

ONLY WAR™

ENEMIES OF THE IMPERIUM™



THE DEADLY FOES OF
THE IMPERIAL GUARD

WARHAMMER
40,000
ROLEPLAY

ONLY WAR™



ROLEPLAYING IN THE GRIM DARKNESS
OF THE 4TH MILLENNIUM



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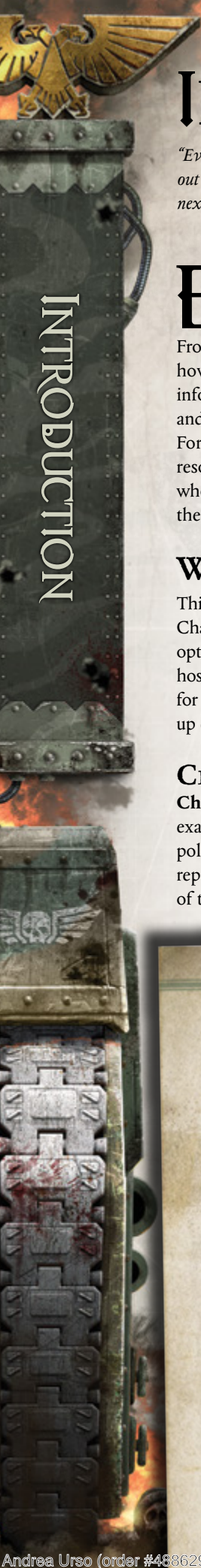
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INTRODUCTION

"Everything out there is trying to kill you, soldier. If you figure that out quickly enough, you might live long enough to pass it on to the next batch of fresh casualties-to-be."

—Private Mercito Grant

ENEMIES OF THE IMPERIUM is a supplement for **ONLY WAR** that gives deeper insight into the deadly foes of the Imperial Guard who lurk in the Spinward Front. It contains not only NPC profiles and guidance on how to deploy them in battle, but also provides considerable information on how these factions make war on the Imperium and each other. Further, it provides rules for managing Formations to facilitate squad-level combat and new resources for Guardsmen and Support Specialist characters who have cut their teeth against these deadly foes, surviving the worst that the Spinward Front can throw at them.

WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK?

This volume contains a plethora of new options for Player Characters, including new regiments of legend and regimental options, Advanced Specialities for Guardsman characters, and a host of new Talents, Orders, and wargear. It also includes rules for creating Mixed Regiments and Mounted Combat, opening up even more new kinds of tactics and tales in **ONLY WAR**.

CHAPTER I: THE TRAITOR

Chapter I: The Traitor explores the Severan Dominate, examining Duke Severus' rebellion in terms of the grand political schism and long-standing personal feud that it represents. It delves into the battlefield tactics and strategies of the Severan Dominate throughout the Spinward Front, and

also provides rules for Severan Dominate troopers and officers, as well as Ducal Legates, the agents of Severus' will. Finally, it includes rules for creating one of the many Severan Dominate regiments, the Ohmsworld Spireguard.

CHAPTER II: THE BEAST

Waaagh! Grimtoof rages across the Spinward Front, and countless Guardsmen are crushed underfoot beneath the rampaging Orks. The second chapter examines these violent and erratic xenos in great detail, exploring the plans of Grimtoof himself, who has set his eyes on conquering the Spinward Front before shattering the Calixis Sector itself. It also has rules for many the powerful Ork NPCs, including Nobz, Mekboyz, Warbosses, Squiggoths, and others, and contains templates that allow the Game Master to quickly create Orks from different Clans like the Blood Axes, Bad Moons, and Goffs.

CHAPTER III: THE SHADOW WALKERS

The third chapter of *Enemies of the Imperium* concerns itself with the foes skulking on the fringes of the Spinward Front, from the depraved Dark Eldar to the carnivorous Kroot to the foul worshippers of Chaos. It covers the various splinter-factions within these groups, along with lethal new enemies like Archons, Incubi, Kroot Shapers, Great Knarlocs, Chaos Space Marines, and mighty Daemon Princes.

CHAPTER IV: VETERANS OF THE FRONT

Chapter IV: Veterans of the Front contains rules for managing Formations of foes, streamlining large-scale battles for the Game Masters. It also introduces new options for those Guardsmen who survive the onslaught of deadly enemies. These include Veteran Talents, Kill Markers, and Squad Medals, which much be earned through sweat, blood, and sacrifice on the battlefields of the Spinward Front.

The Infantryman's Guide to the Spinward Front

Chapter I, Section I (Introduction), Sub-Section I (Prelude)

THE SPINWARD FRONT

The loyal soldiers of the Imperial Guard face many pernicious and cowardly foes in the Spinward Front. This document seeks to inform the reader of the threats to the sanctity of the Imperium of Mankind that might be seen on the battlefield. It covers everything a dutiful trooper needs to know to protect against the corruptive and dangerous influence of the heretic, the alien, and the witch, as well as exact methods by which to identify and cleanly dispatch any and all of these hazards. Adhere to the principles outlined within this document, and there is nothing to stop a trooper with a faithful heart and a loaded lasgun from fulfilling the duty that the Emperor on Terra has placed before all of us!

Any questions or comments regarding this document should be submitted to one's regimental Commissars or other appropriate figures of authority for succinct and thorough evaluation of your query.

If you've been given this guidebook, it probably means that I've smoked my last lho. But that's good news for you. I left some notes and "corrections" in here. Maybe it'll even help you survive. Hopefully you'll get something more out of this guide than paper to roll lhos. Though it is pretty good for that.

That was a joke. Don't let the Commissar catch you doing that.

—Sgt. Natalia Talwar, Attilan 264th



THE
TRAITOR

THE REVOLUTION

•
WORLDS OF
THE SEVERAN
DOMINATE

•
SEVERAN
DOMINATE
REGIMENTS

•
FORCES OF
THE SEVERAN
DOMINATE

Chapter IV, Section I (The Severan Dominate), Sub-Section I (Introduction)

THE CHARGE OF HUMANITY

Only through the providence of the Immortal Emperor may Mankind continue to flourish among the galaxy's vast stars. The wise and the fearful know to trust in His guidance and protection, and those who embrace His litanies and guidance are certain to stand strong against the powers of darkness.

TRAITORS TO THE EMPEROR

Yet, even as those in the Imperial Guard stand true in His name, there remain some among humanity's children who have turned from his light. Many of these fools are overcome by the sin of pride. They choose to ignore the evidence, compiled over the millennia, that the only true path for salvation is within the protection of the God-Emperor. By the power of their ignorance, they proclaim a new path, damning their souls as they forsake the obligations and responsibilities that come with the blessing of life under His grace.

There is no hope of salvation for those who have turned their backs in this way. Without His guidance, the traitors are certain to fall to the temptations that lurk within every shadow. As they damn their souls, the misguided also create a weakness within the very fabric of the Imperium. Unless their heretical ways are quickly terminated, the heresy might spread to neighbouring worlds with horrifying speed. Soon, vast swaths of the Imperium might be susceptible to the unholy, leading to widespread collapse.

It is the sacred duty of the Imperial Guard to return light to shadows created in this way. Our mighty hammer must smite the enemy, so that the worlds of the galaxy may once more know His light. Those who lurk in the darkness remain ever ready to exert their influence upon even the most zealous of His children, and only by perpetually shining His light and following His word may we hope to protect ourselves.

Yet even as we fight the fallen, we must be aware that their very presence may exert a corrupting influence upon our souls. Look not upon their emblems or their banners, for they may contain dark symbols, lurking among the script or cleverly concealed within their iconography. Instead, employ your weapons mercilessly, and destroy any traces that the heretic might leave behind. Rather than watching the actions of thy foe, instead focus upon your comrades. Know that any of your fellows might fall prey to these influences at any time. Be prepared to ignore the bonds of friendship, for any so corrupted would not hesitate to exploit such misplaced loyalty. A solitary stain upon the soul might spread amongst thy brethren like a hideous plague. The first sign of corruption must ever be the last.



A lot of their officers and veterans don't wear helmets. Makes our job easier.

Their equipment is mostly the same as ours, whatever this book says. You can even take their lasgun charge packs (as long as nobody important is looking).



I've never seen this on any Severan Dominate world we've retaken. The battlefield is a different matter, though.

A PLAGUE OF XENOS

The dread xenos have so inculcated the Severan culture that their language and thoughts have been twisted to incorporate portions of their unholy beliefs. Even the weapons and equipment that the traitors wield are crafted by the xenos. Alien traditions are integrated into the Severan culture to such an extent that their ways of life have changed, and are scarcely recognisable as human. Some evidence suggests that the treacherous beings might even dwell side by side with humanity, interacting with them on a regular basis, and frequently twisting the minds and beliefs of the common man to incorporate inconceivable heresies.

THE FESTERING LIE

Though the worlds held by Severus the traitor are far from Holy Terra, their inhabitants only dwell aside from the God-Emperor by their own choice. Know that there are no limits to His beneficence. The traitors who dare to turn from His light have fallen prey not only to the darkness, but also to contamination by the xenos. Today, the xenos taint litters their worlds. The Severans treat these blasphemers as peers, interacting with the abominations as though they were also beings born into His light. Such can never be the case, as their souls and bodies are anathema to all that He commands his loyal soldiers to hold sacred. Their mere touch may open the mind and spirit to disaster. Though our faith should sustain us, dwelling within the presence of the alien is enough to contaminate the purity of the body. With that staunch bulwark defeated, the fall of the mind and soul is certain to follow. This is why it is the sacred charge of the Imperial Guard to uphold the will of the Emperor and purge the xenos from His worlds. In their failure to perform this duty, the warriors of the Severan Dominate have become irredeemably corrupt, and so they too must fall in His name.

THE TRAITOR'S REWARD

They've got a long way to go...

Among the Severan Dominate, it was not enough that they should turn from the path of eternal salvation under the light of the Immortal Emperor. Instead, by their actions, they sought to damn all of the Calixis Sector, transforming it into a dagger that ~~might eventually extend throughout the whole of the Imperium.~~ For as they developed their worlds, using the blessings and grace provided by the Imperium's most devout servants, they failed to fulfil the duties and responsibilities that came with those most holy gifts. Even as they maintained the pretence of loyalty to the Imperium, they misrepresented the size of their holdings. As their worlds grew in number and population, the inhabitants of the Severan worlds failed to report the success that the gifts of the Imperium had garnered. Instead, they continued to demand additional support from the structures of the Imperium from which they had sprung, when they should have been paying their fair share to support the growth of other worlds under His protection.

Even among those worlds that did fulfil their tithes, some provided materials that were hopelessly contaminated. Some of the goods sent back to the greater Calixis sector had known the touch of xenos. They sent such goods deep into the sector, hoping that they might come into contact with the unwary citizens of the Imperium—including our youths and our elderly. Those who could not hope to defend themselves effectively against such a taint were the ones at the greatest risk. As they shirked their responsibilities, the traitors struck at us with a hidden axe that had two heads: one that could corrupt us from within, and another that could prevent us from safely growing elsewhere. If the sacred and noble leaders of the Calixis Sector had not recognised this treachery in its earliest stages, the threat might have become even more pernicious. Now, the traitors must be made to pay for the actions taken against our friends and families. Now, they must learn the consequences for actions taken against the Imperium's most loyal servants.

Know well that a blemish upon the soul does not always carry an obvious mark, and the enemy ever seeks to deceive the righteous. There need not be a physical sign of their corruption, for the xenos and the heretic can be even more powerful when they are subtly hidden by a seemingly human face. Some even have access to disguises of Imperial origin, so that they might masquerade as the righteous. Be stalwart and true in your loyalty to His truth, for even taking the time to question His guidance could lead to the path of heresy, by permitting the traitor a chance to corrupt one's will. There can be no mercy for these traitors, for if they are to survive, then their sacrilege is certain to doom humanity in all of the Calixis Sector and perhaps beyond.

Commissariat Memo MXI to Troopers in the Spinward Front:

Though the blasphemers of the Severan Dominate may seem human in form, their souls are doomed by their transgressions. To show them any mercy is to join them in damnation, and the Commissariat will deem it as such.

Whether they are damned or not, this part is definitely true.

I: THE TRAITOR



CHAPTER I: THE TRAITOR

"The High Lords of Terra would bleed us dry for their purposes, at the same time that they refuse to help defend ourselves against the xenos. The time has come to withhold our tithe, so that we may use it for our defence."

—Duke Severus the Thirteenth, to the citizens of Lukius

Duke Severus the First was unquestionably a hero of the Angevin Crusade. Without the Rogue Trader's influence and tactical acumen, the war to control the Calyx Expanse would have taken to complete. Some historians even argue that the revered Saint Drusus might not have completed his conquests without the successes of Severus. Of course, it was the Duke's own failings that let Drusus surpass him. Severus's greed his greatest limitation, as he chose to consolidate his holdings in Calixis rather than continue his task of expanding the Sector.

For generations that followed, the heirs of the Severus family have trod a path based entirely upon lies and loathing. Their resentment built with each generation, as their desire for what was seen as their just reward went ever unfulfilled. Even across the centuries, this unjust fury had few consequences for the Imperium at large, as the descendants of the first Duke Severus descended into a family of marginal influence and power. Without their Warrant of Trade or the capacity to claim new domains and titles.

THE REVOLUTION

"In hope lies heresy."

—Commissar Bennett, *Heresy and Retribution, Reflections on the Tactica Imperialis*

In 799.M41, the latest heir to the Severus lineage became Lord Subsector of the Periphery. Even as Lord Sector Hax granted him the title, he feared that there might be serious ramifications to the appointment. Hax's hand, however, was forced in making the selection. Severus had spent his lifetime establishing a powerful network of allies throughout the Periphery. Key among his allies were a few ranking members of the Adeptus Arbitres within the Calixis Sector. The Duke used these connections to eliminate any rivals, at the same time as he made certain that his own official records appeared spotless. Recent investigations have brought to light evidence that Severus may have planted witnesses, falsified records, and even sponsored assassinations among some of the most loyal families in the Subsector.

Unfortunately, none of these crimes came to light prior to the Duke's ascension. With this authority in hand, he soon began reaching out to new connections, so that he might secure his holdings. In short order, he began to rapidly expand his holdings beyond the boundaries of the Periphery. Soon, he had influence over a significant number of worlds, yet he did not report his expanded control to Lord Hax. Instead, he reached out to the enemies of humanity, including the Children of Thorns, so that his rampant expansionism and influence might continue unabated.

Disaster struck when the Orks of Waaagh! Grimtoof descended upon Duke Severus's holdings. Even as he attempted to marshal his forces so that they might defend the holdings, the Dark Eldar began to press the politician for ever greater access to the worlds he supposedly secured. As his holdings began to fall, Severus, out of desperation, turned to the Imperium for aid against the xenos.

The increased Imperial presence inevitably revealed the depths of the Duke's betrayal. Evidence of his expanded holdings soon surfaced. Though he had planned to eventually leave the Imperium, the timing forced his hand long before he had completed his preparations. Rather than succumb to the punishments that he so richly deserved, Duke Severus chose to consolidate his forces and secede from the Imperium.

ROAD TO SECESSION

Knowing that the people of the Periphery were devout adherents to the Imperial Creed, Duke Severus had to manufacture a tale so that they would side with his desire for secession. Their faith was far too strong to have any hope of easily subverting it. When the Orks assaulted and the Imperial Guard responded, the Duke's time line had to be substantially accelerated. He no longer had the time he had expected to use corrupting government officials and subverting the population of his worlds. Instead, he had to create a problem that would immediately unite the peoples of the soon-to-form Severan Dominate against the monolithic Imperium of Man. The motivation had to be extremely compelling, and all signs had to indicate that the time for peaceful negotiation had long since passed.



With this philosophy in mind, the Duke decided to spin a false tale about supply shortages. The Duke carefully began to redirect the majority of all shipments of food, equipment, and other necessary supplies away from the highly dependent worlds of the Periphery. Without those imports, these worlds—which were scarcely self-sufficient—struggled to survive, particularly during some of the more treacherous seasons, when locally produced goods were in shorter supply.

At the same time, he began to increase the tithes of military units and supplies demanded from those worlds. The Duke began to expand the roster of his private armies, under the pretence of providing additional soldiers for Imperial levies. He selected the best and the brightest young warriors from numerous worlds, quickly growing his forces, while he also crippled the workforce for many of his own planets. In a few instances, he even coordinated his removal of units with new slaving strikes made by the Children of Thorns.

This combination of events conspired to make life miserable for most of the Periphery's residents. Just as the inhabitants of these worlds saw their vital imports dwindling; their production capacity became crippled by the loss of much of their workforce. This created a dramatic sense of unrest. As some worlds suffered from famine, labour strikes began on others due to the extremely hazardous working conditions. In a few instances, cults emerged that preached about the evils of the Imperium, promising salvation for those willing to accept their unholy cause. In a matter of months, worlds which had been bountiful were soon approaching total political and social collapse.

Through careful monitoring, Duke Severus determined when each of the worlds approached their tipping point. He had to be certain that the majority of each world's inhabitants were thoroughly disillusioned. These citizens had to be irate and prepared to take dramatic—and irrational—action, out of a legitimate sense of desperation. Once it became clear that the citizens were on the verge of revolution, the Duke descended upon each world with a generous stopgap bounty of supplies and an adequate force of peacekeepers to both distribute vital goods and prevent a revolution.

As Severus worked to assuage the populations, he made certain that any credit for the deliveries were placed squarely upon his shoulders. The generosity that he had so clearly engineered at each world's expense became a hallmark of his virtue rather than a sign of his treachery. All the while that his reputation improved among the population, the Duke blamed the High Lords of distant Terra for the shortages and the endless tithes. In his earliest appeals, Duke Severus pretended to play the reluctant hero. He reminded the citizens of the nobility and necessity of the Imperial cause. He spoke at length of the inherent challenges of the galaxy, noting that it was only the grace of the Immortal Emperor that defended humanity from the xenos and other horrors.

Of course, this was just a first step. Invariably, worlds played into his hands, lauding the Duke for his beneficence while decrying the seemingly endless greed of the Imperium. On some worlds, the Duke's followers had to seed dissidents among the population to begin the cries of secession. Surprisingly, on numerous others, this was unnecessary. Even in these places where the citizens remained true to the Imperial Creed, there were many who were willing to remain true to their faith at the same time that they discarded their loyalty to the government

of the Imperium. On each world in turn, the Duke agreed to consider the possibility of secession as a last resort, only after all possibilities for negotiation had been exhausted.

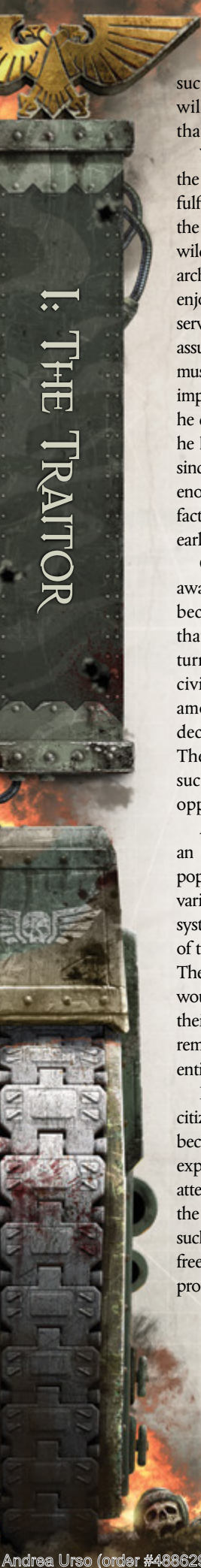
Then, as the emergency supplies that he had provided began to run dry, Duke Severus called for each planet's government to join him in the formation of a new government. Clearly a canny politician and a talented actor, the Duke pretended that each world would be the very first to join in his new federation against the Imperial cause. In each instance, the population felt that they were investing their lives and their assets in a new worthy cause that they had personally helped to create. This provided a sense of ownership, which dramatically increased their willingness to sacrifice even more than they had previously given—under the pretence that they or their descendants might someday have a greater degree of freedom.

As the legitimate leader of the worlds within the Periphery Sub-Sector, the Duke initially had the full assets of the Imperium of Man to assist him in spreading his deceitful tales to the populace. This resource proved critical as he told his lies. Through his network of existing supporters, the Duke was able to ensure that those within existing Imperial organisations continued to follow his directives—or they were replaced by those willing to do so. He was able to limit off world communication and trade, ensuring that the only messages which reached each world were the ones that he sought to deliver, and that the only goods shipped were transported with his permission. Ultimately, the Duke had to replace a significant number of adepts who remained loyal to the Imperial cause—even under the threat of death. In spite of this, he retained enough of the preexisting structures that word of the Imperium's tyranny and his own just revolution were spread to the people of the worlds he had overseen.

A FALSE PHILOSOPHY

After engineering a revolution based upon the supposed tyranny of the Imperium of Man, the Duke needed to persuade his followers that his government would be a very different one. With this in mind, it became critical for him to draft a series of documents that granted his citizens a sense of empowerment. It is important to consider, however, that Severus was never willing to actually share any of his authority with his followers. Ultimately, Duke Severus the Thirteenth is far more of a despot than the darkest portrayal he provided of the High Lords of Terra. In spite of this, he has successfully presented a public image that is completely contrary to reality. Creating and sustaining this image are the central tenets of his government.

The Duke recruited worlds to join the Severan Dominate based upon the principle that he was a more caring ruler than the distant High Lords of Terra. To perpetuate this myth, he had to portray his government as one which was focused upon providing hope to his citizens. He realised that war—with the Imperium and with xenos—was imminent. Severus also knew that all of his newly loyal population would accept the necessity of this war, for he had made certain that all believed it was their only true chance at survival. However, he believed that the mere promise of survival was not enough. Instead, he chose to present them with the promise of a glorious utopia. The Duke believed that



such a promise might create a populace that was far more willing to make sacrifices over the short term, with the belief that these might pave the way for a paradisiacal future.

With this in mind, the Duke has made promises to each of the worlds that are economically and politically impossible to fulfil. These begin with a core premise that all the worlds of the Severan Dominate will be made prosperous beyond their wildest imaginings. The Duke has promised that miraculous archeotechnology will provide for all, so that all citizens should enjoy a veritable bounty of foods and luxuries, and that military service requirements might even be reduced. Of course, all of his assurances are ultimately made with the caveat that his people must first attain victory. Although his promises are blatantly impossible, the Duke has worked hard to create the illusion that he can deliver upon them. As such, he has used the supplies that he hoarded long before the revolution began to demonstrate his sincerity. While those early stores were significant, they are hardly enough to continue providing a generous bounty indefinitely. In fact, due to some of the agricultural losses sustained during the early battles, these reserves grow more and more scant by the day.

Only the most trusted of the Duke's associates are fully aware of this situation. In contrast, the average citizenry have become incredibly devoted to the Duke, due to the early signs that he might manage to raise up his worlds to new heights, turning the Periphery into a shining example of an idealised civilisation. On a few worlds, cults have even sprung up among the devoted followers of the Imperial Creed, who have declared the Duke to be a prophet of the Immortal Emperor. These zealots believe that anyone who could transform such a desperate situation into one that offered unbounded opportunity must be guided by His divine hand.

A further complication is that the Duke has also promised an unprecedented degree of personal freedoms among the population. Within the Imperium, such liberties have historically varied substantially from world to world, based upon each system's particular system of government, subject to the standards of the Adeptus Arbites and Ecclesiarchy, but it is usually stringent. The Duke has suggested that under his authority, all individuals would enjoy the right to make decisions about how they live their lives. Whether or not he intends to deliver on these promises remains to be seen, but the very act of making these offers has enticed some to his cause while terrifying others.

In the absence of strong Imperial oversight, few of the region's citizens fully appreciate just how dangerous these freedoms could become. Such a liberal notion of personal freedom might even expose the populace to heresies, which could quickly draw the attention of xenos, psykers, or even the Ruinous Powers. While the general devotion to the Immortal Emperor might forestall such a crisis, some might even begin to advocate for religious freedoms that could handicap the power of the Imperial Creed to protect humanity within the region.



A further concern is that the Duke has no intention of ever surrendering ultimate authority over these worlds. He intends to make certain that any decisions made about personal freedoms and styles of government are made in a manner consistent with his choosing. To achieve this goal, he is willing and able to lie and cheat in any necessary manner. In places where decisions might be made by some sort of an election, the Duke sees to it that the elections are carefully rigged. On those worlds where governmental decisions are made by mandate—hereditary, divine, or military—those governments ultimately answer to the Duke. Though he is certain to maintain the illusion of choice and personal freedoms, none have yet been implemented, nor are they likely to ever be.

INITIAL ASSETS

For centuries, the Severus family has gradually lost their holdings throughout the Calixis Sector. Duke Severus the First earned the rights to a substantial number of worlds, and leveraged those throughout his lifetime, leaving his heirs in a position to have a controlling interest throughout the Sector's future. Unfortunately, vitriol and vengeance were also a major part of their inheritance. Because of this, his descendants tended to squander their assets as part of a seemingly endless quest to clear the name of the founder of their lineage. When Duke Severus the Thirteenth initially assumed his title, he had little more to his name than a dilapidated palace located on a world ruled by another sovereign. This was hardly a powerful position from which to launch a rebellion.

Even before he assumed his title, Duke Severus the Thirteenth had begun to catalogue his limited assets and grow his network of contacts. From an early age, the Duke held grandiose dreams, which he pursued relentlessly. Though he was always willing to take necessary shortcuts to advance his plans, his goals remained sharply in focus. With his title came a limited amount of influence, which he was able to leverage into connections with those who had greater power and assets, but lacked the trappings of nobility. By creating dozens of alliances with such powers, the Duke managed to secure a broad variety of assets, including both military and political favours of considerable value.

It was not mere chance that led Duke Severus to leadership of the Periphery Sub-Sector. He had chosen to target this location as his first significant holding for a number of reasons. Of course, the fact that the region was long associated with his ancestor's dream played a major part. As it existed on the Imperium's frontier, it offered a degree of autonomy which would be unavailable in the heart of the Calixis Sector. There were also a number of physical assets which might be leveraged to offer a fledgling nation some small chance of resisting the monolithic Imperium.

Key among these was the presence of the Warp Conduit between the Calixis and Scarus Sectors. As traffic passed through the region, the Duke knew that he could legitimately levy a tariff on some of that traffic—along with bribes and the seizure of anything that he could reasonably label as contraband. In a worst case scenario, the vital trade route might also offer an opportunity for piracy. If his situation were to become untenable, he might even flee to the Scarus Sector.

WORLDS OF THE SEVERAN DOMINATE

“Beyond the boundaries of the Imperium, there are yet worlds where humanity dwells without knowing the grace of the Immortal Emperor. It is our responsibility to shine his light upon them.”

—Rogue Trader Bastille the Sixth

The Spinward Front represents worlds near the very border of the galaxy. Some might assume that there would be far fewer stars and even fewer habitable planets than within the more central portions of the galaxy. As humanity explored the region, they found that belief to be sorely mistaken. Though the reasons remain unclear, the stars located within this region—particularly those under the control of the Severan Dominate—have a disproportionately high number of habitable worlds. Few are ideal for human habitation, but a surprisingly high percentage are capable of supporting self-sustaining colonies.

STALYNTHIA

The barren landscape of Stalynthia belies its tremendous wealth. In fact, this mining world is arguably the Severan Dominate’s most valuable asset. Though it is incapable of sustaining itself—the world simply cannot produce adequate food for its population—Stalynthia provides almost enough metallic raw materials to fulfil the needs of all of the manufactorums still controlled by the secessionists. As long as they can harvest this planet’s wealth and deliver the ores obtained to other systems, the Severan Dominate is assured of at least some materials that they can commit to their war effort. Of course, such wealth makes the planet a target for almost all of the groups involved in the ongoing war effort.

CLIMATE

Stalynthia has a heavily polluted atmosphere, which retains heat to a nearly insufferable degree. Centuries of aggressive strip mining have heavily polluted the planet’s surface and her atmosphere. The air is thickly packed with particulates, reducing visibility to only a few metres on the clearest days. At times, conditions can be so severe that surface navigation is entirely dependent upon radar signals—even the brightest of headlights are unable to pierce the densely polluted air.

That same air is also extremely dangerous to the world’s citizens. Mining operations are undertaken by all of the world’s inhabitants, from the moment they can lift a shovel to the day they can no longer stand. Rather than digging deep beneath the planet’s surface, all of these mines are open to the sky. This has the benefit of reducing the number of collapses, as well as permitting virtually the planet’s entire workforce to participate in isolating the most valuable of ores. However, even with the limited machinery in use, the constant digging has contributed to the increased air pollution. Dirt is constantly stirred up, and the planet’s aggressive winds readily spin particulate matter into the atmosphere.

ADVENTURES ON STALYNTHIA

Recent reports indicate that advance elements of Waaagh! Grimtoof may have reached one of Stalynthia’s moons, discovering both its mineral wealth and its limited manufactorums. Upon their arrival, some units might deploy to the planet’s surface, where the deadly atmosphere might leave them stranded among millions of Severan Dominate citizens who see them as invaders.

A comparatively small amount of surface water and an extremely level surface are believed to contribute to Stalynthia’s violent winds. There are few objects to disrupt the air as it flows across the world’s surface. The gravitational effects of the planet’s two small moons are believed to also play a substantial role in its violent atmosphere. Rain seldom graces Stalynthia’s surface, but dust storms are a very common occurrence. The more intense storms are capable of flaying the flesh from an exposed human.

Ironically, though Stalynthia’s surface seldom sees direct sunlight, her surface is now far warmer than the legends suggest it might have been in the ancient past. It is believed that the planet’s pollution has darkened the atmosphere, enabling it to absorb substantially more heat. This also diffuses the heat and light, so that the temperature varies little from day to night, also showing little seasonal variation. An additional consequence is that the planet’s surface is always clouded in a gloomy twilight. Very few atmospheric craft are capable of travelling through Stalynthia’s densely polluted air. The amount of matter suspended in the atmosphere is simply too destructive to traditional engines. Most craft which even attempt to enter the atmosphere crash upon the surface as their systems become hopelessly fouled. This makes transport extremely inefficient, and makes any military operations on Stalynthia cumbersome at best.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

Not surprisingly, those who dwell upon the world have little knowledge of the value of its mineral wealth or of what a lynchpin their assets represent to the Severan Dominate. In fact, nearly all of Stalynthia’s citizenry live in a state of near abject squalor. It is not believed that this was always the case.

Legends suggest that when humanity first colonised Stalynthia, its atmosphere may have been far clearer, and that the world might even have once been well-suited for agriculture. It was only after explorers discovered the abundance of precious ores throughout the world’s crust that the ecological disaster began. In short order, virtually all of the world’s citizens began to mine the surface. At first, this offered a degree of economic freedom to those who laboured to pry the valuable ores from the planet’s crust.

In time, a greater and greater proportion of the population turned to this occupation. This continued until the planet’s pollution problems began, and the amount of arable land began to drop. Soon, members of the nobility began importing food and survival goods, which could be exchanged for the precious ores. Soon, virtually all of the miners were little more than indentured servants. This was an ideal situation for Duke Severus, as he could quickly convert desperation into a revolutionary mindset.

I: THE TRAITOR



FOURTHEDEN

As an agri-world, Fourtheden provides a substantial portion of the Severan Dominate's food supply. The vast majority of the secessionists' strategic reserve came from tithes taken from this planet. If the Duke lost his hold on the world, several others might fall in short order. Without its bounty, the secessionists would be unable to provide the necessary supplies to a number of worlds that rely upon imported foods. Consequently, this system and its agricultural bounty represent a key holding to the rebel forces.

