Vyros, the skorne army would have held, and the Iosans' defeat would have followed. As the skorne withdrew, Ossyan and the others regrouped, knowing they were vulnerable and seeing no benefit in pursuit. Issyria half-expected Vyros to take his destors after his prey, but he saw the state of their exhausted forces and clearly thought better of it.

Though Issyria was content to have won the field, her mind continued to turn over the actions of the skorne. Now that she had taken their measure, the firsthand experience combined with the many reports she had read churned in her mind.

It came to her in a moment of clarity. This force, with its unstable command hierarchy, could only be a distraction, a fraction of a greater army. This would explain the reluctance of its commanders to fight at the fore. Her mind raced as she plotted the various paths an invading force might take against Ios. The Gate of Mists was the only direct ingress, which was why it was so heavily fortified. Were she in the enemy's place she would not strike there. Every other option presented tremendous difficulties, but all obstacles could be overcome with sufficient will.

Suddenly a thought struck her like lightning: *The Twilight Gate*. Located amid the mountains south of Ios in the only accessible pass into the interior, it was thought to be unassailable and thus was defended by far smaller numbers.

It felt as if the veil that had plagued her sibyl vision since the arrival of the skorne was dispelled like fog in the sun. She was sure. The skorne were moving against Ios, but their true path was through the Twilight Gate. With a sinking feeling she knew they would have timed matters to coincide with their efforts here. That fight was already over. She had won a victory—but on the wrong battlefield.



ISSYRIA, SIBYL OF DAWN

RETRIBUTION WARCASTER

The battlefield is a puzzle, simply one too complicated for most eyes to perceive. At the right moment, moving any piece can force defeat or ensure victory.

—Issyria, Sibyl of Dawn

ISSYRIA	SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
	6	5	5	4	16	13	9

FOCUS	8
DAMAGE	15
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
WARJACK POINTS	+6
SMALL BASE	

FEAT: DAWN'S LIGHT

Issyria has the seer's sight and has proven nothing can hide from her vision. The Sibyl of Dawn can extend her power to all who join in her holy cause, lending terrifying clarity to her army and bending fate itself to guide their attacks to strike down all who would oppose them.

While in Issyria's control area, friendly Faction models gain True Sight and gain one additional die on attack and damage rolls. For each of those rolls, you choose one of the dice rolled to be discarded. Dawn's Light lasts for one turn. (Models with True Sight ignore concealment, Camouflage, and Stealth.)

ISSYRIA

Ancillary Attack (★Action) – RNG 5. Target friendly Faction warjack. If the warjack is in range, it immediately makes one normal melee or ranged attack. A warjack can make an Ancillary Attack special action only once per turn.

Arcane Vortex – This model can immediately negate any spell that targets it or a model within 3" of it by spending 1 focus point before the RNG of the spell is measured. The negated spell does not take effect, but its COST remains spent.

Flight – This model can advance through terrain and obstacles without penalty and can advance through obstructions and other models if it has enough movement to move completely past them. This model ignores intervening models when declaring its charge target.

True Sight – This model ignores concealment, Camouflage, and Stealth.

Born to the brother of House Nyarr's Consul Caelcyr, Issyria was brought up to participate in the intrigue of Iosan politics as well as in the military traditions of her house. Though her birth afforded her privilege, it is by her own skill, drive, and intelligence that Issyria has become one of the greatest military assets of House Nyarr. That she has done so while declining to wield a weapon is all the more remarkable.

Issyria's arcane talent and warcaster ability were discovered when she was quite young. Ordinarily her house might have tried to shape someone with such power to serve as arcane artillery or a traditional battlefield general, but Issyria's skills offered a more rarified path. She demonstrated the perceptiveness and insight of a sibyl.

Within Ios, many major houses call on the powers of those specializing in the divinatory arts. By mystically viewing faraway events or discerning patterns around them, these sibyls can anticipate calamity. They are essential to Ios' border defenses, serving as safeguards by detecting intrusions so that military forces can be sent to deliver swift destruction. Outside of House Nyarr most sibyls remain in

SPELLS	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
ADMONITION	2	6	–	–	YES	NO
When an enemy model advances and ends its movement within 6" of target model in this model's battlegroup, the affected model can immediately advance up to 3", then Admonition expires. The affected model cannot be targeted by free strikes during this movement.						
BLINDING LIGHT	3	10	–	–	NO	YES
Target enemy warrior model/unit cannot make ranged or magic attacks and suffers –2 DEF for one round.						
CRUSADER'S CALL	3	SELF	CTRL	–	NO	NO
Friendly Faction models beginning a charge while in this model's control area this turn gain +2" movement.						
INVIOABLE RESOLVE	2	6	–	–	YES	NO
Target friendly Faction model/unit gains +2 ARM and Fearless ☒.						
VELOCITY	*	SELF	–	–	NO	NO
This model can spend up to 3 focus points to advance up to 2" immediately for each focus point spent. Velocity can be cast only once per turn.						

TACTICAL TIPS

CRUSADER'S CALL – Modifiers to movement apply only to a model's normal movement.

INVIOABLE RESOLVE – Fleeing models that gain Fearless immediately rally.

isolation, away from distracting conflicts. This was never the destiny intended for Issyria. House Nyarr prefers its sibyls to be advanced tacticians, using their powers to forewarn of incoming threats and to gain battlefield advantage. Issyria is the ultimate expression of this and so stands foremost among her house's sibyls.

Issyria is strongly motivated to see House Nyarr rise to absolute dominance and has bent her formidable intellect and arcane powers to that end. She finds inherent satisfaction in solving the puzzles that are essential to victory, whether in battle or in house politics. She makes little distinction between the two, as both can have sweeping stakes.

In combat, Issyria uses her powers to perceive the flow of battle, gaining a peerless understanding of each movement and action around her and directing her myrmidons to serve as perfect fulcrums of force. When she enters her meditative trance the world seems to freeze and the best tactical course becomes clear.

Although her bloodline and ambition might have allowed her to challenge her cousin Vyros for rule of House Nyarr, such concerns are beneath her. She prefers indirect influence, offering vital advice and implementing subtle changes in house policy and battlefield doctrine. She values Vyros for his abilities and sees no need to supplant him so long as their interests align. To her the puissant figures around her are all pieces on a board, to be placed, moved, or even removed as necessary.





IMPERATUS

RETRIBUTION CHARACTER HEAVY MYRMIDON

Imperatus is as immortal as it is destructive.

—Dawnguard Scyir Corssya

IMPERATUS

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
6	10	7	6	13	18	—



HALATION CANNON			
RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
10	1	—	14



THERMAL BLADE	
POW	P+S
7	17



THERMAL BLADE	
POW	P+S
7	17

DAMAGE					
1	2	3	4	5	6
	L	G	G	R	
L	L	M	C	R	R
	M	M	C	C	

FIELD DAMAGE	12
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
POINT COST	12
LARGE BASE	

Special Issue [Vyros] – This model can be included in Vyros's theme forces. It can also be bonded to Vyros.

HALATION CANNON

Damage Type: Fire

Magical Weapon

Flame Burst – When this model boxes an enemy model with this weapon, enemy models within 1" of the boxed model suffer the Fire continuous effect .

THERMAL BLADE

Magical Weapon

Continuous Effect: Fire

Reach

IMPERATUS

Field Dependent – While its Field Generator system is crippled, this model loses Phoenix Field and cannot attack with the Halation Cannon.

Phoenix Field – Remove d6 damage points from this model's force field after resolving continuous effects during your Maintenance Phase.

Phoenix Protocol – Once per game during your Maintenance Phase or when disabled, this model can use Phoenix Protocol. Remove up to 1 damage point from each of its systems and remove all damage points from its force field.

Side Step – When this model hits an enemy model with an initial melee attack or a melee special attack that is not a power attack, it can advance up to 2" after the attack is resolved. This model cannot be targeted by free strikes during this movement.

TACTICAL TIP

SPECIAL ISSUE – This only gives the warjack the potential to bond to the warcaster. It does not automatically add a bond.

HEIGHT/WEIGHT: 13' 4" / 6.9 TONS

ARMAMENT: THERMAL BLADE (BOTH), HALATION CANNON (FIELD), PHOENIX FIELD (FIELD), PHOENIX PROTOCOL CELL

PEAK OPERATIONAL DURATION: 2.5 HOURS COMBAT

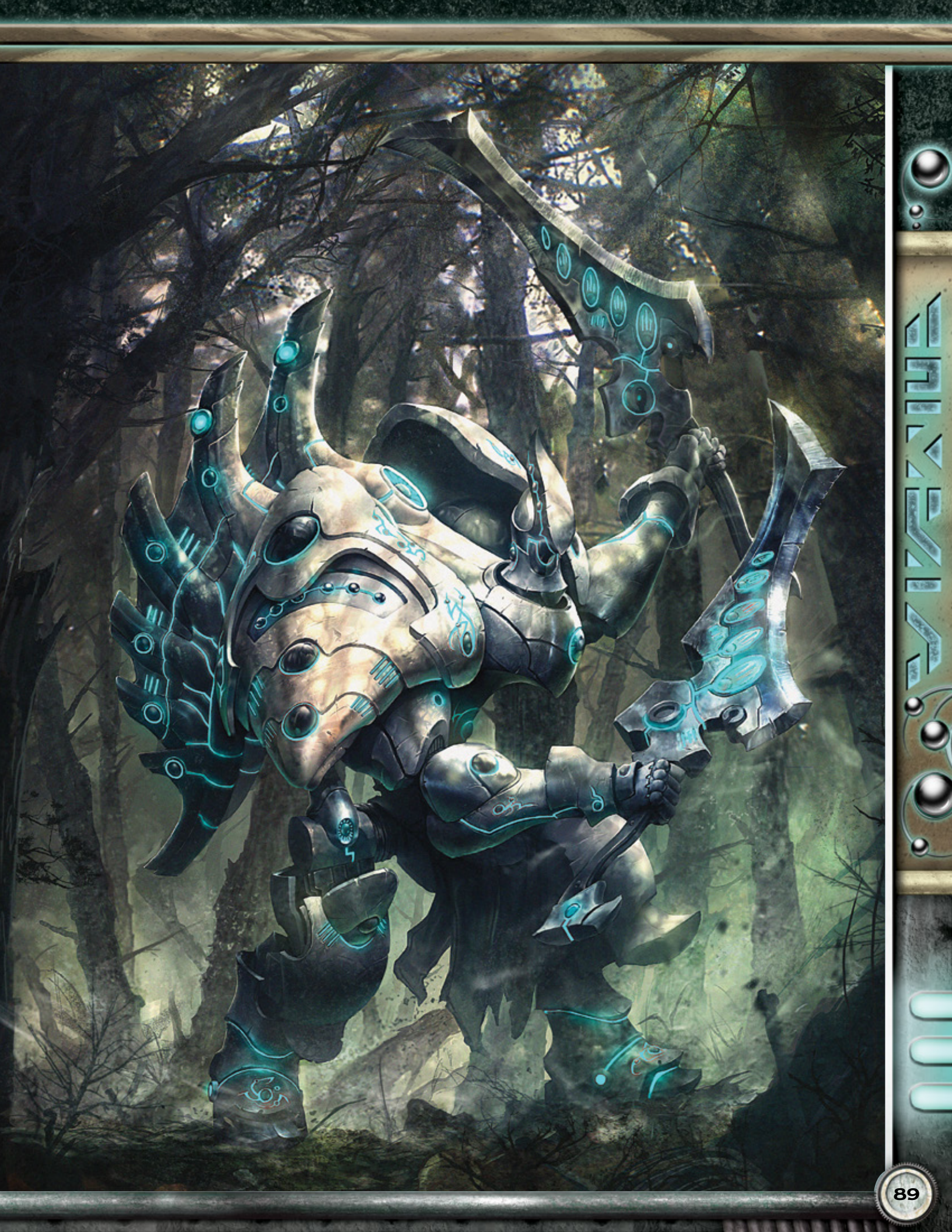
ARTIFICER: HOUSE SHYEEL (WITH INPUT FROM INCISSAR VYROS NYARR)

Vyros himself put the advanced cortex of Imperatus through training protocols so that it might learn every detail of his formidable blade skills. He refused to be satisfied until the machine surpassed his exacting standards, just as he ensured that its weaponry would be imposing. The myrmidon wields a pair of blazing thermal blades to deadly effect, annihilating foes in a flurry of fiery impacts. It can strike and move and strike again, slicing through lesser enemies with formidable efficiency. At a distance it musters energy from its field to empower the Halation cannon, a weapon that can direct a concentrated burst of superheated energy with pinpoint accuracy.

Such a flawlessly engineered fighting machine required dedicated resources for its development. Master artificers of House Shyeel thus worked on retainer for the head of the Dawnguard, who gave them whatever funds they required to see it to completion. From the outset, Vyros encouraged the Shyeel artificers to capitalize on and augment certain technologies first developed for the Phoenix, in particular the regenerative Phoenix Field. This work led to the most astonishing feature of the Imperatus: the Phoenix Protocol, a failsafe system that allows the machine to literally rise from its own ashes. This complex arcanikal device requires a dangerously concentrated one-use energy cell. Activating the device prompts internal realignments that replace damaged systems with redundant components to restore functionality. Simultaneously the myrmidon's protective power field is given a massive surge of energy to bring it back to full strength. Imperatus must therefore be destroyed twice to be truly laid to rest.

After the Phoenix Protocol is employed, the costly device must be replaced entirely, but Vyros considers this a small price to pay to maintain a virtually invincible myrmidon at his side. He has expended every effort to ensure that Imperatus is a machine whose mere appearance can demoralize the enemy and whose blades bring victory in a blaze of blue-white fire.

As regal as its name suggests, the Imperatus was engineered to match the nature of the Iosan who commands it. No cost was spared to ensure this machine of war would be without equal, a weapon suitable for Incissar Vyros of House Nyarr. In commissioning this marvel Vyros sought a myrmidon that would stand beside him as he moved toward his destiny of ruling all Ios. He intended it to be his perfect complement on the battlefield and a symbol of his authority over the Dawnguard as well as the military of the Retribution.



THE
WARRIOR



HOUSEGUARD THANE

RETRIBUTION SOLO

To take a single step back is to die a thousand deaths; to hold the line is to live eternal.

—Thane Idryss of House Lewsynn

THANE

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
6	5	7	6	13	15	9



PISTOL

RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
10	1	—	10



OFFICER'S SWORD

POW	P+S
4	9

DAMAGE	5
FIELD ALLOWANCE	2
POINT COST	2
SMALL BASE	

THANE

☉ Commander

☉ Fearless

Desperate Pace

[Houseguard] (★Action) – RNG CMD. Target Friendly Houseguard unit. If the Houseguard unit is in range, it gains +2" movement during its activation this turn.

Firing Solution

[Houseguard] (★Action) – RNG CMD. Target Friendly Houseguard unit. If the

Houseguard unit is in range, it ignores Camouflage and Stealth during its activation this turn.

Inspiration [Houseguard] – Friendly Houseguard models/units in this model's command range never flee and immediately rally.

OFFICER'S SWORD

☉ Weapon Master

TACTICAL TIP

DESPERATE PACE – Modifiers to movement apply only to a model's normal movement.

tide of more than one battle has been turned by the words and actions of a thane, and in the coming conflicts their ability to hold the line will be needed more than ever.

By the time a soldier reaches the rank of thane, he has served in multiple combat roles among the houseguard. These officers, traditionally armed with a sword and pistol, are proficient in both melee and ranged combat and continue to hone these abilities through extensive practice and sparring. Those of noble blood are tutored extensively in these arts even before entering service, as duels among Iosan nobility are a common aspect of life. As a result most thanes are expert swordsmen capable of carving a bloody path through enemy lines to lead the way for their subordinates, an avalanche of halberd blades and rifle fire.

Exemplifying both leadership and combat prowess, these thanes are veteran officers of Ios' houseguard. While some few gained their rank after years of military service, the majority are the leading sons and daughters of lesser houses. In either case, their lives are built around discipline and the age-honored martial traditions of the houseguard. In addition to their time in the field they spend countless hours studying the art of war, making them master tacticians as well as skilled combatants.

This formal training qualifies them to command combined arms companies, leveraging the strengths of both halberdiers and riflemen. Aspiring to eventually command the entire military might of their houses, they practice leadership skills in commanding the defenses of significant holdings or serving as higher officers integrated into larger combined armies of the Homeguard Coalition. Many have joined the Retribution as part of the recent call to arms.

Thanes will never issue an order they themselves would not follow and are the first to take on the greatest burdens, preferring to lead by example. This fact inspires a strong sense of loyalty within the ranks, creating unshakable resolve where there had previously been uncertainty and doubt. Conditioned through training and experience to operate without fear, they have a remarkable capacity for rallying their forces even in the face of certain defeat. The



MAGE HUNTER INFILTRATORS

RETRIBUTION UNIT

The unseen blade strikes deepest.
—Kaelysa, Night's Whisper



Along with the other mage hunters, infiltrators are part of the traditional core of the Retribution. They bear a deep-seated hatred for human arcanists and consider eliminating them their top priority. It is to this end that they are armed with the traditional purified weapons of their fellowship, blades ritually attuned to disrupt the protective magic of their enemies. Each fights with a pair of these blades, one long and one short, creating a whirlwind of steel capable of slicing through arcane wards with ease.

Able to move at high speeds without so much as a whisper of sound, infiltrators have been known to wipe out entire units before the enemy draws a single weapon. Ambushes

LEADER & GRUNTS

Pathfinder

Stealth

Arcane Assassin – When making attacks, ignore focus points overboosting the target's Power Field and spell effects adding to its ARM or DEF.

Gang – When making a melee attack targeting an enemy model in melee range of another model in this unit, this model gains +2 to melee attack and melee damage rolls.

BLADES

Mage Killer – Gain an additional damage die on this weapon's damage rolls against models with Spellcaster or Magic Ability.

LEADER & GRUNTS						
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
7	6	6	4	14	11	9



BLADES

POW	P+S
3	9

FIELD ALLOWANCE	
LEADER & 5 GRUNTS	5
LEADER & 9 GRUNTS	8
SMALL BASE	

such as these are expertly orchestrated and planned down to the smallest detail, sometimes requiring the assassins to wait days for their quarry. From the littered alleys of humanity's capitals to the dense Iosan forests, infiltrators are at home in any environment, striking from the darkness with speed and efficiency to dispatch those whose existence threatens Scyrah.

Beyond their skill at stealth, the infiltrators' greatest asset is their ability to work as a team. During training they spend long, grueling days drilling in group maneuvers and exercises, typically without being allowed to speak. Eventually these routines become so ingrained that members of the team can intuit the proper course of action in any situation without consulting their commanders, allowing for flawless execution of synchronized takedowns. Due to their light armor, ending such engagements quickly and decisively is essential for success. Infiltrator blows are often delivered at high speeds, overwhelming enemies before a proper defense can be mounted. Foes die amid a swift barrage of steel, each strike a precise thrust to a vital organ or through a weak point in armor.

This coordination carries over to other matters, such as long-term survival amid hostile environments. An infiltrator unit functions much like a tight-knit family and is self-sufficient in every way. Working with their peers, infiltrators join numerous mage hunter cells hidden across Immoren, particularly in the human nations. In recent years their activities have increased as more cells have been sent to the far reaches of human settlements, the body count growing ever higher behind them.





EIRYSS, MAGE HUNTER COMMANDER

RETRIBUTION EPIC CHARACTER UNIT ATTACHMENT

Long has she served our people from the shadows. Now she shall become a vessel for our vengeance, blinding our enemies with the force of her rage.

—Oracle Relvinor Luynmyr of the Nine Voices

EIRYSS	SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
	7	4	7	9	16	12	9



CROSSBOW	RNG	ROF	AOE	POW
	12	1	—	10



CROSSBOW BLADE	POW	P+S
	3	7



SABER	POW	P+S
	3	7

DAMAGE	5
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
POINT COST	3
SMALL BASE	

Attachment [Mage Hunter] – This attachment can be added to a Mage Hunter unit.

EIRYSS

⚔️ **Officer**

🗺️ **Pathfinder**

👁️ **Stealth**

Arcane Assassin – When making attacks, ignore focus points overboosting the target's Power Field and spell effects adding to its ARM or DEF.

Arcane Hemorrhage – When this model hits another model with an attack, the model hit

loses the focus and fury points on it, and upkeep spells it cast immediately expire.

Granted: Fearless – While this model is in play, models in its unit gain Fearless 🛡️.

Granted: Reform – While this model is in play, after all models in its unit have completed their actions, each can advance up to 3".

Quick Work – When this model destroys one or more enemy models with a melee attack during its combat action, immediately after that attack is resolved this model can make one normal ranged attack. Attacks gained from Quick Work do not count against a weapon's ROF.

Tactics: Advance Deployment – Models in this unit gain Advance Deployment 🏃.

CROSSBOW

🔫 **Weapon Master**

CROSSBOW BLADE

🔪 **Weapon Master**

SABER

🗡️ **Weapon Master**

After years hunting human arcanists and gathering intelligence on mankind's armies as a mercenary, Eiryss has assumed her proper place as one of the ranking operatives of the Retribution. Now she takes to the field leading other mage hunters, inspiring them to feats requiring bravery and precision while lending her own deadly skills to rid the world of humanity's blasphemies against the gods.

For decades Eiryss infiltrated the ranks of her hated enemies, learning their ways and studying the territories they call home. No one knows the tactics and weaknesses of the Iron Kingdoms' military might as well as she, making her

TACTICAL TIP

QUICK WORK – This model cannot make the additional attack if it is still in melee.

a uniquely valuable and essential weapon of the cause. In every respect Eiryss is a paragon of the old guard, a woman whose fighting prowess and knowledge have positioned her to become one of the greatest leaders of the Retribution. Nevertheless, she feels driven to remain active in the field, personally eliminating her sect's most hated enemies.

She was instrumental in the recovery of Nyssor, her encyclopedic knowledge of the Iron Kingdoms essential to his safe return. The tremendous task of marching an army of unprecedented size deep into the human kingdoms was managed with relatively little difficulty thanks in large part to intelligence she had gathered. While Nyssor's return to Ios has been credited to Incissar Vyros of House Nyarr, those inside the Retribution consider Eiryss the unsung hero of that victory. Even the latecomers to the Retribution, who are motivated more by political necessity than by zeal for the cause, have been forced to admit her unquestionable effectiveness.

Now, with the people of Ios increasingly galvanized behind the Retribution, the organization prepares to enter a perilous new stage. Eiryss has long waited for the day the Retribution would be able to expand its operations and commit to open war against the blight of human magic with the full support of the Iosan people. Now that time has come. Casting aside her mercenary guise, Eiryss has taken her proper place commanding her fellow mage hunters for her order's most vital strikes in the field.

Though technically she ranks as a mere field commander, Eiryss' actual influence is far greater and can be felt throughout the Retribution. The respect she has garnered as one of the most prolific agents in the history of the organization has afforded her incredible autonomy. In addition to regularly planning and executing her own missions across western Immoren, she is consulted by the Nine Voices as well as the Retribution's warcasters on all major operations outside Ios and remains the organization's foremost intelligence asset. Operating alongside the warcasters, myrmidons, and soldiers of the Retribution, Eiryss is able to direct the full might of her people as never before.





ELARA, TYRO OF THE THIRD CHAMBER

RETRIBUTION CHARACTER SOLO

Commitment is not simply a decision. It is drawn in with every breath until it becomes a part of you.

—Elara

ELARA	SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD
	6	6	6	4	15	14	7



SICKLE	POW	P+S
	4	10

FOCUS	4
DAMAGE	5
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
POINT COST	3
SMALL BASE	

ELARA

☠ Fearless

Journeyman Warcaster –

This model is not a warcaster but has the following warcaster special rules: Battlegroup Commander, Control Area, Focus Manipulation, Power Field, and Spellcaster.

Side Step – When this model hits an enemy model with an initial melee attack or a melee special attack

that is not a power attack, it can advance up to 2" after the attack is resolved. This model cannot be targeted by free strikes during this movement.

SICKLE

☠ Magical Weapon

Extraction – When a living enemy model is destroyed by this attack, allocate 1 focus point to a warjack in this model's battlegroup that is in its control area.

SPELLS

	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
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BATTLE CHARGED	2	SELF	CTRL	–	YES	NO
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While in this model's control area models in its battlegroup gain Counter Charge. (When an enemy model advances and ends its movement within 6" of a model with Counter Charge and in its LOS, the model with Counter Charge can immediately charge it. If it does, it cannot make another counter charge until after your next turn. A model cannot make a counter charge while engaged.)

CONVECTION	2	10	–	12	NO	YES
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When Convection destroys a living enemy model, allocate 1 focus point to a warjack in this model's battlegroup that is in its control area.

TACTICAL TIPS

CONVECTION – A warjack cannot exceed normal focus allocation limits as a result of Convection.

EXTRACTION – A warjack cannot exceed normal focus allocation limits as a result of Extraction.

JOURNEYMAN WARCASTER – This model is a non-warcaster model and is not affected by special rules that specifically affect warcasters. Models with the Attached rule cannot be attached to this model.

Elara, Tyro of the Third Chamber, has been forged into the perfect instrument for the Retribution's war against human arcanists. She stands prepared to face any danger in service to the Retribution. As she darts from foe to foe, each kill imbues her myrmidons with power she unleashes against key targets.

This young Iosan was not actually born inside Ios. Her parents were Seekers who were part of a small community of exiles in western Cygnar. When Elara was just a few years old she was orphaned in a tragedy resulting from a posse of mercenaries tracking fugitive agents of the Retribution to the settlement. The Iosans refused to cooperate with these outsiders, and bloodshed followed. While the mage hunters eliminated those who hunted them, their vengeance came too late for Elara's parents. The young child was rescued by these mage hunters and sent back to Ios.

The girl was given into the custody of the Third Chamber, an inner cult of the Retribution descended from warrior-monks dedicated to Lyliss, Nis-Scyir of Autumn, goddess of swift and merciful death, and patron of assassins. Elara was raised in this radical cult, whose devotion to the Retribution's cause is extreme even by mage hunter standards.

From that day Elara knew nothing but a life of preparation and training, her every waking moment engineered to immerse her in the mysteries of the cult and transform her into an efficient killer. She has learned the exceedingly difficult fighting art of *klyvenesh*, the "striking serpent," which she applies to her double-bladed sickles. Like all

weapons of this fighting form, these blades are difficult to master and require unbroken concentration to wield. Elara's arms and torso are laced with scars from years of training in such weapons.

Elara's warcaster talent was discovered in her late teens. She was handed over to those in the Retribution versed in refining such skills, including Keldeacon Synvas Uithuyr, one of the Nine Voices. To become a tyro, as Iosan novice warcasters are called, Elara learned to utilize myrmidons as extensions of herself, like the blades in her hands. While this came easily, her integration into the broader Retribution has been more difficult. Mage hunter culture differs from the insular Third Chamber in which she was raised, emphasizing team tactics over individual accomplishment. These lessons have not been easy for her to accept.

Though she has completed her training and has been promoted to tyro, Elara is still learning how to live and fight alongside the tight-knit mage hunters. In particular she grapples with how being a warcaster dictates her role; warcasters must be leaders, not simply weapons, and she prefers to work alone. She knows how her parents died and carries a personal vendetta against humanity that she is eager to satisfy.

Those looking in her hard eyes can see her steely spirit and a readiness to do anything to further her cause. Elara is a true fanatic, willing to sacrifice her life to accomplish the mission set before her. Whether she can earn the trust and respect of her peers while remaining true to her nature remains to be seen.



FINAL FANTASY



MERCENARIES

UNWELCOME GUESTS

FELLIG, THE NORTHWESTERN THORNWOOD

Commander Caralo Allesari of the Shield Division of the Ordic Army stood on the platform at Fellig's rail station and watched the arrival of the train from Armandor. He considered he may well have gone too far in finding a "creative solution" to Fellig's problems. Collaborating with agents of the Four Star Syndicate to fund a large mercenary army from Five Fingers was unorthodox, if not technically illegal.

Prior to the completion of the railway, he could never have arranged for mercenaries to cross the kingdom so quickly. Not that Fellig was part of Ord, but it was difficult not to think of it that way. Ever since the horrific attack by the Butcher of Khardov that had depleted the city's surviving garrison, its people had relied on the presence of the Ordic Army forces led by Caralo to discourage the Khadorans from attacking.

The train came to a halt, and he watched its long line of cars begin to offload a dizzying variety of mercenary soldiers along with their supplies and weaponry. Steelheads made up most of the troops, but he saw several other company sigils. Some of the mercenaries carried what looked suspiciously like Cygnaran repeating long rifles or barely disguised trencher kits, indicating they were likely deserters. Also among the motley crew were trollkin in brightly colored quitari who pushed their way through as they loudly discussed the need to visit the nearest taverns. Stranger yet were dozens of what looked like sailors armed with pistols and cutlasses, an incongruous sight here on the fringes of the Thornwood.

Caralo's attention was diverted by the flatbed railcars near the rear. These had been expanded and reinforced with thick metal plates. Atop them were two of the largest warjacks he had ever seen. Standing three times the height of a regular heavy, each unwieldy machine conveyed bulk, weight, and menace in equal measure. He knew these must be Galleons, fresh from assembly by Black Anchor in Clockers Cove.

Warjacks of ordinary proportions were being hauled off other cars by steam-powered cranes. He recognized a Mule,

several Mariners, a Mangler, some Talons, and even a pair of Renegades. A fierce-looking red-haired woman shouted at the crane operators as she gesticulated with a large wrench at the Galleons. There seemed to be a dispute about how best to offload them.

Caralo didn't notice another man had stepped beside him until the man spoke. "Sweet Morrow! What's all this?" The voice was gravelly and sour.

"General Mathern, good to see you!" Caralo managed a partial smile. He had hoped to meet with the leader of the town's remaining Cygnaran garrison later, when he had polished his explanation. "This is the solution to our central problem. A mercenary army, hired to deal with the Khadorans."

"We can solve our problems ourselves." General Mathern was a grizzled military officer, an old-timer who had seen the horrors of war firsthand and had been left scarred, both physically and mentally. The general's left sleeve was folded and sewn up at the shoulder, and he wore an eye patch over his left eye; both arm and eye had been lost during the Butcher's attack. Technically Mathern was in charge of the town's defenses, although he had no authority over Caralo or the Ordic soldiers. Things had been tense between the two, but Caralo had acquired a fondness for the cranky older officer. Mathern asked, "How in blazes could the Ordic treasury afford this?"

Any answer Caralo might have made was interrupted as he spotted the mercenary leaders. They were both warcasters, evident from the arcane turbine exhaust pipes on their backs. Caralo tried to distract the general by pointing out that something seemed amiss at the fore of the train and then stepped away to intercept the pair.

Nearer was the taller and more grandly dressed of the two, a stout, thick-bearded Tordoran in a maroon and gold naval uniform over bronzed armor and wearing a tricorn hat with a large white feather. Each of the warcasters had a mechanikal hand, although the Tordoran's was finely made and intricate, not much larger than a living hand. The other warcaster looked shabby in comparison as he limped along

in battered dark green armor, his right leg supported by a crude metal brace. His right arm had been replaced by an awkwardly large mechanical arm that looked useful only for crushing things. There was something unsettling and intimidating in his posture and his deadened stare.

"Commander Allesari?" the shabby one asked in a rough voice. "I was told to find you on our arrival. You've got the contract?"

"Yes," he said. "But I suggest you see to the disposition of your men and machines first. We'll be putting you to work immediately."

"We'll feel better with a signed contract," said the bearded warcaster with a hearty smile. He extended his ordinary hand, which Caralo shook. "Bartolo Montador, better known as Broadsides Bart. You already know my friend here—" A shout from behind interrupted them.

"Asheth Magnus?!" It was General Mathern, who clearly had not been sufficiently distracted. A large vein throbbed in his forehead as he glared at Caralo Allesari in disbelief. "You hired this man? This is a wanted criminal, a traitor! Put him under arrest!"

Caralo interposed himself and said, "Calm down, Mathern! Asheth Magnus is a legitimate mercenary who honors his contracts, at least to Ord."

Taking the accusations calmly, Magnus said, "General Mathern, I am pleased to see you again. It has been some time." The general glowered at him in silence. Magnus turned to Caralo and said, "I was assured there would be no interference from the Cygnaran authorities."

"There won't be," Caralo insisted. "I take it you two know each other?"

A shadow crossed Magnus' face. "I had the privilege of serving the general in better days, when Cygnar was engaged in pushing Khadorans from its borders rather than inviting them inside." This barb found its mark with Mathern, whose cheek twitched. Magnus continued, "Under Mathern's orders, my company fought north of here to discourage Khadoran settlers. I remember us getting along well back then. But times change, and so do people."

Mathern sputtered, "You may have been a good soldier once, but that was before you turned traitor!"

"I've never once thought of myself as a traitor," Magnus said with a sad smile at Montador, who seemed uncomfortable with the confrontation. "It wasn't until I refused to bend knee to a usurper that they made me a criminal. I've stuck by my principles, General. Can you say the same? I understand Cygnar is allied with Khador. After all you've been through, that must be hard."

Seeing the warring emotions flickering across the old soldier's face, Caralo was impressed by Magnus' ability to cut him to the quick. He couldn't think of anyone who hated Khadorans as intensely as General Dargus Mathern did. The man had flown into a rage upon hearing of the agreements made in Point Bourne.

Mathern replied, "I'm a soldier. I do as ordered. I leave politics to my betters, as should you!"

"And so I have," Magnus said mildly. "I'm here to do a job—to fight a battle neither of you can. Maybe we can let the past stay buried?"

Caralo pulled the general aside and said, "I know this is unconventional, but let's face facts. Kommandant Ilyevich is determined to seize this city under any pretenses and deliver it to his empress."

The general said, "And I told you—Ilyevich can't attack without putting the alliance in jeopardy."

"We've been through this." Caralo sighed. "He claims the Ordic Army is occupying this city illegally—a thin justification, to be sure. But if we let them in, they can wait out the truce. Then when the alliance falls apart they'll have Fellig without the trouble of besieging it again!"

"The Khadorans won't risk provoking Ord out of its neutrality by engaging your soldiers here."

Caralo shook his head. "They're ready to call our bluff. Those troop movements we've seen are a precursor to an attack. They aren't even trying to hide their intention. Khador has never shied from testing Ord's border fortifications. They use Boarsgate for warcaster training, for Morrow's sake!"


The general growled, "This wouldn't be a small border skirmish."

"If my men could stay and fight, you'd be right. But I'm under orders to withdraw before things escalate. I don't know if Ilyevich knows that or if he's simply prepared to attack anyway. It doesn't matter. Trust me, when Ilyevich marches his army through your gates to 'safeguard' the city, the first thing he'll do is send you back to Corvis for some much-needed rest. Mercenaries are our only solution, and these are the ones we have. It's that or prepare to welcome the Khadorans."



"If you'd told me we'd be fighting in the forest, I might not have signed on!" Montador shouted over the sounds of rifle fire and war shouts as the Steelheads rushed into the fray.

"You said you could fight as well on land as at sea," Magnus countered.



When the contract had been squared away to Montador's satisfaction, Magnus had immediately ordered his army into the forest. The men had coin in their pockets, and he knew the risks of losing men and eroding discipline if they lingered in Fellig before battle. More importantly they had been told the Khadorans were about to make their move. Magnus had decided to seize the initiative.

Many military leaders would have thought it folly to give up the defensive position of Fellig's battlements, but he knew attacking one of the Khadoran encampments would force the rest of the Khadoran forces gathered around Fellig to react. They would come to him on his terms. It also kept the fighting from damaging the town itself, which would bring a substantial bonus. Magnus had not exhausted his financial reserves, but additional income was necessary. He had not yet fully assembled his army and would need to pay them over the long haul.

This northeastern hilltop encampment had been aware of their approach, and its Winter Guard had taken to the shelter of rocks and sandbag walls erected around the lip of the hill. An initial volley of cannon and warjack fire had sent bodies flying and forced the rest to hunker down. Halberdiers rushed them from one side and Boomhowler's trollkin from the other, all while rifle fire delivered a hail of deadly lead to pin them down. Soon the sound of Boomhowler's voice drowned out even the gunfire.

Steelhead heavy cavalry galloped around to the rear of the hill to cut off stragglers and then rushed up the incline. They charged into the center of the encampment, opening fire before closing with their axes. A pair of mortars there had caused some early casualties, and Magnus was glad to see them silenced.

"Cease fire!" He shouted to the riflemen, and the order was quickly relayed through the ranks. He did not intend to suffer losses from friendly fire. Magnus watched with greater anxiety than he revealed, since he had hidden Julius among the cavalry.

Immediately after their arrival in Five Fingers he had bribed the local captain to put the young man to work training among the Steelheads, a task the youth had not embraced with immediate enthusiasm. Julius had found the halberd an awkward weapon that was ill-suited to a duelist's temperament, and he had shown no affinity for firearms. Still, the extensive drills had instilled discipline. Once astride a horse he had started to come into his own. Training and living alongside the mercenaries had let him develop bonds of camaraderie. Those bonds would be strengthened in battle, Magnus knew. This was a lesson that could not be taught any other way.

Even as he considered this, Magnus could not escape the feeling that he was being watched—and not just by the

enemies atop the hill. He decided a little paranoia was a healthy thing. He just hoped Julius did nothing to draw attention to himself. He could pick out Vinter's bastard from the other Steelhead cavalry thanks to the horse he rode, a white courser with grey speckles. The boy rode expertly into battle and maintained formation alongside the others; he appeared to have learned to listen to his sergeant. The remaining Winter Guard were swiftly run down.