CLIMATE

Fourtheden enjoys a very mild climate and only slight seasonal changes. This is largely due to the fact that the world has a nearly circular orbit around its system primary, and only the slightest of axial shifts. These factors combine to yield a world with a perpetual growing season. Both the native organisms and the humans who have made it their home have adapted to take advantage of the ongoing harvests.

With little seasonal variation, surface temperatures are almost always comfortably within the ranges ideal for human life. For much of the world, rainfall is a daily event, but severe storms are exceptionally rare. Throughout the world's recorded history, there have only been two cataclysmic storms, both of which only had a significant impact on coastal habitats and the surrounding regions. With the exception of the world's tropical regions and its poles, Fourtheden typically has daily weather which is reminiscent of a late spring day.

The most substantial variations to the world's climate are largely regional, due to geographic factors. For example, temperatures are far cooler near the poles and in some of the more elevated regions. In contrast, the areas nearer the planet's equator are substantially warmer. Even in these less hospitable regions, the natives have identified useful plants that produce abundant harvests.

The system's native life forms are almost never hostile to Terran life. In fact, the only organisms which seem capable of significantly interfering with agriculture are specimens that humans imported during Fourtheden's colonisation. It is unclear why the world's native species are so easily controlled, particularly given the world's inherent suitability for agriculture. Some more radical agents of the Adeptus Mechanicus posited that the entire planet might be a construct, designed specifically for agricultural purposes. However, those agents were never able to accumulate any concrete evidence to corroborate such theories, and so they remain largely baseless suppositions.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

Imperial forces first discovered Fourtheden during the waning days of the Angevin Crusade. By that time, High Command had already recommitted the majority of its forces to other war efforts. Expansion of the Imperium remained a primary goal, but the Crusade was considered a success, as the entire region that would eventually become the Calixis Sector was safely secured. By this point, the exhausted forces of the

ADVENTURES ON FOURTHEDEN

Though it is far from the major Warp routes, this world is the Severan Dominate's breadbasket. High Command might choose to make a deliberate, early strike to try to cripple its food production. However, when that strike arrives, poor intelligence might inadvertently deliver the Imperial Guard forces into a region already controlled by the Dark Eldar. This could offer the soldiers a tremendous insight into the situation, or it might be a shockingly dangerous battle for the unprepared troops.

extended campaign were more than adequately prepared to enjoy a well-earned rest. Even though the world appeared bountiful, its discovery came too late for the commitment that completing securing it would require.

Instead, Imperial forces chose to only commit a minimal colonising effort to Fourtheden. The system was simply too far removed from more established worlds and major Warp routes for the Imperium to properly integrate it into the Calixis Sector. Given its distance from the more civilised regions, High Command only undertook any effort at all because it was too promising of a jewel to ignore. Explorator reports strongly indicated that, with a minimal effort, a small group of colonists could establish a thriving population in relatively short order. An initial commitment of less than a million Imperial citizens soon proved this prediction true. In less than a century, much of Fourtheden's surface was colonised, and dozens of small communities and trading centres emerged.

Ultimately, Fourtheden's early success played a key role in the development of the other worlds beyond the Periphery. Its surplus bounty provided both additional colonists and ample food supplies for nearby worlds. Without its early success, colonies on many other worlds might never have survived. This same bounty played a significant role in Duke Severus the Thirteenth's decision to secede from the Imperium. Fourtheden's bounty of citizens and foodstuffs provide key elements necessary for the Severan Dominate to exist as an independent entity.

In spite of his dependence upon this bounty, Duke Severus was readily willing to sacrifice a portion of it to help secure his stranglehold on the region. In exchange for their military support, the Duke ceded the entire population of the world's southern hemisphere to the Children of Thorns Kabal. By carefully limiting communications—and blaming it on a necessary part of the war effort—the Duke worked to isolate large portions of Fourtheden's population. As part of his negotiations with the Dark Eldar, the xenos have gradually agreed to access more and more of the world. Initially, they stripped the Southern hemisphere bare of human life—servitors are the only forces now undertaking agricultural work in that region. More recent reports indicate that the Children of Thorns have begun to assault communities further north. This might be a sign that negotiations have broken down, or it could be that Severus is even more desperate than previously believed.



OHMSWORLD

A dense and toxic atmosphere makes Ohmsworld inimical to human life. None visit the world or choose to live within its countless small spires because of the hideous environment and the dramatic weather. Instead, most residents are the descendants of colonists who were compelled to live upon the planet due to its unusual mineral assets. This is because the atmospheric contaminants make Ohmsworld a valuable holding. Through careful atmosphere filtration, the inhabitants can obtain several chemicals and compounds key in the creation of Adamantine.

CLIMATE

Nearly all of Ohmsworld's human population dwell among the countless hive spires that dot the planet's surface. Though each is far less populous than a typical Imperial hive city, many of these delicate spires are every bit as tall and nearly as broad. This is largely because the enormous structures are little more than air filtration systems. A vast network of delicate tendrils, constructed of near microscopic tendrils, which resemble minute feathers, filter the world's atmosphere. As air constantly cycles past and through each hive city, the filters carefully identify and isolate the most valuable of the rare ores. The immeasurable numbers of microscopic tendrils capture flecks of each component—far smaller than a grain of sand. The filtration devices pass these precious elements to collection systems. The ore is then smelted into larger bars, which can be transported to off-world refineries and manufacturums.

As a side effect of the filtering, breathable air is directed to each hive's interior. This is an absolutely crucial effect, as without it, the world's inhabitants would be entirely dependent upon rebreathers. Oxygen is simply too rare for filtration plugs or gasmasks to suffice. Most citizens who venture forth from the hives wear tanks of breathable atmosphere, as any extended foray upon the planet's surface is otherwise too dangerous. The situation is so extreme that there are no known populations of humans—or even mutants—dwelling on the world, aside from those within the hives.

Due to the world's inherently toxic atmosphere, agents of the Adeptus Mechanicus have failed to identify any native life forms. They hypothesise that nothing dependent upon a carbon-oxygen life cycle could survive within the environment. If any creatures live within the roiling atmosphere—as local legends suggest—it might be a creature whose biology is completely foreign to descendants of Terra.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

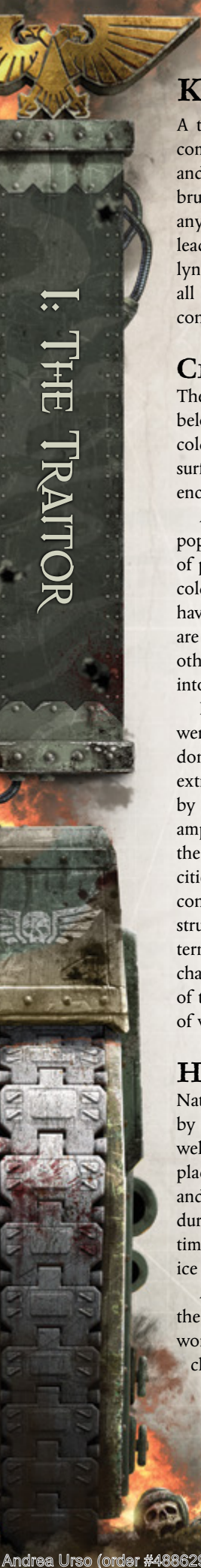
There are few records of Ohmsworld's initial colonisation. The filtration towers represent one of the greatest technological marvels within the Severan Dominate, but their ultimate origins are unknown. The technology is clearly consistent with Adeptus Mechanicus design, but there are no records of its creation outside of those jealously guarded by the Machine Cult. It may be that this world was colonised before the arrival of the Angevin Crusade.

Recently, Imperial Guard forces began a significant push to secure Ohmsworld. This is in part an effort to secure the world's ore production, but also an effort to keep that same production from the Severan Dominate. The important caveat is that both the secessionists and the loyalists believe the hives are far too precious to risk damaging. To date, most of the war's efforts have been battles conducted on open plains far from any hives, within the murk of the planet's toxic atmosphere. The few exceptions are instances where agents were able to penetrate a hive's security, so that loyalist forces could enter the structures, fighting the resistance in brutal, room-to-room combat.

ADVENTURES ON OHMSWORLD

The Player Characters and their platoon are assigned to infiltrate a hive so that additional units can be deployed to capture it. The characters must safely land on the world's surface, and then travel through the murky atmosphere to a filtration hive city. After they overcome the initial security, they must hold a portal against nearly overwhelming resistance forces, as they wait for reinforcements to reach them.





KOKYOTOS

A tragedy of epic proportions, there is little good that can come from the continued war on Kokyotos. Both the Imperium and the Severan Dominate have spent countless lives on its brutally frigid surface in battles that are unlikely to affect anything beyond the planet's boundaries. Since the secession, leadership on both sides decided that this world could be a lynchpin in the war. Even though this belief is clearly false, all seem compelled by pride to honour that initial view and continuously escalate the engagement.

CLIMATE

The average daytime surface temperature on Kokyotos is well below the freezing point of water. At night, it is significantly colder. Harsh winds continuously blow across its frigid surface. All of the planet's oceans are believed to be entirely enclosed by the seemingly endless ice and snow.

Ancient records indicate that Kokyotos once had a robust population of indigenous life forms, including a broad variety of plants and animals capable of surviving under its extreme cold. Since the outbreak of war, sightings of these specimens have become progressively rarer. Some posit that the species are dying from the increasingly dangerous conditions, while others suggest that the surviving species have simply gone into isolation to escape the ongoing extreme cold.

Prior to secession, much the world's human population were largely self-sustaining, as they dwelt within isolated domes, designed to protect their communities from the extreme weather. Vast hydroponic gardens were maintained by each of the communities, providing the citizens with ample food supplies that could be renewed throughout the seemingly endless cold. However, virtually all of these cities were destroyed in the opening months of the battle to control Kokyotos. This has left most of the planet's population struggling to survive in the brutal environment with little in terms of survival gear or food. Unless something is done to change the severity of the environment, it is unlikely that any of the local population will survive the war effort, regardless of who might ultimately win.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

Native legends suggest that Kokyotos was initially colonised by humanity when it was a temperate planet, with a climate well-suited to human habitation. This ancient effort took place long before the time of the Great Crusade, as the world and its population were only reconnected with the Imperium during the waning days of the Angevin Crusade. By that time, its climate had substantially changed—apparently, an ice age had begun in the intervening millennia.

A few surviving records from the initial contact between the explorers and the local population suggest that the world's natives were anxious to leave the world for a warmer climate. Unfortunately for the inhabitants, early exploration revealed that Kokyotos possessed a substantial reserve of promethium, deep beneath its icy crust. In short order, the population were assigned the task of mining this valuable resource for the good of the Imperium.

When the war of secession erupted, Imperial forces targeted Kokyotos, under the belief that the world's promethium reserves represented a critical asset for the war effort. The Severan Dominate exerted a significant effort so that they might retain access to these same reserves. Ultimately, this decision was a tragic mistake, as the planet's promethium supply is now largely exhausted. Now, with little of value, both sides continue to wage a grim war across the cold and barren surface for control of a near-worthless rock.

ADVENTURES ON KOKYOTOS

The characters accidentally discover a subterranean enclave that was destroyed in the early stages of the war. High Command considers the location a vital asset, as the population may be converted to corpse-starch, a precious commodity on this barren world. Before they can begin to exploit this resource, a Severan Dominate reconnaissance group also identifies the outpost. Soon, battle erupts over control of the devastated city, with the ruins representing the ultimate prize.

CUYAVALE

Humanity first began to colonise Cuyavale in the distant prehistory before the time of the Great Crusade. When remnants of the Angevin Crusade reached the distant world, they were surprised to discover the hallmarks of human life. Further exploration soon revealed two separate populations, which continued to thrive in spite of the world's deadly predators. After re-establishing contact, the Ecclesiarchy committed missionaries to the world, so that the surviving humans might learn the glory of the Immortal Emperor. While the Imperial Creed now flourishes upon the planet, their physical distance from the remainder of the Calixis Sector has limited the amount of interaction between Cuyavale and the agents of Holy Terra.

CLIMATE

The world's surface is covered by massive, temperate rain forests. Huge trees, more than a hundred metres in diameter at their bases, extend over a kilometre into the heavens. Closely packed, these enormous plants completely block out the primary's light from ever reaching the ground. Consequently, those creatures that live among the arboreal heights know a normal day-night cycle, while those that dwell in the shadow of the trees live in perpetual darkness.

While Cuyavale does enjoy some seasonal variation in climate, the massive boles of the world's trees limit these changes. The trees shelter all who dwell at ground level from any prevailing winds in the fall, and provide relief from the sun's heat in the summer. Few of the enormous trees shed their leaves seasonally. Though there is ample detritus among the shadows of these massive living organisms, little of it comes from the trees themselves. Instead, the animals and lesser plants that live on and among the trees create their own ecosystems, which are often dependent upon the trees.

ADVENTURES ON CUYAVALÉ

Cuyavale is a harsh world, and any Player Characters taking the field there would have to contend with the natural environment at least as much as their foes. Still, thanks to its ancient origins, Cuyavale could be home to wondrous relics of an era half-remembered—archeotechnology buried deep beneath the ground or hidden high in the trees, protected from the rampaging Drakons and the ravages of time by the diligence of defenders who have forgotten the purpose of the wonders they protect. For this reason, Imperial Guard troopers might find themselves fighting pitched battles high in the trees or deep beneath the surface against foes such as rebels, Orks, and the voracious native megafauna (perhaps all at once!). For the agents of the Adeptus Mechanicus, recovering a relic of the Golden Age of Technology is worth any price in blood—though the troopers shedding that blood might feel differently about the matter.

After considering the trees, the most significant of Cuyavale's life forms are the Drakons. These fearsome apex predators pose a significant threat to any life that travels upon the world. This is, in part, due to the creature's unusual life cycle. Though they can grow to enormous size—reports indicate mature specimens may have a wingspan in excess of 250 metres—the flying reptiloids begin life at a far smaller scale. During their mating season, mature female Drakons create nests among the planet's few arid mountains. These nests are invariably on the borders of the mountainous regions, where they abut with the forests. When the eggs mature and hatch, each nest can unleash thousands of ravenous, metre-long hatchlings upon the unprepared temperate rainforests.

In the weeks that follow, those destructive young often strip hundreds of square kilometres bare as they destroy all life, as well as a significant proportion of their siblings. Only a small percentage of each litter survive this period of frenzied hunting, leaving only the strongest and canniest an opportunity to reach maturity. In the years and decades that follow, the young Drakons continue to grow in size, often preying upon other members of their species at the same time as they devour the world's other life forms. Explorator survey reports indicate that during the early years of their development, Drakons may grow more than a metre each year, though this rate seems to be largely dependent upon the availability of prey organisms. Because of this, Drakons are fiercely territorial, interacting with other members of their species only during the breeding season. The largest specimens are believed to be many centuries in age, and are fiercely protective of their own domains, savaging anything (be it a lone explorer, an infantry formation, or a man battle tank) that wanders too close to it.



HISTORY AND CULTURE

The origins of human civilisation upon Cuyavale are unclear. Initial Imperial studies indicate that the world's two populations—one subterranean and the other arboreal—both originated at roughly the same time. However, the reasons for their split and continued isolation are lost to time. As there are no known surviving records that predate humanity's activity in the region prior to the Great Crusade, none are certain when the region might have been first colonised. Adeptus Mechanicus agents might be able to make an estimate after obtaining biological samples, but there are currently no records of anyone conducting such a test.

The arboreal populations largely dwell within Cuyavale's enormous trees. These humans seldom descend to the world's surface, and many spend their entire lives within the boughs of a small grove of trees. Communities are entirely dependent upon the bounty of the tree in which they dwell, and the organisms that live among the enormous plants. While many of these species are able to directly exploit the tree's biological processes, others merely take advantage of the microclimates that the trees create. These include a broad range of arboreal animals, as well as lesser plants and fungal analogues that have evolved to dwell among the trees. The native humans who live in this environment have domesticated many of these plants for agricultural purposes.

In contrast, the subterranean population lives far beneath the trees, among caves, believed to be the remnants of water flows and root networks that have long since rotted away. These natives are accustomed to lives of perpetual darkness. Their diets are largely based upon fungal growths and the few animals that dwell in the deep shelter of the trees, as they live in perpetual fear of, but relative safety from, the planet's Drakons.

Since the advent of the Severan Dominate, the secessionist nation has drawn recruits from both of Cuyavale's human populations. Some of these forces have been used in defensive efforts directly upon the planet, as Ork forces have recently begun to assault the world. To date, the Orks have focused much of their efforts on attempts to tame the massive Drakons at the same time as they engage the disparate communities. So far, the xenos have had early success in controlling the Drakons, with at least one beast serving as a sort of aerial transport for the violent Orks.

Adult Cuyavale Drakon (Master)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
55	--	52	58	45	12	37	30	--

Movement: 7/14/21/42

Armour: Plated scales (All 6).

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag), Athletics (S), Awareness (Per) +10, Dodge (Ag) +10, Stealth (Ag).

Talents: Berserk Charge, Fearless, Heightened Sense (Vision), Nerves of Steel.

Traits: Brutal Charge (10), Deadly Natural Weapons, Fear (1), Flyer (20), Natural Armour (Plated scales), Size (7), Unnatural Strength (+5), Unnatural Toughness (+5).

Weapons: Razor-sharp beak (Melee; 1d10+10 R; Pen 12), grasping talons (Melee; 1d10+16 R; Pen 2).

Wounds: 95

Total TB: 10

SEVERAN DIPLOMACY

"Your grace, I beg you for reinforcements for our defensive efforts. The tools of the High Lords have us sorely outnumbered and outgunned. I do not know how much longer we can fight for our freedom."

—High Marshall Jacoby Knowles of Kokytos,
final message to Duke Severus the Thirteenth

When war erupted among the Spinward Front, the Severan Dominate was hardly ready for an extended conflict. Duke Severus the Thirteenth had invested many years preparing for secession, but Waaagh! Grimtoof arrived unexpectedly. In short order, a two-fronted war enveloped the secessionists. Now, the Duke continually scrambles in an effort to support his military, at the same time as he tries to preserve a tenuous alliance with the Children of Thorns. With every possible resource in short supply, it is unclear how long he can continue the war against overwhelming opposition. The only possible avenue for success seems to be leveraging his enemies to fight one another as he attempts to secure additional assets.

The Severan Dominate's consistent philosophy towards diplomacy is exactly the same as the Duke used in founding the fledgling nation. Every single measure is focused upon stalling an enemy advance through deception. No promise is too grandiose, nor is any lie too dishonourable. The secessionists realise that their backs are to the wall. All of their choices are made out of desperation; Severus and his followers believe that morality is of little concern at this stage in the conflict.

DARK ELДАР

The Children of Thorns have long tolerated and exploited the human presence in this region of the galaxy. Prior to the arrival of the Imperium, the scarcely populated worlds presented a steady supply of slaves to be used for their needs in Commorragh. As the Imperial presence intensified, worlds which were once easy prey became increasingly resistant to the Kabal's slave raids. When Severus the Thirteenth offered to selectively lower defences against slave raids in exchange for assistance in consolidating his power, the Dark Eldar were swift to agree to his generous terms.

Since their initial agreement, the Duke has mercilessly condemned entire worlds to the Children of Thorns. Hundreds of thousands of Imperial citizens have gone screaming into the slave pits. Outwardly, the Duke has shown no remorse for these actions. He firmly believes that without the assistance of the xenos, his fledgling nation might have already collapsed.

More recently, however, problems have begun to surface in the agreement between the secessionists and the xenos.

As the Severan Dominate has lost control of worlds, their available assets have significantly decreased. The Duke is losing his stranglehold on additional planets, he is unable to consign the inhabitants of those worlds

to a life of torture at the hands of the Children of Thorns. Several worlds which have already been restored to the Imperium are no longer suitable targets for the slavers. This is increasingly true of worlds where the Imperium has chosen to maintain a significant number of reserve forces—in those systems, slave raids are often overwhelmed by the coordinated Imperial Guard efforts.

In reaction to this difficulty, representatives of the Kabal were swift to bring their 'concerns' to the Duke and his court. After all, their agreement to ally was based entirely upon his ability to provide them with worlds well-suited to their raiding efforts. However, as he continued to lose worlds, the Duke's ability to provide such access became limited. The fact that he has become increasingly dependent upon the limited number of worlds he still controls has only exacerbated the issue at hand. Unless there is a swift change in his fortune, the Severan Dominate might soon run out of worlds that can provide an adequate number of slaves to the Children of Thorns. The Duke is well aware of the deteriorating situation, and has begun efforts to renegotiate the scope of their agreement.

Key to that negotiation is the issue of the compensation that the secessionists receive from the Dark Eldar. To date, the xenos have provided the rebels with a limited supply of weapons and technology. In general, these armaments provide the secessionists an edge only within a very constrained set of circumstances. Additional favours have been promised—including actual military support from the Kabal. However, that support has only materialised within a very few, specific situations—ones in which the Children of Thorns were able to acquire additional slaves in the face of minimal resistance.

As the Severan Dominate's resources have begun to dwindle and their needs increase, they have begun to try to press the Dark Eldar ever harder in their negotiations. This creates a situation where neither side is negotiating in good faith. Just as the Duke and his representatives make promises that they have no hope of delivering, the representatives of the Kabal also have no intention to honour many of the human's desperate requests. To date, both sides have continued to pay lip service to their agreements, but both factions have also begun to push the boundaries wherever it is possible to do so. Both sides now recognise the deceptions posed by their opposite parties, and seek to take full advantage of the situation before everything completely collapses.

Each side has responded to the perfidy in its own way. On the part of the Severan Dominate, this has been to attempt to decrease the number of opportunities that the xenos have to take slaves. In part, this has meant better securing many of their isolated facilities from Kabal assault. However, this has not always been an effective deterrent. The Children of Thorns have technology that exceeds humanity's, and the ability to strike at a moment's notice through the Webway. In contrast, the Severan Dominate's resources have become increasingly strained by the ongoing wars. Resources which they could not effectively guard prior to the agreement remain very poorly protected. Consequently, in spite of their best efforts, the secessionists remain largely dependent upon the Kabal honouring its word to only strike at previously agreed upon targets.

In contrast, the Kabal have continually looked for ways to exploit their relationship with the Severan Dominate. As they consider the Duke little more than a talking prey animal, they hardly feel any strong obligation to honour their agreements with him. As long as it serves their purpose, they are likely to continue to at least pay lip service to his nation and his cause. For the time being, this also includes cooperating with him, for exactly as long as they can fully take advantage of his information and his assets. However, they feel no loyalty at all to his cause. In situations where they may be able to acquire additional assets without any added expense, they are certain to do so. They feel no qualms about exploiting the Duke, as they have every expectation that he treats them in the same manner. Notably, in the event that they can confirm an act of betrayal or accumulate strong evidence of his deception, they are certain to turn against him. If this were to happen, the secessionists would suddenly add an additional front to their war—one which might well spell their doom.

A further complication in their agreement is the loyalty of Severan Dominate citizens to the Imperial Creed. A working relationship with these xenos is anathema to their religious beliefs. To assuage this issue, their alliance is secret; only the highest ranking officers are even aware of their cooperation, and soldiers of the line are warned to ignore any scandalous rumours about the matter by Ducal Legates and other authority figures.

WAAAGH! GRIMTOOF

Upon his ascendancy, Duke Severus the Thirteenth began to slowly make his ancestor's dream of his own realm a reality. Quietly, Duke Severus the Thirteenth used intrigue and his vile allies, the Children of Thorns Kabal, to make his domain functionally independent of the Imperium without stirring up sufficient trouble to catch the attention of the great powers in the Calixis Sector. However, the arrival of Ork forces in the Spinward Front added a new element to the equation—one for which the Duke had not prepared. Duke Severus the Thirteenth immediately began to fear that this complication would make holding his new domain untenable, as he lacked the power to oust the Greenskins but feared the results of calling for assistance from the Imperium, which he had worked so hard to covertly cut off. As the Ork numbers spiralled out of control and evidence of a Waaagh! became undeniable, the Duke had no choice but to take desperate action. It was his frantic plea for help to Lord Sector Hax that began the downward spiral into the current situation. Were it not for the Ork assault, the Duke might have had the time to complete his preparations prior to launching his secession. The resulting war could have progressed very differently if not for the Ork Waaagh!, or might not have occurred at all if Severus' quiet campaign of isolation had been allowed to continue.

Initially, the Duke hoped to overcome the brewing Waaagh! with the forces he had mustered on his own. However, he simply lacked access to the assets necessary to effectively resist an Ork onslaught of this scale. Waaagh! Grimtoof represented the most significant Ork threat to the Spinward Front in centuries. During that time, countless systems specifically designed to oppose an assault of this magnitude fell into disrepair. Rampant expansionism led to locations that were never constructed with the necessary defensive measures.

Some of the assets that the Duke reassigned in preparation for secession had even been originally budgeted for use against a theoretical Ork incursion. Because he had misappropriated these forces and equipment for his own projects of expansion, they were no longer available for their intended purpose. In spite of his best efforts, the Duke had too few assets to defend all of the worlds threatened by the xenos. He could either effectively consolidate his forces to try to secure the most vital of locations, or he could remain thinly spread and let the Orks roll through and secure the entirety of his holdings.

The situation had become dire before Duke Severus the Thirteenth called for help from the Imperium, finally conceding to the words of the many advisors he had executed for voicing such opinions. By that stage, he had already lost a handful of planets to the savage advance, and realised that he had little hope of retaining any of his worlds without outside assistance. If these worlds were to be held by any humans, they would require substantial reinforcements. Of course, the Imperial Guard answered the call under their own authority, rather than ceding command to the Duke, as he initially requested. Consequently, on those worlds where they were able to most effectively resist the Ork advance, the traitor lost any control he might have had. Sector Lord Hax used the Imperial Guard forces to subdue worlds key to the Duke's fledgling domain, and thus brought them back to the Imperial fold. Some say the Sector Lord had even been aware of Duke Severus the Thirteenth's quiet betrayal, but had for some unknown reason stayed his hand, waiting until asked to intervene.

Losing worlds and resources to the Orks and the Imperial Guard, as well as the depredations of his capricious Dark Eldar "allies" and Chaos warbands such as that of Sektoth the False Whisperer, Duke Severus grew desperate and gathered the last of his domain into the "Severan Dominate," finally making his de facto betrayal from the Imperium openly known. Sector Lord Hax turned the forces of the Imperial Guard against the traitor, aiming to retake the worlds he had claimed and cast him down for his audacity.

The Orks, for their part, continued their Waaagh!, either uninterested in or unaware of the politics consuming the human factions around them. They continued to rampage across the Periphery and beyond, causing havoc for both the newly-created Severan Dominate and the Imperial forces alike, crushing and enslaving any world they reached. Duke Severus realised that if he was incapable of fighting the Orks, his only chance for survival would be to redirect the savage horde towards other targets. Ideally, these targets would be ones of his choosing; places that the Imperium could ill-afford to lose. The Duke's belief was simple—any Imperial forces committed to fighting Orks were not endangering his own holdings.

Unfortunately, herding the Orks proved more difficult than Duke Severus had hoped. Ork starfaring technology is based largely around travelling on the winds of chance, casting themselves into the void aboard barely-guided Roks and waiting until they crash into something worthwhile. Thus, when Duke Severus leaked information to the Orks about Imperial vulnerabilities and holdings, the Orks, in typical fashion, ignored them and continued their semi-random rampage across the region.



The Duke has learned from this mistake, and has since begun a new strategy, attempting to draw the Imperial Guard into unnecessary conflicts with the Orks. Using intrigue and falsely-leaked documents, Duke Severus has drawn the Imperial Guard to various worlds occupied by the forces of Waaagh! Grimtoof, sparking battles between the two wherever their paths cross. Whether this strategy proves sufficient in the long run remains to be seen.

IMPERIAL GUARD

From the perspective of Duke Severus the Thirteenth, the armies of the Imperial Guard represent the gravest threat within the Spinward Front. This is not because they can overwhelm his military—which they can. It is not because they can effectively stop Waaagh! Grimtoof—though they have the assets to do this as well. It is not even because they dramatically outnumber the forces of the Children of Thorns, and have the capacity to limit the Dark Eldar to little more than a force for piracy and raiding. The Duke is terrified of the Imperial Guard because he recognises that the Imperium holds him personally responsible for the secession of the Severan Dominate.

There are several powerful factions within the Spinward Front, all of them vying for control of the region's numerous systems. All of them are extremely willing to take whatever violent means are necessary to secure their holdings. Only the Imperial Guard, however, are likely to be able to eliminate one of their foes by directly assassinating the Duke. Notably, the Imperial Guard are also the ones most likely to resort to using assassination as a direct means of eliminating him. This is at least partly because they realise that without his political savvy and drive, many of the secessionists might quickly reaffirm their loyalty to the Imperium of Man.

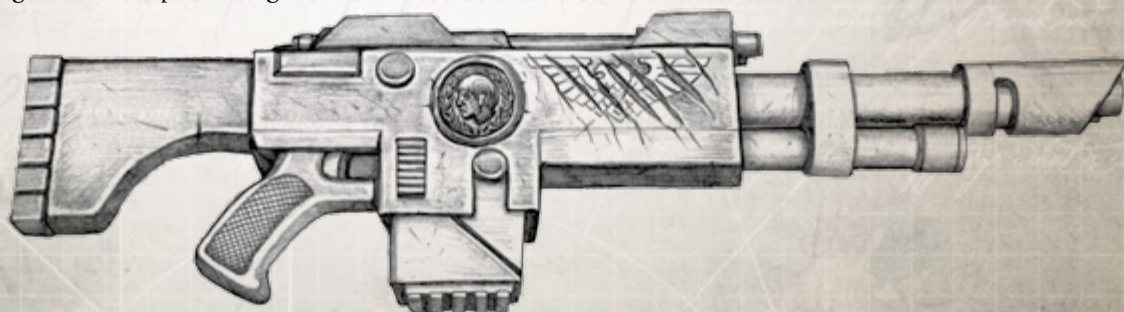
Severus the Thirteenth mistrusts the Dark Eldar. He justly respects the power of the Ork horde. In the end, he is completely terrified by the monolithic fury of the Imperial Guard. He accepts that in any sustained conflict, there is no reasonable chance that his forces could ever emerge victorious against the Imperium. The Imperium's assets are far too vast for him to even fully comprehend. His only hope is to make the prospect of defeating him far too expensive in terms of manpower and resources compared to the pitiful return that his holdings could ever offer. Ultimately, that proposition requires an effective holding action. If he can somehow sustain such an action long enough, it is very possible that a series of distractions might require the Imperium to redeploy their forces for use against more important targets.

This strategy offers only the faintest hope of success. Given the scope of the Imperium, there will always be other crises. Even within the Calixis Sector, the clandestine Achilus Crusade continues to present a significant draw upon available assets—though few people fighting in the Spinward Front are aware of where these resources are truly going. If Waaagh! Grimtoof were to bypass the Severan Dominate, it too could present a significant direct threat to the Imperium that might draw focus away from the secessionist systems. Because of this, the Duke's focus is simply on sustaining a holding action for as long as possible, as he hopes that just such a crisis might emerge.

Duke Severus the Thirteenth has also taken steps towards engineering a catastrophe that might trigger an Imperial Guard redeployment. Even though his treachery has become public knowledge, he still retains a network of powerful contacts within the Calixis Sector. To date, he has offered dozens of bribes and countless promises of future reward to those contacts in the hopes that at least one of them might create a calamitous distraction.

While the Duke might not be able to immediately repay such assistance, if a significant number of Imperial forces were diverted, he could have the time necessary to militarise even more of his holdings, better preparing his forces to resist the Imperial assault. With that act accomplished, any of his greedier contacts might soon be hailed as a powerful noble within the Severan Dominate. It is clear that there are many influential people within the Imperium who would gladly exchange a minor role within its constraints for a powerful one among the secessionists. The hardest challenge for such a traitor might be avoiding the just retribution for their actions.

An additional complication for the Duke is the fact that the excuse for his secession is entirely based upon a lie. The loyal followers of the Immortal Emperor need only recount their stories to Severan Dominate forces to convince them of the true nature of their actions. In contrast, Severus the Thirteenth must constantly invent new ways to continue to support his lies to his people. As time has passed, the tales have had to become ever more extreme. To mitigate this issue, the Duke has attempted to black out all communications between the Imperium and the worlds he controls. Further, he has created the Ducal Legates to maintain his propaganda, and these insidious agents undertake any means necessary to enforce the Duke's will. This has been largely successful, but any communications that sneak through have the potential to trigger a catastrophe, if forces learn of his treachery and renounce their loyalty to his false cause.



THE SCIONS OF CHAOS

The fragmented warbands active within the Spinward Front offer a threat to the Severan Dominate, but that threat is tertiary to the Ork and Imperial presence. The Duke is a rebel, but he is not a devotee of the Ruinous Powers. While hardly familiar with the true nature of such heretics, he does recognise that they have betrayed the Imperial Creed in ways far more extreme than his own. As such, he regards them as a threat he must eradicate, but lacks the resources to entirely expunge them.

In the event that the Duke's situation became more dire, however, his stance towards the Chaos warbands might also change. If he were on the verge of losing his core holdings, the Duke might appeal to the agents of the Ruinous Powers for assistance against the Imperium. Though he has given no direct indication of such an extreme course, the best intentions of desperate men pave a thousand roads to damnation.

SUSTAINING A SECESSION

"A soldier with a full stomach and a knife is far more lethal than one who starved while holding his lasgun."

—Maxim of the Adeptus Administratum

The act of declaring secession from the Imperium has proved far simpler than sustaining the state of separation. As he prepared to found his own discrete nation, Duke Severus the Thirteenth spent years currying the favour of numerous planetary officials. He built a vast storehouse of supplies by painstakingly diverting resources from worlds that had become dependent upon the imports. He oversaw the conversion of countless manufactorums from the production of materials necessary to sustain life, into forges required for the war effort. These efforts were monumental, as they completely changed the economies and focus of billions of lives on dozens of worlds.

In spite of the years of effort, it was hardly enough to begin the process. Though his plans were carefully laid, Waaagh! Grimtoof's arrival quickly revealed their limitations. A significant portion of the reserves that had been so carefully diverted were expended fighting against the xenos assault. The Orks even managed to seize some of these supplies, so that they served the efforts of the invaders rather than the cause of the Severan Dominate.

The arrival of the Imperial Guard soon added another layer of complication. While most of the resources had been moved to worlds beyond the Periphery, some had been maintained closer to the Calixis Sector. After all, the Duke had expected from the outset of his plans that he would need to hold those systems. Yet the Imperial response was far swifter than his plans had accounted for. When they arrived, many of his forces were improperly deployed. Assets

that should have been transferred to more secure locations remained vulnerable. His officers failed to issue orders in time, and his forces failed to defend a number of manufactorums and resources that were essential to the war effort.

In short order, the Duke discovered that these two events had very nearly undone his years of preparations. The fledgling domain had sufficient reserves to maintain its resistance and keep its populace fed and clothed for a few months, but it could not sustain this effort for any reasonable length of time. Severus spent countless hours in meetings with his most trusted advisors. He exhausted his personal astropaths, sending and receiving a flurry of messages to all of the worlds within his domain. He even reallocated a few of his personal luxuries so that they could instead be used to supply the ongoing revolution.

The initial efforts were hardly enough. The Duke studied endless scrolls of reports and finally accepted the cold facts. The reserves of the Orks and the Imperium of Man were far greater than those of the worlds within his holdings. If the revolution were to continue, he absolutely had to secure outside assistance. Of course, such assistance would not come cheaply. In order to stabilise his realm, he had to find groups willing to support his cause, but he also had to be certain that the nation could afford to repay the debts that it would incur.

In order to secure vital wartime resources, the Severan Dominate had two options. The first was to engage in productive trade relationships. By parlaying their resources—especially those which were not particularly relevant to the military cause—they could secure some of the goods required. Of course, most prospective trade partners were already aware of the desperate nature of the current situation. This led to terms that were hardly favourable, though given the risks inherent in dealing with a government of known traitors, this was not surprising. In spite of this, the Duke and his planetary governors have signed many trade agreements of this nature. A few have begun to meet with preliminary success, while others were clearly the work of thieves and con artists.

The Duke's only alternative is to establish alliances with promises of future recompense. In virtually all instances, the promises required have been completely out of proportion to the materials received. A few of the Duke's advisors have begun to speculate about the potential consequences of the treaties currently on file. By their calculations, if the Severan Dominate manages to maintain its independence for a century after the completion of the war effort, they will have only repaid two percent of the favours currently promised. In essence, these agreements have created a situation that is almost certain to bankrupt the fledgling nation. In the event that they manage to successfully maintain their independence from the Imperium, the rebel systems may, in essence, exist in servitude to their treaty partners for the millennia that follow.

In spite of this seemingly disastrous economic future, the Duke cannot afford to relent in his efforts to find additional allies and trading partners. The agreements made to date are unlikely to be enough to preserve the Severan Dominate through the current crisis. Severus only holds power through the support of his planetary governors and his people. His political presence has effectively persuaded them to support his cause, even making



substantial sacrifices in order to fend off the tyranny of the Imperium. Unfortunately, his cause is built upon a bedrock of lies and half-truths. At the same time he has worked to curry favour with outsiders, he has had to maintain this falsehood to his most loyal followers. If the planetary rulers were to learn of the agreements made in their name, it is likely that many of the planets under the Duke's control might withdraw their support and attempt to seek to return to the relative stability and semblance of safety provided by the Imperium of Mankind and its fast, unyielding forces.

ADDITIONAL ALLIES

The Children of Thorns have been the Severan Dominate's closest ally since before the confederation formally seceded from the Imperium. As the war effort has become more challenging, the Duke has attempted to broaden their relationship. To date, these efforts have not met with a great deal of success. The Kabal is fully aware of the many problems that the secessionists have encountered. Not only are they wary of the Duke's promises, they have also begun to undermine their agreements when they believe it is to their advantage. Because of this, the Duke has begun to turn to new contacts in the hopes of finding further assistance from any group willing to offer its aid. A wise man might not risk relationships with many of these factions, but at this point, the Duke has set aside what wisdom he might have had in the face of raw desperation.

ROGUE TRADERS

A number of Rogue Traders ply their way among the stars beyond the Periphery Subsector. The untamed worlds within this region are ripe for conquest by those who have a well-equipped vessel and the will to employ it. Those who bear a sacred Warrant are generally bound to stay true to the laws of the Imperium of Man when they travel within its bounds. Of course, since the secession, a few of the boldest Rogue Traders might argue that they have full authority to execute trade within the Severan Dominate. Officers of the Imperial Navy are unlikely to agree with this viewpoint, but they are also unlikely to open fire upon a Rogue Trader's fleet without at least some discussion.

At least two Rogue Trader dynasties—who are desperate, daring, or both—have chosen to work with the Severan Dominate. Though neither has agreed to provide the secessionists with military assistance, both have entered into extended trade relationships. Their dynasties' fleets have begun hauling cargo from Severan Dominate worlds to systems within the Calixis Sector. Officially, all of the goods originate from confidential worlds beyond the domain of the Imperium of Man, and they never provide any trade goods which might be used in a military action against the Imperium. Unofficially, it is clear that the dynasties have some wiggle room in the terms of their Warrants—or else they are just ignoring their responsibilities.

The trade agreements have opened up a limited flow of supplies to the Severan Dominate. The primary advantage is that the goods are of Imperial manufacture, so the materials imported are consistent with equipment that the secessionist already have in place. Ultimately, this can only present a short term solution. None of the Rogue Traders suspected of involvement with the secessionists have the capacity to even begin to fulfil the Duke's requirements over the long term. Unless they were to substantially increase their transport capacity, the traitors must soon find additional avenues of support.

SCARUS SECTOR

The Warp Conduit to the Scarus Sector offers an additional route that the Duke and his followers have attempted to exploit. The major advantage to this approach is that Imperial forces have not yet attempted to advance against the secessionists through this route. Some of the Duke's military advisors believe that this may be due to the actions of Lord Sector Hax. Their theory is that he is attempting to keep the secession as a Calixis Sector matter, rather than one that threatens the Imperium as a whole. This could be due to Hax's ego, or it might be an effort to channel additional Imperial resources through the Sector's authority.

Unless the Scarus Sector authorities move to blockade the Warp Conduit, this remains an open trade route between the Severan Dominate and the greater Imperium. Official channels prohibit any trade, but they are not the only ones with ships capable of hauling cargo. Further, there is some evidence that the Scarus Sector authorities may not be fully aware of the existence of the Severan Dominate. Because of this, trade has generally continued unimpeded between this region and the worlds beyond the Periphery.

A number of criminal interests have already committed to trading goods with worlds under the Duke's control. However, both the Duke's forces and the syndicates have very limited access to vessels capable of transporting supplies in any significant quantities. As a consequence, the deliberate trade through this passage has been limited.

That has not, however, completely shut down the passage, nor has it eliminated it as a potential avenue of future success. Severan Dominate forces have begun to engage in acts of piracy against Imperial vessels using the Conduit. Some of these actions have been undertaken simply to acquire goods necessary for the survival of the secessionist worlds, but others have focused upon attempting to capture intact vessels. If this tactic meets with success, it might significantly increase the capacity of this supply chain. Alternatively, the Scarus Sector might have to take more direct actions to protect craft that have left their region of space through the Warp Conduit. If this were to occur, the Severan Dominate might soon be engaged with Imperial forces on another front, where they are even less prepared to do battle.

THE CALIXIS SECTOR

Within the larger scope of the Calixis Sector, there are countless small groups that have grown restless under Imperial rule. Inquisition forces work to overcome these heretics on a daily basis. However, within the varied worlds of the region, there are far more threats than even Scintilla can effectively manage. While some of these traitors seek to overthrow their authorities, others simply seek a life free of Imperial oversight. A few groups are even desperate enough to commit to fighting an extended war against the Imperium.

Duke Severus the Thirteenth and his allies have attempted to reach out to some of these heretical groups. His forces face an inherent challenge, in that locating the groups is even more difficult for the secessionist than for the Inquisition, as the traitors cannot easily travel through Imperial space. Conversely, a few heretical groups have begun to initiate contact with the secessionists of their own accord.

Currently, the largest challenges in working with these traitors are establishing secure communications and transportation between the Severan Dominate and the Calixis Sector. The Imperial Navy has committed a number of ships to blockading any vessels that might attempt to travel between the worlds beyond the Periphery and the rest of the sector. The voidcraft which regularly make the journey must use circuitous paths and lesser known routes through the Warp, which typically results in a much longer transit time.

To date, such alliances have yielded only a minimal amount of support to date, but could have significant benefits, unless the Imperium moves to stop it. The Inquisition has been made aware of these threats and has begun to rigorously investigate all leads. However, if additional Imperial assets need to be diverted to deal with uprisings within the Calixis Sector, it might buy the Severan Dominate additional time to reinforce their current holdings.

THE ORDER

Recently, a small group of individuals calling themselves "the Order" discretely approached the Duke, offering their support in the secession efforts. They were able to initiate direct contact with him at a time when he was effectively isolated behind the extensive security of a Severan Dominate military outpost. As none of his advisors were present for the meeting, the Duke recounted the individuals in great detail, presenting a formal treaty that his contacts had provided. The agreement was extraordinarily generous, promising manpower, supplies, and access to reserves that might prove adequate for years. In exchange, the Severan Dominate had only to concede to a number of strange, seemingly meaningless requests including the transfer of a number of specified individuals to their custody and the removal of three members of the Duke's court.

The Duke presented the treaty to his advisors after signing it, but has had no further communication with the Order. He insists that the meeting took place, and the lavish scrollwork of the physical treaty provides compelling evidence of the agreement. However, none have witnessed any action from the Order since.

Some of the Duke's counsellors suspect that the Duke might have gone mad, forging the treaty entirely as a desperate ploy to buy time. Others now fear that a psyker or witch might have been involved in the agreement. They believe that the Duke could have condemned the entire Severan Dominate to an eternity of darkness. Only the Duke knows for certain what the secret meeting truly entailed, but he grows increasingly insistent that he has secured the salvation of his domain.

REALLOCATION OF ASSETS

In addition to trying to identify outside resources, the Severan Dominate has also begun to look for additional ways to utilise the worlds they already control. In most cases, the scope for this is limited. Attempting to build the infrastructure for agriculture on a barren world requires far more time and effort than Duke Severus can currently afford. Similarly, the number of potential recruits is ultimately limited by the current populations of the worlds controlled. Fortunately for the traitors, some assets may be leveraged to provide resources that can sustain the war effort.



RAW MATERIALS

One of the most important assets for the Severan Dominate is food. The populations of their worlds must grow and thrive if they are to sustain the secession. The population has already sacrificed millions of lives, but they are certain to need to sacrifice countless more. Even with their losses to date, the traitorous worlds have barely enough agricultural capacity to feed their current population. In order to maintain a level of population growth that can compensate for the losses of the war, the Duke has begun to initiate significant changes to agriculture and food production.

This is certainly limited by the climates and ecosystems of the worlds held. Many worlds are dependent upon imported food. Others may be able to grow plants or livestock on only a portion of the surface. The Duke has begun to transplant agriculture experts from some of his agri-worlds to places where the climate might have the potential for agriculture. He has also had these same experts analyse various forced growth techniques, so that overall efficiency and production may be improved. Adopting such changes on the enormous scale required is a slow process, but to date, this seems to be the most attainable change that the Duke has undertaken.

Other efforts to obtain raw materials have met with significantly lesser degrees of success. The Duke's advisors have initiated several mining and deforestation efforts. To date, none of these have identified useful locations or unexpected reserves of materials. In two instances, attempts to use materials acquired from alternative sources actually significantly slowed manufacturing capacities. This was because the substitute products were largely incompatible with the techniques already in place at manufactorums.

MANUFACTURED GOODS

The Severan Dominate has a limited capacity for manufacture. All of it is dependent upon the cooperation of representatives of the Machine Cult. For the most part, the Adeptus Mechanicus have withdrawn their support of the secessionists. In a few cases, manufactorums had to be shut down when key components were destroyed or hidden. In many other cases, unskilled labourers continue to toil in the vast manufactorums without the oversight of the Tech-Priests. Many workers have already lost their lives due to malfunctions caused by negligence and misuse.

To overcome this, the Duke and his advisors have worked to identify individuals who have parted ways with the Adeptus Mechanicus. In many instances, this has left the secessionists dependent upon madmen, who are far more concerned with their own experimentation than the revolution. As the traitors continue to deplete their initial reserve of manufactured goods, they have had to utilise more and more equipment that was assembled without expert oversight. Unless something changes soon, the secessionists might have to find alternative sources for their supplies, or they could become unable to equip their forces.

EXPLORATION

The Duke's last desperate ploy for goods has been a renewed focus upon exploration. The chance of success is desperately slim, but his advisors hope that the God-Emperor might grant them some reprieve. If the secessionists could identify another world with significant resources, it might substantially sustain their battles against the Imperium. The best option might be to discover a long-lost colony world even further beyond the Periphery, where there are said to be countless more caches of archeotechnology like those already found within the Spinward Front. Of course, reaching these fabled treasures is no easy task, and Duke Severus has few allies capable of undertaking such endeavours.

HOLDING THE FRONTS

"Captain, this manufactorum cannot fall. It is more important than you, your troops, or the population of this planet. Expend every available resource to keep it from the enemy."

—Planetary Overgovernor Worthington Derrymore

The Severan Dominate is a comparatively small domain under assault by two vast forces, in the form of the Imperium and Waaagh! Grimtoof. Other, smaller groups, including Chaos warbands and the Dominate's ostensible allies, the Children of Thorns, have also targeted their assets. The secessionists were scarcely prepared for war when they split with the Imperium, and the ongoing depletion of their resources has not helped. Duke Severus is a canny and power-hungry individual, but he prefers to rely upon misdirection and deception rather than direct confrontation. This combination of desperation and lies is represented in the Severan Dominate battle strategy in the same way that it is clear in their political approach.

From one perspective, this is a perfectly reasonable and responsible approach. If the Severan Dominate is to survive, it can ill-afford significant losses. The conundrum is that exerting such a conservative effort provides the Severan Dominate with only minor gains from its victories. Using this approach, the best they can hope for is to minimise their losses against the inexorable advance of both the loyalist forces and Ork Waaagh!.

Unless the secessionists manage to make effective use of the time that they have garnered, this is destined to end in a losing effort. To date, several of Duke Severus's military advisors have brought this matter up repeatedly. So far, the Duke's only response is to offer assurances that additional developments are in progress, and that the time is being well spent. However, Imperial sources have not been able to confirm that any such processes are likely to bear fruit within a realistic time frame. The war remains an ongoing effort on many fronts, but unless something significant changes in the upcoming months and years, the outcome seems inevitable.

A DEFENSIVE EFFORT

Each of the worlds that belong to the Severan Dominate is a precious commodity. All of them provide some resource that is vital to sustaining the war effort. Some contribute raw materials, which may be turned into vital weapons on other worlds. A few primarily provide citizens to join the secessionist armies. In a war of this scope, every contribution is vital. If the secessionists are to succeed, every commodity sacrificed before the altar of war must exact a tremendous price from the foe.

The Duke has preached this philosophy endlessly to those in command of his armies. In at least four instances, he has recalled a commanding officer because he felt that actions taken within a particular theatre of war were unacceptably daring. In all instances, this was in spite of the fact that those actions had met with significant levels of success. At this stage, it is very clear that the Duke's military philosophy is unyielding. It is also clear that he is unwilling to accept the advice of those with greater tactical training and acumen. This has significantly limited the tactical flexibility of those under his command.

In reaction to this crackdown, many of the Severan Dominate officers have become extremely conservative in their tactical decisions. With very few exceptions, the secessionists have devoted a substantial portion of their forces towards the construction of bunkers and other defensive installations. Now, these commanders see fortifications as the core of any strategy. Offensive strikes against Imperial forces are now far rarer than they were during the initial stages of the conflict.

On several planets, commanding officers have taken this to an extreme. Sorties and scouting missions have actually been eliminated, and the secessionists have conceded any effort at aerial superiority. Military units normally assigned to vehicles have instead dismantled their war machines, so that the components could be transformed into immobile defensive structures. These decisions have clearly made the defenders far more vulnerable to a carefully planned and executed assault. At the same time, the secessionists have sustained significantly fewer casualties as they have implemented these commands. It seems improbable that the Severan Dominate could hope to win with this strategy, but they are clearly less likely to lose the war over the short term, as long as they are able to keep their supply chains intact and flowing.

MINIMISE WASTE

In conjunction with the notion of sustaining a defensive effort, the Duke has also commanded that his forces are to avoid unnecessary losses, at all costs. This directive applies not only to the soldiers, but also to their equipment, and to the commodities they defend. Again, this is in keeping with the core Severan Dominate philosophy, that their resources are finite, particularly in comparison to those of their greatest foes. Further, they are also to make certain that time is not to be wasted. Idle hands are to be put to good use, whenever possible. If they have any hope of persevering, all must make a constant and concerted effort.

This represents a significant change in tactical philosophy from that originally used to train many of the officers who learned under the *Tactica Imperialis*. Many Imperial Guard

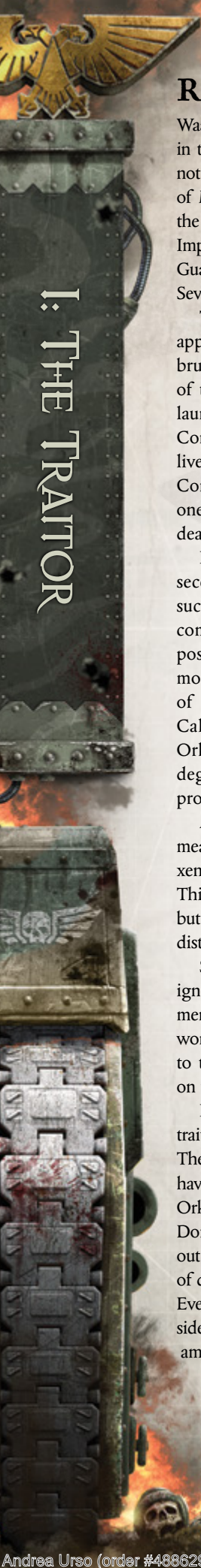
commanders are completely dependent upon using a vast wave of soldiers to overcome a target. Commissars are renowned for their willingness to execute soldiers who hesitate in combat. The secessionist forces eschew both of these approaches. Instead, they actively attempt to rehabilitate any troopers who show signs of cowardice or treachery. Human wave tactics are replaced, whenever possible, by artillery bombardments.

In this same vein, the soldiers of the Severan Dominate—as well as its citizens—are never to stand idle. Their days are rigorously planned out, and seldom involve any meaningful amount of downtime. Between deployments, secessionist forces are frequently assigned to duty within manufactorums, on agri-worlds, and even within mines. In many instances, products leave manufactorums only partially prepared for battle, so that machines and labourers may be assigned other tasks. Soldiers must commit additional time to unpack and finalise clean up on their arms and munitions before they can be put to work. In general, this is done during time that might otherwise be assigned to drills or calisthenics—often, hauling the massive crates provides an adequate physical training regimen.

Troops are also trained to take care to salvage materials whenever possible. Leftover food is saved and reused. Damaged goods are typically repaired rather than replaced. In many cases, this has left the secessionists wearing threadbare uniforms and using well-worn equipment. Generally, these are superficial issues that would only play a factor during a formal inspection. However, few of the soldiers have the necessary training to perform effective field repairs. As time has passed and equipment has continued to exceed its planned life expectancy, the traitors have had to deal with increasingly unreliable gear.

Of course, this tenet is in direct conflict with the Duke's alliance with the Children of Thorns. The Severan Dominate has wilfully sacrificed a significant portion of their holdings, including their citizens, to the cruel desires of the xenos. The Duke feels no regret for this agreement, but he is unwilling to discuss it with most of his advisors, and also keeps the alliance a secret from the population at large. If word of the agreement and its consequences were to spread, it might cripple his authority with his citizens, and with many of his line officers.





REDIRECT THE ATTACKER

Waaagh! Grimtoof's arrival preceded the Imperial Guard presence in the Spinward Front. Prior to their arrival, Duke Severus was not fully prepared to initiate his secession from the Imperium of Man. Were it not for the Ork invasion, the planets beyond the Periphery Subsector might have remained ostensibly under Imperial authority for another century, or more. The Imperial Guard arrived to stop the Ork incursion, but had to deal with the Severan Dominate's secession at the same time.

The Orks—including their highest ranking examples—appear to be undiscerning foes. They are generally content to brutally assault anyone that stands before them. The troopers of the Imperial Guard are also generally less than selective, launching attacks against whomever their officers target. Consequently, the worlds of the Severan Dominate largely live or die based upon the decisions of the Imperial High Command. Any time the Orks and the Imperial Guard battle one another, the secessionists are relieved to watch their deadliest foes combat one another.

Instigating such battles has become a key goal for the secessionist officers. To date, they have had little confirmed successes in this strategy. In spite of that, the Duke has commanded his officers to pursue this path whenever possible. He has even discussed what approaches might be most effective to lure the Waaagh! away from the holdings of the Severan Dominate, and towards the worlds of the Calixis Sector. If the traitors could somehow redirect the Orks, it would buy the Severan Dominate a tremendous degree of flexibility to reassign existing forces, and also to provide some additional relief to its frontline units.

At issue is the fact that the secessionists have no effective means of communicating with the Orks. In essence, any time the xenos begin a conversation, it inevitably ends in another assault. This is partially due to the limitations of their communications, but also due to the fact that the Severan Dominate worlds are distressingly close to the Waaagh!'s path of migration.

Similarly, the Imperium's doctrine prohibits them from ignoring the presence of traitors in their midst. There can be no mercy for the traitor. The Imperium has thoroughly cleansed the worlds they have recovered of any who might maintain loyalty to the secessionist cause. Trying to focus the Imperial assault on the xenos rather than the traitor is not at all a trivial matter.

In spite of their frequent failures in using this approach, the traitors have continued their efforts to attempt to employ it. They have leaked false maps and transmissions to the Orks. They have even used a number of craft as bait, to lead trails between Ork-infested planets and the Imperium. Similarly, the Severan Dominate has planted countless false distress beacons and sent out many cries for help towards the Imperium, with the intention of drawing vessels into systems controlled by the green menace. Even a minor encounter between these two groups can cost both sides tens of thousands of lives, and so any success is worth vast amounts of effort for agents of the Severan Dominate.

COVERT OPERATIONS

The Severan Dominate must do as much as it possibly can to undermine the effectiveness of their foes. From the perspective of the secessionists, the vast armies they face are seemingly unstoppable entities. As they unleash their resources, the invaders are capable of using their momentum to roll over worlds before an effective defence can even be mustered. In order to prevent this, the traitors have begun to utilise a variety of different techniques that might delay the efficiency and effectiveness of their foes.

One tactic secessionist agents frequently use involves infiltrating into the population of labourers attached to any Imperial unit. In many instances, simple acts of sabotage can result in disasters of epic proportions for the Imperium. Simply altering the labels on boxed munitions can lead to crippling situations for the Imperium. Riskier actions, such as setting fires or using explosives, are also used selectively. As these actions are generally far more noticeable, they also tend to be much less survivable for the agents involved.

In a few cases, assassination attempts have been made against high profile Imperial and xenos officers. These actions have met with limited success, as the secessionists ultimately lack the necessary resources to effectively train their agents. Similarly, the highest ranking invading officers tend to be particularly well-prepared for such attacks.

Part of the covert operations initiative is actually targeted against Imperial agents already present upon Severan Dominate worlds. After centuries of contact, even at a distance, with the Imperium, the majority of the secessionist planets still have many citizens who remain loyal to Terra. In a number of cases, these citizens have begun to provide intelligence back to the loyalists. Some of these agents are trained, but many are only amateurs, motivated to take action by their beliefs and hunted by the more zealous of the Ducal Legates.

PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE

Duke Severus overcame his family's history of ignominy through his impressive talents as a politician and negotiator. Admittedly, a certain amount of his success came through luck, and carefully working to avoid any attention. Yet it must be acknowledged that his deceptions successfully persuaded the citizens of numerous worlds to swear fealty to his cause. This must be considered a clear sign that he is a talented and charismatic leader. Because of his past successes in this field—and failures in so many others—the Duke believes that the same skills may serve as an effective tool within the context of war. His plans in this regard are still at a formative and experimental stage, but several of his advisors have already acknowledged that the plans seem to have merit.

During the earliest stages, the secessionists have focused their psychological efforts upon the troopers and line officers of the Imperial Guard. To date, all of their efforts have been focused on encouraging desertion among the ranks. If possible, they have often attempted to persuade the soldiers to give their loyalty to the secessionist cause instead, though this extreme of a change has met with far less success. To achieve this very difficult goal, the traitors began by choosing a very simple message, utilising as many delivery mechanisms as possible.

The key to their message was to convince the Imperial soldiers that the secessionists were the ones acting in the right. They have tried to support this message by reminding the invaders that the Severan Dominate worlds remained steadfast in their faith in the God-Emperor. This is then supported by the evidence of their tactical practices. The fact that Duke Severus limits offensive actions actually plays in to support this message. Their limited direct actions against the Imperial units provide ample support for the message that the secessionists are reluctant to take their battle to the Imperium.

Of course, delivering this message to the thoroughly trained soldiers of the Imperial Guard is extremely difficult. The most loyal of soldiers are already under orders to ignore any enemy propaganda. Because of this, the most effective means to distribute such information requires that the secessionists have active agents operating among the Imperial forces. Limited training restricts the number of possible candidates. However, in their time of desperation, the Duke is perfectly willing to send this message out in as many ways as is reasonably possible. Because of this, he has instructed a number of his citizens to pretend to turn traitor, so that they can spread their message of revolution into the Imperium.

SUPPLY LINES

Because of the current stresses upon his resources, the Duke has presented one scenario where he considers it acceptable to initiate higher risk offensive actions. This specifically regards any actions which might be taken to secure supplies. Successes in such endeavours represent an effective double win for the secessionists. Not only do they obtain additional assets to prosecute their war effort, they also manage to deny those same assets to their foes. In at least two cases in the Spinward Front, Imperial assaults floundered, and turned short conflicts into extended wars, when secessionists secured equipment that had been intended for loyalist troops. Before they can initiate strikes of this style, the Severan Dominate require two critical tools in their arsenal. The first is accurate intelligence about the Imperial supply lines. The second is units and equipment appropriately trained to seize and reassign the supplies in question.

For better or worse, the secessionists have a very constrained supply of both of these. Information about the supply lines generally comes from native workers who have been forcibly inducted into slave labour groups. These workers have limited access to information and few means of communicating. However, their data are often very accurate. Alternative sources of this information tend to be individuals who have ready access to the Imperial Guard officers' clubs and mess halls. In a few instances, pirates have even managed to identify common transit patterns for Imperial transports. It is critical to note that none of these sources are particularly reliable. Missions that endanger a significant force to capture unconfirmed supplies are often riskier than even the most desperate secessionists are willing to undertake.

Forces committed to stealing supplies must be swift moving and have a significant cargo capacity. In many instances, the secessionists' mobile assets have been disassembled, so that their components might be used to build defensive structures. An alternative solution has been to steal the vehicles carrying the cargo at the same time as the target supplies. This strategy is, of course, less effective when targeting a supply depot that has been left lightly defended. In other instances, transport vehicles have proven to be far better defended than the depots, which presents another set of challenges.

After several early successes, the Imperium has become cognizant of the Severan Dominate tendency towards targeting its supplies. They have recently begun to leak false information to the secessionists about timing and security of various deliveries. In two attacks since this change in tactics, the traitors were defeated without a significant loss of Imperial life. This change in strategy is quite recent, so it remains unclear how the Severan Dominate may respond to this new development in Imperial tactics.

Comparable strikes against xenos supplies have been far more limited. This is largely because the secessionists are far less able to make effective use of any equipment that they might recover. Missions of this type have been used, and likely remain a critical component to the Severan strategy, but they are only executed in much lower risk situations.

SEVERAN DOMINATE REGIMENTS

“God-Emperor, save us from your false servants!”

—Rallying cry of the Ohmsworld Spireguard

Some groups might decide that they would like to explore an **ONLY WAR** campaign using characters allied to the Severan Dominate faction. While these characters remain loyal to the Imperial Creed, they have denied the authority of the High Lords of Terra. This grants them the opportunity to use a different philosophical outlook than the Imperium, but it means that their supply strains are substantially constrained.