"Not committing the warjacks?" Montador asked as they strode up the hill alongside both men and machines. Magnus had ordered him to sit tight during the first clash, which had clearly disappointed the man. Being the leader of his own private fleet, the privateer was not someone who appreciated being told what to do. Magnus did not intend to keep him leashed for long.

"We need to get in position quickly. A much larger force is closing on us even now, hoping to flank us," Magnus explained. "This was just a prelude."

"Ah," Montador said, his eyes brightening. "Yes, the flare." He referred to an orange-and-red flare they had spotted overhead during their initial assault.

"I expect they were on the way even before that. We didn't leave Fellig quietly. Hopefully they will arrive in disarray after abandoning whatever defenses they'd erected at their primary encampment."

"Not a proper siege, was it?" Montador snorted critically. "They really shouldn't have let our train through."

"I'm sure they're saying the same thing. They hadn't actually besieged the city yet, though, and reinforcements weren't a concern since they knew the Ordic Army would never attack. I can't fault the kommander for failing to predict our arrival."

"That's generous of you," Montador said with a laugh. "All this smoke and mirrors with armies that don't intend to fight is a bit baffling."

"Think of it as a card game," Magnus said as he looked through the eyes of his warjacks scattered around their rear perimeter and mentally directed them where he needed them. He moved his Renegades and his Mule up to the best firing positions and urged Montador to do the same with his Mariners, which obediently tromped up the hill, each carrying a heavy ship's gun. The sea dogs moved where Montador directed, their gun crews sweating as they pushed their weapons into place.

"Want me to bring the Galleons up here?" Montador asked.

"Not yet," he said. "The enemy will have seen them leave Fellig and will worry about them when they don't spot them at once. We can unleash them when it will have the greatest impact on their morale." He could see the plumes

of smoke from the machines over the trees, but those might be mistaken for fires in the aftermath of recent battles.

Magnus had consented to allow Montador control over both colossals, knowing the privateer warcaster was an expert at orchestrating warjack fire. He was not so jaded about warfare that the thought of controlling a colossal did not excite him. But he had decided that tactically they were better under Montador for now. A third Galleon was on its way but hadn't reached Five Fingers by the time they had moved out.

Despite the size of their mercenary force they were greatly outnumbered by the Khadorans occupying the northern Thornwood. Magnus was gambling that they lacked the will to commit those numbers, though. Everything hinged on the next assault. Either Magnus would be quickly overwhelmed, or he would break the Khadoran vanguard and force their retreat.

He had chosen to attack this small camp first because of the higher, clear ground it occupied. There were advantages to sticking to the trees, but Magnus preferred this rocky hilltop. The forest surrounded them, but there were several obvious approaches allowing him to position his firepower accordingly. No large force could expect to approach from the southeast, for example, because of the dense undergrowth on that side. To reach the hill an enemy would have to cross in front of them, becoming exposed while exhausting themselves climbing an incline. His position meant he would take some incoming fire, but the rocks and earthworks provided cover.

Other than a few losses, it looked as though his force had weathered their first strike well. The Steelheads were in good cheer as they regrouped, their blood fired from that brief taste of battle. Boomhowler led his trollkin in singing a ribald song and made quite a racket. Magnus indulged it since the enemy already knew where they were. The next fight would be bloody, so all the better if the men entered it with high spirits.

Julius rode up and reined in his horse. He raised the visor on his helmet and inclined his head to Magnus. To the warcaster's critical eye he looked quite at ease in the Steelhead armor. The sword Magnus had crafted for him was strapped behind his saddle, but he had resisted the urge to draw it. "We're in position to the rear," he reported. Perhaps seeing Magnus' eye on the sword, he lifted his cavalry axe and said, "This is such a crude and clumsy weapon! It feels like a lump of shapeless steel in my hand."

Magnus grunted and said, "A true warrior is deadly regardless of the weapon he wields."

"So you've said." Julius sounded unconvinced.

"Get back to your troop now." Magnus spoke mildly, but his tone was firm. "I need you in position."

Julius closed his visor and spurred his horse away, showing admirable control over the impetuous steed. This next clash would be bad for the cavalry, limited as they were here atop the hillside. He had given the Steelhead officers strict instructions, backed by gold. If the situation became untenable, they would get Julius away if they could.

Montador said in a low voice, "Smart lad, that one." He gave a knowing nod. "A bastard, I presume? His mum turn him over to you?"

Magnus chuckled and said, "Something like that." The privateer had asked several times about Julius, but Magnus had remained evasive. This particular theory was one he saw no reason to correct.

Montador nodded sagely. "Been there. Good that you're teaching him a trade. Mercenary life is good for bastards."

MAGNUS COULD NOT ESCAPE THE FEELING THAT HE WAS BEING WATCHED—AND NOT JUST BY THE ENEMIES ATOP THE HILL.


He did not reply, listening instead to the unmistakable sound of steam engines and marching soldiers. "Here they come!" he shouted. "Take cover and stand ready to fire!"

From the clearest openings in the trees the Khadorans began their approach, starting with heavy armor. Lines of Man-O-War advanced slowly but resolutely toward the hill, at least a dozen formidable heavy warjacks looming among them. Iron Fangs came behind, and he saw the shadows of countless Winter Guard farther back. There was movement in the trees to every side as the enemy encircled them.

"That's a lot of armor," Montador said under his breath.

It was true, but with Magnus' critical eye he saw a different story. The warjacks were older Destroyers and Juggernauts, and while the number of shocktroopers was daunting, they too wore dated armor. These were all signs that the opposing force was drawn from a reserve garrison, supporting Magnus' expectation that Irusk had marched the bulk of his heavy assault forces south. "All their armor is up front. We have to shatter it."

Montador grinned fiercely as he raised Red Tide, his mechanical cutlass. Arcane runes manifested around the weapon and then around the cannon of one of his Mariners as he empowered it. He cut down with a sharp motion. Master Gunner Dougal MacNaile saw him and signaled his crews. The air was filled with the roar of cannon fire.



Deck guns manned by sea dogs fired alongside Montador's Mariners, and when Magnus directed his Mule to fire as well, steam pressure diverted into its cannon to lob great cannonballs down onto the enemy.

Explosions filled the air with smoke and flying debris, although the Khadorans weathered it well. It would require tremendous concentrated firepower to bring them down. Rifles fired by Steelheads, sea dogs, and former Cygnaran infantry joined the onslaught, though most bullets deflected harmlessly off Man-O-War shields or warjack armor. Only a few shots found weak points, hydraulic pipes, or piston rods, doing some small harm.

The wall of red continued its inexorable advance while the rest of the mercenaries watched uneasily—halberdiers, trollkin, and cutlass-wielding sea dogs hunkered down behind the rocks, awaiting orders to charge. Magnus was well aware of the tenuous nature of the dedication of his own men, who were fighting not for family or nation but for coin that would buy them nothing if they met their end.

There was a slight twinge in the back of Magnus' mind, and he turned sharply around to look behind him, into the trees. He thought he saw a splash of dark blue, Cygnaran blue, but then it was gone. His shoulder blades itched. He had learned to trust this instinct, and he invoked his magic to protect himself, casting a spell that would sharpen his reflexes against incoming fire. No shot came from that direction, yet he could not escape the sensation of menace.

"Feel that?" he asked Montador, forced to shout over the explosive fire.

"Feel what?" Montador shouted back, his attention focused on empowering his warjacks.

Magnus shook his head and held his tongue, not wanting to distract the man by mentioning a phantom warcaster he was not certain he had actually sensed. He returned his attention ahead.

A number of the Man-O-War soldiers had fallen. The mercenaries had crippled two of the incoming warjacks, and another slowed, its legs damaged. The other 'jacks neared enough to counter with Destroyer fire. Pushing forward between the shocktroopers were squads of bombardiers, who sent explosive ordnance up into the rocks. This took a toll on the sea dog cannon crews.

"They're getting close!" Montador warned.

Magnus waited several long seconds and then shouted, "Now! Charge!" His Mangler and Talons were beside him as he raced forward, and with another spell he created runes around himself and his warjacks that loaned speed and certainty to their legs as they rushed down the rocky slope. His Renegades on the ridge behind him fired their powerful

shells into a wide swath of incoming Man-O-War, toppling them and a pair of Juggernauts alongside them with an earth-rending eruption of blasting powder and shrapnel. As he closed with the foe, he invoked another spell to weaken the shocktroopers to the left, where his Mangler was headed as it swung its massive spiked ball by the chain.

Not far from him Montador had also committed to the charge, joined by anchor-wielding Mariners. With them came a wall of halberdiers. Boomhowler's trollkin and the sea dogs were not far behind, firing into the masses of Khadoran soldiers.

Things quickly became a chaotic frenzy of dust, smoke, and the clash of metal on metal. Magnus flicked the switch on Foecleaver to maximize its mechanical cutting edge and delivered several fierce blows to the Destroyer at the front of the Khadoran force, slicing through its armor and biting into its cortex amid a hail of sparks. His Mangler's wrecking ball whirled overhead and crashed through three shocktroopers, sending them flying back broken and bleeding.

The entire forward wall of Khadoran armor was swiftly brought to a standstill and began to topple. Even as the Iron Fangs next in line prepared to charge, the Galleons emerged from the forest. The ground shook beneath their tread as they pushed through and toppled smaller trees with the sound of splintering timber. Another chorus of cannon fire sounded as their gun ports sent cannonballs soaring past the forward lines into the Winter Guard. They then launched their gigantic harpoons into the nearest Khadoran warjacks, which they reeled back and smashed to wreckage beneath immense cargo claws.

Montador had penetrated deep into the enemy lines like a blood-drenched berserker, laughing as he set about himself with Red Tide, each blow stronger than the one before. Even as the nearest bombardiers and Iron Fangs began to close on him, he summoned his arcane might and unleashed a typhoon of howling wind and sheets of rain, turning the ground into a morass. Foes charging him lost their footing and tumbled into the mud, easy prey for the closing halberdiers and sea dogs. Montador directed the Galleons to trample through Iron Fangs and Winter Guard alike, throwing the Khadoran advance into a panic as soldiers were smashed underfoot. Magnus urged his Mangler ahead to shore up their left flank. He finished off two fallen Man-O-War shocktroopers with Foecleaver as they struggled to rise.

The mercenary warlord's instincts were keen regarding vulnerability at his back. He took a moment to look through the eyes of his Revengers atop the hill even as he continued to fight. Most of his forces were still up, but the Winter Guard had maneuvered around to flank them. The Steelhead cavalry were positioned to guard against threats

from the rear and fired into the approaching Winter Guard, but they were outnumbered.

Magnus saw Julius wheel his horse around and make ready to charge alongside the men of his troop. The warcaster moved his Revengers to support them and then drew on a surge of arcane power to send rending energy through one of their arc nodes and into the mass of Winter Guard. The ground exploded into shrapnel at their center, dismembering a half-dozen men and sending blood and dirt to spatter the rest. Disoriented by this blast, they were ill prepared for the charge of the heavy cavalry that drove through them, toppling Winter Guard beneath iron-shod hooves.

So caught up was he in this battle that Magnus hardly registered the sounding of a Khadoran horn, the series of high notes echoing across the area. The Khadorans began to disperse, and Magnus realized the enemy was in full retreat. His army had broken their forward armor and thwarted their flanking effort, so apparently the officers in charge had had enough, at least for now. They were unwilling to march into the meat grinder that was a pair of Galleons, several heavies, and two battle-ready veteran warcasters.

Some of the mercenaries at the fore chased after them, eager to cut down more men from the rear. Magnus indulged them briefly before ordering their officers to rein them in. The Khadorans still outnumbered them and might regroup and retaliate if harried too badly, sparking a more prolonged engagement.

With everyone in high spirits, Magnus and Montador collected men and machines and began the march back to the Fellig gates. On their return march Montador seemed invigorated despite the blood and mud that coated his jacket and polished armor. He said, "A fine battle, although I miss my ship."

"You won't see it for a while yet."

After a thoughtful pause Montador said, "So is this what you had in mind when you hired us? Carving out a little town of your own in some far corner of a dark forest?"

Magnus smiled and said, "This is just the first step of many."



The battle had taken place near enough for those manning Fellig's battlements or tensely listening from the streets to hear the distant reports of gunfire and cannons, yet far enough away for its outcome to have remained in doubt. When Magnus' army arrived triumphantly at the gates, the mercenaries were welcomed by an enthusiastic and grateful populace. It was clear the people here had no desire to endure another bloody siege.

As the men began to disperse, Magnus asked Boomhowler, his Steelhead captain, Julius, Montador, and two other officers to join him to meet Commander Allesari at the town square. The Ordsman smiled and enthusiastically shook his hand.

"Nicely done! Of course, they'll probably regroup and try again at least once or twice before deciding seizing this place by force isn't worth the cost, but with that kind of showing I shouldn't have trouble getting the funds for your extension fee." His smile faltered a bit on seeing something in Magnus' eyes.

The mercenary leader said, "That won't be necessary, Commander. You can arrange for payment for this engagement when you take your men back to Fort Bairdon, which you will do immediately. We'll stay on here, but not on contract."

**ANOTHER CHORUS OF
CANNON FIRE SOUNDED AS
THEIR GUN PORTS SENT
CANNONBALLS SOARING PAST
THE FORWARD LINES**

"Not on contract..." Allesari's eyes narrowed as he thought about Magnus' words and took in the company standing alongside the warcaster as if for the first time. When he replied, his tone was measured. "We *are* going to have to pull out soon, now that the Khadorans have pressed the matter. But I thought I should stay long enough to ensure the people are protected."

Magnus gave a small smile. "That would be ill-advised. Without you here, Khador can't maintain the pretense of saving the city from a foreign army as a favor to their Cygnaran allies. I'm confident I can dissuade them. Should you wish to know how matters are progressing, please feel free to send a messenger. Fellig is in good hands."

The commander looked uncomfortable as he considered this. Magnus knew that despite the man's larger force the Ordic government would not want him to intervene. He also knew Allesari understood that as well. Finally the Ordsman said, "And General Mathern? What do you intend for him?"

"You don't need to worry about him. We're old friends. I'll make sure he understands the situation, and we will come to an arrangement." Magnus inclined his head. "It was good working with you. But please, have your men out of the city before the week is up."

The mercenary leaders around Magnus stared grimly at Allesari as the heavy tread of the Galleons resounded through the streets of Fellig.





GHORDSON EARTHBREAKER

FEUD VIOLATION CLAIM / MOOT INTERVENTION PLEA (FORM FVC3)

Date: Godesh 8, 593 AR

Filing Clan: Erdon

Opposing Clan: Steelthunder

Location: East Borokuhn Mountains, Kaller Valley

Basis of Claim: Preferential Access to Overwhelming Weaponry

Incident Report: We, the warriors of Clan Erdon, have long been involved in a dispute against Clan Steelthunder for rights to Kaller Valley excavation projects. As Moot records will confirm, Erdon has worked this valley for over a thousand years, but Steelthunder's interests date back only fifty.

Steelthunder merchants boast wealth and holdings across the western mountains, whereas all of Erdon's interests are in Kaller Valley. We confirm the sad state of our treasury to emphasize our hard-won and numerous victories against those money-grubbing bastards. Sadly the Moot has ignored requests to declare this feud ended in our favor.

This led to the woeful affair last week. Things began auspiciously as our skirmish near the quarry was won, with Steelthunder in full retreat. We had engaged in the traditional manner, with rifle and blade. At that point the enemy *dishonestly* and *against the laws of feud* feigned a rout while leading us into a gorge wherein awaited the largest damned war machine I've ever laid eyes upon.

Most dishonorably, Clan Steelthunder had used its financial clout to lease a Ghordson Earthbreaker and unleashed it on my clan! We have nothing to compare with this tower of metal. Its telescoping arms swept bladed claws through our ogrun front line. Then it unleashed a salvo of repeating cannon fire to slaughter heavily armored kinsmen and launched earth-burrowing torpedoes to detonate across half the gorge and dismember a dozen brave men of Clan Erdon before I could so much as stammer out a surrender!

There is no way our clan can afford to counter this colossal. This is *preferential access to war hardware* and is against the very spirit of the Edicts of the Great Fathers! That such a machine would be set upon my clan is inexcusable. Our claim is clear. I trust you will see the right thing done.

Claimant: Clan Lord Holon of Clan Erdon

Related Filings: Cease and Desist Petition (Form CDP526.4); Application for Order of Restraint within Feudal War (Form AOR12F); Preliminary Injunction with Asset Freeze on the Use of Overwhelming Weaponry during a Feudal War (Form PIF(f)-OW)



—Noril Ghordson, *mechanik*

EARTHBREAKER

STEAM CLAWS	
POW	P+S
4	20

FIELD ALLOWANCE	2
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POINT COST	19
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HUGE BASE

Driller – When making an attack with this weapon, ignore cover and the +2 DEF bonus for elevation.

REPEATING CANNON

Rapid Fire [d3] – When you decide to make initial attacks with this weapon at the beginning of this model’s combat action, roll a d3. The total rolled is the number of initial attacks this model can make with this weapon during the combat action, ignoring ROF.

STEAM CLAWS

 Open Fist[illegible]

	RIGHT DAMAGE					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
C	C	R				
C	C	C	R	R		
M	M	M	M	R	R	

EARTHBREAKER

Rhulic Warjack – This model can be included only in a battlegroup controlled by a Mercenary Rhulic warcaster or assigned to a Mercenary Rhulic 'jack marshal. This model can be reactivated only by a friendly Mercenary Rhulic warcaster or a friendly Mercenary Rhulic 'jack marshal.

TORPEDO

Ammo Type – Each time this weapon is used to make an attack, choose one of the following abilities:

- **Crater** – The AOE is rough terrain and remains in play for one round.
- **Quake** – On a direct hit against an enemy model, all models hit are knocked down.

TACTICAL TIP

RHULIC WARJACK - Colossals cannot be controlled by a 'jack marshal. Only a Rhulic warcaster can control an Earthbreaker.

HEIGHT/WEIGHT: 28'6" / 90 TONS

ARMAMENT: DRILLING TORPEDOS (LEFT AND RIGHT CHASSIS), REPEATING CANNONS (LEFT AND RIGHT CHASSIS), STEAM CLAWS (LEFT AND RIGHT ARMS)

FUEL LOAD/BURN USAGE: 650 LBS / 12 HRS GENERAL, 2.5 HRS COMBAT

INITIAL SERVICE DATE: 585 AR

CORTEX MANUFACTURER: BRAND OF ODOM

ORIG. CHASSIS DESIGN: CLAN GHORDSON

When the wealthiest Rhulic clans need to leverage immense power—whether at a contested construction site or in wars abroad—they mobilize machines like the Ghordson Earthbreaker. This colossal is capable of tearing entire battlefields asunder, standing as proof that even mountains can be toppled by Rhulic ingenuity.

Through the use of its twin drilling torpedoes, this hulking construct can turn the very ground beneath the enemy into a frightening obstacle. Seismic detonations level infantry and warjacks alike with massive craters and upheavals of stone while fissures wide enough to swallow a man whole split the landscape, stopping assaults in their tracks. With the aid of six legs built for stability, the Ghordson Earthbreaker deftly navigates the most jagged terrain while bringing to bear rapid-fire repeating cannons. Closing to destroy it in melee forces foes to confront its massive, telescoping steam claws. Heavily reinforced armor of the best steel alloys allows it to endure tremendous punishment before it loses fighting effectiveness. When the dust settles and the enemy has fled, the reshaped landscape becomes a permanent reminder of this colossal warjack's victory.

Previous successes by Clan Ghordson and income from its versatile line of durable steamjacks allowed it to launch its most ambitious plans ever with the design of the Earthbreaker. Decades before the human kingdoms saw the need to reinvent the colossal, Ghordson engineers set to outdo all steamjacks that had come before. Even as Clan Ghordson began work on the prototype, representatives were summoned before the Moot and the stone lords to explain themselves. There was considerable debate that such machines could unbalance the natural competitive environment of Rhulic governance, where organized conflict has long been an acceptable recourse between feuding clans. Eventually Ghordson won support with the argument that such an achievement would strengthen all of Rhul, so long as no one clan had exclusive access to the

machine. The stone lords eventually consented to the plan, with the caveat that the defense of Rhul would be given priority over any other use for the warjack.

Negotiations to allow for the Earthbreaker were among the most convoluted in the Moot's history, but they proved quite equitable to Ghordson in the long run. The enormous foundries and facilities owned by several of the stone clans were made available to contribute to the manufacture of the colossals. In exchange, these clans received a percentage of the profits of their sale, and by law each Rhulic colossal is owned by the Moot itself. Ghordson was given the oversight of producing and leasing these machines to any clan interests able to afford them, though the lessees remain accountable to the Moot. Stone Clans Dovur, Orm, and Uldar all contributed investments, whether in financial support, materials, or labor, for the completion of the first Earthbreaker. Moot Judges are at liberty to intercede and deny the use of Earthbreakers in any feud or dispute that could potentially threaten the general welfare of Ghord or other Rhulic cities.

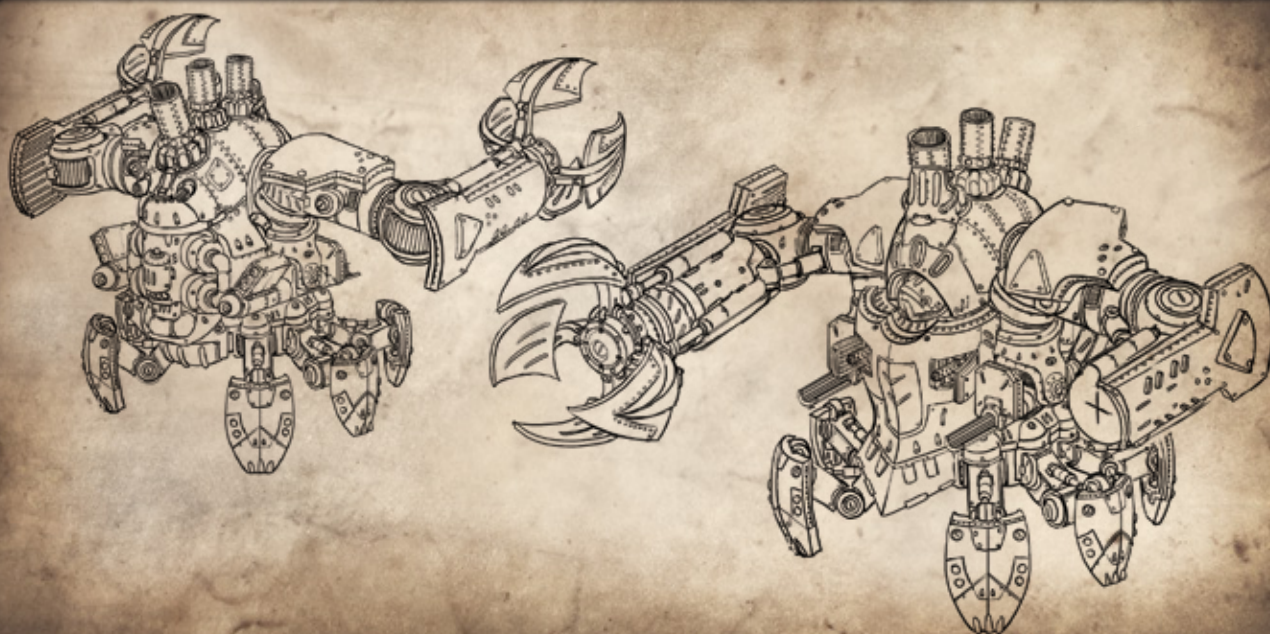
More than was the case with any previous steamjack created by Ghordson, the Earthbreaker was always intended for the battlefield. This decision was reinforced after the stone lords saw how useful the machines would be in securing Rhul's borders. Nonetheless, Rhulic pragmatism is evident here; the versatile Earthbreaker has many uses outside of battle. Its drill torpedoes have been creatively employed to assist with mining by cracking open access to fresh veins of metals. Its enormous steam claws can quickly move huge volumes

of rock or soil, such that entire mountainsides have been excavated in a fraction of the time that would ordinarily have been possible. This colossal has even served to reroute several minor rivers for the convenience of Rhulic industry.

As tremendous as these efforts have been, there is no question the Earthbreaker is leased with the expectation of battle. Within weeks of the first colossal's construction, its use ended several long-standing disputes in Ulgar, seemingly validating the fear that it might upset the political landscape. Soon enough additional Earthbreakers were produced that rivals gained access to using the great machines as a formidable deterrent against escalating feuds. Thirty years after the machine was first unveiled, the Moot credits the Earthbreaker with being a stabilizing force among the most powerful clans of the nation. The battles where these colossals are most often unleashed are situated far from Ghord, amid contested mining stakes or other territorial disputes on the nation's fringes.

While these imposing machines were once employed only within the borders of Rhul, the emergence of colossals in the wars of the Iron Kingdoms has motivated Rhulic mercenary warcasters to invest in leasing Earthbreakers in an attempt to maintain a competitive edge. Mercenary forces possessing such power are in high demand. Much has been made of the colossal's ability to detonate torpedoes under fortifications, potentially leaving a military outpost in ruin. For good or ill, Ghordson Earthbreakers are destined to shape the world wherever they stride.

GHORDSON EARTHBREAKER CONCEPTUAL DESIGNS





TACTICAL ARCANIST CORPS

MERCENARY RHULIC UNIT

The Arcanist Corps wield fire as a precision weapon and tool—plus the sight of them setting enemies afire is good for morale.

—General Ossrum

LEADER & GRUNTS							
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD	
4	6	6	4	11	16	9	



THERMO MACE	
POW	P+S
7	13

DAMAGE	5 EA
FIELD ALLOWANCE	2
LEADER & 2 GRUNTS	4
SMALL BASE	

Mercenaries – These models will work for Cygnar and Khador.

LEADER & GRUNTS

Immunity: Fire

Battle Wizard – Once per turn, when this model destroys one or more enemy models with a melee attack during its activation, immediately after the attack is resolved

it can make one Magic Ability special attack or special action.

Magic Ability [7]

- **Flame Blast (★Attack)** – Flame Blast is a RNG 10, AOE 3, POW 13 magic attack that causes fire damage . On a critical hit, models hit suffer the Fire continuous effect .
- **Smoke Bombs (★Action)** – Place a 3" AOE cloud effect in play. Its center point must be within 1" of this model. This AOE remains in play for one round.
- **Vortex of Flames (★Action)** – This model gains Righteous Flames for one round. (An enemy model that ends its activation within 2" of a model with Righteous Flames suffers the Fire continuous effect .

THERMO MACE

Flame Burst – When this model boxes an enemy model with this weapon, enemy models within 1" of the boxed model suffer the Fire continuous effect .

Shrouded in smoke and rippling heat, the Tactical Arcanist Corps are engineers who approach unleashing destruction by fire with the exacting analytical detachment others apply to building a bridge or forging a cannon. Though they are trained in the service of defending the clans of Rhul, their services are occasionally bartered to the kingdoms of men.

When they storm the battlefields of western Immoren, the air is illuminated by scorching salvos of arcane fire. Wherever they march, these incendiary shock troops leave trails of ember, ash, and charred bone as a testament both to their martial prowess and to the destructive force of their arcane abilities. There is an element of true horror in witnessing their flames devour entire ranks of the enemy, and any who have seen their pyres licking at the night sky will attest to the mix of dread and awe they can inspire.

The members of the Tactical Arcanist Corps always work in small squads led by a veteran leader. Joining the corps is an arduous process, and recruits are required to undergo training and drilling together until they can meet and even

TACTICAL TIP

MAGIC ABILITY – Performing a Magic Ability special action or special attack counts as casting a spell.

exceed the exacting standards imposed by the Brand of Odom for Rhul's elite battle mages. As military arcanists, they are trained to focus on mastering specific arcane formulae, enabling them to enact their magic instinctively whenever called upon to do so. Just as with any other weapon at his disposal, a commander must know precisely what to expect from the arcanists when he orders them to action in battle.

Once they are on the battlefield, the destructive power of the Arcanist Corps' magic is brutally manifest, particularly against enemy foot soldiers. Tactical Arcanists have been known to walk away from particularly intense battles with their armor coated in a layer of soot composed entirely of incinerated enemies.

The heavy battle armor created for the corps is insulated from fire, heat, and the power of their own spells, allowing them to carry out their tasks without succumbing to the infernos they unleash on their enemies. In addition to their arcane might, each member of the Arcanist Corps is also armed with a mechanical thermo mace, a weapon of considerable incendiary power. Tactical arcanists have no qualms putting these maces to use in battle, particularly when they are closed upon by enemy combatants eager to extinguish their flames. The damage they deal to enemy morale spreads even more quickly than the fires they ignite, and arcanist sergeants continually assess the battlefield situation and stand ready to order their peers to charge should they perceive any weakening of an enemy line.

During their time in service, tactical arcanists have become renowned for their contributions to Rhul's fighting forces. Around the neck of each arcanist hangs a pair of medals embossed with a record of his acts of valor on the battlefield. Should he fall in battle, these also serve the pragmatic secondary function of identifying him so that his remains might be returned to his kinsman and given proper honors.





RALUK MOORCLAW, THE IRONMONGER

MERCENARY MINION TROLLKIN CHARACTER SOLO

I wouldn't trust him as far as I can throw his Rover, but if it's broke, Moorclaw can fix it.

—Graeven Tran of Boomhowler's company

MOORCLAW							
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD	
5	7	6	6	13	15	9	



SLUG GUN				
RNG	ROF	AOE	POW	
4	1	—	14	



BATTLE AXE		
POW	P+S	
6	13	

DAMAGE	8
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
POINT COST	2
MEDIUM BASE	

Mercenary – This model will work for Cryx, Cygnar, and Khador.

Minion – This model will work for Trollbloods and the Blindwater Congregation or Thornfall Alliance pacts.

MOORCLAW

★ Jack Marshal

⊗ Tough

Assault – As part of a charge, after moving but before making its charge attack, this model can make

one ranged attack targeting the model charged unless they were in melee with each other at the start of this model's activation. When resolving an Assault ranged attack, the attacking model does not suffer the target in melee penalty. If the target is not in melee range after moving, this model must still make the Assault ranged attack before its activation ends.

Drive: Hog Wild – This model can attempt to Drive each warjack under its control in its command range. To Drive a warjack, this model must make a command check at any time during its activation. If it passes, the warjack can make one ranged attack this activation before its normal movement. After its normal movement, the warjack can only make melee attacks that activation. If it fails, the warjack does not benefit from Jack Marshal this turn.

Mechanically Adept – This model can attempt to repair friendly non-Faction warjacks and battle engines.

Repair [8] (★Action) – This model can attempt repairs on any damaged friendly Faction warjack. To attempt repairs, this model must be B2B with the damaged warjack and make a skill check. If successful, remove d6 damage points from the warjack's damage grid.

Motivations to enter the mercenary lifestyle are numerous and varied—most seek wealth and others independence, while some fight for particular causes or ideals. The mechanik known as the Ironmonger fights for none of those reasons but for the sake of fighting itself. As a young trollkin growing up in the Wake Isles district of Five Fingers, Moorclaw faced gang violence, food scarcities, and cramped living conditions. A stern Thurian blacksmith eventually hired the young trollkin, and he quickly exceeded expectations. His natural strength combined with a keen mechanical aptitude and a penchant for problem solving. In his spare time Raluk Moorclaw took to repairing elaborate weaponry and armor, including mechanical items he understood more by instinct than training.

TACTICAL TIPS

JACK MARSAL – When fielded as a Minion, a Mercenary Minion Jack Marshal can field Mercenary warjacks normally.

ASSAULT – The assaulting model ignores the target in melee penalty even if it is not in melee range of its charge target after moving.

REPAIR – A wreck marker cannot be repaired.

Despite his remarkable talents, Moorclaw had little passion for his work and spent much of his time (and coin) in disreputable establishments of Five Fingers. Only his blacksmith's strength and trollkin constitution carried him through the countless tavern brawls and occasional forays into the fighting pits he endured. After one night left him badly beaten and bereft of coin, Moorclaw impulsively signed up to join a mercenary company. Without even returning to the smithy for his tools or belongings, Moorclaw dedicated his life to earning a living on violence.

It was during his mercenary days that Moorclaw's mechanical aptitude was applied to the steamjack and the trollkin discovered a new consuming passion. He was never happier than when fighting alongside these iron constructs that followed his commands. Moorclaw nurtured his warjack talents and sought out opportunities to work with the great machines no matter the wages. For one particularly bloody engagement where he was one of the few survivors, he earned a hefty payment share that, combined with hard-earned savings, allowed him to purchase a warjack of his own. Ever since, Moorclaw is rarely seen without his battered Rover, Hack. Much like Moorclaw, there is more to Hack than appearance would suggest. Though its frame is gashed and dented, Hack's internal systems are in perfect repair, and its response to Moorclaw's complex mental commands is impressive for a machine of its age and cortex quality.

Moorclaw's connections continue to expand, and the trollkin mercenary continues to work for any who will hire him. He reluctantly repairs their machines, even complex designs he has never seen before, but his heart hungers for combat. In a flurry of gunshots from his warjacks and his slug gun, Moorclaw charges into battle against any odds, swinging his axe wildly at enemies who would bar his path.





GASTONE CROSSE

MERCENARY CHARACTER SOLO

The Khadorans got rid of the nobles. Now we just need to get rid of the Khadorans.

—Gastone Crosse

CROSSE							
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	CMD	
6	5	5	5	14	14	7	



GYPSY KISS				
RNG	ROF	AOE	POW	
12	2	—	12	



KNIFE		
POW	P+S	
3	8	

FOCUS	4
DAMAGE	5
FIELD ALLOWANCE	C
POINT COST	3
SMALL BASE	

Mercenary – This model will work for Cygnar, Protectorate, and the Four Star and Talion contracts.

CROSSE

☠ Fearless

Dodge – This model can advance up to 2" immediately after an enemy attack that missed it is resolved unless it was missed while advancing. It cannot be targeted by free strikes during this movement.

Flank [warjack] – When

this model makes a melee attack against an enemy model within the melee range of a friendly model of the type indicated, this model gains +2 to attack rolls and gains an additional damage die.

Journeyman Warcaster – This model is not a warcaster but has the following warcaster special rules: Battlegroup Commander, Control Area, Focus Manipulation, Power Field, and Spellcaster.

Scavenger [Vanguard] – Reduce the point cost of Vanguard warjacks in this model's battlegroup by 1.

GYPSY KISS

☠ Magical Weapon

A natural at hit-and-run tactics, the bitter, reckless Gastone Crosse prefers to strike from a distance, whether with his powerful mechanical pistol Gypsy Kiss or the cannons of his warjacks. He lends his arcane power to extending the range of his battlegroup's firearms, while each kill provides them with a burst of arcane speed.

Gastone spent his childhood as a gutter rat in the slums of Merywyn, scavenging and stealing to keep himself and his mother alive. He learned early on the need to keep a ready blade and to know how to use it. His crimes, temper, and insolent attitude eventually earned him a stint as child labor in a machine factory. Being scrawny, Gastone could get inside machines to clean them, a dangerous job usually given to gobbers, and he immediately began working to escape. When he returned home to learn that his mother had died, he felt his lifetime of desperation harden into a burning core of anger and resentment toward those in authority. The years that followed would have been even bleaker for the orphaned boy if he had not been taken in by strangers who were themselves hopelessly poor.

As far as Gastone could tell, the country's laws hurt people more than helping them, while the wealthy simply went about their self-indulgent lives. Because of this he took

SPELLS

	COST	RNG	AOE	POW	UP	OFF
--	------	-----	-----	-----	----	-----

FIRE GROUP	2	SELF	CTRL	—	NO	NO
While in this model's control area, the ranged weapons of models in its battlegroup gain +2 RNG. Fire Group lasts for one turn.						

MOVING SHADOWS	2	SELF	CTRL	—	YES	NO
-----------------------	---	------	------	---	-----	----

While in this model's control range, models in its battlegroup gain Gun-and-Run. (At the end of its activation, if a model with Gun-and-Run destroyed one or more enemy models with ranged attacks this activation it can make a full advance.)

TACTICAL TIP

JOURNEYMAN WARCASTER – This model is a non-warcaster model and is not affected by special rules that specifically affect warcasters. Models with the Attached rule cannot be attached to this model.

particular pleasure in fleecing nobles, though he would steal from anyone in a pinch. Some of his arcane abilities awakened early, granting him what he saw as merely extraordinary luck in tough scrapes. Eventually he talked his way into a menial labor job in a mechanic's shop, where his dexterity and resourcefulness proved valuable in working on steamjacks and other machinery.

When the Llaeese War threw the country into chaos, Gastone was not sorry to see many nobles put to death, but the Khadorans proved a poor replacement. A number of his friends died during the siege of Merywyn, while others fled to Rhydden. With each loss, Gastone's hatred grew for those in charge of what had been his country.

It was amid the post-invasion turmoil that Gastone managed to steal the Gypsy Kiss, unaware of the weapon's full power. Shortly thereafter his warcaster talent began to reveal itself, though he had yet to learn how to harness it. The enigmatic pistol also brought him new enemies, and its acquisition marked a significant turn in Gastone's destiny.

Not long thereafter, Gastone encountered Marshal Ashlynn d'Elyse of the Llaeese Resistance, who saw raw potential in him. She convinced the initially reluctant thief to go with her to Rhydden, where she has taken the first steps in his warcaster instruction, hoping he might prove useful to their cause. Gastone is learning everything he can from her, but he does not see himself as a Resistance fighter. He hates the idea of working with an organization that seeks to reinstate the Llaeese government, but he also knows the value of contacts and allies. Through the Resistance he has access to the warjacks and supplies he needs to have a shot at punishing those who have made so many lives miserable. For now he is willing to earn his keep as a mercenary so long as everyone knows he is beholden to no one.