This section presents one of the many planetary regiments that serves the Severan Dominate—the Ohmsworld Spireguard—for use by the Game Master, to help create NPCs, or by the players to create Severan Dominate-aligned Player Characters. Other famous Severan Dominate regiments include the taciturn Kokytyos Frozen Wind, the honour-bound Caravasse Leigesworn, and the infamous Kulth 57th, “The Butchers.” These and countless other Severan Dominate regiments can be created with Regiment Creation rules in the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook and a few thematic tweaks as outlined in this section.

Though these regiments were trained in a manner consistent with Imperial Guard regiments and still operate in much the same way, they have deviated in certain fashions since the secession. The most obvious difference is that they are accompanied by Ducal Legates (see page 31), who fill the role of Commissars. However, other Support Specialists could certainly still be present, in the form of Ministorum Priests continuing to preach the faith, members of the Adeptus Mechanicus too engaged in their work to notice petty things like the change in political climate, or even Abhumans who were once attached to these regiments. Though the secession might seem too large of a political schism for any ambiguity at first glance, it is only one of the countless internecine conflicts that constantly rage within the vast span of the Imperium. The true will of the Emperor is rarely known even to his most pious agents, and bloody wars are fought every day over less. For a soldier of the line in the 41st Millennium, choosing the “right” side in such a conflict is nigh-impossible, and so the troopers fighting in the Spinward Front must merely hope that they are on the winning side, that they might survive to be vindicated by history.

CREATING THE OHMSWORLD SPIREGUARD 12TH

The rules listed for the Ohmsworld Spireguard have been created using the Regiment Creation Rules on page 58 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook. The following doctrines have been used:

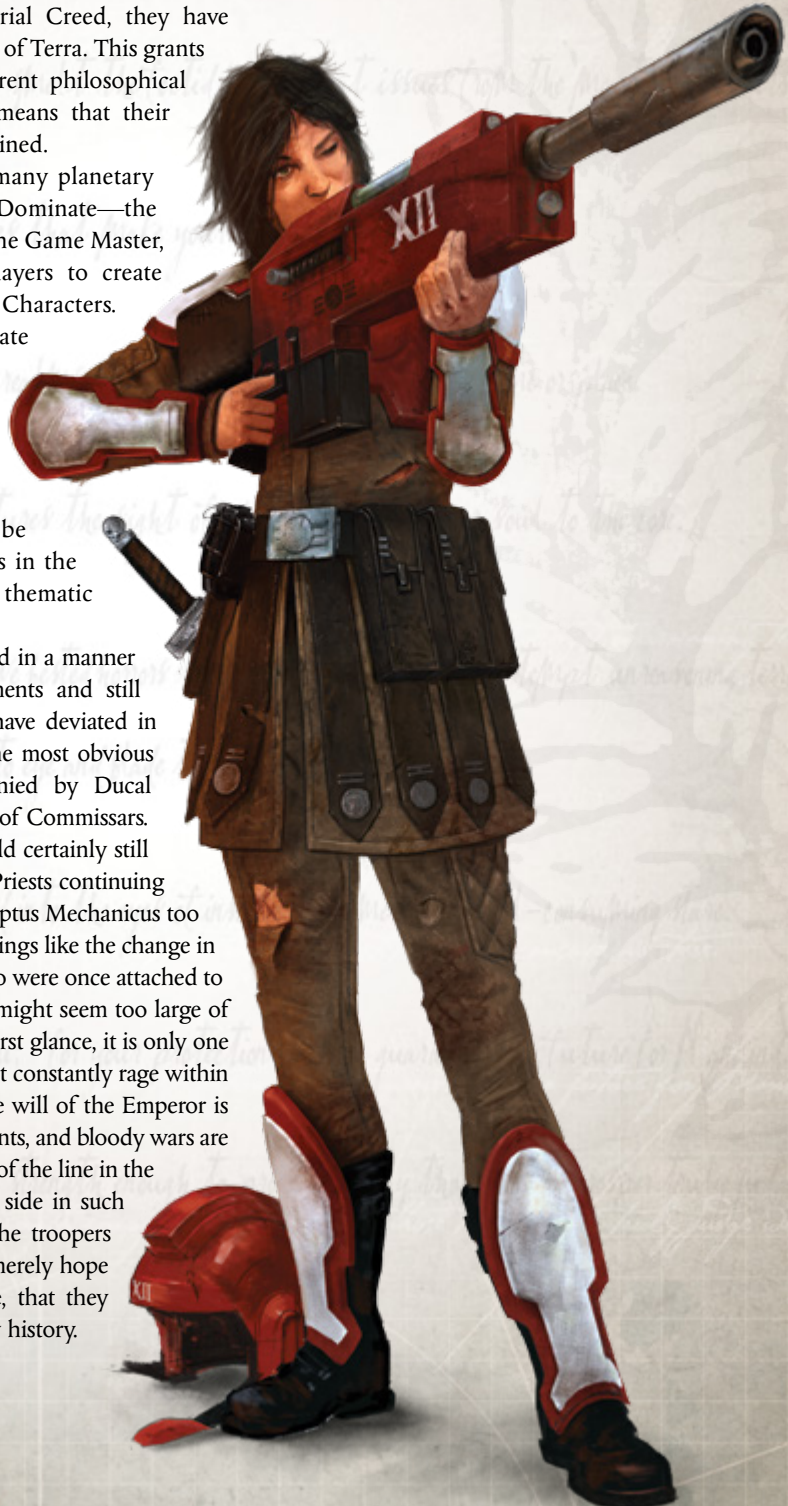
Home World: Hive World

Regiment Type: Line Infantry

Doctrines: Hardened Fighters, Iron Discipline

Commanding Officer: Circumspect

Total Cost: 12 points



REGIMENT RULES

Characters belonging to the Ohmsworld Spireguard gain the following advantages:

Characteristic Modifiers: +2 Weapon Skill, +3 Strength, +3 Agility, -3 Intelligence, +3 Fellowship.

Starting Aptitudes: Willpower.

Starting Skills: Athletics, Common Lore (Severan Dominate), Deceive, Linguistics (Low Gothic).

Starting Talents: Foresight, Paranoia, Rapid Reload, Street Fighting.

Accustomed to Crowds: Hive worlders grow up surrounded by crowds, and they are used to weaving through even the densest mobs with ease. Crowds do not count as Difficult Terrain for hive worlders, and when Running or Charging through a dense crowd, they take no penalty to Agility Tests to keep their feet.

Hivebound: Hive worlders seldom endure the horrors of the open sky or suffer the indignities of the great outdoors. Whilst outside of an enclosed or artificial environment (such as a hive city, voidship or similar), they suffer a -10 penalty to all Survival Tests, due to their continued unfamiliarity with such places.

Wounds: Characters from this regiment reduce their starting Wounds by 1.

Standard Regimental Kit: 1 M36 lasgun and four charge packs, 1 suit of Imperial Guard flak armour, 2 frag grenades, 2 krak grenades, 1 Good Craftsmanship sword, respirator, photo-visor, micro-bead, uniform, poor weather gear, rucksack, basic toolkit, mess kit and water canteen, blanket and sleep bag, rechargeable lamp-pack, Severan Soldier's Guide to Battle, 2 weeks' rations.

Favoured Weapons: Meltagun, heavy flamer.

OHMSWORLD SPIREGUARD 12TH

The ancient spires of Ohmsworld represent a stunningly efficient example of archeotech in action. Their ability to isolate atmosphere for their inhabitants, as well as filter precious resources from the world's merciless winds, is a tremendous asset to the secessionist cause. Of course, Imperial forces hunger for this same resource, spurred on by the hopes that they might be able to recover it from the traitors. Only the Spireguard are bold enough to defend the valuable archeotech from the tyrants who seek to steal the enshrouded world from the Severan Dominate.

On Ohmsworld, each small hive tithes a percentage of its population to join the Spireguard. This tradition extends back to the earliest surviving records of the world. When the Angevin Crusade re-established contact with the planet, the Spireguard began using training methodologies consistent with those of the Imperial Guard. The intention at the time was that, eventually, the Spireguard might be assembled into a full Regiment and delivered to the Imperial Guard. However, due to their limited population and their importance as a mining world, the world has never successfully delivered a regiment.

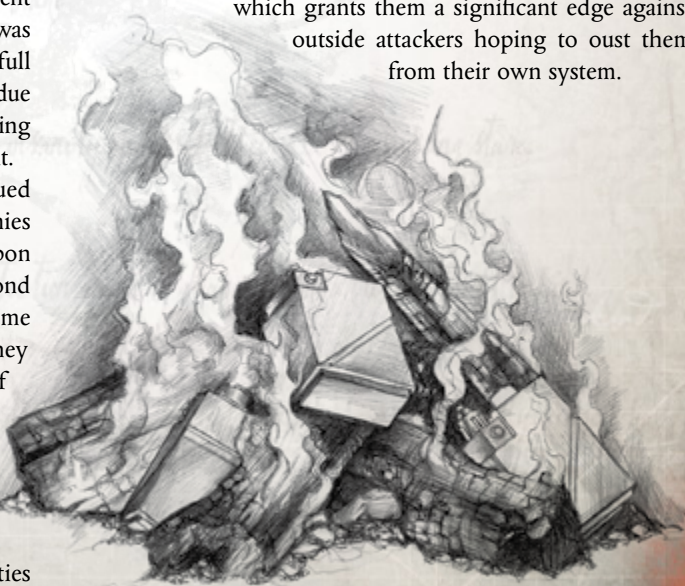
In spite of that fact, the tithing and training has continued for hundreds of years. Over the centuries, the companies assembled played minor roles in countless wars, both upon Ohmsworld's surface as well as on other worlds, beyond the Periphery. The vast majority of their experience came from battles fought within the planet's hives, where they must take great care to avoid damaging any portion of the vast filtration systems. However, some battles have also been fought upon the planet's exposed surface—where casualties succumbed to the environment even more often than to enemy fire. It was there that the Ohmsworld 12th won renown as stubborn protectors of their home, suffering terrible losses to protect the cities from the outside. When it was reformed in the wake of these casualties, this veteran unit was tasked by Duke Severus

himself with the continued defence of its home world.

The unit's training has focused heavily upon fighting within the confines of a hive world. Key among these tactics is a focus on avoiding excessive collateral damage in their battles. When fighting beyond the confines of a hive, this superfluous combat restriction is also enforced. As a consequence, they tend to be overly conservative in their strategies in outdoor battles.

OHMSWORLD SPIREGUARD 12TH IN THE SPINWARD FRONT

Almost all of the Spireguard 12th's action has been on Ohmsworld, as recent Imperial pressure on the system has required their continued presence. Initial plans to use them against the Orks were curtailed when the Imperial attacks flared up again. Their strategies to date have largely been dependent upon their familiarity with their home system, which grants them a significant edge against outside attackers hoping to oust them from their own system.



I: THE TRAITOR

FORCES OF THE SEVERAN DOMINATE

"Today we fight the servants of the tyrants, so that we may restore the God-Emperor's true vision. The revolution begins here, which may sweep across the entirety of the Imperium of Man."

—Duke Severus the Thirteenth, Proclaiming the Founding of the Severan Dominate

Soldiers devoted to the Severan Dominate are remarkably similar to those of the Imperial Guard. In large part, this is because the training techniques were designed by individuals who had learned the ways of war through the *Tactica Imperialis*. Deviations are largely connected to the philosophical differences between the secessionists and loyalist beliefs. Of course, some variation is common, as reflections of the home worlds for the forces in service.

SEVERAN DOMINATE SOLDIER

In many instances, the soldiers who now serve the Severan Dominate began their military training in preparation to serve the Imperium of Man. As the worlds beyond the Periphery grew in population, techniques were introduced that utilised training systems consistent with those of regiments raised for the Imperial Guard. The intention of this change was that the systems could be immediately ready to provide their tithe, once formally inducted into the Imperium. In many cases, the *Departemento Munitorum* provided a substantial supply of military equipment to facilitate this process, as Duke Severus the Thirteenth had made it a point to request generous levels of supplies, under the condition that they were to be used for training.

Consequently, it is hardly a surprise that the Severan Dominate military is very similar in terms of organisation, equipment, and philosophy to its Imperial counterparts. The largest changes deal with the core expectations and the ability to keep its soldiers adequately supplied in the field. For the most part, the philosophical differences tend to deal specifically in the methods used for ongoing training. Among the secessionists, the soldiers are expected to assume other responsibilities, often among the civilian population, at a moment's notice. This is largely due to the lack of available personnel to tend to both civilian and military needs on many of the rebel worlds.

Recently, an increasing percentage of Severan Dominate units have taken to wielding autoguns and shotguns in place of lasguns. This is largely due to a limitation in the available supplies of power packs necessary for the lasguns.

The secessionists have a much greater manufacturing capacity for autogun ammunition, though they are also restricted in their ability to transport the necessary supplies to worlds already engaged.



Severan Dominate Soldier (Troop)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
36	34	35	35	37	28	34	26	33

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 10

Armour: Flak armour (All 4)

Total TB: 3

Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness (Per), Common Lore (Spinward Front) (Int), Dodge (Ag), Linguistics (Low Gothic), Operate (Ground) (Ag), Scholastic Lore (*Tactica Imperialis*) (Int), Stealth (Ag), Survival (Per).

Talents: Deadeye Shot, Rapid Reload, Street Fighting.

Weapons: Autogun (Basic; 100m; S/3/10; 1d10+3 I; Pen 0; Clip 30; Reload Full) *or* lascarbine (Basic; 75m; S/2/-; 1d10+3 E; Pen 0; Clip 60; Reload Half; Reliable) *or* shotgun (Basic; 30m; S/-/-; 1d10+4 I; Pen 0; Clip 8; Reload 2 Full; combat knife (Melee; 1d5+3 R; Pen 0), 3 frag grenades (Thrown; 9m; S/-/-; 2d10 X; Pen 0; Clip 1; Reload -; Blast [3]).

Gear: Severan Dominate uniform, basic toolkit, 2 reloads for primary weapon, *Severan Soldier's Guide to Battle*, home world memento, standard regimental kit.



GM ADVICE: USING SEVERAN DOMINATE SOLDIERS

The line troopers of the Severan Dominate are much like their Imperial Guard counterparts—they are well-trained and skilled soldiers, and they are only human. As such, they tend to employ tactical thinking and avoid unnecessary risks when they properly identify them.

ENGAGEMENT

Like almost all soldiers, Severan Dominate troopers prefer to launch ambushes than be on the receiving end of them. In either case, however, they frequently try to use cover to their advantage, fanning out so as to avoid being hit with blast weapons and making the most of the terrain to avoid volley fire. If charged or caught off-guard, they often attempt to fall back to a more defensible position.

COMBAT TACTICS

Severan Dominate soldiers follow the lead of their Sergeant, Lieutenant, or other officer on the battlefield, fighting as coordinated units that support one another. The Game Master can use Formations (see page 124) to represent this sort of fighting style if he wishes. Most Severan Dominate soldiers are professional and efficient, trying to eliminate threats in order of the danger they pose to the squad using sustained volleys of fire with their lasguns (and any special weapons the squad might have). Severan Dominate soldiers typically prefer not to engage their foes in melee combat unless they are in the midst of a rout and victory is assured.

Most squads have a Sergeant leading them. Squads with Lieutenants or Commanders (see page 30), or even Ducal Legates (see page 31), attached operate in much the same way, but tend to be better at identifying major threats and acting as part of a larger battlefield strategy rather than simply fighting to survive. Further, these squads tend to make a priority of keeping their charge alive at all costs, given the importance of experienced officers on the battlefield. If he wishes, the GM can use the Formation rules in **Chapter IV: Veterans of the Front** (see page 124) to represent leadership figures so protected by their troops. This also allows these foes to take advantage of Commands (see page 128) that represent the battlefield acumen of the Severan Dominate forces.

SEVERAN DOMINATE SERGEANT

Among the Severan Dominate forces, the rank of sergeant is most commonly earned during the course of basic training. Those soldiers who exhibit the greatest understanding of the core military philosophies, in conjunction with an unwavering devotion to the secessionist cause, are assigned to provisional leadership positions. The responsibilities of these non-commissioned officers gradually increase throughout the course of their training process. Those who prove successful during the entire process are eventually given command of full squads, as sergeants. Not all succeed, and in those cases, rookie squads are most often split up after training, so that they can be assigned to reinforce existing units.

Of course, a newly minted sergeant is hardly comparable to a savvy veteran who has served in the trenches. Typically, the secessionists try to pair more accomplished lieutenants with less experienced sergeants, as well as the reverse. Whenever possible, the rebels assign at least one experienced non-commissioned officer to each platoon. This serves as a means of ensuring that the less experienced troopers have a combat veteran to turn to for experience. Of course, given their current casualty rates, the Severan Dominate has an ample supply of shattered squads that they can use to provide veteran leadership to their newest recruits.

Severan Dominate Sergeant (Elite)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
37	36	35	35	37	30	35	30	39	

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Armour: Flak armour (All 4)

Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness (Per), Command (Fel), Common Lore (Spinward Front, War) (Int), Dodge (Ag), Linguistics (Low Gothic), Operate (Ground) (Ag), Parry (WS), Scholastic Lore (Tactica Imperialis) (Int) +10, Stealth (Ag), Survival (Per).

Talents: Deadeye Shot, Nerves of Steel, Rapid Reload, Street Fighting, Takedown, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee, Ranged).

Weapons: Autopistol (Pistol; 30m; S/–/6; 1d10+2 I; Pen 0; Clip 18; Reload Full) *or* laspistol (Pistol; 30m; S/2/–; 1d10+2 E; Pen 0; Clip 30; Reload Full; Reliable); chainsword (Melee; 1d10+5 R; Pen 2; Balanced, Tearing), 3 frag grenades (Thrown; 9m; S/–/–; 2d10 X; Pen 0; Clip 1; Reload –; Blast [3]).

Gear: Severan Dominate uniform, basic toolkit, 3 reloads for primary weapon, *Severan Soldier's Guide to Battle*, home world memento, standard regimental kit.



SEVERAN DOMINATE LIEUTENANT

Within the forces of the Severan Dominate, there are some officers with particular experience combating certain kinds of foes. Some have fought the Ork threat for years or decades, and are well-versed in the tactics and strategies of the Greenskins (so much as such things exist). Others cut their teeth against heretics, and have grown accustomed to fighting wars against other humans. Officers with experience fighting humans are particularly valued now, as the Severan Dominate must fight many of its battles against the Imperium of Mankind itself. Ironically, many of the most pious soldiers within the Severan Dominate, who hate the heretic above all else, now use their skills to cut down the soldiers of the God-Emperor. Depending on the situation and their rank, some of these soldiers remain unaware of the Duke's defection—or at least the depths of this treachery—but others are fully aware of their betrayal, and must attempt to rationalise this shift to themselves.

The officers with a background that focused upon battle with other humans have been instrumental in many of the ongoing wars with the Imperium. Duke Severus made it a point to grant additional authority to officers who already had such experience. He also made clear that these officers should be stationed in locations that were most critical to the war effort. It is unclear if the existence of such traditions was a fortunate coincidence for the fledgling Severan Dominate, or if one of the Duke's ancestors might have engineered traditions of revolution within the Periphery Subsector as a crucible to prepare troops and leaders for this very sort of conflict.

Severan Dominate Lieutenant (Elite)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
38	40	35	35	35	35	37	39	40	

Movement: 3/6/9/18
Armour: Flak armour (All 4)
Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness (Per), Command (Fel) +10, Common Lore (Spinward Front, War) (Int), Dodge (Ag), Linguistics (Low Gothic, Severan Codes), Operate (Ground) (Ag), Parry (WS) +10, Scholastic Lore (Tactica Imperialis) (Int) +10, Stealth (Ag), Survival (Per).
Talents: Deadeye Shot, Nerves of Steel, Rapid Reload, Sidearm, Street Fighting, Takedown, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee, Ranged).
Weapons: Bolt pistol (Pistol; 30m; S/2/-; 1d10+5 X; Pen 4; Clip 8; Reload Full; Tearing), chainsword (Melee; 1d10+5 R; Pen 2; Balanced, Tearing), 3 frag grenades (Thrown; 9m; S/-/-; 2d10 X; Pen 0; Clip 1; Reload -; Blast [3]).
Gear: Severan Dominate uniform, basic toolkit, 3 reloads for bolt pistol, *Severan Soldier's Guide to Battle*, home world memento, standard regimental kit.

SEVERAN DOMINATE COMMANDER

Among the secessionists of the Severan Dominate, higher ranking officers seldom gain their rank through merit. In spite of their claims of liberty and freedom from their oppressors, those in positions of leadership are invariably descendants of nobles, who have maintained control over their world for untold generations. Typically the children of long dynasties, officers invariably are granted their commissions as part of their inheritance. The duty to military leadership is seen as a proving ground. Those who exhibit competence in leading their forces in battle are often granted additional responsibilities when they retire from service to formally join their worlds' ruling classes.

The Severan Dominate military philosophy is grounded in the *Tactica Imperialis*. In spite of this, the conservative philosophies that Duke Severus espouses have played a significant role in the way they currently conduct battle. Generally speaking, these officers prefer to retreat in the face of superior threats, sacrificing lives and equipment only when no other option is available. Only a few of these commanders are brave enough to risk their own lives for the sake of the soldiers under their command. Often, this is not a sign of personal cowardice, but fear for the consequences that the Duke might inflict upon their homes or families should they fail.

Severan Commander (Master)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
40	40	33	36	39	37	38	40	38	

Movement: 3/6/9/18
Armour: Flak armour (All 4)
Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness (Per) +10, Command (Fel) +20, Common Lore (Spinward Front, War) (Int), Dodge (Ag), Linguistics (Low Gothic), Navigate (Surface) (Ag), Parry (WS) +10, Scholastic Lore (Tactica Imperialis) (Int) +10, Security (Int), Stealth (Ag), Survival (Per).
Talents: Deadeye Shot, Lightning Reflexes, Nerves of Steel, Rapid Reload, Sidearm, Street Fighting, Takedown, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee, Ranged).
Traits: Touched by the Fates (1).
Weapons: Bolt pistol (Pistol; 30m; S/2/-; 1d10+5 X; Pen 4; Clip 8; Reload Full; Tearing), chainsword (Melee; 1d10+5 R; Pen 2; Balanced, Tearing), 3 Frag Grenades (Thrown; 9m; S/-/-; 2d10 X; Pen 0; Clip 1; Reload -; Blast [3]).
Gear: Severan Dominate uniform, basic toolkit, dataslate, 3 reloads for bolt pistol, *Severan Soldier's Guide to Battle*, home world memento, standard regimental kit.

DUCAL LEGATE

For the Severan Dominate to survive, its people must remain focused and devoted to their cause. The ongoing Imperial and Ork invasions certainly serve as a convenient reminder of the tyrants who seek to obliterate their interstellar nation and its worlds. Even with that constant reminder, it is far too easy for the populace to lose their sense of urgency and let vigilance slip. An overwhelming workload in concert with strict rationing saps the minds and the spirits of the fledgling nation's citizens. This can lead to decreases in productivity, or even calamitous losses—neither of which the Severan Dominate can afford to bear in their hour of desperate need. Unless something is done to prevent such decreases, the wars are doomed to failure from the very outset.

Duke Severus the Thirteenth chose to implement political officers as a core part of his nation's cultural identity, because he felt that they were the best means to offset his citizens of their responsibilities. In part, the Duke made this decision because he was very familiar with the Commissariat. The military units that had used Imperial training techniques were designed to function in cooperation with Commissars. At the time of the secession, there were very few Commissars within the worlds that seceded. Those present had simply been involved in detached duty so that they could assist in training soldiers on the worlds beyond the Periphery Subsector. Without exception, all of the Commissars remained loyal to the Imperium of Man. Consequently, all were eventually executed, leaving a gaping hole in the Severan Dominate military hierarchy.

Even though the citizens of the Severan Dominate remain true to the Imperial Cult, there are no Schola Progenium institutions within their boundaries. These schools are the sole source of Imperial Commissars. Without them, the Duke's armies had no facility to properly train their political officers. The Duke decided, as these officers were clearly vital to his military, that he would need to design a new training regimen. As Severus created the training protocols for these new political officers, he made significant changes, so that they became a practical reflection of his own political and personal philosophies.



Even with his limited military savvy, the Duke was aware of this impending issue in the years that led up to his declaration of secession. During that time, he prepared the curriculum of study for the officers that would initially form the core of the Ducal Legates. As part of assembling the regimen, Severus became directly involved with several dozen prospective candidates who were well-suited for the roles and receptive to his beliefs. Over a course of several years, he moulded these men and women into his vision of ideal political officers. When the secession formally occurred, the Duke used these initial trainees to found his schools. Now, every world of the Severan Dominate hosts at least one Ducal school to provide the increasing numbers of Ducal Legates required for the secession to effectively continue.

SEVERAN DOMINATE BELIEFS

Ducal Legates serve primarily as a physical manifestation of the Duke's political beliefs—at least the ones that he chooses to espouse to his followers. Duke Severus charges these officers with making certain that all of the Severan Dominate soldiers are familiar with their cause, and that they remain ardent adherents of it. Because of this, it is essential that the core philosophies are the most central part of their training.

The first pillar of the Severan belief system is that of interdependence. Every world within the Severan Dominate's domain can only function to its fullest when it is capable of relying upon others within its boundaries for assistance. This notion is stressed from an interstellar level down to that of the individual. Each labourer at every manufactory and each soldier within a platoon is reminded on a daily basis that the success of his comrades is entirely dependent upon the hard work of his brethren. This idea is reinforced with the distribution of goods, particularly those that are rationed. In many instances, Ducal Legates take a hands-on role in the distribution of goods, reminding recipients where each item originated. Historically, many of the worlds had been dependent upon materials from the Calixis Sector and the Imperium as a whole. In order to establish the Severan Dominate as a functional entity, the Duke has used this pillar to stress the value of each of the nation's member worlds.

The second pillar of the Severan belief is that of justice. This functions in coordination with the notion of interdependence. While not every world or individual is capable of contributing to the same degree, all are expected to always put forth their best effort. Constant monitoring plays a key element in this regard. Individuals who are consistently observed to do less than their best effort are questioned. In some cases, their fitness for duty is reassessed. In other instances, appropriate punishment is immediately meted out.

The Duke has based his secession on the principal that the High Lords of Terra have been unjust in their distribution of goods and expectation of repayment from the frontier worlds. It is essential for the citizens of the Severan Dominate to believe that they are treated more fairly under the Duke's guidance.

The final pillar is that of honesty. The political officers expect their citizens to be forthright in all matters. Key to this is the responsibility of citizens to report anyone who might be acting in ways that are at odds with the goals of the secession. Without their cooperation, it would be impossible to identify traitors and spies. An additional consequence of this is that many individuals who do not fulfil their responsibilities to the Severan Dominate are also identified as candidates for re-education. This process has created a philosophy of fear among many of the nation's citizens, but it has also been an effective tool for maintaining internal security. The Ducal Legates are expected to maintain an approachable manner as a key tool in offsetting the fear response, so that paranoia does not impact productivity.

THE DUKE'S WILL

Ducal Legates are empowered to take any steps necessary to ensure the Duke's will is obeyed. Many of the citizens of the Severan Dominate base their loyalty to the Duke on the belief that his methods are not so pitiless as those of the Imperium. To reinforce this belief, Ducal Legates rely foremost on diplomacy and dialogue. However, should a local ruler or officer prove intractable, Ducal Legates are also empowered to serve as judge and executioner. In such cases, those same skills of diplomacy serve to smooth things over with the unfortunate's peers. Most Legates are not above fabricating crimes and evidence in order to remove undesirable elements quietly.

Ducal Legates are just as zealous and ruthless as Imperial Commissars. Where Commissars usually make this abundantly clear, Legates tend to conceal it beneath a veneer of cordiality and concern for the local populace. To preserve the reputation of the Duke, Legates prefer to operate through duplicity rather than overt violence. Legates often ask subtle or probing questions in order to direct the actions of local governments, which allows the local population to revel in its supposed "independence" without relinquishing any real control. Of course, they are hardly above using more direct methods to fulfil their goals, if it proves necessary.

Initially, the Ducal Legates worked to motivate soldiers within the Severan Dominate armies. As that strategy soon proved successful, the Duke chose to expand its scope. Over the past few months, more and more Ducal Legates have accepted roles at many levels of the Severan Dominate, including supervisory roles within organisations that only have a peripheral association with the military. The uniforms of the Legates and their calm authority have become an everyday sight for many Severan Dominate citizens.

GM ADVICE: USING A DUCAL LEGATE

Ducal Legates are natural leaders and manipulate the masses to their whims, using rhetoric to stir the hearts and minds of their underlings.

ENGAGEMENT

Ducal Legates rarely place themselves on the front lines intentionally and, as such, are rarely involved in ambushes. They typically prefer to lead from behind a sufficient mass of troops, and usually call for a defensive withdrawal if caught unawares.

COMBAT TACTICS

Most Ducal Legates tend not to involve themselves on the front lines of battle. However, some of these political officers are highly skilled tactical leaders and combatants, having come from within the Severan Dominate's armed forces. Others are diplomats with little real combat experience. If drawn into combat, however, most Ducal Legates gather soldiers around them to protect them (see **Formations** on page 124 for one way to handle this), speaking inspiring words to their troops to drive them on against the enemies of Duke Severus.

Ducal Legate (Elite)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
43	43	39	42	40	45	4I	45	47

Movement: 4/8/12/24

Wounds: 20

Armour: Legate's overcoat, carapace chest plate (6 Body, 4 Arms, 4 Legs)

Total TB: 4

Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness (Per), Charm (Fel) +10, Command +30 (Fel), Common Lore (Calixis Sector, Severan Dominate, Spinward Front, War) (Int), Deceive (Fel) +10, Dodge (Ag), Inquiry (Fel) +10, Interrogation (WP), Intimidate (S) +10, Linguistics (High Gothic, Low Gothic, Severan Dominate Codes) (Int) +10, Navigate (Surface) (Int), Parry (WS) +10, Scrutiny (Per).

Talents: Air of Authority, For Duke and Dominate!†, Nerves of Steel, Swift Attack, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee, Ranged).

Traits: Touched by the Fates (1).

Weapons: Bolt pistol (Ranged; 30m; 1d10+5 X; Pen 4; Clip 8; Reload Full; Tearing), power sword (Melee; 1d10+8 E; Pen 5; Balanced, Power Field).

Gear: Severan Dominate uniform, micro-bead, 3 bolt pistol clips, signet ring home world memento.

†**For Duke and Dominate!:** A Ducal Legate's role is to use his rhetoric to inspire nearby Severan Dominate forces. Once per Encounter, as a Half Action, he may make a **Challenging (+0) Fellowship Test**. For every Degree of Success he scores, allies who hear him gain a +5 to Willpower Tests until the end of the encounter.



THE BEAST

AREAS OF
ACTIVITY

•

WAAAGH!
GRIMTOOF AND
OTHER FACTIONS

•

ORK FORCES

•

ORK CLANS

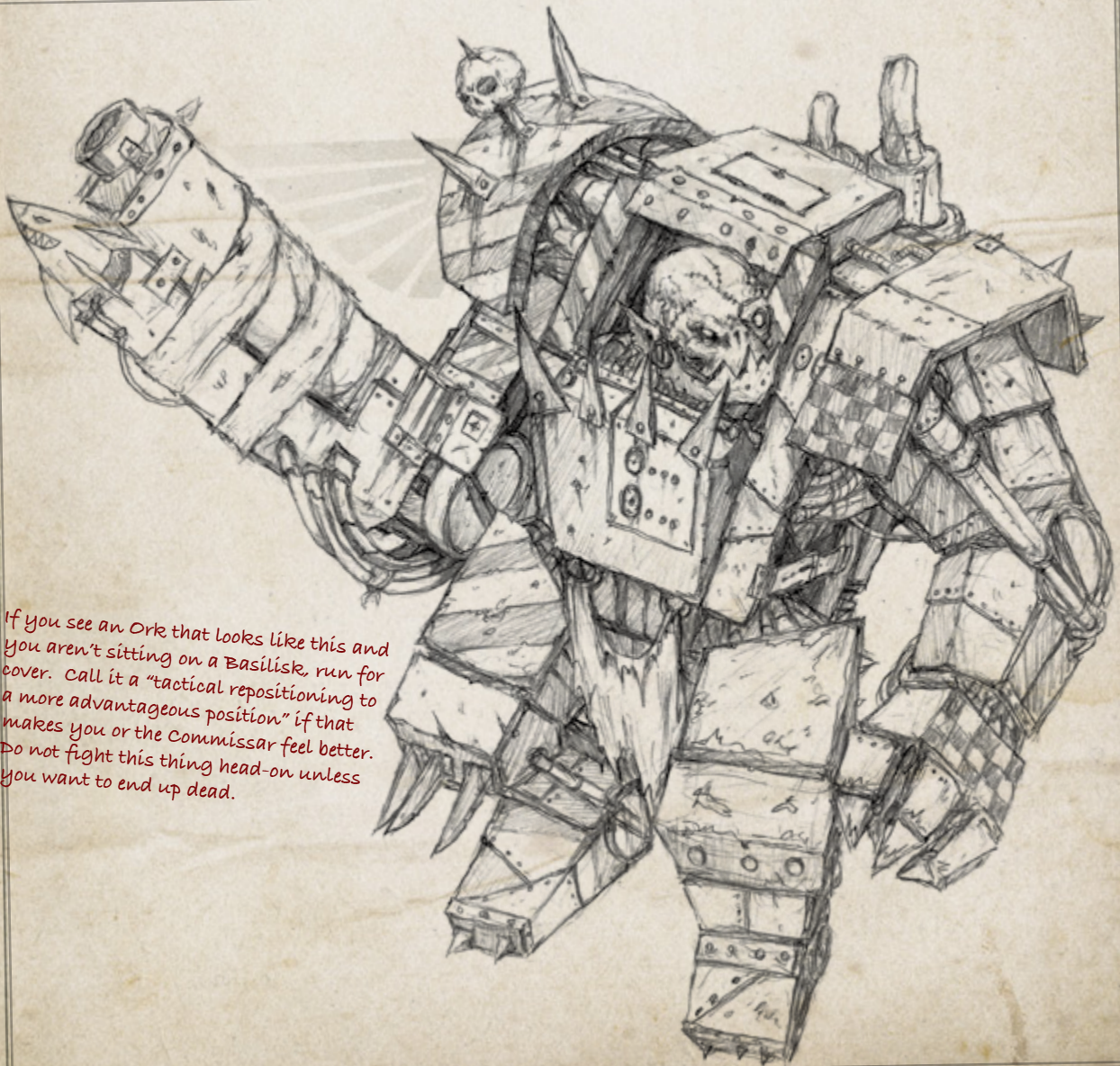
Chapter V, Section I (Orks),
Sub-Section I (Introduction)

THE XENOS CALLED "ORKS"

Of all the vile enemies of humanity, cursed in the sight of the Emperor, few are more obviously loathsome than the Orks. These brutish, rampaging beasts are hulking and dim-witted, flailing about in the dark and howling at the void. Wherever they go, they swarm in pathetic, disorganised mobs, milling aimlessly about battlefields and using little more than the weight of overwhelming numbers in an attempt to crush those who stand before them. Despite persistent but heretical rumours to the contrary, Orks are no great threat to a loyal and properly-equipped Imperial Guard trooper. Though they are bulky and their appearance horrible, Orks can easily be dispatched.

Thus, do not let fear take root, faithful servant of the God-Emperor! Is it not true that the Imperial Guard is one of the greatest forces for good in the galaxy? Is it not true that the faith and zeal of the Imperial Guard makes it a more powerful in battle than any unruly clump of abominable xenos? Is it not true that the weapons and armour of the Imperial Guard are the finest and most deadly known to humankind, aside from the holy wargear of the Emperor's Angels of Death? Indeed, all of this is true. So long as one remembers the relevant training and this advice: any Imperial Guardsman can stand before even the largest, most savage Ork, sure in the belief that the righteous will always triumph over the beast.

Belief is a great weapon. But I prefer frag grenades.



If you see an Ork that looks like this and you aren't sitting on a Basilisk, run for cover. Call it a "tactical repositioning to a more advantageous position" if that makes you or the Commissar feel better. Do not fight this thing head-on unless you want to end up dead.

THE RAMPAGING MENACE

Even though Orks pose little danger to disciplined Imperial Guard troopers, their bestial and thoughtless savagery makes them dangerous to untrained civilians. Such individuals, who are of weaker will and constitution than the stalwart soldiers of the Imperial Guard, are in constant danger of falling to these slaving hordes. Orks will slaughter and devour any civilian they can overrun. Feel no pity for these creatures, for they feel none for the innocents they would slay!

You can kill an Ork with a lasgun. But you can also kill one with a stale ration pack if you're stubborn enough. A meltagun, autocannon, or earthshaker cannon is better.

KILLING THE ORK

Though they can be felled by mighty weapons such as the noble lasgun, Orks are extremely resistant to harm. Expert xenologists have debated whether this is the cause of their incredible clumsiness or a result of it, but such academic concerns aside, their blasphemous physiology makes them difficult to kill. Though their misshapen bodies are vastly inferior to the perfect form of humanity as created in His image, it is so strange and alien that their organs are not where one would expect. As such, melee attacks are an extremely slow method for killing Orks, and should be avoided except in emergencies. Further, thanks to their woefully underdeveloped nervous system, they do not feel pain the way other species do. In fact, it is in question whether they feel pain at all. When Orks are wounded, unless they are rent limb from limb or otherwise killed outright, they can regenerate from even the most heinous wounds quickly. Thoroughness and dedication in putting such beasts to rest can save the life of a civilian, another trooper, or even a Commissar!

Saw one fighting without a head today. Guess the guide is right this time.

FINAL NOTES ON THE GREENSKINNED XENOS

The Orks have no culture that one could recognise in the civilised parts of the galaxy. They build no great cities, make no art, tell no stories, play no music, raise no monuments, and produce nothing of value. Their blasphemous religion, if it can even be called that, is similar to the ancestor worship found on isolated backwaters, where the populace has forgotten the light and glory of the God-Emperor.

The Greenskins have no priests, no houses of worship, and no recognisable rites, rituals, or litanies. How they worship their "gods" with no hierarchy and no administration is beyond the understanding of the most learned and expansive minds of the Imperium. These foul creatures must simply be written off as heathens and heretics, when they are thought of at all. Orks live in squalor, in wretched tribes they refer to as "clans." Ork clans appear to be split along cultural lines, with each one home to a specific kind of brute with unique traits and instincts. Within these ragtag, dissolute groups, as in all other aspects of Orkoid "culture," might makes right, and the biggest and most savage Orks rise to the top of their rickety power structure. The biggest, strongest, and most brutish of the Greenskins in any tribe quickly rises to the top and declares himself "boss," an ascension typically expedited through mindless violence and fratricide, which is little more than we can expect from such debased and vicious creatures.

Despite their obvious shortcomings, these creatures have somehow come to possess a rudimentary understanding of military technology, likely through theft of sacred relics from the Imperium of Mankind. The learned adepts of the Machine Cult offer up no wisdom as to how this strange state of affairs came about, but it is certain that Orks possess the ability to operate and modify (if not truly construct) ramshackle fortifications, armour, weapons, and even vehicles.

Regrettably, Orks are endemic to many worlds in the Spinward Front, infesting them and harassing loyal populations left vulnerable by the spiteful and futile actions of the Severan Dominate. It is the Imperial Guard's sacred charge to dispatch these creatures wherever they encounter them, driving both these beasts and the Severan Dominate off of the many innocent worlds that they have invaded. Every world freed from these xenos is a world that can contribute to casting out the betrayers and heretics rallying behind Duke Severus the Traitor and returning the Spinward Front to the everlasting peace and prosperity that it once enjoyed as part of the Imperium of Mankind.

Commissariat Memo MXXVII to Troopers in the Spinward Front:

The primitive technology of the Orks is largely stolen from superior forces (including even the Imperial Guard, usually due to theft or security lapses). Orks inevitably deface and befoul any machine with which they interact. Do not attempt to operate any contraptions constructed, modified, or in close proximity to these brutes, lest the depraved and tormented machine spirits within lash out and cause spiritual harm or explosive death. Report any individual tampering with such devices to the regimental Commissar and Departamento Munitorum representative for discretionary punishment and/or reinforcement requisition forms.

Save your arm. Don't touch it.

CHAPTER II: THE BEAST

AREAS OF ACTIVITY

"If the Orks fought us half as often as they fought each other, this whole crusade would be in serious trouble."

—Col. Christoff, 526th Valhallan Ice Warriors

The following chapter expands on information presented in the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook regarding the great Waaagh! led by Warlord Grimtoof the Git-Slayer. This chapter contains a list of some of the worlds currently under the thrall of the Git-Slayer, detailed outlines of the relations between the Greenskins and the various power factions within this region of the Periphery (all of them defined by violence), and a discussion of the long-term goals, strategies, and battlefield tactics used by the Waaagh! in this particular theatre of war. Waaagh! Grimtoof is one of the most dangerous foes for the Imperial Guard in the Spinward Front, and this chapter is designed to help the Game Master present the rampaging Greenskins in all their brutal glory.

At the end of the chapter is a list of new Ork NPCs, including the powerful Warboss and the mechanically gifted Mekboy, as well as a listing of the various Ork clans. This information is provided for Game Masters and players to add a further layer of detail to the dangerous region of space they inhabit, to flesh out worlds they might visit, and to give their enemies distinct traits and personalities.

"Look at 'dis, will ya'? Alla 'dese worlds is mine, and 'dose wot ain't'll be mine soon enuf. I'm gonna take evryting in 'em 'an no one can stop me. Not 'da 'umies, not 'dem fancy gitz, and fer sure not any of 'dem uvver Orks wot tink 'dey can nose around in my galaxy!"

—Grimtoof Git-Slayer,
Warboss of Waaagh! Grimtoof

Countless human-inhabited worlds now lie firmly in the grasp of Warlord Grimtoof. These worlds have been transformed into slave labour camps, and private game preserves, and titanic foundries. The surviving inhabitants of these worlds live a life of quiet desperation, longing for rescue, or death, to free them from their bondage.

The following worlds are just a small selection of the hundreds of worlds currently occupied by the forces of Waaagh! Grimtoof, and Game Masters are encouraged to use these worlds as they see fit, to expand on the numerous adventure hooks and clues in the descriptions, or to simply create their own worlds for the Orks to exploit based on the ideas in this section. Thanks to their violent, sporadic meanderings, Greenskins can reasonably appear on almost any world in the Spinward Front, and seemingly straightforward battles against the forces of the Severan Dominate can quickly become desperate struggles for survival as the green tide unexpectedly surges forth.



AUGURY

A decidedly strange and bewitching planet, located near the death world Iris and close to the borders of the Severan Dominate, Augury is a world with an unsavoury reputation. The fifth planet of the Lituus system, a star system long rumoured to be home to a host of mysterious cults, daemons, and strange and unexplainable phenomena, Augury is a haunted world said to hold the secrets of space and time beneath its surface. Long considered a haunt of the numerous pirates, brigands, freebooters, and assorted private ships of war that ply the fringes of the Severan Dominate, in reality, these hard-bitten criminals and scoundrels uniformly shun the planet. While voidsmen are an incredibly and fervently superstitious lot, and those who make their living in more criminal pursuits perhaps the most superstitious voidsmen of all, their fear of Augury goes well beyond the typical, cheerful impieties practiced aboard voidships.

The planet itself is relatively temperate and blessed with a highly varied but generally mild climate, seas that are largely easy to navigate and rich with sea life, and incredibly plentiful natural resources. There are three large continents and many small atolls and island chains, with a broad belt of roiling, stormy ocean about the planet's middle, where wind, ocean currents, and the constant pull of Augury's two moons churn the waters into a barely navigable maelstrom. There are a number of human settlements on the planet; some are truly ancient and still full of priceless treasures, but all are abandoned, and no one lives on Augury now save for the native flora and fauna, and the occasional hermit or daring Explorator mission. On the largest of the three continents, a broad expanse of rugged badlands and harsh stony landscapes, a dark, mist-shrouded mountain range slashes diagonally across the continent from north-west to south-east like a massive, ragged scar. It is these mountains that give Augury its bad reputation and cast a pall of vague dread over the planet and, indeed, throughout the system at large.

Records recovered from the abandoned villages and cities make numerous mentions to a mountain range, called the Oraculus Maximus, the Mountains of Eternity, and other variations thereof. What exactly lies within the mountains is a mystery, but there are countless conflicting reports suggesting what could be there, each more fanciful and outrageous than the last. There are reports of evil spirits, daemons, living mountains, portals that lead directly into the Warp, ghost armies, and a thousand other stories that read like a catalogue of common morality tales and folk stories told throughout the Imperium. Those brave enough to actually spend time on the planet's surface report a sense of unease that slowly grows into an unshakeable feeling of creeping and impending doom. Most do not make it that far, instead leaving the planet at the first opportunity and never looking back. Field surveys show an inordinately powerful psychic field that envelops the entire planet and can be sensed from as far away as the system's star. The entire world of Augury is suffused with arcane energy, constantly generated by an as-yet unidentified source.

When the Orks arrived on Augury, the only human force they encountered was a lone pirate raider in a high stationary orbit. After a brief running gun battle and a wearisome stern chase, the pirate managed to slip into the Warp and escape his Ork pursuers. As the small craft circled back to the rest of the squadron, landas were already being dispatched in droves to the surface to see what there was to kill, loot, and enslave. Once they landed, the large Ork raiding force found themselves sorely disappointed. No loot, no fighting, not even a few teef to make the trip worthwhile. Undaunted, the Orks fanned out and started to scour the planet, looking for anything vaguely of value. As they searched, one by one the few Weirdboyz that were with the raiding parties began to complain of pounding headaches accompanied by whispering, chattering voices that no one else could hear, and vague visions, briefly half-seen out of the corner of the eye. The longer the Orks were on the surface, the worse off the Weirdboyz got, bleeding from their ears and noses and experiencing uncontrolled outbursts of psychic energy. Eventually, the Weirdboyz started dying in screaming agony, much to the amusement of their colleagues. After the Orks had a good laugh at the writhing, screeching Weirdboyz as they burst into flames and burned to cinders, flew apart in bloody explosions, or were violently turned inside out, they decided they'd had enough, there was no loot or fun to be found here, and they returned to their ships.

Despite the distinct lack of loot, slaves, and good fights, Augury was under control of Grimtoof the Git-Slaver roughly six months into the main Ork invasion of the region. Since then, the Orks have fought a number of battles with forces from the Imperial Navy and the Severan Dominate, and possession of the world has changed hands dozens of times. The Orks' zeal for battle is slightly muted, however. They find the world boring, and many of the smarter Boyz and a great number of the Oddboyz who have travelled to the planet complain of "avin' a funny feelin'" when away from the main force of Orks. Due to this and an assortment of other concerns, more and more of the Ork forces have been moved back to the main part of the Waaagh!, making the planet even more of a chore to maintain control over. Currently, Augury is back in the hands of the Orks after an occupying force from the Severan Dominate was recalled to shore up armies fighting on the front against the Imperium. Thus, for the time being, Augury once again belongs to the Greenskins.

DELUGE

The first world to fall to Waaagh! Grimtoof, Deluge is a grey and tempestuous world in the far Trailing reaches of the Severan Dominate. It is the ninth world of the largely uncharted Veles system and at first glance it seems to hold little of value to draw the eye of would-be conquerors. Deluge is a water world, with a surface composed mainly of deep, frigid, incredibly vast, storm-wracked seas inhabited by titanic, antediluvian sea creatures. Relatively isolated and poorly blessed with easily exploited natural resources, what land exists on the planet is little more than collections of rocky, wind-swept island chains and small, mostly desolate continents. Initial surveys showed a world locked in a perpetual, world-



wide hurricane, the environment a hellish mix of driving rain, screaming wind, eye-searing lightning, kilometre-high tidal waves, and the constant shattering roar of thunder. Deluge was initially listed as worthless and unsuitable for exploitation by the Imperium due to the inclement, world-wide weather, a permanent twilight caused both by its distance from the star Veles and the thick cloud cover, a paucity of fresh water, and thousands of other, smaller factors discovered by the Adeptus Mechanicus survey team that first scouted it.

For centuries, this inhospitable world remained as little more than a set of coordinates set out in an Adeptus Mechanicus Explorator Fleet star chart. Over the years, a handful of ultimately doomed exploratory expeditions travelled to the world, bringing with them members of the Adeptus Mechanicus. Due to loss, failure, and the passage of time, the records of those missions are vague and incomplete, and Deluge existed in semi-obscurity until just after the Angevin Crusade. Calixis Synod records show that in the early years of M40, a group of mendicant aesthetes left Scintilla bound for a world listed as DV-440 aboard the Rogue Trader ship *Faith's Bulwark* belonging to the notoriously pious and long-dead House Ankorah. These pilgrims were searching for quiet and solitude, a place to pray and devote their lives to the contemplation of the God-Emperor, away from the corrupting influences and decadence of Scintilla. Depending on which conflicting report one hears, the pilgrims either arrived at their destination and set up their cloistered colony, or perished when *Faith's Bulwark* was reported lost

with all hands in the Warp. It is assumed, however, that DV-440 is, in fact, the stormy world of Deluge, and that those ancient pilgrims were the ancestors of the small mendicant colony reported to be on the planet currently.

With the meteoric arrival of Waaagh! Grimtoof and the Greenskins' taking of Deluge, what little contact there was with the mendicant colony abruptly ceased. Having little interest in the plight of the colony, Lord Severus has done nothing to investigate, and the Imperial Navy and Explorator Fleets know nothing of the situation (and could spare no ships even if they did care to intervene). No one is quite sure what the Orks are doing on Deluge, but they all agree that it can come to no good. Psychic auguries have shown floating ramshackle war camps bustling with industry, with Orks and Gretchin flitting to and fro in vast and chaotic fleets of seagoing vessels. Here and there, smoke-belching workshops operate day and night on the small spits of little dry land. Leaky drilling rigs, surrounded by chemical slicks kilometres across, pump noxious things up from the Stygian abyss.

The corpses of countless local sea creatures have been seen splayed out across rocky shores being stripped of meat, organ, and bone by hordes of Gretchin and staining the rocks with their black blood. Presumably the Orks are using Deluge as a place to gather provender and raw materials for their Waaagh!, but with Orks, one can never be certain. As for the few inhabitants, the few attempts at contacting them via astrotelepathy or passing reconnaissance ships have failed. However, there is some hope, as one astropath recently discovered a suspiciously blank spot on the world, close to the reported site of the religious colony, and shielded from all psychic prying. Imperial Guard intelligence is unsure if this is the colonists hiding themselves somehow, some undiscovered quirk of the planet's energy fields, or simply the presence of Ork Weirdboyz, but the matter is disquieting to some in High Command and beyond.

IRIS

Just spinward of Augury, right on the borders of the Severan Dominate, sits the verdant and deadly world of Iris. A large, terrestrial world roughly the size of Scintilla, Iris is the fourth planet orbiting a strange, violet-coloured star referred to in ancient star charts as Iridaceae. Of the twelve planets and innumerable planetoids, moons, and large asteroids in the crowded Iridaceae system, Iris is the only one with any life on its surface. In fact, the world is teeming with so much life that it seems somehow to be making up for the lack of living things elsewhere in its desolate system. Iris is a relatively young world, and the planet's surface is deeply creased by soaring mountain ranges, rolling, rock-strewn hill countries, and deep, meandering canyons kilometres cut by the fast, rushing rivers coursing through them. Iris' equatorial regions are clustered with volcanoes that belch ash and poisonous fumes into the atmosphere and give grumbling voice to the mighty tectonic forces at work deep within the planet.

The small, shallow seas are very warm, heated by geothermal activity and home to countless strange and terrible sea creatures. Here and there, super-heated lakes and streams that boil that steam and smell of brimstone dot the landscape. All of this dramatic natural splendour, the boiling lakes, the soaring mountains, and the glowing belt of volcanoes at the equator, seem merely to accent the planet's defining feature—its native flora.

Save for the frigid areas at the poles, the searing lava fields at the equator, and the tops of some of the larger mountain ranges, the entire world is covered in thick, impenetrable jungle. Thick trees a kilometre high with vast, spreading canopies and snaking tendrils as thick as a man's waist crowd together in rainforests hundreds of thousands of square kilometres in size. So thick is the canopy that there are stretches of ground the size of a continent which have never seen the light of Iris' sun shining out of its hazy, violet sky. Where the sunlight manages to pierce the thick canopy, the ground is densely packed with plants of all description, draped in creepers, flowers, thorns, spines, and leaves in a countless variety of shapes and colours. Many of these plants are carnivorous, or otherwise pose a serious threat to man and beast alike. They use pheromones, psychotropic spore clouds, soporific stinging nettles, grasping vines, and countless other lures to bring in fresh meat and blood with which to fertilize their roots. The weather is uniformly hot and humid, with the air so thick that at times visibility falls to dangerous lows and breathing becomes difficult. Monsoon rains beat down on the jungle many months out of the planet's long year. Even in the clearer months, savage thunderstorms spring up at a moment's notice to drown portions of the planet in billions of gallons of rainwater in an instant.

In addition to its voracious plant life, Iris is home to a host of native creatures. In and among the riot of plant life live an incredible number of species of bird, reptile, arachnid, insect, and mammal. While all of the world's fauna have a frightful, threatening look about them, most are retiring and largely inoffensive. There are creatures among them, however, that are much more dangerous. Venomous serpents and arachnids of all size abound, their snapping fangs dripping with poisons that can liquefy organs in seconds, or send a man into excruciating, convulsive fits, which cause him to flail about until his back breaks. Massive, semi-intelligent simians live in colonies beneath the jungle canopy and wage savage wars on one another, and packs of ill-tempered saurians of varying sizes roam the planet in search of food. Huge flocks of birds, predatory and otherwise, rule the skies, and can block out the sun with their wings. However, there are forces at work on Iris beyond the beasts that live amidst all of this savage and untamed fecundity.

Numerous primitive human tribes are scattered about Iris, and they constantly war with each other and nomadic bands of feral Orks. There are a few great empires on Iris, vast confederacies of tribes that exhibit sophisticated social, economic, artistic, and religious practices. Many seem to have discovered metal working and engineering, and small swaths of jungle have been clear-cut to make way for the orderly stone cities that lie at the hearts of these primitive empires. Most of the human populace, however, lives in tiny villages of thatched huts, based around agriculture, fishing, and mineral extraction. Where their counterparts in the great stone cities are wealthy beyond imagining, resplendent in their gilded robes and gem-encrusted shawls, these farmers and miners eke out a largely subsistence level existence in the jungle. There, they compete with wild beasts, the brutish jungle simians, roving packs of feral Orks, and one another. Their technology level is limited, and their weapons, tools, and armour run to slings, spears, bronze swords, and obsidian knives.

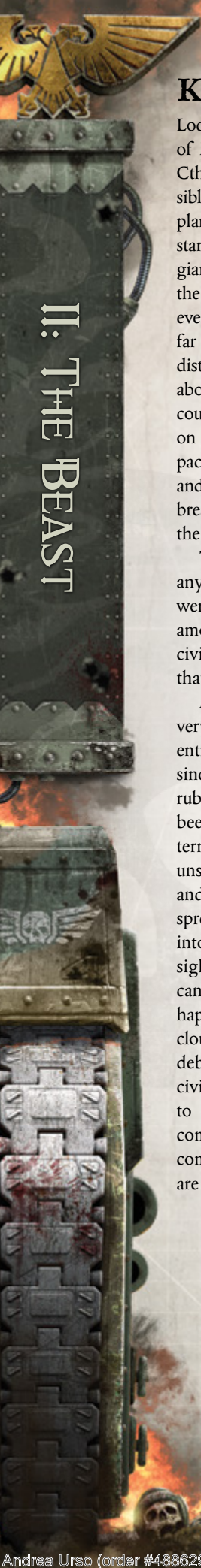
Despite the unrelenting nature of the world they call home, these human societies are the most advanced species on the planet, and hold their own relatively well both against their old enemies, the feral Orks, and against the rising green tide of Warboss Grimtoof's occupiers.

When the Orks of Waaagh! Grimtoof came to Iris, they discovered quickly that there were feral cousins there in their multitudes, and that the far-flung humans were backwards, and didn't have so much as a slugga or stikkbomb between them. Believing the world to be easy pickings, the Orks attacked, and immediately found themselves mired in a brutal war against both the humans and the Orks.

At first believing them to be some new tribe of local Orks, the humans took little notice of the newcomers. Soon enough, however, Ork raiding parties were sweeping down on villages and leading exploratory attacks into the more settled regions to capture loot and slaves. It did not take long for the disparate kingdoms to unite against this new green menace, and they quickly organized a force of canny jungle warriors with which to hold off the invading Orks. On top of this, the initial "overtures" to the feral Ork tribes made by the occupying Ork forces were met with violence in kind, and the feral Orks began their own war against these strange Greenskins who appeared from nowhere to take their lands and spoil their fun instead of falling in line behind them. Though this proved an amusing diversion for some time, most of the invading Orks made some progress into the jungles but ultimately abandoned Iris to seek out better fights elsewhere, where there were greater spoils and much grander battles to be had. Eventually only those groups made up largely of members of the Snakebites remained.

Currently, the human populace, the local Orks, and the not-insubstantial Snakebites forces have come to an uneasy balance of power. Raiding and killing still happens regularly, but the deadly guerrilla fighting has subsided for the moment, and each faction is content to stay in their territories and leave each other alone. For their part, the Snakebites believe they have discovered a place blessed by Gork and Mork, where and fill their hours with fighting. Enjoying the seclusion and the feral surroundings, the Snakebites have turned their camps into huge breeding operations for sundry varieties of Squigs. They breed all manner of Squigs in their foul pens, including a variety of lumbering Squiggoths of different qualities and sizes. Through experimentation and constant tinkering, the local Pigdocs have discovered a new and incredibly potent feed formula with which they have begun breeding bigger and bigger Squigs—up to and including thunderous Gargantuan Squiggoths.





KW-9

Located in the long abandoned Lucanis system rimward of Melqart and bathed in the flickering, hellish light of the Cthulgha Nebula, KW-9 hangs alone among its dead stellar siblings, awaiting its final dissolution. The last remaining planet orbiting the star KW-80104, a guttering white dwarf star of incredible antiquity, KW-9 is a massive, bloated gas giant surrounded by great, glittering, azure-hued rings and the tumbling, shattered remains of its many moons. Larger even than the proud world of Jupiter, Terra's neighbour in the far off Sol system, KW-9 glows faintly in the dim light of its distant and dying star, showing dark blues and greens swirling about in its gaseous atmosphere. Its rings are packed with countless shards of ice, ranging in size from the little finger on a human hand to the size of a small moon. These tightly packed ice clusters throw back the mellow glow of their planet and the dying light of KW-80104, and are, by all accounts, breathtakingly beautiful, and the last vestige of splendour in the growing dark of the system.

There are no records of this world or its star system anywhere in the vast Imperial record of the region. No worlds were ever colonised, no Explorator missions ever trawled among the lost worlds looking for resources or ancient civilisations, and there is no evidence anywhere in the system that it was ever inhabited by humans or xenos.

As breathtakingly stark as this lonesome planet is, it is very clearly the end not only for KW-9 itself, but for the entire star system. The other worlds in the system have long since disintegrated, dissolved, or otherwise been reduced to rubble and particles. The delicate balance of natural forces has been completely unbound within the system thanks to the termination of the star, and the entire area is a death trap for unsuspecting voidships that happen into the system. Powerful and unpredictable gravity tides sweep through regularly, spreading the rubble of the former planets and moons further into the void. Deadly radiation storms scour everything in sight. In some areas, pockets of radiation so strong they can strip a voidship's shields and armour lurk, waiting for hapless travellers to meander into their grasp. Vast, roaming clouds of particulate matter, pulverized moons, shattered debris, and possibly the disintegrated works of some ancient civilization linger here and there, nearly invisible and ready to shred anything unlucky enough to pass through. Vox communication is nearly impossible, as those frequencies not completely scrambled by the radiation storms and dust clouds are drowned out by the screams of the dying star.



The system in which KW-9 stands its lonely vigil is, perhaps, one of the most inhospitable places in the galaxy. Luckily, it is so isolated and far from the established trade and travel routes through this part of the region that there is little chance of a ship or battlegroup blundering in and being torn apart by gravity waves or battered to death with debris. Yet, despite all of the danger and isolation, the sheer difficulty of navigating the system, and the apparent paucity of exploitable resources, the Orks of Waaagh! Grimtoof have made numerous expeditions into this region, and they are very, very busy there.

How the Orks found themselves in this out of the way system is anyone's guess, but a small flotilla of Ork ships is anchored in the relatively stationary debris field orbiting KW-9. A motley assortment of gunships and attack ships supporting a handful of Kill Kroozers and a lone Hammer-class battlekroozer hang above the dissolving gas giant. Smaller craft swarm around these massive vessels, flitting from ship to ship. Assault boats fly in loose formation, patrolling among the scattered debris and seemingly searching for something. Landas and other types of bulky, small craft shuttle ceaselessly between the larger capital ships and the surrounding asteroids carrying tonnes of stone and ore, while others troll through the rings, collecting ice and delivering it back to the fleet. Most of the activity surrounds a group of perhaps three dozen of the largest asteroids the Orks could find.

Towed into place by the kroozers, these massive rocks are swarming with Orks and Gretchin in makeshift vacsuits, all of them busily welding, cutting, hammering, and sawing away in a combined effort to convert these asteroids into devastating Roks. The fact that there is nothing in the system left to attack with these newly built Roks does not seem to be much of a deterrent to the toiling Greenskins, and they work incessantly, hollowing out the asteroids and fitting them with their drives, control systems, and terrifyingly oversized guns. What they plan to do with these Roks once they are finished and how they plan to move them is unknown. However, the mere fact that a small and powerful flotilla of Ork warships are conducting salvage and building scores of Roks should cause Imperial Guard High Command considerable concern. The fact that the system is isolated and seemingly a poor jumping-off point for any military efforts is perhaps even more concerning, for it suggests that the Orks have realised some significance of the region that others have overlooked.

LETUM

Letum, the sixth planet of the Annihilus system, is a hard-scrabble frontier world just to spinward of the dead world Sleef. It is a temperate and agreeable world of broad savannahs, rolling, grass-covered plains, vast, sweeping steppe land, and low and ancient mountains. It is blessed with untold hectares of fertile, arable land, and numerous, easy to reach veins of strategically important ores and precious gems. Until a few centuries ago, Letum was nothing more than a footnote on a chart of possible inhabitable worlds drawn up for a Rogue Trader house who made their money shuttling colonists to and from the Calixis Sector. Recently rediscovered by an Imperial Navy reconnaissance group, Letum shows no sign of ever having been inhabited by humans. Further study by both the Imperial Navy and the Magos of the Adeptus Mechanicus



revealed no man or xenos-made structures anywhere on the world, and a generally unspoilt planet, ripe for colonization and exploitation. Almost immediately upon news of Letum's rediscovery reaching the capital world of Scintilla, colony ships set out with charters from the numerous branches of the Adeptus Terra, the Calixian Synod, and the Adeptus Mechanicus to carve out their territories and get down to the business of settling this promising new world.