MODEL GALLERY



EIRYSS, MAGE HUNTER COMMANDER
Retribution Epic Character Unit Attachment



ISSYRIA, SYBIL OF DAWN
Retribution Warcaster



RALUK MOORCLAW, THE IRONMONGER
Mercenary Minion Trollkin Character Solo



KOMMANDER ZOKTAVIR, THE BUTCHER UNLEASHED
Khador Epic Warcaster Unit



STORMBLADE CAPTAIN
Cygnar Storm Knight Solo



IRON FANG KOVNIK
Khador Solo



EXEMPLAR BASTION SENESCHAL
Protectorate Solo



HOUSEGUARD THANE
Retribution Solo

GHORDSON EARTHBREAKER
Mercenary Rhulic Colossal





TACTICAL ARCANIST CORPS
Mercenary Rhulic Unit



MAGE HUNTER INFILTRATORS
Retribution Unit



SKARLOCK COMMANDER
Cryx Thrall Unit Attachment





TEMPEST BLAZERS
Cygnar Arcane Tempest Light Cavalry Unit



FLAME BRINGERS
Protectorate Flameguard Light Cavalry Unit



GREYLOD OUTRIDERS
Khador Light Cavalry Unit



BANE RIDERS
Cryx Cavalry Unit

PAINTING GUIDE

WARMACHINE: Vengeance presents a wide variety of models that will provide intrepid painters with a wealth of new challenges. All the new light cavalry offer plentiful opportunities to paint realistic horses of different breeds. This book also brings Rhul's first huge-based model thundering

onto the table, giving hobbyists a chance to work on a larger surface. For an inside look at completing character models, we take you through a detailed step-by-step description of painting the new Retribution warcaster Issyria. Read on, and prepare yourself to take on these challenges undaunted.



ISSYRIA, SYBIL OF DAWN

	Arcane Blue		Exile Blue		Morrow White		Sanguine Highlight
	Battledress Green		Frostbite		Murderous Magenta		Thamar Black
	Beaten Purple		Greatcoat Grey		Necrotite Green		Traitor Green
	Carnal Pink		Ironhull Grey		Pig Iron		Trollblood Base
	Coal Black		Menoth White Base		Quick Silver		Underbelly Blue
	Cryx Bane Base		Menoth White Highlight		Ryn Flesh		Umbral Umber
	Cryx Bane Highlight		Midlund Flesh		Sanguine Base		

Issyria, Sybil of Dawn is a beautiful and unique addition to the Retribution of Scyrah's warcaster lineup. This comprehensive step-by-step describes how to bring this character to life.

Step 1) Prime the model with Formula P3 Black primer, and then give it a light coating of P3 White Primer from above. This will help the light paint colors coat the model and will serve as a guide for the highlighting and shading.

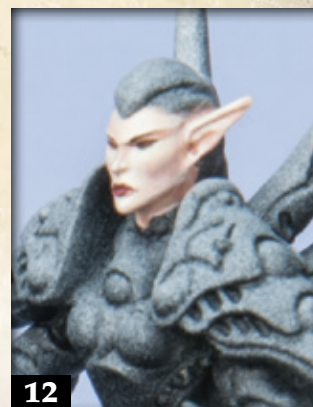
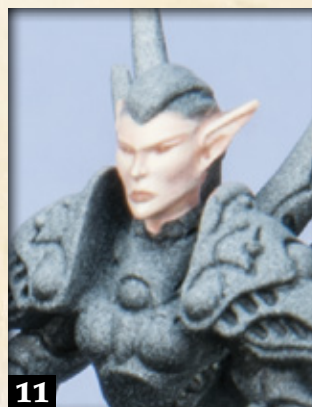
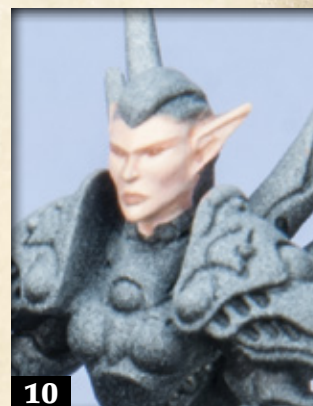
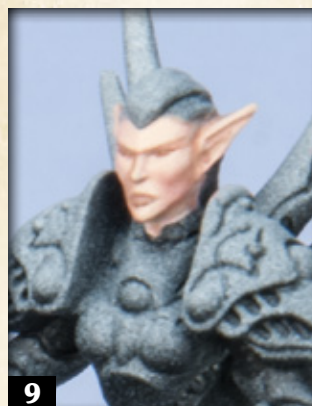
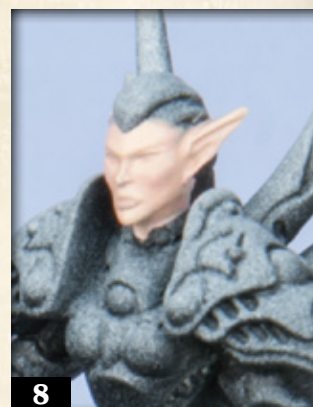
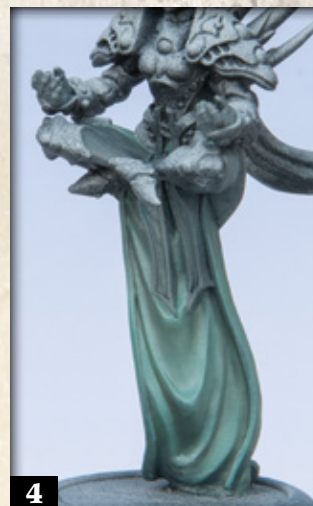
Step 2) Basecoat the cloth and leather areas. Use Greatcoat Grey for the lower legs and tabard and a mixture of Traitor Green and Trollblood Base for the skirt.

Step 3) Shade the green areas with a mixture of Traitor Green, Trollblood Base, and Cryx Bane Base.

Step 4) For the final shading layer, use a mixture of Cryx Bane Base and Sanguine Base.

Step 5) Use a mixture of Traitor Green, Trollblood Base, and Midlund Flesh to highlight the green areas.

Step 6) Add Underbelly Blue to the paint mixture from step 5 and use this for the final highlights.



Step 7) With the green finished, move on to painting the skin. Begin by basecoating the flesh with a mixture of Ryn Flesh and Menoth White Base.

Step 8) Create a mixture of Ryn Flesh and Sanguine Highlight and carefully glaze it into the lines and recesses of the face for shading. Apply additional shading to the flesh with a mixture of Battledress Green and Ryn Flesh.

Step 9) Mix Sanguine Highlight and Battledress Green and carefully blend this into the shadows using the glazing technique.

Step 10) Highlight the skin using glazes and a mixture of Ryn Flesh and Menoth White Highlight.

Step 11) Bring in final highlights with glazes of Menoth White Highlight.

Step 12) Lastly, add details to the face. Carefully apply thin black lines to define the eyebrows; then define the lips with Sanguine Highlight.



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Step 13) Basecoat the armor with a mixture of Morrow White and Underbelly Blue. You will add other colors to this mixture to use for shading in the upcoming steps.

Step 14) Add Cryx Bane Highlight to the armor basecoat mixture and use this to subtly shade the armor.

Step 15) Add Ironhull Grey to the existing shade mixture and use this to apply additional shadows to the armor.

Step 16) Mix Greatcoat Grey, Exile Blue, and a small dot of Thamar Black for shading the overhanging portions of the armor. Then use the mixture to apply line shadows to separate the various sections of armor.

Step 17) Apply Thamar Black lines to the hair to add texture and shading. Highlight the grey areas with a mixture of Greatcoat Grey and Cryx Bane Highlight.

Step 18) Add Frostbite to the mixture of Greatcoat Grey and Cryx Bane Highlight and use this to give additional highlights to the grey areas.

Step 19) Mix equal parts Necrotite Green, Arcane Blue, and Carnal Pink for the glowing channels in the armor. Thin the paint and allow it to flow into the recesses of the channels.

Step 20) Use Menoth White Highlight to highlight the areas where the channels intersect, reinforcing the glowing effect.

Step 21) Highlight the hair using Carnal Pink. At this point the highlights and shadows are very stark.

Step 22) Mix Sanguine Highlight with Beaten Purple and thin the paint to a glaze consistency. Apply this glaze to the hair in multiple layers to bring the stark highlights and shadows toward a midtone.

Step 23) Mix Beaten Purple and Sanguine Base, thin the paint to a glaze, and use the glaze to shade the hair. This application is similar to the previous step but the glaze should be applied more sparingly.

Step 24) Highlight the hair with Carnal Pink. Try to imagine the light glinting off the hair during this step.

Step 25) Mix Murderous Magenta with Beaten Purple and thin the mixture to a glaze. Use this to help blend the highlights, accentuate the volume, and add vibrancy to the hair.

Step 26) Using a mixture of Sanguine Base, Umbral Umber, and a dot of Thamar Black apply extra shading to the overhanging areas and pick out any texture that has been lost in the previous steps. Sparingly add some final glinting highlights with a mixture of Carnal Pink and Menoth White Highlight.



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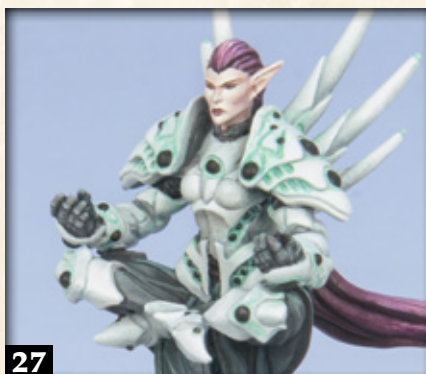
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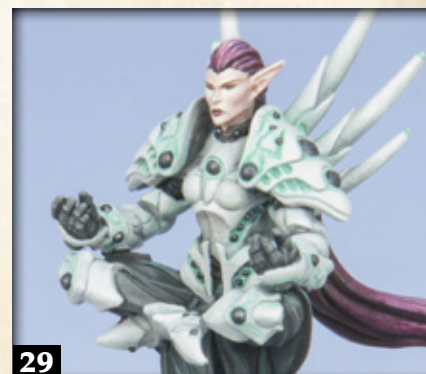
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Step 27) Black out the metal pods with Thamar Black to prepare them for metallic paint.

Step 28) Basecoat the metal pods with a solid coating of Pig Iron.

Step 29) Carefully shade the pods with a mixture of Beaten Purple and Coal Black.

Step 30) Apply the final details. Highlight the armor with Morrow White, highlight the metal pods with Quicksilver, and finish the eyes.



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GHORDSON EARTHBREAKER

The Ghordson Earthbreaker represents the most imposing weaponry available to the mercenaries of Rhul. This colossal is fashioned from some of the best steel in Immoren, whose strength and resistance to weathering make it an especially valuable material for constructs used in military campaigns. The studio paint job for the Earthbreaker reflects this with a torso free from rust but still appropriate for a battle-worn machine of war. Carefully following these steps will allow you to re-create the studio scheme or adapt the concepts for use with your own army colors.

Step 1) Prime the Earthbreaker black and apply a solid coat of Cold Steel to all parts of the model. To avoid clogs while applying Formula P3 metallics with your airbrush, it is important to thin the paint and strain it through wire or nylon mesh.

Step 2) Apply two coats of aerosol hair spray to the model. Then apply a coat of Hammerfall Khaki to the large armor plates, being careful to avoid spraying the triangular insignias. It is important to keep this coat of paint slightly translucent; you want to be able to see the silver showing through slightly.

Step 3) Use masking tape to mask off the area surrounding the triangular insignias on the forearm and shoulder plates.

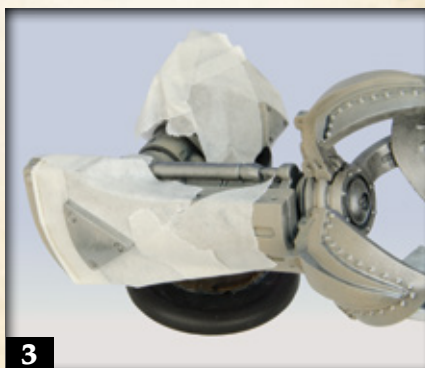
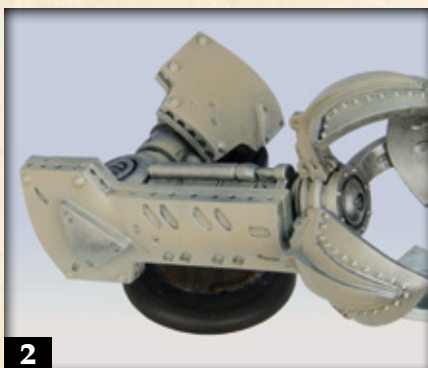
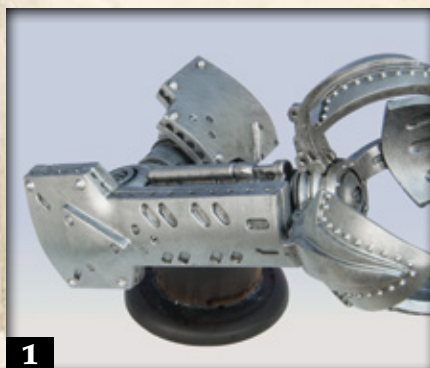
Step 4) Apply a mixture of Skorne Red and Khador Red Base to the insignias with an airbrush, then remove the masking tape.

 Jack Bone
 Brass Balls
 Cold Steel
 Exile Blue
 Greatcoat Grey
 Gun Corps Brown
 Hammerfall Khaki
 Khador Red Base

 Menoth White Highlight
 Midlund Flesh
 Quicksilver
 Sanguine Base
 Skorne Red
 Thamar Black
 Umbral Umber

Step 5) Use the blunt side of a Formula P3 hobby knife to make a few light scratches in the surface. Apply clean water to the surface of the model using a brush. If the paint was left suitably translucent, this water will penetrate the top layer of paint and dissolve the hair spray underneath. You can then chip and weather the loosened paint using a Formula P3 small drybrush. Finally, apply a coat of matte varnish to fix the paint to the model, preventing further chipping.

Step 6) Combine a little mixing medium with Gun Corps Brown and use this to shade the khaki areas. The mixing medium keeps the brown translucent so that it does not cover up the nice chipping achieved in step 5.





Step 7) Add paint streaks to the model using the two-brush technique. To do this, apply dabs of 'Jack Bone and then use a damp brush to blend them into streaks with quick up-and-down motions.

Step 8) Repeat this for additional streaks with a mixture of Greatcoat Grey and Gun Corps Brown.

Step 9) Next, shade the chips using Thamar Black and highlight them with a mixture of 'Jack Bone and Menoth White Highlight to create a three-dimensional effect.

Step 10) Then use this highlight mixture to highlight the armor plates as well.

Step 11) Add brass accents to the metal areas using Brass Balls. These accents will break up the metal sections and add some areas of interest.

Step 12) If any metal areas have received overspray, basecoat them by hand with Cold Steel. Then shade all the metal areas with Greatcoat Grey.

Step 13) Apply additional shading to the metal areas with a mixture of Exile Blue and Umbral Umber.

Step 14) Shade the red insignias with a mixture of Sanguine Base and Umbral Umber.

Step 15) Use a mixture of Skorne Red and Midlund Flesh to highlight the insignias.

Step 16) Coat the model with matte varnish and allow it to dry. Finally, highlight the metal areas, using Quicksilver for the steel areas and a mixture of Brass Balls and Quicksilver for the brass areas.

PAINTING HORSES

A number of releases in *WARMACHINE: Vengeance* are cavalry models mounted on horses. Painting these mounts can present a unique challenge for hobbyists who have not painted these animals before.

For painting miniatures the most common approach is to paint each area one solid color and then follow with shading and highlighting in that area. Horses, though—and animals in general—often have drastic shifts in color as well as patterns and markings, which should be the focus. Reference material is important when attempting to achieve a convincing look, and there are some specialized techniques you can use to obtain the best results.

HORSE EYES

Painting human eyes on horses will make them look a bit strange, as the construction of the eyes is not the same in both species. In a horse eye, the cornea takes up a much larger area of the eyeball than in a human eye. For this reason the eyes of a horse need to be painted differently than those of a human.

Step 1) Paint the entire eyeball with Thamar Black.

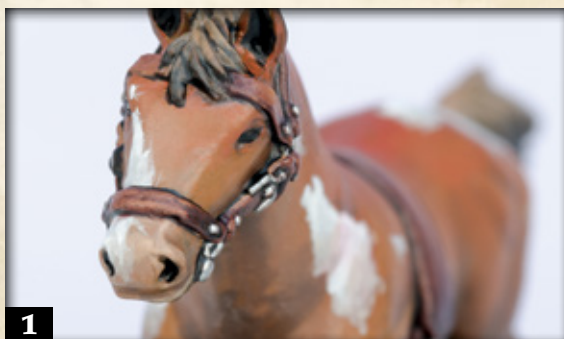
Step 2) Apply a white dot with Morrow White to each corner of the eye with a fine detail brush.



Morrow White



Thamar Black



BREEDS OF HORSES



KHADORAN HORSES

Horse breeding in Khador is a noble and ancient tradition going back thousands of years among those of the southern and eastern plains. To represent these breeds we chose dark browns and greys with less patterning to suggest pure breeds. The breeds referenced for the Khadoran Greylord Outriders were the Thoroughbred, Oldenburg, and Friesian.



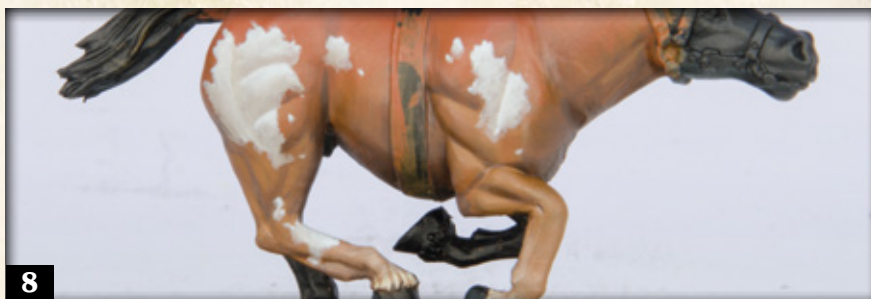
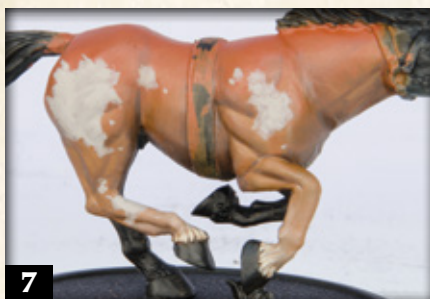
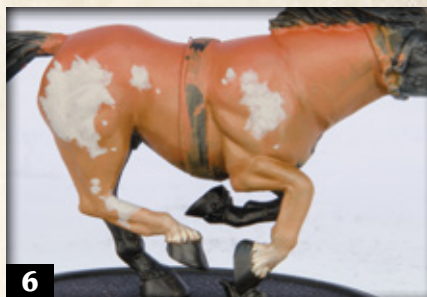
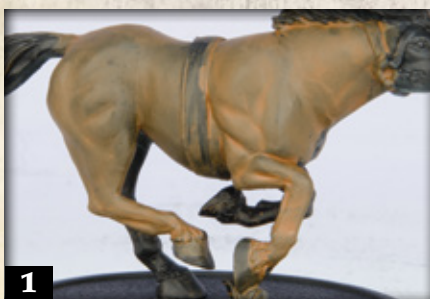
CYGNARAN HORSES

As a strong center of trade and culture, the horse breeders of Cygnar draw on local breeds from the Midlunds bred with stock from across the Iron Kingdoms. To represent the horse breeds of Cygnar we chose a variety of colors and patterns that complement the Cygnaran blue color scheme. The breeds referenced for the Cygnaran Tempest Blazers were the Newfoundland pony, Andalusian, and palomino.