For decades, the population on Letum grew by leaps and bounds, bolstered by both rising birthrates among the first generations of settlers and by the constant influx of new pilgrims. Villages grew into towns, consolidated, and grew into great cities. Agri-colonies sprang up, harvesting the native grasses and grains and tilling the rich soil to plant cash crops for export back to the Calixis Sector. Industrial concerns, both private and set up by the Priesthood of Mars, grew up around the numerous mines, drawing their power from smouldering geothermal furnaces constructed kilometres beneath the planet's surface.

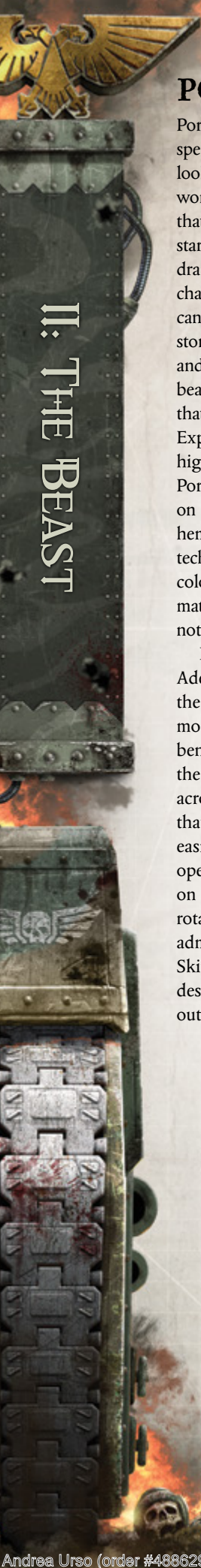
As Letum grew, its communities never lost the frontier mentality developed during their first hungry and back-breaking years. Extended family groups grew and lived together, and a feeling of shared sacrifice and the strong Imperial work ethic informed the day to day lives of the settlers. Driven to perform great feats of industry and creation, the people of Letum built their cities, tilled their land, dug their deep mines, and settled in for a long and fruitful existence. This all came crashing down in an instant, when the first of the Ork craft appeared in the skies.

First contact with the forces of Waaagh! Grimtoof was made by the Imperial Navy picket ship *Vindication*. Part of a small Imperial Navy squadron stationed in orbit over Letum to guide incoming and outgoing voidships and to protect their cargoes from the predation of pirates and scavengers, she was on station near the system's Oort cloud when the Greenskins appeared. They tumbled out of the Warp in an instant, suddenly filling space around the small Imperial vessel with their grotesque and awkward hulls. There was no hail, no request to parley, only a whoop and a string of gibberish over the vox, then the searing light of concentrated broadsides from more than a dozen warships. Within the brief span of a minute, *Vindication* was completely destroyed, set afire and drifting with her dead crew out into the cold, dark fringes of the system. No warning was sent, and the Orkish Kommodore wasted little time in getting his battlegroup underway. Within hours, the Ork squadron was in orbit over Letum. Caught completely unprepared, the Imperial Navy squadron made a valiant effort to protect their charge with main voidships and aeronautica fighters alike, but one by one, they were destroyed and fell into the planet's atmosphere, trailing fire and wreckage.

On the ground, it was a slaughter. Letum had no Imperial garrison, and aside from local enforcers, the only defence forces available were groups of local militia composed of merchants, farmers, and miners. Like the brave voidsmen of the Imperial Navy, the Letum militias fought valiantly and honourably, but it was of little use. The hordes of Greenskins came boiling out of their landas and scythed through the poorly equipped and poorly prepared militias with ease. People fled to shelters as the Orks flooded the cities and farms, carrying only what they could and leaving the rest for the marauding xenos. Looting, burning, pillaging, and killing every human not quick or smart enough to hide, the Orks ran amok and largely unchallenged among the settlements and cities of Letum.

Finally, after weeks of bedlam and slaughter, the invasion began to turn into an occupation. The Orks' lust for battle and loot slaked for the time being, Kommodore Sunsmasha, the boss of the invasion force, set his Boyz to work rounding up survivors and splitting them into groups. Some were herded onto the landas, enslaved, and delivered to Warlord Grimtoof. Those not taken were put to back to work in the fields, mines, and foundries. Under the watchful eyes of a collection of Mekboys, Runtherds, and a small army of Grots, the colonists worked until they dropped, to feed the invaders and supply the growing war machine of the Waaagh!

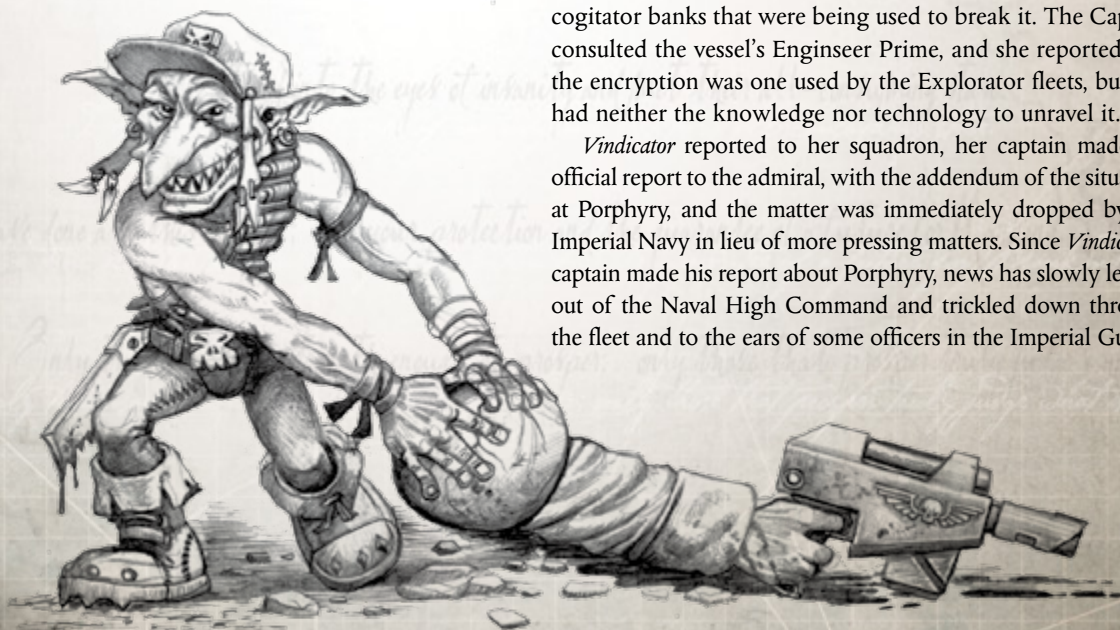
The inhabitants of Letum now live day to day in this state of servitude and constant existential terror. Thanks to the constant, backbreaking work and the interference of the Orks, there is no time to organise a resistance or send a message off world. The slaves are watched intently for any sign of laxity, and accompanied everywhere by guards and minders who herd them from their pens to their work and back again. This is not to say that the people of Letum are broken—far from it. The hard working and hard fighting frontier spirit burns in the heart of everyone left on the planet. If help were to arrive in the form of an Imperial Guard force, it would find a multitude ready to rise up at their command and cast off their shackles.



PORPHYRY

Porphyry is a rocky, arid world home to insects, numerous species of serpent and reptile, a handful of spindly, dangerous-looking plants, and not much else. It is a dusty, sun-baked world of dark, purple-red stone and glittering, crystal deserts that shimmer under a perpetually cloudless, azure sky like stars. The landscape of this harsh and unforgiving planet is dramatic and decidedly vertical, with huge, jagged mountain chains crisscrossing the stony continents and incredibly deep canyons sheltering abyssal lakes of brackish water. Strange stone formations litter the planet, formed by wind erosion and long dormant tectonic forces, each one disturbingly beautiful and covered in wicked, obsidian-like stone flakes that pierce even flak armour with ease. Evidence uncovered by Explorator missions shows that sometime in the distant past, a highly developed society of unknown provenance dominated Porphyry. The crumbled ruins of their great cities still stand on the wind-scoured plains in the northern and western hemispheres, showing evidence of a complex and highly technological culture. No record exists of humans ever having colonised Porphyry, and what remaining architecture, building materials, artefacts, and art that have been unearthed resemble nothing produced by any of the known extant xenos races.

In recent times, Porphyry has been home to an extensive Adeptus Mechanicus mission, sent from the Lathes to extract the world's mineral wealth. Hundreds of mines litter the mountains and valleys of this splendid world. Shafts cut deep beneath the crust, where men and servitors toil like ants in their warrens, and massive strip mines hundreds of kilometres across are tended by titanic, slowly moving digging machines that can draw up millions of tonnes of rock and stone as easily as a man would heft a lasgun. For years, this mining operation provided much needed raw materials to the forges on the far away Lathes, and thousands of miners worked rotating assignments, carefully organised by Explorator administrators and watched over by the keen eyes of the Skitarii. Suddenly, though, elements of Waaagh! Grimtoof descended unannounced upon the unsuspecting mining outposts, slaughtering all who stood in their way.



The battle for Porphyry was fierce and bloody, with no quarter given or received on either side. Miners took up tools, improvised weapons, and stood shoulder to shoulder with the heavily augmented Skitarii. In orbit, the few Explorator cruisers fought a valiant, but ultimately futile battle with the Ork voidships. Many thousands were wiped out in an instant, and overhead, the small Mechanicus fleet was routed, each ship either completely destroyed or captured and taken by Ork boarders. Greenskins swarmed through the mines and their accompanying foundries, constructed to process the raw ores. Workers who surrendered or were caught unawares and subdued were gathered up and herded into ersatz holding pens, while those who took up arms and resisted were killed without hesitation. Unlike other raids throughout the sector, the men and women enslaved on Porphyry were not packed up and shipped offworld to the main bulk of the Waaagh!, but were rather put back to work, mining and refining to feed the ravenous Ork war effort.

Since the Ork invasion and subsequent occupation, Porphyry has had little contact with the galaxy at large. Nothing is known about the enslaved humans, and no members of the Adeptus Mechanicus mission are known to have escaped. At some point, weeks after the invasion, a distress signal was sent from the planet and intercepted by the Imperial Navy cruiser *Vindicator*. En route to the front, her captain made a detour to investigate the signal, and found a large Greenskin force blockading a planet that, heretofore, had been ruled by the Priesthood of Mars. Quickly determining that he was woefully outgunned, *Vindicator's* captain turned his ship about and immediately dropped back into the Warp as the slow moving Ork assault ships got underway to intercept him. As *Vindicator* transitioned into the Warp, her signals crew received a second call from the surface. Hastily recorded to the ship's data banks, the heavily encrypted signal was slowly deciphered by senior communications officers as the ship made her Warp passage. By the time *Vindicator* reached her original destination, the vox officers had made scant progress on the message. The origin was obviously Imperial, as some of the headings and footers were immediately recognizable, but the encryption was so fiendishly hard that it destroyed two cogitator banks that were being used to break it. The Captain consulted the vessel's Enginseer Prime, and she reported that the encryption was one used by the Explorator fleets, but she had neither the knowledge nor technology to unravel it.

Vindicator reported to her squadron, her captain made his official report to the admiral, with the addendum of the situation at Porphyry, and the matter was immediately dropped by the Imperial Navy in lieu of more pressing matters. Since *Vindicator's* captain made his report about Porphyry, news has slowly leaked out of the Naval High Command and trickled down through the fleet and to the ears of some officers in the Imperial Guard.

WAAAGH! GRIMTOOF AND OTHER FACTIONS

"Shoot 'em! Krump 'em! Smash 'dem squishie gitz, ladz!"

—Boss Tordaz opening negotiations with representatives of a Chaos renegade cell

Thankfully (according to the Orks, anyway), Waaagh! Grimtoof does not exist in a vacuum. Knowing that great fights and lots of loot were waiting for them in the regions of the Periphery, the Orks under the Git-Slaver were well prepared to face human resistance when they set off on their great campaign. They were pleasantly surprised upon arriving in the human systems to discover that there were other forces at work there as well. Conniving Dark Eldar and heretical forces of the great Chaos Gods were at large, upon what dark errands, no one could say. The Orks found them and immediately opened a discourse with these other factions, wherein "opening a discourse" means launching a full-on assault.

The following section outlines some of the major factions operating in and around the Periphery, and their (almost invariably violent and frequently cataclysmic) interactions with the Orks of Waaagh! Grimtoof.

HUMAN FORCES

"Da hoo now? Sever-Un Dome-Nut? Nah, nevva 'eard uv 'im."

—Gazgor, Ork Nob on Kulth

The Orks of Waaagh! Grimtoof make little distinction between the factions of their enemies. To the Greenskins, humans are humans. It makes no difference what colours they wear or to whom they pledge their fealty, as long as they provide the Orks enough sport and loot to keep them entertained. As the Waaagh! swept into the regions surrounding the Periphery, and Warlord Grimtoof set about fortifying the region, his Orks faced off against both primary human factions—the forces of the Imperial Guard and the secessionist Severan Dominate.

Over the course of the Waaagh!, there has been only one official communication between Warlord Grimtoof and the humans of the Periphery. It is a solitary hail, broadcast on all frequencies as the Git-Slaver's ships boiled into the region, that consisted solely of a savage "WAAAGH!"—a prelude of violence to come. Since then, Warlord Grimtoof's tendency regarding the humans involves either enslaving them or slaughtering them wholesale. Though Grimtoof has more foresight than many of his kin, he does not hesitate to destroy whole worlds if they provide too much resistance (or if the fighting becomes too exhilarating). Whole systems have been reduced to ash and cinders for no other reason than because their defenders met the Orks with sufficient fervour and Grimtoof's Waaagh! ran rampant, exuberantly butchering their foes and destroying potential resources.





SERVANTS OF THE RUINOUS POWERS

"Kaos? Wot, 'dem spiky gits ova 'dere wit' 'da funny lookin' hats? 'Dey don't look like much from up 'ere!"

—Borlox, Deff-Kopta pilot of the Evil Sunz

Emboldened by the sudden collapse of the Imperial power structure within the regions surrounding the Periphery, numerous agents of the Ruinous Powers swarmed into the anarchy to carve out their own places of power. Fleets of reavers and other assorted pirates came from the Koronus Expanse to prey on undefended shipping, overworked ships of Battlefleet Calixis, and convoys of civilian and merchant ships fleeing the onslaught of Waaagh! Grimtoof. Dark cults sprang up on besieged and occupied worlds, the twisted lies of the Gods of Chaos whispered in the ear of the desperate Imperial citizens by apostates,

recidivists, and other assorted corruptors and liars from the Screaming Vortex. Daemons stalked the dark regions of the Subsector, and even a few powerful warbands of Chaos Space Marines started snatching up worlds for themselves and clashing with forces of the Waaagh! As with every other living being in the galaxy, the Orks see the forces of Chaos flooding into the region as both a challenge to their growing Waaagh! and as a welcome diversion from less challenging work. Orks enjoy the difficulty inherent in vanquishing the champions of Chaos, and revel in upstaging and destroying "dem lads wiv 'da spikes," as they call them.

One of these warbands is led by a ruthless killer calling himself Azg'othr the Execrator. An outcast from the Iron Warriors, this maniacal apostate has gathered cultists and created numerous Daemon Engines as blazing testaments to the one he serves. So far, the most substantial problem Azg'othr has encountered is the pugnacious resistance of the Orks. His warband, along with its numerous new recruits

and camp followers, clashes regularly with the forces of the Waaagh!. The two forces see their conflict from very different perspectives, however. The Chaos warband see themselves as fighting a war against the Orks, albeit a small, guerrilla-scale war, in the hopes of driving the Greenskins out of the regions Azg'othr has chosen for as his sacred site. The Orks, on the other hand, see the Execrator's warband as merely one more force to be defeated, and a prime source of good fights. Where Azg'othr and his host see the Orks as a serious threat to their quest to exalt their dark master, the Orks pay them little mind until the time comes when they cross paths, and then the Orks bring the full force of their power to bear on them (at least temporarily).

This state of affairs is extremely infuriating to Azg'othr. The Orks ruin his grand works and raid his hard-stolen stores of war materiel, responding to the copious amounts of their blood he sheds with increased enthusiasm. When the two run across one another in the field, the Greenskins invariably greet the members of the warband with jeers and aggravatingly cheerful greetings before attacking, laughing and hooting and not, in Azg'othr's view, taking the matter as seriously as it surely demands. In fact, the Orks' casual indifference toward the warband and the slow but constant loss of troops and materiel to the Waaagh! might be the only thing keeping the clever and megalomaniacal Execrator from attaining many of his wicked aspirations.

DARK ELДАР

"Wot? Me? Afraid uv 'da dem fancy gitz? I ain't afraid uv a buncha stick-legz wot just run away an' shoot. 'Ooid be afraid of dem?"

—Grotkicka Blackknife, Ork Kommando

The members of the Children of Thorns Kabal have been a constant irritant to the forces of the Git-Slaver since his first forays into the Subsector. Anathema to the straight-forward, no-nonsense Orks, the sneaky, cut and run tactics of the Dark Eldar raiding forces aggravate Warlord Grimtoof and his Boyz perhaps more than anything else in the galaxy. Both forces attempt to avoid one another, the Dark Eldar because they have better things to do and the Orks because their attention lies elsewhere, but when the opportunity arises, the Greenskins do not hesitate to cross swords with the conniving Dark Eldar. As the majority of the Dark Eldar forces in the regions of the Periphery are ship-borne corsairs and pirates, the majority of the Waaagh! forces actively fighting the deadly xenos are those bosses and crews of the many rickety voidships in the Ork fleet. Tougher than the fragile Dark Eldar ships, the Ork ships are, unfortunately, woefully slower and less agile than the quick and light vessels commanded by the Children of Thorns. Since they cannot use their usual tactics of "Ram 'em an' board 'em, ladz," the Orks have had to retool their tactics somewhat in an attempt to counter the lightning raids of the Dark Eldar. This has met with mixed success, since Orkish psychology and their primitive naval architecture have extreme difficulty with the Dark Eldar, but those few Kaptains who have successfully destroyed Dark Eldar ships are handsomely rewarded by the Git-Slaver himself.

The Dark Eldar exist near the very bottom of the Greenskins' list of worthwhile opponents. Winning a fight with Dark Eldar is not seen as much of an achievement among Orks, given their use of stealth and tendency to stage tactical retreats when faced with unyielding walls of bellowing Greenskins. Still, those few Kommandos among the Waaagh!, especially those hailing from the Blood Axe clan, absolutely love engaging with the Dark Eldar. The thrill of using their own sneaky tactics on the fey xenos drives most Kommandos to greater and greater feats of so-called "kunnin," as they try to out-do one another by collecting the most Dark Eldar heads through shadowy means. An extremely bloody shadow war has recently sprung up between various troops of Kommandos and Dark Eldar raiding parties. They mercilessly prey on one another, typically waging their clandestine campaign of total extermination on the fringes of the Subsector. Currently, the Dark Eldar have the advantage, but the Orks are undaunted. One Kommando in particular, the very cunning and knowing Grotkicka Blackknife, a veteran of the Waaagh! from its very beginning, is dedicated to seeing this small, relatively quiet conflict to its bitter end. He carries dozens of Dark Eldar skulls with him at all times, and hopes to adorn his abode with hundreds more before the conflict concludes.

OTHER FACTIONS

"These Greenskins must die. Withdraw your own warriors, human, and we need not kill them to reach our targets."

—Stalker Kerilk of the Coldfire Kindred

Aside from the Severan Dominate, the Children of Thorns, and the insidious presence of the forces of the Ruinous Powers, there are a number of smaller factions operating within the Periphery that could present obstacles to Warlord Grimtoof's ultimate plans. Packs of Kroot mercenaries ply the void-lanes, selling their services as spies, trackers, and assassins to the highest bidder. Some Kindreds work alongside anyone—including the Orks—while others go out of their way to butcher the Greenskins at any opportunity. Heavily armed Rogue Trader flotillas run blockades and tangle with xenos and Chaos fleets as they bring men, supplies, and materiel in from the Calixis Sector to supply the growing crusade. There have even been reports of errant Space Marine Strike Cruisers tending to unknown affairs here and there among the region, apparently unconcerned with the strife and warfare which abounds. Warlord Grimtoof and the forces of his Waaagh! have had little contact with these interlopers.



WAAAGH! GRIMTOOF ORDER OF BATTLE

"Get 'em!"

—Gogr da Backbreaka', Nob on Hervara

The following section is designed to give Game Masters and Players alike an idea of what their Guardsmen can expect when going up against the forces of Waaagh! Grimtoof. First is a discussion of the general strategies and long-term plans of Warlord Grimtoof, such as they exist at all, and what his final end-game may be. Second, a discussion of common Ork battlefield tactics is presented to give a better idea of how and why Orks fight, and how their various combat and support units are deployed.

ORK STRATEGIES IN THE SPINWARD FRONT

In his great hall atop the teetering spire of the dreaded Iron Mountain, Warlord Grimtoof 'da Git-Slaver sits on his armoured throne and gazes out upon the ashen steppes of Avitohol, gravely considering his new empire. Warlord Grimtoof has been incredibly successful, at least as these things are reckoned by the Greenskins. His mighty Waaagh! has swept largely unopposed through these pitiful human domains for decades, claiming the people, resources, and vast industrial infrastructure of the Subsector for his own personal use. Billions of human slaves are now held firmly beneath his calloused green thumb, toiling endlessly in forges, foundries, and mines throughout the region, producing the raw materials and finished products needed to feed the constantly hungering war machine of the Waaagh!.

As he sits on his throne and considers his achievements, however, varying between states of swaggering mania and deep, all-encompassing melancholy, he feels that something is missing. The great Warlord is unhappy, restless on his iron throne, displeased with the pace of the Waaagh!, constantly harried by his chattering, striving Nobz and the constant pleas of his multitude of petitioners. He has wealth and power beyond the ken of even the most ambitious, avaricious Greenskin. Countless millions of Orks fight and die for him at the smallest command. He possesses the finest armour, weapons, and machines of war to be found anywhere, and anything his black heart desires is his only for the asking. Anything, that is, save for Scintilla, the glittering capital of the Calixis Sector.

Though perhaps not the most intelligent of all Orks, Warlord Grimtoof is still incredibly cunning and ambitious.

Blessed with an uncanny ability to plan ahead farther than the next meal or fight (uncanny for Orks, at least), a younger Grimtoof saw first-hand the wealth and splendour of the Calixis Sector, and knew that he



must have it. His youthful energies were spent cracking skulls and consolidating power in the far-off and mysterious, wild space beyond the Periphery. Millions of Orks flocked to his banner, drawn by the promise of more fights than they could handle and more loot than they could carry. He surrounded himself with Nobz that were both surprisingly loyal and relatively decent leaders. Massive fleets of slapdash Ork ships were constructed, their holds bursting with weapons, wargear, and Boyz of all stripes. When he finally had what he considered to be a force strong enough, he descended into the systems Spinward of the Periphery and began to make his march on Scintilla. Now, with decades of fighting and looting behind him, and much of what he wanted to accomplish done, the Git-Slaver looks ahead once again, toward the act of capturing his next prize.

Much like all things Orky, Grimtoof's plan is straightforward and brutally simple. His first action has been to invade and rampage his way across as many worlds as possible. This simplistic strategy has been an unqualified success for the savage Warboss, and he has stomped many worlds in the Spinward Front beneath the heel of his growing Waaagh! before drifting on to the next battlefield. His "plan" (so much as he has one) to enslave whole populations has gone incredibly well, and many forges throughout the region have been looted and modified to pump out Orky weapons and wargear constantly to fill Grimtoof's armouries. Various armies and elements of the Waaagh! sweep through the region, taking worlds and destroying all that stand before them.

ORK BATTLEFIELD TACTICS

“Ere’s wot we’s gonna do, right? First I’se gonna yell Waaagh! an’ ‘den I’se gonna run up to ‘em an’ krump ‘em. ‘Den, while I’se runnin’ and hollerin’ an’ before I get to ‘da krumpin’ part, you lot yells Waaagh! an’ makes a run at ‘em too, see? ‘Den we’ll all krump togevva! ‘S a great plan, innit? ‘Dem ‘umies’ll nevva expect it.”

–Flikka Hammahead, Blood Axes Nob

Orks are an incredibly straightforward race who, on the whole, have little artifice about them. While many among them exhibit great cunning, insight, and creativity on occasion, when they deploy on the battlefield, their tactics favour a more direct approach. The Greenskins’ approach to making war reflects the basic tenets of their culture, and their combat style is direct, brutal, lightning-fast, and deadly. Perhaps one of their greatest strengths, aside from their unquenchable zeal for warfare, is the fact that Orks are completely unburdened by many of the considerations that must be weighed by their enemies’ commanders.

Orks do not worry themselves about paltry things such as friendly fire, fratricide, heavy casualties, the loss of leaders in battle, fear, panic, or shell shock. They have no sense of self-preservation, no fear of death, and they gleefully run hooting and laughing into an enemy’s guns for little more than the thrill of battle and a chance for loot and glory. They live emphatically in the moment, fully alive and giving no consideration to the actions of the past or the potential of the future, save for how it pertains to their interests in warfare and spoils. To the Orks, war is war, a way of life to which they were bred, and their *raison d’être*. As such, they tend to take in stride routs, savage defeats, and losses of troops and materiel that would demoralize other armies or make them quit the field in disgrace. Many scholars describe this behaviour as foolishness or insensibility, but in fact, there is nothing more fulfilling to an Ork than to fight and die in the best way possible, hopefully either atop of or buried beneath a pile of dead foes.

Those Guardsmen who have tangled with Ork forces in the past describe the experience as a cross between a savage battle and a bloody riot. In battle, Orks are anarchic, striking here and there, seemingly without rhyme or reason, and revelling in the chaotic joy of war making. Ork fighting styles are all frenetic energy; war cries, loud guns, bright colours, and shattering explosions. Their ramshackle vehicles rattle and roar across the field sowing death in their wake, while their improbable flyers scream overhead, trailed by plumes of oily, black smoke and the laughter of their pilots. More so than with any other enemy of the Imperium, battling Orks is an exercise in sensory overload. They are primal and visceral, beings very close to their nature, who possess a level of enlightenment and self-awareness that is perhaps unique among all the other sentients in the galaxy. This makes them confident, courageous, and incredibly dangerous.

In small-scale engagements, such as those between a typical Imperial Guard squad and a roaming Ork mob, the Greenskins react immediately, taking any bait and rising to any challenge presented by the enemy. They are merciless hand-to-hand fighters, and prefer to close with their enemies and hack, smash, pummel, and grapple them. Indeed, those who bother to use

their shootas or sluggas fire the weapon dry, then rush in and use it as a bludgeon instead of reloading. Up close, they use the advantage of their size and bulk against smaller foes, overrunning them and trampling them under their hobnailed boots. In large scale engagements, as between regiments or full armies, an Ork army uses every asset at their disposal, holding nothing back and practising the fine art of total war. When taking the field in this manner, Orks typically outnumber their enemies by at least three-to-one, if not more. This great number of warriors is required for the success of the Greenskins’ headlong, swarming fighting style, which is designed to sacrifice waves and waves of Orks and Grots to allow the main force of the army to sweep the enemy from the battlefield. To achieve the desired effect, Ork armies often consist of numerous different tribes, and can contain tens or hundreds of thousands of Orks, and Gretchin. During a full-fledged Waaagh!, the number of Orks is usually tallied in the millions or more.

The first Greenskins to take the field are usually vast hordes of shrieking Gretchin, herded en masse straight into the enemy’s guns by hard-charging Runtherds. Armed with rusty blades and the occasional cobbled-together shoota or slugga, the Gretchin are used as cannon fodder, to soak enemy fire and to draw their attention away from the primary thrust of the upcoming charge. Occasionally, this first wave is accompanied by Killa Kans, to add extra punch and help keep the Gretchin on task. As the wave of Grots crash on the enemy position, a running, shouting, hollering band of Slugga Boyz follow quickly behind, wading into the fray and laying about with their choppas and sluggas. Supporting the Slugga Boyz is typically a mix of Shoota Boyz firing for effect from medium range, and Stikk Bommas lobbing grenades and explosive Squigs indiscriminately into the melee.

Warbikers and warbuggies, along with trukks full of Orks, run around the enemy flanks, harassing outliers and attempting to cut the opposing force into easily defeated pieces. Elsewhere, Tankbustas dismantle enemy armour, while Burna Boyz flush enemy troops from cover and fill bunkers and pillboxes with searing flame. When called for, Ork armoured units composed of looted tanks, wartrukks, gunwagons, bigtrakks, and the occasional battlewagon clank across the field to engage enemy tank columns, supported by infantry, Deff Dreads, and scores of Mekboys. At the heart of the chaos, leading by example, is the Warboss. Often clad in powerful mega-armour and surrounded by his retinue of Nobz, Big Meks, and various other followers, the Warboss leads the charge, fighting alongside his army.

Once the battle is joined, Orks typically fight until they win or are utterly destroyed. They use their numbers, their savagery, and their sheer glee in battle to grind their enemies to dust, and win the day against any odds. Occasionally, especially when led by a particularly cunning leader, Orks retreat or regroup in the face of overwhelming odds. Even then, it is only a temporary lull in the fight. Ever the eternal optimists, Orks consider all of these options as great successes. Either they win, they’re dead and it doesn’t matter any more, or they can come back and fight again. No matter the outcome, win or lose, failure or glory, the battle is soon over, and all is quiet save for the cries of the wounded and the screams of the carrion birds. This is when the Lootas creep on to the field, knives in hand, to strip the corpses of Greenskin and enemy alike of anything vaguely valuable.



ORK FORCES

WARBOSS

"Well, yer gots yer Boyz, 'den you gots yer Oddboyz, see? 'Dey's called 'dat 'cause dey's, well, a little off in 'der head if you knows wot I mean. Dey can still loot an' krump wit' 'da best uv 'em, tho."

—Jezza, Blood Axe Stormboy, speaking to a clan yoof

The elite Ork warriors listed in this section are some of the most dangerous foes the Greenskins can throw at soldiers of the Imperial Guard. These powerful Orks can be used to lead the Ork forces found in **Chapter XI: Adversaries and NPCs of the ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook (see pages 363–371), or as powerful lone threats to any Squad.

"Da boss already et 'af a dozen uv 'im Squigs, kilt tree uv 'im Nobz, an' pinned Halsbaz's ears to a plank wit a coupla spikes 'dis mornin'. Mad? Nah, 'e's not mad. Dis is a good day."

—Borzash Geargrinda, Big Mek

A Warboss is the biggest, the greenest, and the meanest Ork in a tribe, and as such, he's the supreme commander of every Greenskin that falls under his jurisdiction. Relatively cunning strategists (by Ork standards) and exceedingly powerful warriors, these brutes rise through the Ork ranks by winning battles and killing every challenger to his power who puts himself in the way of the putative Warboss. A Warboss carries the best wargear, and with his great height and bulk, he towers above even the largest of his Nobz.

First and foremost, Warbosses are warriors, and they excel at the art of war. In battle, they lead from the front, giving full reign to their bloodlust, and driving their mobs to ever greater feats of savagery and brutality. They charge into their enemies at the side of their Boyz, hacking and slashing and tearing their opponents limb from limb in a bloody whirlwind of screaming violence. In the heat of battle, a Warboss expresses the qualities to which every Ork aspires, and they become, in a sense, living avatars of Gork and Mork, the twin gods of the Orkish pantheon. Their brutality and effectiveness on the field of battle is awe-inspiring, and even the hardened Battle-Brothers of the Adeptus Astartes treat truly aged and successful Warbosses with a modicum of respect, for they recognize true martial greatness when they see it.

Warbosses who are particularly powerful, wealthy, and successful on the field of battle often take on the title of Warlord. In doing so, the Warboss consolidates power by bringing together disparate Ork tribes, mobs, and warbands under his banner to serve some greater purpose. Usually, this greater purpose is simply to sweep through star systems to fight as many fights as they can and to collect as much treasure as they can carry. Occasionally, however, such an army turns into a full-blown Waaagh! and can pose a grave threat to even the most strongly fortified Sector or Segmentum.

Storied and ruthless killers such as the Arch-Arsonist of Charadon and the legendary Ghazghkull Mag Uruk Thraka, Prophet of the Waaagh!, are but two examples of the terror Orks who ascend to the rank of Warboss can wreak upon the Imperium and its holdings.



II: THE BEAST



Warboss (Master)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
60	30	60	60	40	30	35	40	30	

Movement: 5/10/15/30 **Wounds:** 45
Armour: 'Ard armour (All 5). **Total TB:** 11
Skills: Command (Fel) +10, Intimidate (S) +10, Parry (WS).
Talents: Air of Authority, Bulging Biceps, Crushing Blow, Die Hard, Fearless, Furious Assault, Hardy, Iron Jaw, Paranoia, Street Fighting, True Grit.
Traits: Brutal Charge (4), Fear (1), Make it Work, Mob Rule, Size (5), Sturdy, Unnatural Strength (5), Unnatural Toughness (5).
Weapons: Twin-linked big shoota (Heavy; 80m; S/3/10; 1d10+6 I; Pen 1; Clip 40; Reload 2 Full; Inaccurate, Twin-linked, Unreliable), big choppa (Melee; 2d10+14; Pen 2; Tearing, Unbalanced), power klaw (Melee; 2d10+21 R; Pen 7; Power Field, Unwieldy).
Gear: Boss pole†, 3d10 Ork teeth ("teef"), shiny bitz, trophy, pet attack Squig.
†**Boss Pole:** All allied Orks within sight of a Warboss wearing a boss pole gain a +10 bonus to Fear and Pinning Tests. Additionally, if a boss pole is adorned with trophies taken from the greatest champions of a foe (the helmets of Space Marines, the weaponry of an Incubus, etc.), increase the value of the Warboss' Fear Trait against that foe by 1.

GM ADVICE: USING A WARBOSS

A Warboss is invariably the biggest and the baddest Ork around, the most wrathful and avaricious of his kind, for if he were not so, he would not be the Warboss. As such, an Ork Warboss is extremely dangerous to any Squad of Guardsmen without artillery support at its disposal.

STRATEGY

A Warboss is likely to base his command strategy upon his personal clan affiliation (see page 60).

ENGAGEMENT

Once faced with an enemy, a Warboss typically rushes to close combat whether he launched the ambush or was caught unawares, shouting for his Boyz to follow his lead and charging heedlessly. Once he reaches close combat, he smashes his foes apart with his raw might. Once engaged in enthusiastic slaughter, a Warboss is unlikely to retreat from battle.

TACTICS

Though individual Warbosses vary in their preferred tactics, many Warbosses enjoy finding the biggest opponents they can and felling them with indiscriminate gunfire, savage blows, or a combination of the two, to once again assert their might over the other Greenskins who follow them. A Warboss tends to commit wholly to his preferred method of assault, typically without caution or care.

BOSS POLES AND TROPHIES OF WAR

Bosses are judged not only on their size, greenness, and killiness, but also on their martial prowess, and how many foes they have killed over the years. Most Orks in a mob have lived through each one of their boss' victories, and retell each tale over and over again. However, Bosses like to keep these memories fresh, and take any opportunity to shore up their position by reminding 'da Boyz why he's 'da Boss. To this end, Warbosses both drape themselves in personal banners and panoply that detail their achievements on the field and collect trophies from their mightiest foes.

Boss poles are simply a tall pole with a cross arm about a quarter of the way from the top, worn on the Boss' back when he rides into battle. Hung from the boss pole above the Boss' head are a number of banners, pennants, trinkets, gubbins, and skulls of various vanquished enemies. The banners and pennants are covered in crude glyphs, pictograms, and horribly spelled slogans that catalogue the Boss' battlefield history, telling of his "kunnin" and deadliness in battle. Seeing these banners flying in the wind as the Boss wades into the thick of battle surrounded by his Nobz rouses the Boyz' fervour even further than normal, and they become more dangerous and reckless as a result.

Along with the boss pole, any Warboss worth his teef has a large collection of trophies taken from defeated foes. These trophies are typically the heads of enemies, pickled or mummified and kept on display in the boss' lodge. Trophies can take any form, however, and range from loot and weapons to bits of power armour or even looted tanks and fighting vehicles. Bosses often take their trophies into battle with them, hanging them from their belts or boss poles to rattle his enemies and fire up 'da ladz.





MEKBOY

“Ere, pass me ‘dat wosname, ‘dat welda. Yeah, ‘dat’s ‘da one. Now, watch ‘dis!”

—Last words of Golmak Spannabreaka, Mekboy

Orks grasp the rudiments of their technology on an instinctual level. How exactly this works remains largely a mystery, although some studies performed by the Magos Biologis suggest that this may be a result of the latent psychic potential possessed by all Greenskins. Whatever the case might be, whether Orks understand technology due to psychic powers, from hard-coded genetic memory, or simply by rote or inclination, every Ork in the galaxy can design, build, and maintain the basic weapons and vehicles used by their race. This general basic mechanical aptitude possessed by the Greenskins means each boy in a mob can easily build and repair their own weapons, armour, and assorted wargear without having to rely on any kind of maintenance or supply infrastructure. In turn, this mobility and adaptability makes them an incredibly adaptable and frightfully efficient species.

While all Orks can turn a spanner or swing a hammer to some degree, there is a group of mechanically inclined Greenskins called Mekboys. These Orks show more than the usual basic understanding of building, jury-rigging, and bodging.

Also colloquially called Mekaniaks, or simply Meks, Mekboys are blessed a greater ability to modify machinery than other Orks the a willingness to put these skills to use regardless of personal risks.

Strange amalgams of engineers and mad scientists, Mekboys are the jovially imprecise craftsmen responsible for producing the bulk of Orkish wargear. They enjoy a privileged place in Orkish society thanks to their unique talent, and, along with other Oddboyz like Painboyz and Weirdboyz, make up an important part of any Warboss’ retinue. Along with their mechanical and engineering prowess, Mekboys also have a knack for assessing the nature, use, and value of a given piece of scrap or hardware at a glance. Thanks to their keen eye for, and discerning tastes in the industrial and mechanical detritus of the galaxy, they excel at using these salvaged and recycled materials to create the improbable devices clamoured for by Boyz, Nobz, and Warbosses alike.

As it is among Ork society at large, within the disparate ranks of Mekboys, the bigger a Mek is, the more powerful he is. While it is difficult to categorize any parts of chaotic Orkish society, there are a few general divisions among Mekboyz, determined by size, cunning, and the amount of “kustom” bits and mechanical ephemera they possess. The most common (and therefore least potent) among these are the Mekboyz. These are the Meks who work by themselves or in small groups assisted by Gretchin, who operate in support of smaller Ork formations like mobs and warbands.

As Mekboyz grow in size and experience, many become Big Meks. Big Meks command squads of lower ranked Mekboys and countless Gretchin in battle, and devise the more potent kinds of wargear fielded by Orks, such as mega-armour and kustom-blastas. Some of these Big Meks, occasionally called “Mek Bosses,” become so powerful that they command entire warbands or tribes and have thousands of Boyz at their command. Clans run by Big Meks are more technology-oriented, and tend to have a higher than normal concentration of “kustom” gear and combi-weapons among the ranks. They also have more cyborks and advanced war machines like Deff Dreads, Mega-Dreads, Stompas, and even the highly volatile and destructive Gargants, as well.

The tools of the Mek’s trade—his massive spanners, rivet guns, welders, cutting torches, hammers, and the like—are crude and hand-made. Each one fits the calloused hand of their creator, and withstands his constant use and abuse. In their motor pools, workshops, and foundries, Meks gleefully toil away in a cloud of cigar smoke, oily mist, exhaust fumes, and fine metal dust, attended by a small army of Gretchin attendants tasked with fetching tools, holding parts, and applying lubricants and adhesives.

In these clamorous and noisome environments, Mekboys and their assistants churn out the countless shootas, sluggas, stikkbombs, bits of armour, and other wargear required to feed the ravenous Ork war machine. Mekboys are also constantly tinkering with and “kustomizin” their wargear, and that of other Orks, to improve its performance. Mekboys also create kustom weapons and vehicles for Warbosses, Nobz, and any boy with enough teef to pay for their services. Some Mekboys even exhibit a strong inclination toward invention, and from these demented minds have sprung some of the most terrifying and dangerous war machines (both to their enemies and their users) that the galaxy has ever seen.

Ork technology captured in battle and examined by the Adeptus Mechanicus defies all description and classification. Guided by each individual Mekboy's particular, for lack of a better term, "design vision," no two pieces of Ork equipment are alike. They show no signs of standardisation or mass production, and vary so widely in their construction, design, and make-up as to make each piece of equipment essentially unique. The only commonality among Ork technology is that, as far as any learned Magos of the Priesthood of Mars can determine, every shoota, trukkk, lobba, and suit of mega-armour seems to be nothing more than a random collection of scrap parts, gubbins, and metal plates bashed together in random fashion that simply should not function.

Somehow, their ramshackle vehicles run, their terrifyingly crude flyers stay in the air despite lacking any kind of aerodynamic qualities, and their weapons to fire chattering bursts of slugs or to disgorge gouts of flame, plasma, or other types of energy, despite seeming nothing more than collections of flammable junk. For this to work, however, a Mekboy must have an idea of what it is that he wants to build. He cannot simply build a basic item that resembles a firearm, and then dictate what kind of ammunition it fires or what effects it inflicts on its enemies at a whim. If, for example, a Mekboy needs to build a plasma pistol, he begins to construct what he imagines a plasma pistol to be. Sometime during this process (assuming that it is not cut short in an explosive fashion), it occasionally begins to function as such, even if Imperial scholars and tech-adepts cannot determine how this occurred.

Orks also hold numerous related and seemingly bizarre beliefs regarding the importance of colour and how it affects their wargear. Perhaps the most well-known is the widespread belief, especially among Evil Sunz and members of the Kult of Speed, that "red onez go fasta." The fact that this actually seems to have any bearing on reality continues to confound the Adeptus Mechanicus. The beliefs and superstitions of the Orks, and the gestalt phenomena that accompanies them, added to each Ork's ability to carry out basic construction and maintenance of his wargear, is one of the factors that makes the Greenskins so potent and successful a species, despite their predisposition toward shortsighted violence.

Mekboy (Elite)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
40	20	45	40	35	35	35	35	25

Movement: 4/8/12/24

Wounds: 35

Armour: Flak armour (Body 3, Arms and Legs 3, Head 1).

Total TB: 8

Skills: Awareness (Per), Common Lore (Tech), Intimidate (S), Operate (Surface), Tech-Use (Int) +10, Trade (Armourer) +10.

Talents: Bodgin'†, Bulging Biceps, Crushing Blow, Furious Assault, Hammer Blow, Hardy, Iron Jaw, Master Engineer, Technical Knock, Street Fighting, True Grit, Weapon-Tech.

Traits: Brutal Charge (3), Fear (1), Make it Work, Mob Rule, Size (Hulking), Sturdy, Unnatural Strength (4), Unnatural Toughness (4).

Weapons: Slugga (Pistol; 20m; S/3/-; 1d10+4 I; Pen 0; Clip 18; Reload Full; Inaccurate, Unreliable) *or* shoota (Basic; 60m; S/3/10; 1d10+4 I; Pen 0; Clip 30; Reload Full; Inaccurate, Unreliable) *or* shokk attack gun (Heavy; 200m; S/-/-; 3d10 X; Blast [3], Inaccurate, Overheats), big wrench (1d10+10 I; Pen 0; Primitive [7], Unwieldy).

Gear: Mek's tools, 2d10+5 Ork teeth ("teef"), Grot oiler, shiny bitz, tek gubbinz (assorted springs, gears, wires, circuits, valves, etc), kustom force field††.

†**Bodgin'**: Before battle, a Mekboy can modify a number of Ork weapons up to his Intelligence Bonus (3). These weapons gain the Shocking Quality and increase their Damage by +1d5 until the end of the combat encounter.

††**Kustom Force Field:** A kustom force field is a Force Field (see page 196 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook) with a Protection Rating of 50 that Overloads on a roll of 15 or lower. Instead of the usual effects, when this Force Field Overloads, it ceases to function for 1d5 Rounds and immediately inflicts 1d10+5 Energy Damage with a Penetration of 0 and the Shocking Quality upon everything within 2d10 metres of the Mekboy (including the Mekboy himself, naturally).

GM ADVICE: USING A MEKBOY

Mekboyz are clever and fiendishly inventive, driven ever onward by their instincts to ceaselessly tinker with any and all machines in their general vicinity. Given how dangerous some of these strange items can be, Mekboyz and their insane inventions can cause considerable harm to anyone unfortunate enough to be nearby even if they are not directly engaged in battle.

ENGAGEMENT

Mekboyz tend to be extremely focused on modifying the machines around them, even once combat breaks out around them. This distraction can make it easier for careful and enterprising Guardsmen to gain the initiative during battle with them.

TACTICS

Mekboyz often lead from the middle of the pack, surrounded by warriors, strange machines, and various Grot assistants. Mekboyz often continue to tinker with their devices during battle, enhancing the weapons used by the Boyz who follow them even as shots fly from their barrels. As such, any Boyz in a formation led by a Mekboy are likely to have customised weapons (see the Bodgin' Talent). If directly threatened, Mekboyz often defend themselves with powerful melee attacks. Occasionally, Mekboyz equip bizarre and potent ranged weapons such as the fabled shock attack gun and wreak havoc upon anyone unfortunate enough to be in their line of sight when they decide to experiment with these terrifying devices.



NOBZ

"I'se got 'da teef, I'se got 'da loot, I'se got 'da dakka, an' I'se got 'dis 'ere mega-armour. 'Dat's why wot I sez goes aroun' 'ere, ya runty Grots. Try me any time ya'z feelin like a beatin'!"

—Bawbag Gitstompa, Meganob

The undisputed ruling class in the strangely egalitarian Ork hierarchy, Nobz are among the largest and most dangerous Orks in a warband. Indeed, only the Warboss or Warlord is larger. Like the Warboss, Nobz rise to their station through martial prowess and killing challengers. A Nob that fights and wins quickly gains the respect, and often fear, of a warband's Boyz, which allows the Nob to gain power and status. Nobz are typically found in the retinue of a Warboss or Warlord, assisting their superior in the day-to-day running of the tribe and constantly vying for power with his fellows. Should a Warboss fall or be otherwise neutralised, his Nobz quickly fall upon one another in a savage and bloody fight until one stands victorious and takes the mantle of Warboss for himself. Occasionally, Nobz lead small bands of Ork Boyz themselves, preferring to have their own Boyz to kick around and lord their superiority over, as opposed to sucking up to a Warboss. In battle, much like Warbosses and Warlords, Nobz lead from the front, inspiring their Boyz in combat by example of their ruthlessness and brutality.

Taking every excuse to lord their power over their inferiors, Nobz revel in making life a living hell for those around them. Casual brutality is only to be expected when in the company of Nobz. They consider their subordinates disposable, especially the snivelling Gretchin, and go out of their way to make that fact perfectly clear to all and sundry. Aside from their brutality, Nobz also flaunt their wealth and station by using only the finest arms and armour. Flashy suits of mega-armour, complicated snazzguns, and garishly decorated trukks are all the hallmarks of rank for a Nob.

No other Ork in a warband (save the Warboss) is allowed to have better gear than the Nobz, and anything that even remotely strikes a Nob's fancy is immediately confiscated. All of a Nob's disposable wealth goes toward purchasing better and fancier gear and "shootier" guns. Many a prolific Mekboy has made his fortune by catering to the expensive tastes of his warband's Nobz and Warboss (or done so simply under the threat of extreme violence).

Dangerous in the extreme and thoughtlessly cruel, Nobz embody the Orkish mindset better than any other Greenskin, save perhaps the Warboss. Their avarice and savagery is nearly unmatched, and wherever they go, murder and strife is sure to follow. A single Nob can easily endanger whole squads of Imperial Guardsmen, and in the Spinward Front, there are even many regimental medals for bringing down a Nob in battle. Defeating a Nob might mark a squad for greatness in the eyes of the Imperial Guard, but it can also bring them to the attention of a Warboss. After all, if a squad is capable of vanquishing one of his Nobz, then they can likely put up a worthy and enjoyable fight if he faces them on his own.

II: THE BEAST



Nob (Elite)								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
45	20	50	47	39	30	30	35	35

Movement: 4/8/12/24

Wounds: 25

Armour: 'Ard armour (All 5).

Total TB: 9

Skills: Athletics (S), Command (Fel) +10, Intimidate (S) +10.

Talents: Air of Authority, Bulging Biceps, Crushing Blow, Furious Assault, Hardy, Iron Discipline, Iron Jaw, Lightning Reflexes, Street Fighting, True Grit.

Traits: Auto-Stabilised, Brutal Charge (3), Fear (1), Make it Work, Mob Rule, Size (5), Sturdy, Unnatural Strength (4), Unnatural Toughness (5).

Weapons: Power claw (Melee; 2d10+19 R; Pen 7; Power Field, Unwieldy), twin-linked big shoota (Heavy; 80m; S/3/10; 1d10+6 I; Pen 1; Clip 40; Reload 2 Full; Inaccurate, Twin-linked, Unreliable).

Gear: 1d10 Ork teeth ("teef"), shiny gubbinz, spiky bitz.

Meganob (Elite)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
45	20	80 ¹²	49 ⁹	39	30	30	35	35	

Movement: 4/8/12/-

Wounds: 25

Armour: Mega-armour (Body

Total TB: 9

14, Arms and Legs 9, Head 5).

Skills: Athletics (S), Command (Fel) +10, Intimidate (S) +10.

Talents: Air of Authority, Bulging Biceps, Crushing Blow, Furious Assault, Hardy, Iron Discipline, Iron Jaw, Lightning Reflexes, Street Fighting, True Grit.

Traits: Auto-Stabilised, Brutal Charge (3), Fear (1), Make it Work, Mob Rule, Size (5), Sturdy, Unnatural Strength (4), Unnatural Toughness (5).

Weapons: Power claw (Melee; 2d10+22 R; Pen 7; Power Field, Unwieldy), twin-linked big shoota (Heavy; 80m; S/3/10; 1d10+6 I; Pen 1; Clip 40; Reload 2 Full; Inaccurate, Twin-linked, Unreliable).

Gear: 1d10+5 Ork teeth ("teef"), shiny gubbinz, spiky bitz.

MEGA-ARMOUR

The most powerful Orks sometimes don mega-armour, the most potent personal defence in the Orky arsenal. Bashed together from thick steel plates, scavenged power-exoskeletons, powerful hydraulic rams, and other bits and gubbins of military and industrial detritus, mega-armour is one of the heights of the Mek's craft. Each suit is custom built for its wearer, typically a flashy, domineering Nob, but oftentimes a Boss or other high-ranking Ork. These ponderous, clanking, smoke-belching suits of armour allow an Ork Warboss or Nob to stand toe to toe against even a Space Marine in Tactical Dreadnought Armour, and make them nigh unassailable by Imperial Guard troopers armed with anything less than potent anti-tank weaponry. At the GM's discretion, any Warboss can wear a suit of Mega-armour. Mega-armour has the following profile:

Body 14, Arms and Legs 9, Head 5

Mega-armour increases its wearer's Strength Characteristic by +30 (included in the Nob profile). However, it also imposes a -20 penalty on all Agility Tests the wearer makes, and he cannot take the Run Action while wearing it.

GM ADVICE: USING NOBZ

Nobz are able to rule over most other Orks with their brute might. As such, a Nob outclasses an Imperial Guard trooper by a frightening margin in terms of raw strength and resilience, and any squad that wishes to kill even one of these hulking creatures must use their wits and skill to lay it low.

ENGAGEMENT

Once they sight battle, most Nobz rush forward, enthusiastically (if inaccurately) firing at their foes. This is largely true whether or not the Nobz were prepared to fight before the violence ensues. Nobz in Meganob armour are hard-pressed to ambush anyone, given their massive, clanking, smoke-spewing armour. Nobz in 'ard armour can be more stealthy in their attacks, though different clans have different opinions on what constitutes proper Orky behaviour (see page 60).

TACTICS

Nobz in Meganob armour tend to plow into their foes, crushing the biggest foes underfoot or with hammering blows from their weapons. Depending on their clan affiliation (see page 60), Nobz in 'ard armour are sometimes more careful (so much as that term can ever be applied in Ork warfare) in battle, choosing targets of opportunity and working together to fell the most deadly enemies.





KILLA KAN

"Yar! Oose 'da biggest an' da baddest now, eh? I'll show ya, I'll show ya all! Just try an' stop me!"

—Grabthroat Shinkicka, Killa Kan pilot

The Grot's life is nasty, brutish, and short. Theirs is an existence of not-so-quiet desperation, during which they are treated more or less as disposable and potentially edible slaves by their larger Greenskin cousins. Kicked, prodded, harangued, herded by the thousands into the muzzles of enemy guns and the paths of their crushing war machines, and worked mercilessly to the bone, Grots suffer countless indignities, great and small, during their brief and violent lives. Despite this misery, Gretchin continue to serve the larger Greenskins as necessary (usually to avoid being eaten). Many Gretchin grow to fill specific or symbiotic roles for their masters, such as those who assist Mekboyz and Painboyz. Some Gretchin, especially those who have developed a chip on their shoulders, crave more than the life of a slave and emergency food supply. Despite their innate cowardice, these resentful Grots aspire to what they see as the zenith of Grot service: implantation into a Killa Kan.

Killa Kans are smallish, bipedal walkers composed of a rickety, lightly armoured "kan" perched atop a pair of piston driven legs, and armed with a selection of ranged and close-combat weapons. Relatively primitive and weak by Ork standards, they are nonetheless fast and incredibly dangerous for their size, and one or two are more than a match for an Imperial Guard Sentinel Walker. As for the operator within, Killa Kans are not so much piloted as they are inhabited by a particularly ill-tempered Gretchin. Requiring the skills of both a Mekboy and a Painboy, fielding a Killa Kan entails first building the vehicle itself, then hard-wiring a volunteer Grot directly into the control systems. This painful procedure is not unlike the technology used in the creation of Space Marine Dreadnoughts, although significantly cruder and messier. Not only is the procedure excruciatingly painful, but implanting a Grot into a Killa Kan often increases the creature's aggression and brute savagery by an inordinate amount.

Despite the numerous drawbacks—the incredible pain, the bloodlust, being trapped in a tiny, clattering can for the rest of one's natural life—the sheer power and glory promised by becoming a Killa Kan pilot drives many Gretchin mad with desire. Dreams of bloody revenge and lording their new-found power over their former tormentors are the most common motivators, and there is never a shortage of volunteers to become Killa Kan pilots. Indeed, competition between Grots for the honour of becoming a Killa Kan pilot is so fierce and bloody that many Grot mobs and Mek workshops have instituted a simple lottery system by which they choose candidates for implantation.

Once chosen and implanted into their new bodies, many Killa Kan pilots go on murderous killing sprees upon activation. Gibbering and howling, they flail about, dishing out well-deserved justice to former bullies



and oppressors with their whirling saws, slashing power claws, and chattering heavy guns. Most Orks find these bloody spectacles hilarious, at least those who are not on the receiving end of the new Kan's fury. A raucous and violent festival atmosphere often accompanies the brutalities that follow the creation of a new batch of Killa Kans.

The life of a Killa Kan, while perhaps more violent and spectacular than it had been, remains little changed from their previous existence—though a Killa Kan need not fear being eaten by larger Greenskins, at least most of the time. Kept asleep and on stand-by in pens with others of their kind when not actively engaged in battle, Killa Kans are viewed by their Ork cousins as extremely useful, but essentially disposable armoured shock troops. On the field, Killa Kans charge ahead of an Ork army, directly into their massed enemies. Once they break into the enemy formation, the Kans set about them with their power claws, buzz-saws, and heavy, close-range shootas and skorchas, causing incredible carnage.

Although they can be frightfully effective, one major downside of deploying Killa Kans is that, while they are a heavily armed, armoured, piston-driven Grot with a thirst for battle, inside all the armour, they are still Grots. This often means that although Killa Kans are as "stompy and killy" as a Gretchin can ever hope to be, they are still skittish, easily distracted, shameless cowards, who have a disturbing tendency

to break and run from battle at the slightest provocation. To combat this natural timidity, Mekboyz typically deploy Killa Kans in small mobs, in the hopes that strength in numbers can overcome the Grot's natural cowardice. While this plan usually serves, Killa Kans still have a tendency to panic, flail about, gibber, and flee when faced with an opponent or opponents of obvious superiority. However, they still possess the natural, often sadistic vicious streak exhibited by all cowards, which often works to their advantage. Upon encountering an enemy that is wounded, distracted, looking the other way, or otherwise in disarray, especially if the Killa Kans outnumber their opponents, they have no compunctions about wading directly in and taking advantage of their enemy's vulnerability to tear them to bloody shreds.

Killa Kan (Elite)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
35	33	40	--	30	30	40	20	25	

Type: Walker
Cruising Speed: 35 kph
Structural Integrity: 8
Armour: Front 15, Side 15, Rear 15
Vehicle Traits: Enhanced Motive Systems, Enclosed, Ramshackle, Walker.
Crew: One hard-wired Grot pilot.
Carrying Capacity: None.

WEAPONS

Killa Kans are typically armed with one heavy weapon and one close-combat melee weapon, like a power klaw or some manner of brutal saw. As with all Ork technology, however, there is great variance, and no two Killa Kans are outfitted the same way. A Killa Kan is equipped with any two of the following weapons:

- Big shoota (Front Facing; 120m; --/--/10; 2d10+5 I; Pen 2; Clip 120; Reload Full; Inaccurate, Unreliable).
- Rokkit launcha (Front Facing; 150m; S/--/--; 3d10+5 X; Pen 9; Clip 1; Reload Half; Inaccurate, Unreliable).
- Grotzooka (Front Facing; 50m; S/--/--; 2d10+5 I; Pen 2; Clip 25; Reload 2 Full; Inaccurate, Scatter, Tearing, Unreliable).
- Skorcha (Front Facing; 30m; S/--/--; 1d10+7 E; Pen 3; Clip --; Reload --; Flame, Spray, Unreliable).
- Big shears (Melee; 2d10+6 R; Pen 6; Razor Sharp, Unbalanced).
- Buzz saw (Melee; 2d10+8 R; Pen 4; Tearing, Unwieldy).

GM ADVICE: USING KILLA KANS

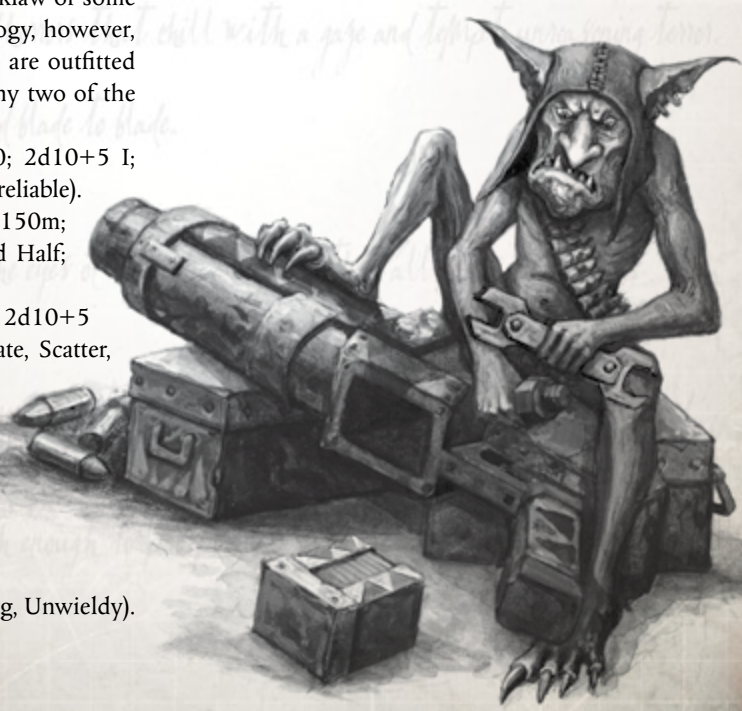
Killa Kans stomp across the battlefield, revelling in the power they now possess over their former tormentors and anything else nearby. Facing even a single Killa Kan at relatively close range without vehicle support would be a highly daunting task for most Imperial Guard squads. Unfortunately, Killa Kans are often deployed in small groups for this very purpose.

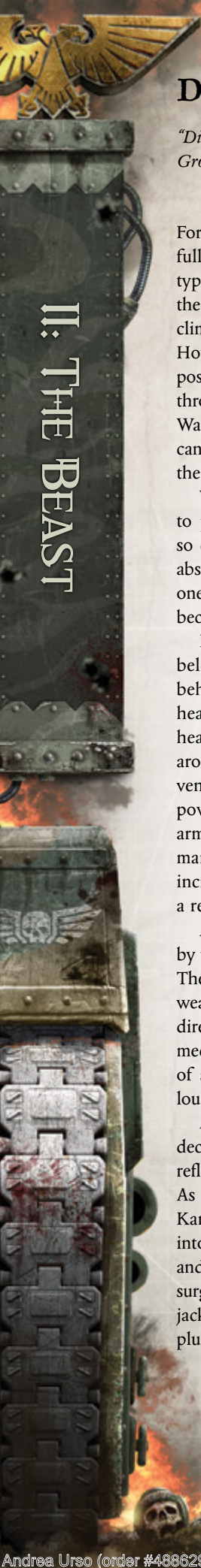
ENGAGEMENT

Killa Kans are simply too large, loud, and obvious to launch ambushes outside of the most extraordinary circumstances. Killa Kans caught in an ambush must work hard to overcome the instincts that the Grots within developed over their previous lives, and sometimes break and panic in the face of unexpected resistance.

TACTICS

So long as the Grot within believes that it possesses the advantage, a Killa Kan is a cruel and dangerous foe. However, if a Killa Kan is faced with overwhelming force (or believes that its advantage has slipped away), the cowardly Gretchin within often reverts to its previous instincts and panics, fleeing preposterously in its massive metal body. Clever Imperial Guard troopers might be able to capitalise on this weakness (though Killa Kans are extremely dangerous both at short ranges, where they pepper their foes with salvos from their ranged weapons, and in hand-to-hand combat, where their crushing metal feet and array of bizarre and deadly melee weapons can do their vicious work.





DEFF DREAD

"Dis isn't some puny Killa Kan, so get ready ta get krumped, all ya Grots! Dis is no Killa Kan!"