HORSES OF THE PROTECTORATE

Great herds of wild horses once roamed the Bloodstone Marches on the eastern fringes of the Iron Kingdoms, including the area that is now the southern interior of the Protectorate of Menoth. To acquire mounts the Protectorate of Menoth trade with the Idrians for horses culled and broken from what remains of these herds of wild mustangs. The breeds referenced for the Protectorate horses were Appaloosa and American Paint Horse.



'Jack Bone



Bloodstone



Exile Blue



Rucksack Tan



Battlefield Brown



Bloodtracker Brown



Morrow White



Trollblood Highlight

WET BLENDING HORSES

Wet blending is simply blending two colors together on a model while both are still wet. This technique is perfect for creating the drastic color transitions needed to bring the mounts to life.

Step 1) To prepare the surface for wet blending lay down one layer of a midtone color—in this case, Bloodtracker Brown—on the whole area. The purpose of this step is to help with paint coverage in later steps.

Step 2) Apply a block of color to the back of the horse and allow it to dry. Here we used Bloodstone.

Step 3) Reapply Bloodstone to the transition area of the coat, and then quickly apply Bloodtracker Brown like a basecoat onto the model starting with the legs and working upward until it blends with the wet Bloodstone. Note that the picture shows only the back quarter blended. This is because it is wise to split the model into quarters for this step unless you are comfortable painting quickly.

Step 4) Now create the transition on the legs. Reapply Bloodtracker Brown to the top of the legs, and then apply a mixture of Rucksack Tan and 'Jack Bone to the bottom of the legs like a basecoat. As your basecoat application reaches the wet Bloodtracker Brown the paints will blend together.

Step 5) Feather 'Jack Bone onto the fetlock of each leg to complete the transition. There is no need to wet blend this step.

Step 6) For a spotted horse, apply spots freehand at this stage using Trollblood Highlight.

Step 7) Apply shading to the horse using Battlefield Brown with a dot of Exile Blue and a dot of mixing medium added to it. Avoid any freehanded spots while shading.

Step 8) To highlight freehanded spots, use a mixture of Morrow White and Trollblood Highlight.

BREAKING POINT

PART TWO

THE WYTHMOOR, SOUTHEASTERN ORD

The Cryxian column worked its way through the swampy ground of the Wythmoor. Lich Lord Malathrax had chosen the route himself, based on his slight familiarity with the region. Their speed was greatly inhibited by the massive wagon bearing the athanc. Its undercarriage had been repaired as well as possible after the collapse of the underground passage, but they lacked the materials to do a proper job. It listed to the left, and as it moved there was a scraping sound from one of the axles that suggested friction. The terrain was a continual problem. Venethrax brooded about every delay but pushed on. He made it clear that nothing would stand in the way of him delivering his prize to Toruk.

Despite these problems Malathrax now estimated they were just days from the Dragon's Tongue River and their rendezvous with Skarre Ravenmane. He had to admit that things had been proceeding smoothly since Terminus and his reinforcements joined the column.

In the reports Malathrax had received from his agents and minions came the unexpected news that the dragonspawn army closing behind them had been intercepted by forces of the Circle Orboros. According to his scouts this had only delayed them, though. More spawn and blighted Nyss were closing from the north and would reach them before they arrived at the river. Battle was inevitable.

This had presented a personal quandary for Malathrax, who chafed at the presence of the two other lich lords. Nothing had proceeded as he had intended, not since Deneghra had entered had into his plans. In retrospect it had been a severe miscalculation to try to topple Asphyxious by manipulating the wraith witch. Malathrax had been forced to face the fact that Asphyxious was not the architect of Morbus' downfall; improbable as it seemed, Deneghra had arranged that herself. He had badly underestimated her.

Malathrax knew the athanc should have been his, its delivery to Toruk his crowning achievement. He had sacrificed much and bent all his resources toward its discovery. After his initial plans had gone awry, he had attached himself to Venethrax in hopes of making up for that setback. If things continued unchecked, it would be Venethrax who would succeed and receive all of Toruk's accolades; Malathrax's own contributions would be forgotten. Such an outcome was unthinkable.

Since he had first joined Venethrax, he had been secretly scrutinizing the athanc's containment device to discern how it was controlled. This was facilitated by a difficult arcane technique he had mastered centuries ago that allowed him to function in more than one place simultaneously

for a short time. It was a warping of reality that created a convincing simulacrum while his ghostly essence acted invisibly nearby.

Armed with what he had learned and what Lord Exhumator Scaverous had told him of the wagon's construction, he was confident he could manipulate the containment field. So long as Terminus and Venethrax remained vigilant, however, there was no occasion to test that knowledge, let alone secure the athanc. The shimmering energy field with its constant thrum was too prominent for even a brief cessation to go unnoticed. Nevertheless, he had prepared elaborate plans to transport the athanc to Cryx.

This was, of course, a dangerous game. If evidence came to light that he had withheld assistance from Venethrax, it would be deemed a betrayal of Toruk and could justify his own destruction. His contingency plans involved compromises, however. In particular, the containment field that Venethrax and Scaverous had excavated from below Hellspass was unique. The ancient machinery had been maintained over the centuries by a cabal of dwarves set to the task by Zevanna Agha. Malathrax had prepared an alternate container for the athanc that would serve for a short time—long enough, he thought.

He did not believe they had to keep the athanc absolutely contained to succeed. Venethrax was overly cautious. He had his reasons—once freed, the athanc would try to reform a body. Its blight, at least, did not concern Venethrax; undead were unaffected by such energy. All the lich lords had stood before Toruk himself, whose power was far beyond that of his progeny. Also, with Everblight's minions pursuing them, it seemed too late to prevent the dragons from perceiving any blighted emissions.

Were he interested in aiding Venethrax, he might have pushed for them to abandon the containment device and hasten toward Cryx. As it was, the delays represented a narrowing chance Malathrax could restore his schemes. By the time they set the athanc aboard Skarre's vessel, it would be too late. He had agents in Five Fingers who might try to intercept Skarre before she left the Bay of Stone, but it would be impossible for him to arrange that without revealing himself as the architect of a conspiracy against Venethrax. That, too, would result in his destruction.

It was with these thoughts that Malathrax received one of the spiderlike necroservitors that periodically returned to him with information. It scuttled up his robes and through one of its many rents to lodge itself against the steel segments of his spine. It then retracted its legs and connected to him, thereby allowing him to perceive all it had done and seen.

The necroservitor had been set to observe Point Bourne. For weeks it had been watching the city's northern road from a hidden position, instructed to return to him only at the emergence of an army from the city.

As if he were there, Malathrax scanned the ranks of soldiers and warjacks. First came Storm Knights, both on foot and astride steeds, followed by numerous trenchers, long gunners, and rangers as well as a cadre of Morrowan Precursor Knights. It was not difficult to identify the warcaster Coleman Stryker, who had recently helped lead the assault on Asphyxious' necrofactorium.

Within moments a way to exploit this information had assembled in his mind. He moved swiftly forward and bade Venethrax and Terminus to listen. Venethrax had been marching in front of the wagon to ensure its smooth progress, while Terminus marched behind it, towering above the army he commanded. Malathrax quickly outlined the situation.

"We have Everblight's 'legion' converging rapidly from the north and a Cygnaran army approaching from the southeast," he concluded. "I think it highly likely that if we proceed as planned, both forces will reach us before we arrive at our destination. Our strength exceeds either individually, but overcoming both could be problematic."

"How do they know where we are?" Terminus demanded, as if suggesting Malathrax were personally at fault.

"We are too large a force to pass unseen," Malathrax said. "We must assume they know our course, at least roughly."

Venethrax glowered at Malathrax and said, "We press on. Whatever stands in our way will be obliterated."

Typical, Malathrax thought. He replied, "Yes, we press on. However, I have the means to ease the way. I see no need to deplete our forces prematurely." They said nothing, so he continued. "We can arrange for the Cygnarans to find our trail after we have apparently altered our course. The ruse will require slightly delaying our arrival, but if done properly we can steer the Cygnarans into Everblight's minions. Our two problems can neutralize one another, or at least be slowed sufficiently for us to reach the river unhindered."

Terminus pondered this and said, "They may not prove predictable."

"Perhaps," Malathrax admitted. "I think it worth the effort to try."

"Agreed," Terminus said without hesitation. "Do what you must to lure them." Venethrax inclined his head, deferring to the others now that he was satisfied they did not intend to divert his mission severely.

Malathrax wasted no time initiating what he had planned, starting with altering the course of the athanc wagon to veer northwest. He sent a half-dozen of his necroservitors to convey his orders and position themselves where needed. Knowing the Cygnarans would require additional assistance in finding the trail, he had already prepared a second force to meet them.

Terminus was correct in how narrow the timing would truly be, a fact he hoped to exploit for his own purposes. He intended for their enemies to converge on them simultaneously, which would force Venethrax and Terminus into battle. While they were preoccupied, the athanc would be his at last.



Two days had passed since Lord General Stryker and his army had marched from Point Bourne. Captain Krave had given them maps for the area, but the difficult terrain had hindered their advance as they moved northwest into Ordic territory and the Wythmoor. The course was treacherous, particularly for a sizable force including heavily armored knights and warjacks. Although the ground had somewhat hardened with the onset of winter, they still had to proceed carefully. Stryker hoped the Cryxians would be similarly inhibited. He worried about the two missing ranger teams he had sent ahead.

Before his army had left Point Bourne he had received word from Artificer General Nemo asking for reinforcements at Calbeck, suggesting something larger than anticipated was happening there. This added to Stryker's concerns about the safety of Point Bourne, including its citizens and the thousands of wounded recuperating there. The nightmare scenario would be for his force to become stuck in the quagmire here while the Cryxians circled around and attacked the poorly defended city.

Such were the thoughts occupying him as he sat astride his horse Valorous watching the rest of his army prepare to move after having encamped for the night. Each night tension in the camp had been thick, with an awareness of potential hostilities. After so long battling Cryx the men had limited confidence in the effectiveness of their pickets and patrols to alert them to attack.

"Happy New Year, General," Captain Jocen Ashdown of the Tempest Blazers said, guiding his own horse closer and bringing the warcaster a tin cup of coffee.

Stryker took the cup and looked at the neatly groomed gun mage captain in surprise. "New Year?"

"That's right," the man said with a small smile. "Glacius the first, six-oh-nine. Some of the men tried to do a bit of



celebrating last night, but we put a stop to it. We allowed a single drink to those not on watch, though." Traditionally the end of the year was marked with Giving Day, including gatherings between family and close friends to exchange small gifts. Stryker couldn't remember the last time he had celebrated the holiday. Maybe 603?

"That makes me pretty cold-hearted for summoning the men into the swamp," he said. "The timing had escaped me."

Ashdown shrugged. "Cryx doesn't honor holidays. The men know the priorities."

Their discussion was interrupted by the arrival of an agitated ranger. He reported having spotted a fast-moving Cryxian force to the northwest riding parallel to them. He thought the enemy might have already seen the Cygnaran column and were surveying its numbers.

It was important for Stryker to keep the strength of his forces unknown to the Cryxians as long as possible, so any such scouts needed to be eliminated. He assembled a small

and highly mobile force of Storm Lances and Tempest Blazers along with a few of his warjacks, including Ol' Rowdy, a Sentinel, and a Firefly. Rowdy was the slowest of them, but Stryker knew the stubborn machine would follow even if he told it to remain behind. He left Blaize in charge of the remainder of his force. Her authority within the Cygnaran Army was equivalent to that of a major, but Stryker's senior officers were well accustomed to the field command exercised by warcasters.

Stryker and his escort galloped off, his warjacks following. He invoked runes to surround Ol' Rowdy and fuel its pace and battle prowess. Even if the 'jack fell behind, this magic would enable it to maintain top speed.

He addressed the officers who rode with him, which included Captain Kline Goodwin of the Storm Lances and Captain Ashdown leading a squad of veteran Tempest Blazers. "I need them neutralized as quickly as possible." They affirmed his orders and passed instructions to their subordinates.

Stryker paced their advance so the warjacks could keep up and sent the Blazers to fan out ahead, since they had the fastest steeds and could react quickest.

He drew Quicksilver, checked the mechanika housing and storm chamber in the hilt, and activated the weapon. It emitted a deep thrum, and sparks crackled along the blade. The storm smiths had modified the weapon to be able to fire a powerful blast of electrical energy, freeing him from the need to carry a pistol. Its range was short, but it was more powerful than even Storm Lance weaponry.

As they moved between two low hills there was a shout from one of the Tempest Blazers on the left as soulhunters came galloping over the hill on that side, scythes and sickles in hand. They were horrific creatures, unnatural amalgams of human flesh stitched to necrotite-fueled equine bodies. It was impossible not to look on them without fear and revulsion, knowing they had the power to tear away living souls and collect them for their masters.

The nearest Blazers reacted quickly, yanking reins with one hand while leveling rune-inscribed pistols in the other to fire at the oncoming undead. Mystically empowered bullets tore through the two soulhunters in the lead, piercing

through pallid flesh and shattering the machinery beneath to topple them down the hillside.

The rest of the horrors closed on them with wicked speed. Expert riders, the gun mages evaded the first strikes, ducking under wide swings and spurring their horses beyond others. Despite this, one of the sergeants on the left flank was cut down with a brutal blow that tore him off his steed and nearly severed his head as his body tumbled to the ground.

More soulhunters came over the rise even as the Storm Lances rushed to support the gun mages, charging their weapons and then firing crackling bolts of electricity. Several of the shots went wide of the quickly moving soulhunters. The knights wasted no time maneuvering for additional shots and were already charging to take the enemy down with powerful impacts from their lances. Runes surrounded the Storm Lances as Stryker empowered them to strike with brutal finality.

Stryker's instincts told him there were threats yet to reveal themselves. He trusted his knights to finish their melee and looked through the eyes of his warjacks to scan the hillsides. He spotted a number of dark forms rushing from the opposite side of the narrow ravine and prepared himself. He directed his closest 'jack, the Firefly, to fire a searing bolt of voltaic energy into one of several mounted bane thralls emerging from between the trees. Their eyes glowed with hate, and they gave ghostly howls as they charged.

Stryker pulled Valorous about and fired at the first bane rushing at him with its long, wicked sword raised. It was practically on top of him before lightning sent it shuddering from its rotting steed. Stryker reared back and Valorous' hooves crushed the unholy mount's skull. With a hiss of vented steam, Rowdy moved alongside him to batter two more banes to oblivion with its quake hammer. The 'jack protected Stryker's flank as he charged into another, his horse's barding unleashing crackling arcs of electricity into several more. The air was split by the sound of his Sentinel firing a continuous stream of lead. At Stryker's urging, both of the light 'jacks waded into melee to assist the nearest knights while he sent a series of arcane explosions into the last approaching banes.

With a short clash of steel most of the undead were destroyed and the fight was over. Two of the Tempest Blazers had been slain and three Storm Knights were down. At least one of those yet lived, and another knight leapt down to assist him back to his feet and onto his steed, although he looked unsteady. Each casualty was a blow, but Stryker knew it could have been worse. This had felt more like an ambush than an encounter with a reconnaissance force.

He felt his Sentinel become aware of additional enemies. He looked through its eyes and saw a small group of undead

atop a neighboring hill, including several more soulhunters surrounding a spectral figure: a pistol wraith on a ghostly steed. One of the Blazers had also seen the creature and spurred his warhorse closer, raising a magelock to fire as he did. The wraith was faster. Its ghostly hands were a blur as it fired both pistols unerringly into the chest of the unfortunate gun mage, who slumped back and fell off his horse. The wraith kicked its mount and fled into the trees.

"After them!" Stryker ordered, already spurring Valorous into a full gallop. He compelled his warjacks to follow. The Blazers had suffered badly in the encounter and now Captain Ashdown was down to a single man, but the pair raced after the wraith, followed by the heavier cavalry led by Stryker. Rowdy let loose a blast of steam as the warcaster began to pull away.

Stryker felt a considerable urgency to stop the pistol wraith, surmising it was the leader of this force, the one that would report what it had seen of his army. Unfortunately the ghostlike creature and steed passed straight through trees and underbrush as if they were not there.

The wraith veered off the easier path and into the deeper swamps, where the ground was treacherous. Its unnatural steed raced across the surface of boggy ponds without so much as a splash and did not sink into the murk. Stryker ordered his Tempest Blazers after it; they were trained to deal with uncertain terrain, and their nimble Ordic steeds remained sure-footed. He followed as well, though his own horse was wary of its footing. He had to ensure the spy was destroyed.

Off to his right, his Storm Lances closed on the soulhunters, which had to contend with the terrain as corporeal creatures. Still, they proved difficult to pin down as they wove between dank, moss-covered trees, using them as cover. The Storm Lances fired electrified bolts as they closed. Stryker lost track of them except by the sounds of shouted commands and the discharge of voltaic weaponry. He realized he had now been now drawn well away from his main forces, which was a risk, but his Blazers were closing on the wraith.

Sergeant Kline, Captain Ashdown's remaining Blazer, got a shot off on the flank of the ghostly steed, but the mount did not falter. The pistol wraith turned back to put a shot through the man's forehead. Stryker gritted his teeth but could do little, as he had fallen farther behind. He felt a sick tightening in his stomach as Ashdown neared, pushing his own horse to its limits as he raised his magelock. The wraith twisted out of the way, but the shot had not been for him and struck the head of his undead steed instead, shredding the creature's ghostly essence like black cloth.

The wraith did not tumble from its mount as a corporeal rider would have but drifted down gracefully and turned toward the gun mage. With casual grace it fired two shots

at the captain. The first one pierced Ashdown's upper chest; the other, his cheek. The wraith turned away and rushed on. Stryker closed, feeling the knot in his stomach become a hardened ball of hate. Those gun mages had been good men with years of hard-won experience, yet that unholy thing had slaughtered them in moments. How many other people had it gunned down?

There was a break in the trees as the wraith swept up a sharply inclined hillside that fronted a broad ravine. Stryker could hear flowing water below. If the wraith reached the ravine it could drift across without hindrance and escape his reach. The open ground gave him the chance he needed to close, as his horse no longer needed to avoid lacerating branches or rotted tree trunks.

He pointed Quicksilver at the wraith's back as he galloped up the slope behind it. The creature sensed him coming and turned to fire. Time seemed to slow, and Stryker ducked his head as the first bullet screamed past. The second impacted his power field and disintegrated. He focused all his will into Quicksilver and triggered the blast. The burst of lightning that emerged blossomed into a whirling ball of energy that consumed the wraith, sending it to oblivion in a blinding flash of white. This brought Stryker only small satisfaction as he brought his horse to a sliding stop near the top of the ridge.

The blood drained from his face when he looked past the ravine and saw the foggy landscape crawling with moving things. Among the slowly moving line he saw countless specks of green light; the color was so intrinsic to his recent experiences that he instantly knew it was the glow of necrotite-fueled machines. He was observing an extremely large Cryxian force, only a few hundred yards from his position. His elevated vantage atop the ridge gave him a particularly good perspective, although the fog and intervening foliage countered that somewhat. The wraith's masters were clearly closer than Stryker had thought.

His mind reeled. The Cryxians were not where they were supposed to be, and they were not moving the direction Cygnar's intelligence had indicated. His mind touched the cortexes of his various warjacks, both nearby and at a distance. These included ones he was connected to in the main army column, which still moved along its original course. Those were too far for him to control or communicate with, but sensing them enabled him to get his bearings.

It was difficult to gain an accurate count without a spyglass, but this was unquestionably no furtive Cryxian expedition slinking through the Wythmoor. This was a full army, one larger and more imposing than what he himself had cobbled together from the able-bodied men and women who had come through the attack on Point Bourne. He felt a growing despair. What were the depths

of Cryx's reserves? He could tell these were not simply thralls, as he could make out the shapes of helljacks and bonejacks in the distance. He also saw the flickering forms of what might have been Wraith Engines.

More compelling was the unmistakable towering form of Lich Lord Terminus. In his mind Stryker felt the distinct tingling of other warcasters—at least two. It was difficult to confirm which of the other silhouettes were warcasters, but he thought he saw a large one that did not match the configuration of any helljack he knew and was likely another iron lich. More ominous was the great wagon being hauled on enormous iron-banded wheels by helljacks and soulhunters. It was clearly the reason this force was moving slowly. The long, wide armored wagon carried a heavy load of churning machinery, which emitted sooty smoke into the air.

The machines appeared to power several concentric metal rings that spun above the wagon. Pulsing around these was some sort of energy field. It reminded him of an arcane turbine's power field, only larger and more visible. Given the wagon's position at the center of the Cryxians and the proximity of Terminus, it was important. Its function was impossible to gauge with certainty, but he thought it must be some sort of weapon.

Even as he had this thought Terminus turned toward him. The lich lord unleashed a piercing inhuman cry, raised a sword longer than an Ironclad was tall, and took to wing. A number of Scavenger bonejacks also launched into the air.

Stryker wheeled Valorous around and spurred him to gallop down the hill. He could tell his 'jacks had sensed his peril and were running as quickly as they could to reach him, but the long chase had left them well behind. He soon entered the murky ground between the trees and had to slow. Looking over his shoulder he saw Terminus sweeping through the air with his tattered and bladed wings blocking what dim light leaked through the winter clouds. Ahead of the lich flew his Scavengers.

At the sound of galloping ahead, Stryker realized Captain Goodwin and his Storm Lances were seeking him, and he gritted his teeth. He reached them as he emerged into a slight break in the trees, and they pulled up on their steeds.

"It's too late to retreat!" Captain Goodwin said. "We'd never make it!"

Stryker knew he was right; they had too far to go through boggy terrain. Terminus raced toward them over the treetops, green fire burning within his chest, eye slits, and open maw. Stryker pointed ahead, and together he and his men raced to the far end of the open gully to gain room to maneuver. There they wheeled about and raised lances humming with charged voltaic power.

"Charge!" Stryker shouted, raising Quicksilver.

Even as they spurred their warhorses forward, Terminus swept in on at an oblique angle. His murderous Scavengers moved ahead of him, their long-fanged jaws ready to bite. Bolts of lightning erupted from several lances, but the fliers easily evaded them.

Terminus opened his skeletal jaws to breathe a torrent of blazing green acid fire that washed across Stryker and three of the Storm Knights. The warcaster's power field shielded him from most of the burning liquid, but some penetrated to spatter across his shoulders and breastplate, where it began to eat through the metal.

The two nearest knights screamed as corrosive fire burned through armor to dissolve flesh. One died almost at once, his body and his horse's flesh dissolving together into a bloody mass, while another fell off his steed and clawed at his burning armor, trying to remove it. The third had been only lightly grazed, but her armor continued to burn. A Scavenger crashed into her. Her lance ripped into its metal chassis, but the creature's momentum carried it forward with lethal force. Both forms collapsed to the ground as the Scavenger continued tearing at her until being destroyed by another knight.

The remaining Scavengers rammed into other knights, sacrificing themselves to allow Terminus to close unscathed. He gave a deafening, metallic roar and cut through two of the embattled knights, his blade easily slicing through horses and men alike. Stryker said their names in his mind: Corporal Jassiter Olton, a young knight from Fellig, and Sergeant Ike Fairwayne, who had fought alongside him numerous times during the Caspia-Sul War.

Stryker gave a war cry and channeled his anger as he fired an electrical bolt from Quicksilver into Terminus and then spurred his steed ahead in a charge. He galloped across the intervening ground and leveraged all his strength into a swing. Quicksilver's edge struck the towering lich lord near the waist, cutting through his power field and into his armored side. Stryker yanked the blade loose to strike again even as Valorous reared and kicked with steel-shod hooves, sending lightning arcing through the lich to strike the nearest Scavengers.

The heavily armored lich was unfazed. His clawed right hand seized Stryker to tear him loose from Valorous, then hurled the Cygnaran warcaster across the clearing. Stryker smashed into a rotted tree trunk on the opposite side, shattering it, but his overboosted power field saved him from most of the impact. His leg twisted under him, and a wave of agony shot up his back from his old injury.

Struggling to breathe, he looked up to see Terminus extending his blade toward Captain Goodwin and Corporal

Lorimer—the last embattled knights, fighting side-by-side. They had just finished a Scavenger and turned their steeds to face the lich lord as green runes surrounded Terminus' blade and coalesced into unholy black energy. In a split second, this power erupted like cold fire to rend their very beings to dust. With disembodied shrieks their souls were torn loose and sucked into the soul cages dangling from the undead general's waist.

Terminus leapt toward Stryker, gliding through the air with wings outspread and sword raised to deliver a killing blow. Instinctively Stryker tried to raise Quicksilver, though strength had yet to return to his arms.

**"IT'S TOO LATE TO RETREAT!"
CAPTAIN GOODWIN SAID. "WE'D
NEVER MAKE IT!"**

The ground shuddered and he heard a whistle of venting steam. Ol' Rowdy barreled into sight, running on powerful legs. Seven tons of steel crashed into Terminus with a sound of metal on metal and sent the lich lord flying back into the trees behind him. Wincing, Stryker managed to regain his feet and nodded gratefully at Rowdy, which had turned its head to look at him. It adopted its battle posture facing the lich lord, quake hammer ready. Valorous had fled after Stryker had been thrown but had quickly circled back around to his side. Gritting his teeth against the pain in his back and leg, Stryker pulled himself into the saddle. His Sentinel and Firefly had caught up to him and rushed forward to flank Ol' Rowdy, standing between the lord general and his foe.

The Sentinel's chain gun whirled up to speed and it extended its shield protectively in front of him as Terminus stood back to his full height. The chain gun fired. The bullets skipped harmlessly off the lich's power field, but he paused. Suddenly he took to wing and flew back in the direction from which he had come. At no point did Stryker have the impression the ancient creature was cowed; Terminus' withdrawal seemed entirely a measured decision prompted by the warjacks joining the battle.

Stryker knew that he had narrowly escaped death and that the lich lord might renew the assault at any moment. Pushing his machines to follow as quickly as they could, he galloped back toward his army.





Malathrax did not bother to restrain his masks from showing his agitation toward Terminus even though he knew it was futile to call him to task. He felt compelled to say, "Why? Why did you attack? This was not the plan." He missed the era when he had been free to implement his plots without the interference of competing lich lords.

Terminus simply stared at him from his greater height and said calmly, "If the enemy offers you the chance to slay one of their generals, you must take it. If you do not understand this, that explains why you are not entrusted to lead the Dragonfather's armies."

"I intended them to find us," Malathrax said.

"And so they have," Terminus answered. "He will return to his army with word of our position and course. Had I slain him, they would have sent others to investigate his disappearance. We lost nothing more than a handful of

Scavengers. It was worth the risk. Indeed, were it not our priority to reach the river and Everblight's minions not closing on us, I would take another force and chase him down before he could return to his forces." Without another word, Terminus swept past him to return to the center of his army.

Malathrax let it go, although he had a feeling that this confrontation might have changed how Cygnar would react to their presence. He wanted to entice and lure them, not drive them away. All he could do now was watch them and be ready to adapt.



Stryker rode hard and was both relieved and surprised that he reached the army without Terminus dogging his heels. It had worked to his advantage that most of the Cryxians were inhibited by the terrain as badly as his own forces would be.

He sent additional rangers to see whether any Cryxians had followed him and ordered soldiers to take defensive positions in case of attack. Once they were arrayed and ready, they waited tensely. When no immediate alarm was given and the scouts reported no signs of a closing force, he summoned his senior officers.

His mind roiled with dark thoughts. So many good men had fallen, and he had not been able to recover their bodies. Even worse was the looming significance of what he had seen. He knew he had to make a difficult decision.

When his senior officers were with him, including Major Kline of the CRS and Constance Blaise, Stryker summarized what he had seen, emphasizing the size of the Cryxian force as well as the presence of Lich Lord Terminus and potentially multiple other liches or subordinate warcasters.

"This is not a conclusion I arrive at lightly," he said, "but after witnessing what is arrayed against us, I believe we are fortunate the enemy did not follow me. We are not ready to battle them. Our numbers are far insufficient to seize victory, particularly on a battlefield of their choosing. For now, we must withdraw to Point Bourne." He spoke succinctly and without emotion, as a leader must, but the words tasted like ashes. He remembered persuading Leto

about this expedition. The reasoning he had provided was still sound. Unfortunately, the numbers presented an irrefutable argument. He continued, "Once there we can reassess the best way to stop the Cryxians. I do not intend to let them escape, but we will need reinforcements."

A number of the officers looked relieved, but not Commander Montfort, the most passionate of the Storm Division's senior officers. His thick moustache quivered with his agitation. "You want us to march back to Point Bourne without so much as a fight?"

"We need more men, machines, and warcasters," interjected Commander Gant. "Kraye will be ready to fight again soon, and General Nemo may have completed his mission by now, as might have Sloan. I'd like to enter this fight on better than losing terms. General Stryker is right."

"We must not sacrifice soldiers to salve our pride," agreed Commander Bradher, who had been quietly listening. "Would it have served us in Sul, when the fight turned against us, to dig in our heels and die to the man? No, so we withdrew—and because we did, we were there to defend Caspia at its most desperate hour. If we chase these Cryxians into the swamp and then are defeated, they will almost certainly invade Point Bourne again."

Stryker shared a look with Blaize, who had also been listening. She appeared troubled.

Montfort was not ready to concede. "They didn't follow General Stryker because they have a different goal. Are we going to let them pass, with whatever new weapon they've created? What if they're marching on Ceryl, a city of three hundred thousand souls? It's ill prepared for an attack by land, and by the time we gather additional forces, the enemy will be gone."

Major Kline spoke up, perhaps hoping to add some support to Stryker's argument. "Chasing them down in the Wythmoor would be quite perilous. There are significant geographical barriers for a column our size and only a single route to reach the Cryxians. We'd have to march double-time and swing around north in a wide loop. Meanwhile, they'd know we were coming and could ambush us at any turn. We have to let them go. We can alert Ceryl and other communities to the west and track their movements while we muster additional forces."

"This isn't a debate," Stryker said firmly. "We're returning to Point Bourne." He was troubled by the same doubts Montfort had voiced, but he could not throw away his army. Seeing Stryker was decided, the other commanders swallowed any other objections.

They were interrupted by an urgent courier with information from Captain Sloan. They listened to the report of another Cryxian force waiting on the Dragon's

Tongue River with well-armed riverboats, apparently led by Skarre Ravenmane.

"Another warcaster," Gant said, his face pale. "Something big is afoot, make no mistake."

Stryker closed his eyes for a moment, fighting to conceal the despair the news stirred in him. Skarre being on the river explained why the lich lord had not followed him; she was clearly awaiting Terminus. The Cryxians were close to their goal. Once they were aboard those vessels, they could go anywhere they wished; there would be no time to alert any other forces to intercept them. He still did not know their ultimate purpose, but if the column reached the river, there would be little that could stop them.

Cryx had confounded them at every turn. *We cannot stand before them*, he thought. He feared they had passed a point of no return. Cryx had too much momentum, gained while Khador and Cygnar were slaughtering one another. The nations' generals thought they were just now entering a conflict, but it seemed they were already checkmated. He knew his army had no hope of defeating Terminus' force, but the thought of allowing them to reach those boats uncontested turned his stomach. He opened his eyes and drew a breath to speak but stopped when he saw Blaize's expression.

"There are times," she said, "when we must fight, even if we know we will lose. When the very act of resistance is important, even if it costs us our lives." Her voice grew in strength. "Those who began the Rebellion against the Orgoth knew this. They did not see the result of their sacrifices, yet they did not turn away from the battles they thought they could not win."

It was as though she had spoken the feeling in Stryker's heart. Her words shook him loose from his uncertainty and dread. He said, "This intelligence changes everything. What Blaize says is right. There is no time to return to Point Bourne now. We cannot allow Terminus and this weapon to reach those boats. Now that we know where he is marching, we do not need to follow him into the swamp. We can go to the river directly and there confront the enemy and perhaps destroy that weapon."

He looked around at them, and when he continued, his voice carried the distinct timbre of deep conviction. "Make no mistake, this will be a battle we cannot win just by strength of arms. We may have to give our lives to prevent whatever Cryx is planning. Regardless, they must be stopped. We are the only ones in a position to do so. It is our sacrifice to make, to show the people that we will not surrender to Cryx. I ask each of you: are you willing to give your life in this fight, to defeat our enemy and prove that we, the living, will always defy them?"

He saw something new kindled in their eyes, a courage that did not rely on odds or expectations of victory but on

doing what must be done regardless of the price. One by one his leaders affirmed they were with him. As they stood to prepare the army to march, he shared a quick look with Blaize and inclined his head to her.



"They did not take your bait," Venethrax said with obvious satisfaction.

"This is a serious problem," Malathrax insisted. Inside he seethed, knowing this was the fault of Terminus and his confrontation with Stryker. Mortals were mercurial creatures that required delicate handling. "We have no choice now," he said. He had to persuade them or it would all be for naught. "Everblight's forces are closing quickly, and we will not be able to divert the Cygnarans toward them as I had hoped. Stryker's army will seek to stop us before we reach the boats."

"We will just have to break through them." Venethrax said stubbornly.

"The dragonspawn will be here first. Fighting them will deplete us and leave us vulnerable." Malathrax was twisting the facts slightly, but his annoyance with both other lich lords loaned sincerity to his words.

"We need to divide our forces and deal with the dragonspawn," said Terminus after a pause. These words delighted Malathrax, who had been about to suggest the same. It was better coming from Terminus, whom Venethrax respected. The winged lich lord drew himself up and continued, "I will take a small force to hinder Everblight's minions. I only need occupy them until you reach the river."

"No," said Venethrax firmly. "It is I who will confront them. I have been battling the spawn of Toruk's progeny for a thousand years. I know how to destroy them. You carry on and return the athanc to our master." Malathrax felt his masks freeze in surprise. Such a foolishly selfless gesture—even knowing the lich lord's fanaticism, he would not have thought Venethrax capable of such a decision.

"This may give us the chance we need," Malathrax said slowly, wary lest he show too much enthusiasm. "We need to move at once to the river."

Terminus inclined his head to Venethrax in a sign of deep respect. There were no more words as they prepared their next move. Venethrax took his helljacks together with a portion of the army and went north. Malathrax felt some admiration for the departing lich lord but also hoped he would not see him again. Now he just had to wait for Terminus to be distracted. He eyed the shimmering athanc containment field. *Soon.*



The forward companies of trenchers ran ahead, weapons at the ready, to take up positions on a rise overlooking the approach to the river. Snipers readied their rifles while others pushed cannons into position. Next the knights rushed forward in ordered ranks, the blue of their armor contrasting with the steel of glaives and halberds. Stryker and Blaize and their battlegroups followed thereafter, her advancing toward the waterline on the left while he reinforced the Storm Lances on the right.

The ingress toward the open riverbank was relatively narrow, but the ground past the trees opened up quickly to offer a broad slope of open terrain down to the Dragon's Tongue, where the Cryxian riverboats were pulled close to the shore. Stryker could see frantic activity on the decks once the crews spotted the approaching Cygnarans. Deck guns were being wheeled into place, and they boomed and released plumes of smoke as their crews tested their range. These shots fell short, but the next salvo would be more on target.

Before Stryker could give the order to advance, sudden movement from the trees on the far side where the river made a sweeping curve northwest brought him up short. He signaled to his men to slow their advance as Cryxians poured from the trees along the river opposite them. Bane thralls, mechanithralls, and bile thralls moved swiftly across the ground. Soon enough he saw Lich Lord Terminus amid his helljacks and bonejacks.

They had failed to beat the Cryxians to the rendezvous. Stryker felt renewed suspicion that the enemy had been watching them. At the sight of Terminus he felt his heart beating quickly, remembering the moment he thought his death had come. He lowered his goggles. Kicking his horse forward, he barked orders to his subordinates, pointing to where they should be. He mentally directed his warjacks as well, positioning them to support the men.

He had direct control over a pair of Defenders and a Reliant. He had given his light warjacks to 'jack marshals among his army. Also among them were several formidable Stormclads as well as Cyclones, Grenadiers, Sentinels, Fireflies, and Chargers. Young journeymen controlled some, but most were guided verbally by trenchers and field mechaniks. These comprised only a portion of his division's total warjacks, but he had lost many in the Thornwood battle, and others were being repaired in Point Bourne.

Even as the men began to array themselves for battle Stryker saw the enormous armored wagon emerge from the trees. Again the sight of its strange and flickering energy field filled him with apprehension. Constance Blaize approached him, waving to get his attention. He stepped Valorous closer and leaned down to hear her

words above the clamor of shouted orders and booming reports from the boat guns.

"That machine—" she said. "I don't believe it's a weapon!"

He squinted at the distant armored wagon and said, "We have to presume the worst."

She seemed to be struggling for the right words. "I have a strong feeling, a premonition."

Stryker frowned but did not dismiss her message. She was chosen of Morrow and he had seen the holy might she possessed. He had also seen how ably she had located hidden thralls in Point Bourne. Some forces in the world were beyond easy explanation. "What is this premonition?"

"That it is more prison than weapon. Something terrible and powerful is locked away in that machine. I suggest we capture it intact, not destroy it as we had planned."

His eyes narrowed and he considered the risk if she was mistaken. "How certain are you?"

"These feelings have never guided me wrong." She hesitated before adding, "It has been a long time since I had one. Still, I know I am right."

"Very well," Stryker said. He adjusted his grip on Quicksilver. "While I handle Terminus, you secure that machine. I will clear the way."



Captain Kara Sloan had become so accustomed to the stillness of lying in wait that she had entered a strange state of disembodied focus. She had been careful to keep her presence from the Satyxis warcaster, remaining far enough away not to be detected. It helped that she had not been in regular communication with her warjacks. So long had she sought to achieve minimal thought or activity that she had to collect her wits when she saw the time had come. After days of maintaining position, nearly starving themselves after their supplies had run thin, the moment was here. She caught Kapitan Ulchev's eye where he was perched several trees away. He nodded once. He had seen.

They passed silent commands to their soldiers. By the time acknowledgements had returned, she could see Stryker's force marching out from the trees northeast of her position, coming down into the open stretch of ground along the north bank of the river. Shortly thereafter a large number of Cryxians emerged from the northwest. It was ominous to see how the enemy kept coming from the shadows.

She had Spitfire in her hands and peered through the scope, looking away from the gathering armies and closer to her quarry, also on the other side of the river. Satyxis and Scharde crews were in frantic motion as they manned cannons and

oriented them toward the approaching Cygnaran army. Sloan scanned the decks while she awaited confirmation that her Hunters were ready for action. She had kept the machines cold to save on fuel, as they were down to the last of the coal. It would be several minutes before their steam engines had reached full pressure. The riverboat deck guns began to fire, although the first shots landed well astray.

There! She saw Skarre emerge onto the deck of the center vessel, gesturing to her subordinates as her warjacks were lifted from the holds. Heavy gangplanks were lowered while Satyxis raiders, black ogrun, and revenants prepared to offload. They would be able to flank Stryker's army as he engaged Terminus' forces. Already some of the pirates were up in the riggings firing on anything in range.

**"SOMETHING TERRIBLE AND
POWERFUL IS LOCKED AWAY IN
THAT MACHINE."**

Sloan directed her Hunters through the trees before they had built up to proper pressure. They moved sluggishly, but that would improve with each moment that passed. She wanted them in range to fire across the river. The southern bank was raised almost fifteen feet above the northern one, as the water had cut into rockier soil on this side, creating a sharply sloped cliff. There would be no easy landing for boats here. The ground sloped back down a hundred yards downriver; once Sloan got their attention, that was where her enemy would head to reach her. With the river so swift and deep, crossing would take time, and she would be able to fire and reposition. She and Kapitan Ulchev had already chosen their route.

Skarre's force outnumbered hers by a huge margin. If the Satyxis warcaster reached them, they were dead. Sloan looked through her scope again to find her target. Her people had their own targets among the boats.

She sent her mind into her Hunters, then invoked the magic that would increase the accuracy of her battlegroup. She held her breath and fired. The trees erupted with the sound of rifle fire followed by the reports of Hunter cannons. Bullets picked out targets along the riverboat decks, taking down snipers and officers, while armor-piercing shells slammed into Leviathans and Harrowers. Sloan unleashed a surge of arcane power and forced her warjacks to fire again, making every shot count before they had to fall back. Through her scope she saw her first shot penetrate Skarre's power field, though the Satyxis turned at the last minute and the bullet struck her in the left arm rather than the head. Sloan's fingers were already fitting another cartridge into her rifle's breech.



Malathrax felt excitement for the first time in years as he watched the two armies close amid rifle and cannon fire, bile sprays, and the crackling of lightning. He marveled in the chaos as previously undetected Cygnarans unleashed concentrated fire on Skarre's riverboats, successfully pulling her forces south. "Marvelous," he said under his breath.

A familiar haze had gathered around the Cygnaran front lines as the air thickened and clouds accumulated overhead. Storm smiths among them held up their rods and summoned lightning to send deep into the Cryxian ranks, the tendrils reaching through the thralls in an array of geometric patterns. Stormblades and Stormguard rushed forward to hack into dead flesh, sending more lightning arcing through mechanithralls. He felt satisfaction as one bile thrall managed to advance untouched amid a dozen others that succumbed to withering sprays of Sentinel and Cyclone fire. It exploded to deliver a bellyful of alchemical acid that washed over the nearest knights, reducing them to smoking pools of bubbling bile.

What most excited Malathrax, though, was the sight of Terminus drawn personally into the fray, unable to hold himself back. As intelligent as the lich lord was, Terminus was a creature of battle. He delighted in slaughter, in the whirlwind of necromantic energies harvested by his sweeping blade. Across the field, Stryker rode alongside his heavy cavalry. Together they surged forward along the right flank behind knights on foot who beat back the undead tide. Stryker's warjacks fired shells and surges of voltaic energy to help clear a path. The two warcasters moved inexorably toward another clash.

Malathrax knew it was time. He had also advanced into the fray, lending arcane power to his forces, but he had lingered farther back. Now he paused as he gathered the energy for a much more complex magic. His body was surrounded by three concentric rings of mystical runes as his essence was divided.

To an outside observer nothing had changed: Malathrax continued to stride forward, runes erupting from his clawed hands to scythe into the Cygnarans through the arc nodes of his bonejacks. His escort of bane thralls surrounded him, even as Terminus was surrounded by mechanithralls. Yet the Malathrax others saw was a mere conduit for the will of the lich lord, who had become incorporeal and slipped unseen back toward the athanc-bearing wagon.

Undead were stationed protectively around the wagon, but even if they had possessed the will to interfere with Toruk's chosen, none could sense him. He mounted the wagon and looked across the array of steam engines with their complex banks of levers, valves, and knobs. He had spent considerable

time studying these and was certain he knew what to do. Deactivating the containment field permanently would have been simpler, but he hoped to shut it down only long enough to seize the small sealed container levitating within those orbiting metal arcs. This required more precision.

His necroservitors had forewarned his minions to the west to stand ready to assist him in his flight. He also had control of one of the Leviathans pulling the wagon. At his direction it freed itself and moved nearby even as he began pulling the first levers of the sequence. Looking briefly through the eyes of his warjacks closer to the center of the battle, he could see the Cygnarans were making a heroic offensive. With almost suicidal resolve they waded deep into the Cryxian ranks, unslowed by the deaths of friends. He could hear fighting not far away, but he ignored it to focus on completing his task.



Constance Blaize directed her Precursor Knights onward, pushing them hard and forcing herself not to think of those who gave up their lives in the attack. She was battling along the left flank, with her warjacks leading the way. Her forces had come under fire from the deck guns of the nearest riverboats and were only just moving out of their angle of fire. Several of her 'jacks were battered. At the point of the wedge formation strode a pair of Centurions wearing the colors of the Church of Morrow. Gallant fought between them, prepared to fall back closer to her if need be. Her Precursors fanned out to either side, raising their shields to intercept blows and retaliating with blessed maces even as their numbers dwindled. All were empowered to move more swiftly by her prayers, as holy power flowed from her to strengthen their legs and banish fatigue.

She was keenly aware that her force likely would have been overrun by pirates if not for the efforts of Kara Sloan on the south shore, who had drawn attention at just the right time. Although there were still defenders atop the boats firing on them, the bulk of the pirate force had boarded landing craft to make for the south shore, chasing Sloan's battlegroup.

Blaize focused all her attention on reaching the mysterious Cryxian machine on the armored wagon ahead of her. She thought she saw the energy field around it flicker and change colors slightly, the silver aura around the blackness taking on a sickly yellow hue. She exhorted her men to greater efforts as they smashed through what seemed to be endless ranks of mechanithralls.

There was a howling noise and an explosion as a Harrower shell consumed several of her knights. She sent one of her Centurions rushing forward to engage the spiderlike machine. Bane thralls flanked by Deathrippers rushed her line, and she unleashed an explosion of holy light among them even

as many Precursors to her left fell before their wicked blades. More knights stepped forward to fill the gaps and struck with their holy maces as they strode on. A Slayer unhitched itself from the armored wagon and crouched, then rushed forward only to become impaled on the second Centurion's spear. The helljack twisted loose and slashed deep metal-tearing grooves through the Cygnaran machine, eventually wresting off its shield and the arm that bore it. Blaize directed Gallant to intervene, and it hammered the helljack into an unmoving wreck. The Centurion limped on, heavily damaged and without its shield but still wielding its piston spear.

She split her Precursors to either side of the wagon as she moved up to fight alongside it while Gallant fell back to protect her. Mechanithralls came at her as her force cleared the rear of the wagon. She ended them with a sweep of her spear. Battle Chaplain Corley was at her side, and he stepped forward to crush a mechanithrall approaching from her left. Even as they continued to fight she turned to look at the wagon and the thrumming field of energy that was now almost directly above her, though she found it painful to behold. Something drew her attention to a series of levers set into the machinery near the back, and then she saw several move of their own accord.

She grabbed Corley's arm and shouted over the din, "Give me the Sight!" He nodded and raised a hand to perform a benediction, closing his eyes as bluish-white runes surrounded his hand and then her head. Her eyes tingled, and the world took on an unnatural vibrancy. The effects of this blessing were disorienting, particularly in daylight, but it had been useful in the past to see what could not be seen, such as the lingering ghosts of fallen souls.

As he completed his benediction a Leviathan came around the end of the armored wagon to fire its piercer cannon repeatedly at them. Blaize urged Gallant to protect Corley, and the 'jack moved with its buckler raised to intercept a long metal spike that would have blasted through his back. Two more rounds were launched in quick succession, at her this time. She raised her shield and the first shot deflected off its steel with a spray of sparks, having been slowed by her power field. The next spike penetrated beneath her shield to jab painfully into her upper thigh, piercing the mail between the plates of armor. She tore the spike loose as she sent Gallant charging into the helljack.

She looked back up to the wagon and saw a ghostly silhouette that had not been there before. Even with the blessed sight Blaize could not make out much more than swirling black shadows surrounding a black steel frame. She sensed tremendous unholy power from the being. Its hands were busy working the levers. She felt a sinking sensation in her stomach worse than the pain of her injury. Whatever this creature was doing, she knew she had to stop it.

She gathered her holy power and offered a prayer to Morrow, then pointed her spear toward the apparition and unleashed a tremendous sunburst. Blinding radiance filled the creature, which wailed in agony as the dark wisps surrounding it burned away. It became corporeal—an iron lich with an interlocking metal mask and a body wrapped in black robes. The explosion of holy energy sent it flying back against the machinery with a crash of metal and gears.

The lich's eyes glowed with rage as it invoked its own magic to send a wave of blackness forward that filled her body with cold and siphoned away her strength. Blaize staggered back and fought against the darkness. She prepared to invoke her magic again, but when she recovered the creature was gone. She caught a glimpse of its dark form, incorporeal again, moving into the trees to the west, where more undead waited. Around the armored wagon the battle still raged, and she was in no position to follow.

Corley alleviated her injury with another prayer, and she limped closer to Gallant, who had suffered minor damage but had demolished the Leviathan. Together they moved to support the Precursors fighting on the perimeter. Blaize spared a glance at the containment field. It held, but even as she watched it flickered.



"Get them clear of the lich lord!" Stryker shouted to his senior officers as he rallied his Storm Lances to his side.

He could see the strained expressions on the nearest ones astride their horses—they disliked being held back while their brothers in arms fought. Across the open ground Stormblades and Stormguard were fully engaged, having charged into the sea of undead. He had never been prouder of the soldiers of his division, but countless bodies in blue armor were scattered lifeless on the ground they had seized from the enemy.

He saw trenchers on his far left charge. Rather than firing from their concealed positions, they surged forward to crash into mechanithralls that threatened to flank a line of Silver Line Stormguard already committed to the bane thralls at their fore. Two purging bile thralls ended their heroics, killing half the squad. The remaining knights fought on amid lightning and thunder.

Ahead of him knights pressed toward the center of the undead where Lich Lord Terminus strode, a towering incarnation of death. Where his spells struck, men withered and died and their souls were sucked into his grasp as surely as the souls of those hacked down by his tremendous sword. His draconic fire opened great rents in the Cygnaran offensive line. Glutted on souls, his power field shone with potency. Reminded of their battles with Asphyxious, Stryker



had ordered his men back. He needed to deprive Terminus of souls. The lich continued to shrug off incoming fire; even blasts from Defender cannons empowered by Stryker's will burst harmlessly off his power field.

"Line up, on me!" Stryker shouted to his Storm Lances, knowing they were eager to commit. Strong as it was, their morale was suffering amid the theater of death by darkness. No sane person could long endure the sight of Terminus reaping souls.

At last his infantry pulled back and moved clear of the lich lord. Warjacks sent by 'jack marshals and journeymen—whatever machines remained intact enough to engage—entered the gaps that were left. They did not advance on Terminus but cleared the dead nearest him to carve a path. Ol' Rowdy went ahead of Stryker to crash into a Wraith Engine blocking their way. It hammered the enormous machine repeatedly and was soon joined by a battle-rent Stormclad missing its left arm.

Reapers and Seethers surged toward them, destroying Grenadiers and Fireflies. The Cygnaran line wavered but

held. Deprived of souls, Terminus unleashed his anger on the nearest warjacks instead. Stryker had sent his battered Reliant up against him to buy time, and the lich now delivered it a crushing blow.

"Charge!" Stryker shouted, spurring Valorous. To either side of him the Storm Lances surged forward, lances lowered and crackling with energy as their armored steeds raced across the ground. Stryker invoked his magic to empower his immediate escort. Then he gathered his mystical strength to unite the galvanic potential of all who rode alongside him, creating a rising tempest of coordinated destruction. The air darkened above them, and there was a rumble of thunder that seemed to answer the sound of pounding hooves. Lightning shot down from the skies to arc between the riders.

Terminus turned toward them, seeing the vulnerability of the open lane too late to evade the charge. Once more he breathed blazing liquid, which enveloped several knights in acid and fire. More surged ahead to take their place. These crashed into the lich lord in an explosion of lightning and thunder that echoed across the battlefield while the nearest

warriors were swept by a torrent of wind and blinded by a flash of light. From the center, Stryker saw Terminus stagger to his knees, knocked low by the tide of horses and knights.

Stryker raised Quicksilver in both hands and brought it crashing down through the Cryxian's blackened iron ribcage. Again and again he swung, tearing through metal and bone while lightning scorched the lich's tattered wings. The green light within Terminus' eyes flickered and died as Quicksilver cut through his steel-forged skull. Amid so much death and carnage, Stryker felt more relief than triumph at having toppled the lich lord. For a moment he stood simply looking down at the hulking form as if uncertain whether to believe he had won.



Constance Blaize and Stryker regrouped as the soldiers of the Storm Division established a perimeter and nominally secured the area. Stryker seemed startled by their success, having expected several other warcasters to be pitted against them. They agreed that the creature Blaize had driven away from the wagon might have been one of the warcasters he had earlier sensed. He remembered another iron lich fighting not far from Terminus that had collapsed and vanished amid a charge of Stormblades.

Blaize and Chaplain Corley, both of whom had been trained at the Sancteum in the occult lore of Cryx, carefully examined Terminus' fallen form and concluded that the phylactery containing his immortal essence was missing. What they knew of iron liches suggested he was not permanently destroyed, but there was hope it might take time for him to be restored.

The chaos of the battle had not ended with Terminus' fall, but their efforts had been eased significantly. Most of the Cryxian 'jacks had gone inert and the remaining thralls had become disorganized upon the loss of their leader, allowing the knights to quickly finish them. Stryker's forces had been able to destroy the last of the Wraith Engines and the few remaining sentient undead, while Blaize had continued the fight from the perimeter she had established around the armored wagon. One of the boats had escaped downriver, but they had managed to destroy the second one by cannon fire and capture the third, killing any crew who did not surrender. Skarre had not been found, and it had been quickly determined that she and a significant portion of her force had been drawn to the other side of the river by Captain Sloan. No one had been able to determine the status of either warcaster.

There was still much to do before the area was secure. Stryker sent horsemen downriver to alert the nearest patrols of the escaped boat, though the Dragon's Tongue had become largely unsecured in the wake of recent conflicts.

If the Cryxians reached Five Fingers, those loyal to the Dragonfather would likely facilitate their escape. Among the Cygnaran Army it was widely believed that some of the first Cryxians in the Thornwood had been smuggled to the mainland from that city.

With so many matters left unresolved and so many dead and wounded, it was difficult to celebrate victory. Lord General Stryker organized his people quickly and efficiently, his urgency plain. He sent a small force across the river to find and assist Sloan. It was unlikely Skarre would maintain the chase once she realized she had been lured from the river. Stryker intended to hunt her down, if possible, but he was clearly pessimistic about his chances.

"What will you do with the Cryxian artifact?" Blaize asked.

"I need you to take it south," he said, startling her. "With the king in Point Bourne and matters here unsettled, I can't leave. We need to get this contraption somewhere it can be analyzed in safety. There's a fortress deep in the Wyrmwall ideal for our needs. I'll send word to Caspia and to the Third Army at Highgate to coordinate additional protection. The boat we seized from the Cryxians was intended to transport it west. We'll use that to our benefit. You can travel down the Banvick River to Orven and then take the wagon on a secured military train to go the rest of the way. I can't trust anyone else for this."

"I understand," she said. "I'll see that it arrives intact. Perhaps members of the Order of Illumination can assist in its analysis."

Stryker nodded. "If we can't find Skarre, she might follow after you. Be ready for attack from any quarter. I'll try to arrange for forces from Fort Whiterock to help."

Blaize did not voice her apprehensions, knowing how much was resting on the lord general's shoulders. She oversaw the transfer of the wagon to the boat. Then, with her remaining Precursors and warjacks and what forces Stryker could spare, she set off for the Banvick River.

As the boat left the north shore, Blaize went immediately down into the hold to observe the apparatus. When they entered the river's main current, she felt her blood run cold as she saw the containment field dim and shrink before slowly restoring itself. She could not shake the feeling deep in her bones that she was escorting something dangerous beyond measure. All she could do was pray to Morrow that its prison would hold.



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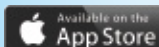
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