—Ramtusk Wraahr, Deff Dread pilot

For the majority of Ork Boyz, their one goal is to live a life full of anarchic action, savage combat, and looting. Some, typically the smarter ones, are more ambitious, and parley their combat prowess and leadership potential into a steady climb up the ladder of the strangely egalitarian Ork hierarchy. However, Orks are, by nature, incredibly impatient creatures, possessed of a powerful lust for instant gratification. Climbing through Orkish society from a common Slugga Boy to a great Warboss, the absolute pinnacle of Orkish power and prestige, can take long years of fighting, cunning manoeuvring, and the knocking together of countless heads.

While most Orks are content with taking the normal path to power despite their burning impatience, there are some so driven that they seek any opportunity, any short cuts to absolute power. Since might makes right in Ork society, one of the quickest, if not easiest, short cuts to power is by becoming a Deff Dread pilot.

Deff Dreads are clanking, rattling, lumbering, smoke-belching, implacable engines of destruction. A terror to behold on the battlefield, these deadly machines are hulking, heavily-armed and armoured bipedal walkers, bristling with heavy guns and slashing close-combat weapons. Based around a similar, if infinitely cruder technology than those venerable machines of war, Deff Dreads are infinitely more powerful than their smaller Killa Kan cousins. With heavier armour, bigger guns, and a more powerful power plant than many walkers of their size and class, Deff Dreads pack an incredible amount of firepower and destructive potential in a relatively compact package.

As with Killa Kans, and indeed the majority of things built by the Orks, there is little commonality between Deff Dreads. They are typically armed with two forward-facing heavy weapons like skorchas, rokkit launchas, or big shootas bolted directly to the kan, along with anywhere from two to six mechanical arms. These arms usually end in some combination of slashing power claws, hammers, and numerous types of loud and cruel flesh-tearing saws.

Aside from these basic design elements, Deff Dreads are decorated, armed, and configured in countless ways, each one reflecting the tastes and vision of the Mek who designed it. As for the pilot of a Deff Dread, as is the case with Killa Kans, the Ork volunteers are permanently hard-wired directly into the vehicle itself. Requiring the services of a both a Mek and a Painboy, installing a pilot into a Deff Dread involves surgically implanting numerous tubes, nerve probes, cranial jacks, and other, more esoteric bits of mechanical device plugged directly into his brain and spinal column.

This is a painful and disorienting experience, which requires an Ork to trade away much of his natural Orkiness, and spend the rest of his days trapped in a claustrophobic, incredibly loud, hot, and uncomfortable metal can, with only a small slit provided to see through, in exchange for raw killing power.

While this might sounds like a favourable bargain to some particularly deranged Orks, Deff Dreads are relatively rare among Ork forces due to the length and horrendously unpleasant nature of the operation. Despite an Ork's natural resilience, the ministrations of the ones responsible for installing them inside this metal chassis are hardly tender.

In battle, Deff Dreads act as support units and mobile weapons platforms, working in compliment with mobs or backing up a Warboss and his mega-armoured Nobz. Wading into the thick of battle in support of infantry forces, even a single Deff Dread brings enough firepower and general good "stompy killiness" to an engagement to tip the scales of even the most fearsome battle in the Orks' favour. Extremely expensive and, for the Ork's enemies at least, blessedly rare, Deff Dreads are used sparingly by those Warbosses who can afford them. This irritates none more than the pilots locked within, whose only release from the tedium of being welded inside these machines comes in slaughtering their foes on the battlefield. When they are deployed in support of an Ork mob, however, the destruction they inflict on their enemies is truly shocking to behold. Only the most stalwart or foolish of Imperial Guard troopers can stand against these metal monsters, whose crushing feet, tearing claws, and rattling guns shatter anything that falls within range.

GM ADVICE: USING A DEFF DREAD

Deff Dreads are brutal machines of war that destroy everything in their path with overwhelming firepower and unrelenting violence, driven on by the raving fury of the beast caged within.

ENGAGEMENT

Deff Dreads know nothing of subtlety. As such, one that encounters a group of enemies usually rushes forward firing indiscriminately before attempting to stomp them into a bloody paste, regardless of combat circumstances.

TACTICS

Deff Dreads wade across the battlefield from foe to foe, annihilating them with excessive weapons fire or hacking them apart with their massive claws. A Deff Dread rarely bothers with thoroughness for any particular foe in combat, concerning itself instead with inflicting as much harm on as many unfortunates as possible. Deff Dreads do sometimes target the largest enemies first, especially if these are other armoured vehicles or equally massive creatures.



II: THE BEAST



Deff Dread (Master)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
45	20	55	--	20	25	35	30	20	

Type: Walker

Cruising Speed: 25 kph

Structural Integrity: 25

Armour: Front 30, Side 30, Rear 25

Vehicle Traits: Enclosed, Ponderous, Ramshackle, Walker.

Crew: One hard-wired Ork pilot.

Carrying Capacity: None.

Tactical Speed: 8 m

Manoeuvrability: +10

Size: Enormous

WEAPONS

Deff Dreads are often armed with two heavy guns welded to their chassis and two melee weapons, but as with any Ork creation, there is no standard. A Deff Dread has four of the following:

- Big shoota (Front Facing; 120m; --/10; 2d10+5 I; Pen 2; Clip 120; Reload Full; Inaccurate, Unreliable).
- Rokkit launcha (Front Facing; 150m; S/--; 3d10+6 X; Pen 9; Clip 1; Reload Half; Inaccurate, Unreliable).
- Kustom mega-blasta (Front Facing; 100m; S/2/--; 4d10+7 E; Pen 6; Clip 10; Reload 3 Full; Blast (2), Inaccurate, Overheats, Shocking, Unreliable).
- Skorcha (Front Facing; 30m; S/--; 1d10+7 E; Pen 3; Clip --; Reload --; Flame, Spray, Unreliable).
- Burna (Front Facing; 40m; S/--; 1d10+4 E; Pen 2; Clip --; Reload --; Flame, Spray, Unreliable).
- Power klaw (Melee; 2d10+16 R; Pen 7; Power Field, Unwieldy).
- Buzz saw (Melee; 2d10+12 R; Pen 3; Tearing, Unwieldy).



SQUIGGOTH

"Don't poke at 'der Squiggoths ya' snotling-brained oaf! 'Dey don't like it, an' it hurts 'der feelins. So don't ta holler at me if dey eats yer fingers."

—Zargoz, Snakebites Runtherd

The pinnacle of the Runtherd's art, the Squiggoth is the largest and most aggressive of all the Squigs. Bred primarily by the Snakebites and sold to any warband or tribe who can afford them, Squiggoths are massive, reptilian quadrupeds with a mouth full of wicked teeth and an incredibly savage demeanour. Though the reptilian Squiggoths are the most widely observed, other phenotypes have been reported, such as those encountered in arctic climates, covered in thick hair. Squiggoths range in size from roughly the size of a Leman Russ main battle tank to nearly as large as a Warhound Titan. The size of a Squiggoth depends largely on the mix of food they are fed as they grow. Each Runtherd has his own special recipe of Squiggoth feed, and these recipes are constantly modified and tinkered with to eke out the maximum amount of growth possible. The smallest Squiggoths, although still huge and very dangerous, are the product of inferior, low-quality feed mixes, and are considered runts among their larger cousins. Large Squiggoths are the result of carefully crafted diets (supplemented by any Orks who stray too near their mouths). The largest of all, the legendary and vanishingly rare Gargantuan Squiggoths bred in the pits of the Snakebites, gain their size and strength from the very best and most potent feeds available to their Ork caretakers.

Squiggoths are used as a combination battle tank, personnel carrier, and mobile siege engine. Their size, utility, and mindless aggression appeal to the Orks on a visceral level, and much like most aspects of Ork "kultur," Squiggoths seem to be perfectly honed to suit their role and

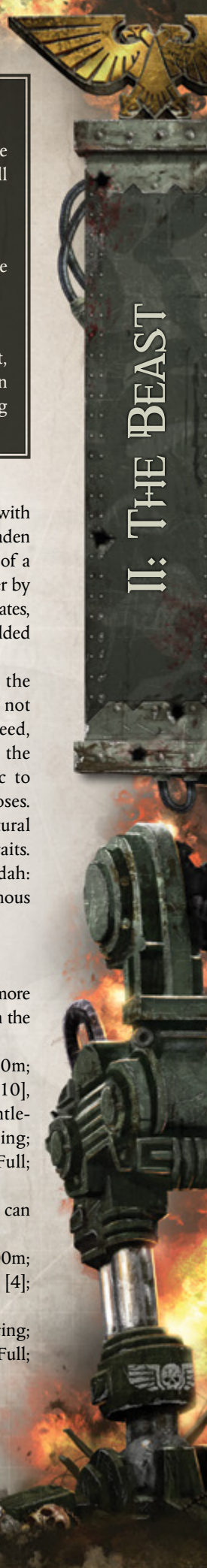
to appeal to the base tastes of their masters. In their natural, unaltered state, Squiggoths make excellent beasts of war. Their massive frames are draped in a thick, scaled hide that provides considerable protection, and their brute strength, massive tusks, and crushing feet can pierce even the strongest defences. An angry Squiggoth set loose on a battlefield can strike terror into even the most stalwart heart. Of course, being bestial and relatively dim-witted, Squiggoths are hard to train and hard to control, when they are not simply eating their so-called owners.

While feral Orks and those of the Snakebites clan are certainly wont to field Squiggoths as they came from the crèche and use them simply as beasts of burden to transport Boyz, the other clans fit a number of upgrades to their huge and savage pets. When outfitted for war by most of the clans, a Squiggoth is first fitted for a suit of Squiggoth armour, an articulated suit of cobbled barding. Along with the armour, Squiggoths are fitted for fighting platforms called Howdahs, which mount heavy weapons and carry an assortment of Boyz, both inside and hanging on straps and chains outside. The Howdah serves as both a mobile artillery platform and an ersatz armoured personnel carrier, bringing Boyz into the fight and providing heavy fire support to Ork forces engaged with the enemy. Like their less domesticated cousins found among the Snakebites and feral Ork tribes, these armoured Squiggoths can cause incredible damage with their natural weapons, and while the Boyz in the Howdah gleefully blast away with their heavy guns, their mount is usually hard at work biting, goring, and stomping flat anything that comes within reach. Gargantuan Squiggoths often mount an

entire fortress on their back, a fortified and enclosed pillbox bristling with artillery and heavy weapons, and is perhaps one of the most destructive engines of war in the galaxy. Thankfully, such monstrosities are incredibly rare.

II: THE BEAST





GM ADVICE: USING A SQUIGGOTH

Massive on a scale typically reserved for super-heavy tanks and small-to-midsized Titans, Squiggoths are simply too large for most infantry squads to harm directly. Armoured companies, siege weapons, and wide orbital bombardments have all been used to bring such creatures down in the Spinward Front.

ENGAGEMENT

Launching an ambush with a Squiggoth would require incredibly exceptional circumstances. Regardless of how its foes engage it, a Squiggoth responds in much the same way: by bellowing, charging, and goring or crushing everything in its path.

TACTICS

Squiggoths are aggressive even without large groups of Orks spurring them on, trampling their enemies underfoot, ripping them apart with their tusks. Though Squiggoths often accidentally kill such individuals, they lack the precision to strike at individual infantry troopers, instead shattering entire formations or armoured vehicles and typically rendering any unfortunate infantry nearby too terrified or dead to try to take action against them incidentally.

Squiggoth (Master)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
55	--	90 ²⁰	90 ¹⁶	25	10	25	30	05	

Movement: 14/28/42/84

Wounds: 90

Armour: Squiggoth armour (All 12).

Total TB: 16

Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness (Per).

Talents: Berserk Charge, Crushing Blow, Hardy, True Grit.

Traits: Bestial, Brutal Charge (8), Crushing Blow, Deadly Natural Weapons, Fear (2), Natural Weapons, Quadruped, Size (9), Stampede, Unnatural Strength (11), Unnatural Toughness (7).

Weapons: Big fangs (Melee; 2d10+22 R; Pen 10; Tearing), stumpy feet (Melee; 2d10+22 I; Pen 8; Concussive [5]).

Gear: Squiggoth armour, Squiggoth Howdah.

Gargantuan Squiggoth (Master)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
55	--	90 ²⁸	90 ²⁰	25	10	25	30	05	

Movement: 16/32/48/96

Wounds: 125

Armour: Squiggoth armour (All 15).

Total TB: 20

Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness (Per)

Talents: Berserk Charge, Crushing Blow, Hardy, True Grit.

Traits: Bestial, Brutal Charge (10), Crushing Blow, Deadly Natural Weapons, Fear (3), Natural Weapons, Quadruped, Size (10), Stampede, Unnatural Strength (19), Unnatural Toughness (11).

Weapons: Enormous fangs (Melee; 1d10+30 R; Pen 10; Tearing), stumpy feet (Melee; 1d10+30 I; Pen 8; Concussive [8]).

Gear: Squiggoth armour, Squiggoth Howdah.

SQUIGGOTH HOWDAH

When charging into battle, Squiggoths are often equipped with a massive armoured fighting platform called a Howdah, laden with artillery and packed full of Boyz. Typically the size of a Chimera transport, Squiggoth Howdahs are pieced together by a warband's Meks from scrap metal, scavenged armour plates, and the stripped hulls of enemy fighting vehicles, all welded and riveted together and secured to the Squiggoth's backs.

As they are simply fighting platforms strapped onto the beast and not actual vehicles, Squiggoth Howdahs do not have the following Vehicle Characteristics: Cruising Speed, Tactical Speed, and Manoeuvrability. Instead, they use the Squiggoth's Movement Rate and Agility Characteristic to determine speed and manoeuvrability for combat purposes. However, they do have both Armour and Structural Integrity, as well as weapon facings and some Vehicle Traits. The following are the stats for a typical Squiggoth Howdah:

Structural Integrity: 25

Size: Enormous

Armour: Front 35, Side 25, Rear 10

Vehicle Traits: Open-Topped, Ramshackle, Rugged.

Crew: 1 Ork to guide the Squiggoth.

Carrying Capacity: 10 Orks inside the Howdah, up to 12 more hanging on the outside, or 20 Orks on the inside and 24 on the outside for a Gargantuan Squiggoth's Howdah.

Weapons: Fixed supa-lobba (Front-Facing; 30–200m; S/–/–; 4d10 X; Pen 5; Clip 1; Reload Full; Blast [10], Concussive [6], Inaccurate, Indirect, Unreliable), pintle-mounted big shootas (2 Left Facing, 2 Right Facing; 120m; –/–/10; 2d10+5 I; Pen 2; Clip 120; Reload Full; Inaccurate, Unreliable).

Optional Weapons: Additionally, Squiggoth Howdahs can have up to two of the following weapons:

- Hull-mounted kannon (Left Facing/Right Facing; 200m; S/–/–; 3d10+6 X; Pen 6; Clip 1; Reload Full; Blast [4]; Concussive [2], Inaccurate, Unreliable).
- Hull-mounted kill kannon (Left Facing/Right Facing; 100m; S/–/–; 3d10+8 X; Pen 8; Clip 1; Reload Full; Blast [8]; Concussive [3]; Inaccurate, Unreliable).

ORK CLANS

"Each of der clans 'as 'dere own partic'lar fing, see? 'Da Evil Sunz is fast an' loves 'dere trukks, 'da Deathskulls is a bunch of filchas, Bad Moons is snobby an' flashy, 'da Blood Axes is a pack of filthy 'umie luvvas, an' 'da Snakebites is jus' weird. Us Goffs is 'da biggest an' 'da greenest an' 'da meanest uv course, 'dats wot makes us 'da best bosses."

—Galthaza, Goff 'Ard Boy

Among Orkish society, such as it is, there are many different types of organization into which the Orks fit themselves and one another. The most basic Ork group is the Warband. This large mob of mixed, like-minded Orks is organised and led by particularly tough and brutal Orks called Warbosses. Warbands are further divided into mobs, which are smaller bands that are both social and fighting units, commonly grouped together by fighting style and led by the various Nobz and Bosses subservient to the Warboss. Warbands are typically part of a larger tribe, which can number in the hundreds, thousands, or even millions of Greenskins, and is led by a powerful Warlord. Cutting across such divisions, and informing much of Orkish thinking and "kulture," are the clans.

There are six clans in the Galaxy: the Bad Moons, the Deathskulls, the Blood Axes, the Goffs, the Evil Sunz, and the Snakebites. Each one represents a particular philosophy, and purports to exemplify true "Orkiness" and the dominance of one set of Orky virtues over another. Members of each clan gravitate toward certain roles, dictated by proclivity and natural talent.



GM ADVICE: USING BAD MOONS

Bad Moons are more likely to engage their foes at range than most other Orks, punctuating their raucous cackling with the fire of their long-ranged weapons.

STRATEGY

Bad Moons prefer to kill with their extravagant and deafening guns. Therefore, Bad Moons often have many Flash Gitz, who set up across the battlefield before the fighting starts in earnest and lay waste to anyone who comes into their fire lanes.

TACTICS

Bad Moons are usually capable melee combatants, but prefer to fight at range. As such, if they find themselves too close to use their guns effectively, Bad Moons sometimes reposition themselves to other convenient positions where they can continue firing their guns unimpeded.

BAD MOONS

"Yer rich! Yer flashy! Yer got a proppa Orky stoutness about yer belly and yer got more big, shooty, and ded 'ard gear 'dan any udder two Orks put togevvur. Now tell me 'dat ain't 'da life."

—Blazarg Gilttoof, Flash Git

The wealthiest and most ostentatious of the Ork clans, the Bad Moons are idle, venal Orks with a reputation for showing off and using their wealth and status like a club to bludgeon other, less fortunate Orks into line. The Orkish economy, such as it is, is based on "teef," which are literally Ork teeth, harvested from living and dead Orks. An Ork's teeth constantly grow, and those that are lost are quickly replaced, which means a nearly endless, if slowly produced, supply of currency. In such an economy, the Orks whose teeth grow the quickest are the wealthiest, and the teeth of the Bad Moons grow the fastest of all. Bad Moons are loud mouthed, tight-fisted braggarts who spend their teeth on only the finest things, from shootas and choppas to fancy clothes. In camp as well as in battle, they swagger about in the best armour that teef can buy, festooned in shiny bits of precious metals, gems, and other precious items of value. Bad Moons love to flaunt their wealth and style, and festoon themselves with the best loot. Their weapons are of the highest quality, gilded, destructive, and above all incredibly loud, and their vehicles are the loudest and gaudiest around. Bosses and Nobz of the Bad Moons clan are well-known as aficionados of kustom Battlewagons, which are huge, heavily armed, flashy vehicles designed to carry an entire mob along with all of its Gretchin, Snotlings, Squigs, and any other gubbins they can squeeze in.

The wealthiest, most well-heeled Bad Moons become Flash Gits. Though they are not unique to this Clan, many Bad Moons aspire to such Orky opulence, and these Orks with more teef than sense who are absolutely addicted to loud, flashy, highly customised weapons. Strutting around with expensive Snazzguns and Kustom Shootas, Flash Gits tend to have a "style over substance" mindset that appeals to

the greedy Bad Moons. While all Flash Gits are known to be arrogant, conniving, treacherous scum with a decidedly mercenary and “un-Orky” mindset, those from the Bad Moons clan are considered the worst of all.

If there is a downside to their wealth, it is the fact that while they have access to more teef and better loot than the average Ork, it is also incredibly easy to separate them from said wealth. All it takes is a bigger, tougher Ork to come along and smash a Bad Moons’ teeth out of his head to make a serious dent in their cash flow. This is seen as right, proper, and fair by all Orks, even Bad Moons, as the violent “might makes right, biggest is best” part of Orkish society balances out the otherwise constantly expanding wealth available to Bad Moons.

Though they do live to acquire wealth and material possessions, the Bad Moons do serve an important function within Ork society. Bad Moons make excellent merchants and money lenders. They know the value of any item at a glance, and with a quick study of an individual, they can discern exactly how much that individual is willing to pay for something. Always eager to acquire new luxuries, haggling Bad Moons are a fixture in any Ork gathering where goods and services are being exchanged.

Bad Moons prefer flashy and gaudy colours in their liveries, with a heavy emphasis on yellow, gold, and red. Their clan sigil is a snarling yellow crescent moon over a black sunburst on a yellow banner. Their banners are often chased with black and white check, embroidered with threads of gold, and encrusted with glittery, shiny bitz. These Orks prefer a posh and refined lifestyle, at least by Ork standards. Instead of rushing in to melee combat immediately like many of their brethren, they sometimes hang well back, firing their deadly snazzguns into the fray while their mobs of Gretchin slaves wade into the enemy ranks to do the dirty work, with tooth and claw and choppa.

Clan Bonus: Orks of the Bad Moons Clan gain the Commerce (Int), Deceive (Fel), and Sleight of Hand (Ag) Skills at the Trained Rank and gain the Storm of Iron Talent. Further, all of their weapons and armour count as being of Good or Best Craftsmanship (at the GM’s discretion). These are in addition to all other Ork Traits, Talents, and bonuses found on pages 363 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook.

BLOOD AXES

“Eh, don’t pay ‘dem no mind, ‘dem uvver Boyz is just jealous. We was ‘da first ta meet ‘da ‘umies, and it was us what learned ‘da best way ‘a tradin’ wit’ ‘em an’ krumpin’ ‘em before ‘dat lot evva knew how ta use a shoota. ‘Dey wouldn’t know kunnin’ if it bit ‘em in da face.”

—Halgaz Darksneeka, Blood Axe Kommando

Orks from the Blood Axe clan have the most frequent interaction with the Imperium of Mankind, and through their long and mostly acrimonious acquaintance with the humans, they have developed skills and abilities that cause other clans to look at them askance. Considered untrustworthy by their fellow Orks due to their peculiar ways, these Orks put a greater emphasis on “cunning and tactics than on the typical brute force approach favoured by other Greenskins. Blood



Axes often trade instead of steal, parley instead of bellow, sneak instead of charging headlong into the withering fire of their enemies, and even retreat instead of dying in a heap with nothing to show for their effort. In addition to their decidedly un-Orky tactics, they have been known to fight for the Imperium as mercenaries, taking their pay in coin and materiel instead of teef. Some have even taken to the stars as Freebootas, where they split their time between piracy, raiding, and honest trade. They are every bit as dangerous in battle as their less sophisticated cousins, perhaps even more so thanks to their high level of innate cunning, which allows them to think around problems. In combat, they use battlefield tactics closer to those of a professional army as opposed to the more usual Ork tide of violence, using moderately organized squads instead of mobs and employing basic tactics like enfilading fire, feints, staggered advances, and even the occasional clever ruse. The Warbosses who rise up from the Blood Axe ranks tend to have a greater grasp of

big picture strategy than those from other clans, and some of the most well-planned and well-executed Waaaghs! in Imperial history have had a Blood Axe at their head.

Among their many strange behaviours, perhaps the most confounding to their enemies are their use of stealth and camouflage, and their proclivity for clandestine warfare. Blood Axes see little worth in going through all the effort of making a “kunnin’ plan” only to be gunned down like a fool before it can even be executed, and their approach to combat is more circumspect than others. In fact, along with great Warbosses, many Ork Kommandos come from the Blood Axe clan. While not perhaps as stealthy or as well-trained as those special forces operatives of the Imperium, Eldar, or Tau, they are still brutally effective. It is their use of obfuscation, misdirection, and plain sneakiness that has given them an unsavoury reputation among others of their race. They are roundly mocked by members of other clans that view them as cowardly scumbags, especially the Goffs. The Blood Axes care little for this derision, however. Secure in the knowledge that they alone know how to make war on humans the proper way, and understandably smug in their clan’s legacy of leadership and destruction, Blood Axes take these insults in stride, either having a good laugh and walking off or having a good laugh, knocking all of the offender’s teeth out of his head, and walking off that much richer.

Blood Axes prefer muted colours for their clothing and gear, with black and green being predominant, along with numerous patterns and colours of camouflage, both self-made and looted from enemy forces. While they alone among the Ork clans use camouflage, the Blood Axes do not understand why it works, only that it does. This means that a group of Boyz might have a dizzying array of different camouflage patterns among them, typically none of which are appropriate for the environment in which they are fighting. It matters little, however, because no matter what kind of camouflage they wear, and no matter what branches, bits of moss, scraps of metal, and the like, that they strap, pin, nail, or glue to themselves, the camouflage keeps them hidden as long as they think it keeps them hidden. The Blood Axes’ banner features crossed axes with bloody blades in a dark green circle on a black banner. Along with the axe sigil, their banners often feature other icons extolling their cunning and sneakiness.

Clan Bonus: Orks of the Blood Axes clan increase their Strength and Perception Characteristics by +5. They also gain the Common Lore (Imperium) (Int), Scrutiny (Per), and Stealth (Ag) Skills at the Trained Rank. These are in addition to all other Ork Traits, Talents, and bonuses found on pages 363 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook.

GM ADVICE: USING BLOOD AXES

Blood Axes use stealth to reach their enemies, denying them the chance to fire and gutting them before they know the battle has begun.

STRATEGY

Unlike most Orks, Blood Axes actively work to avoid being shot while running screaming across the battlefield. As such, Blood Axes frequently ambush their foes, using dense terrain such as jungle, ruins, or other enclosed areas to close to melee combat before their enemies can react. Blood Axes also employ decoy units from time to time, drawing the enemy force out of position to expose vulnerabilities that they can exploit. If badly outnumbered, Blood Axes sometimes retreat, regrouping and striking again if the opportunity presents itself.

TACTICS

Blood Axes prefer to fight their enemies in hand-to-hand combat, and prefer to get there alive. They often opt for a silent (or, at least, relatively more silent) approach, scattering back into cover if they meet exceptionally impressive resistance.

EVIL SUNZ

“Evil Sunz like two fings most: Goin’ fast and krumpin’ stuff. Dat’s why we’s ‘da best at it!”

—Lugnut of the Evil Sunz

Put simply, the Orks of the Evil Sunz clan are addicted to speed. They are among the most daring drivers and pilots in the galaxy, and the prowess of an experienced Evil Sun in the cockpit or behind the wheel is easily the match for any Imperial Navy pilot or Imperial Guard tank driver. Natural pilots, Evil Sunz are irresistibly attracted to almost any fast and loud vehicle they can fit themselves inside. Evil Sunz have a notoriously short attention span, even for an Ork, favour speed and clamour above all else, and are constantly in motion. Even in those rare times when they are afoot, the Orks of the Evil Sunz are a red-wrapped riot of bellowing, laughing, fidgeting, brawling, high-strung energy, always on the lookout for an outlet. In combat, they careen around the battlefield running down infantry, ramming other vehicles, ploughing through fortifications. They cause as much damage as possible in one area, then suddenly wheel about and charge off to another part of the battlefield to cause more mechanised mayhem.

Evil Sunz are among some of the more naturally mechanically-adept Greenskins, especially when it comes to their beloved trukks, buggies, and battlewagons. The thundering roar of a powerful engine, the whine of a spinning supercharger, the clatter of tracks, and the squeal of tyres are the loveliest music, and the smell of burning fuel and burnt rubber is headier than the sweetest fragrance to these adrenaline junkies. They are forever modifying and tinkering with their vehicles, mounting ever larger engines and increasingly more powerful weapons. Their love of speed leads most of the

Evil Sunz to join the Kult of Speed, a group of Orks who call themselves "Speed Freaks." These barnstorming pilots and drivers love the challenge and danger of high-speed, seat-of-the-pants driving, where the slightest mistake means certain death (typically a quick, violent, screaming death punctuated by a huge fireball).

Evil Sunz livery is predominantly red, trimmed with red and white checks. The use of red paint is a tradition stemming from an ancient Orkish rite of slathering one's mount with the blood of one's enemies. While blood is still used among the older, more traditional Evil Sunz, in modern usage the blood has given way to thick, bright red or crimson paint, the application of which has become a practical superstition. Among the Evil Sunz and the members of the Kult of Speed, it is a well-known fact that "da red onez go fasta!" Indeed, it seems that any vehicle painted red actually has its speed significantly increased, a fact that baffles Imperial observers. When charging into battle, the Evil Sunz display their banner on every trukkk, bike, battlewagon, and even on their voidships. It features a bright red Ork face leering out of an ornate black sunburst on a bone coloured banner, and its arrival on the field of battle signals the onslaught of frenzied cacophony that is an Evil Sunz assault.

Clan Bonus: Orks of the Evil Sunz clan increase their Agility Characteristic by +10. They also gain the Operate (Surface) (Ag) and Operate (Aeronautica) (Ag) Skills at the Trained Rank, and the Hotshot Pilot Talent. Further, any vehicle piloted by a member of the Evil Sunz has its Tactical Speed increased by 5 metres and its Cruising Speed increased by 10 kph. These are in addition to all other Ork Traits, Talents, and bonuses found on pages 363 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook.



GM ADVICE: USING EVIL SUNZ

Evil Sunz prefer to attack with vehicles, riding to war at the greatest possible velocity on trukks, warbikes, and battlewagons.

STRATEGY

Evil Sunz strike directly and savagely, relying entirely on their raw, blistering speed to give them the edge in their engagements rather than subtlety or stealth. They frequently drive their vehicles straight into the heart of an enemy formation in the hopes of causing it to collapse entirely under their unforeseen ferocity.

TACTICS

These speed-loving Orks usually travel the most direct path between themselves and their enemies (preferably on a fast vehicle while hollering wildly). If their initial assault does not shatter an enemy formation, they sometimes speed past and gather velocity for another pass.

DEATHSKULLS

"Oi, wor's 'dis, 'den? A whole pack a 'umie shootaz just lyin' 'ere in 'da dust wit' no one usin' 'em? 'Dat's a shame, 'dat is. 'Ere, 'elp me move 'dese bodies so's we can give 'dese shootas a proppa home."

—Bilesnik Litefinga, Deathskull Loota

Inveterate looters, scavengers, borrowers, and scroungers, the Orks of the Deathskull clan have a well-deserved reputation as thieves and filchers. Never ones to pay their fair share or spend teef when an item can be spirited away with a modicum of effort, the Deathskulls are nearly as mistrusted among fellow Orks as their Blood Axe cousins. Whereas the notoriety of the Blood Axes is completely without merit, the Deathskulls deserve their scabrous reputations to an Ork. When not looting bodies on the battlefield (both Ork and non-Ork), they can be found either fighting or dickering among themselves for scavenged items, or stealing everything that isn't nailed down from one another and any other Ork in sight. Some of what they steal they trade or sell to other Orks, or turn into upgraded wargear, but the majority of their loot they simply hoard. Anything "dat might come in 'andy lata" is put aside and kept in one or more hidey holes, from useful items like weapons and armour to trinkets, lucky charms, and strange gubbins of unknown use or provenance.

This knack for knowing the value of junk and what (if any) use it might be, combined with a natural technical aptitude, would make the Deathskulls the pre-eminent engineers of the Orkish race if not for their drastically short attention span, which typically extends only as long as it takes to steal an item. Despite their flighty, scheming nature, the Deathskulls do turn out an inordinate number of Mekboys from their ranks, as their obsession with an object typically expires the moment it is within their possession. Indeed, Meks hold a place of high status among the clan, as it is these canny Orks who bodge together copious amounts of scrap and gubbins into the deadly weapons, tanks, buggies,



GM ADVICE: USING DEATHSKULLS

DEATHSKULLS

Deathskulls are superstitious and covetous in the extreme, and believe that various talismans and charms allow them to manipulate their fate upon the battlefield.

STRATEGY

Deathskulls often possess unexpected weapons, vehicles, and war machines that they have looted, and the sudden appearance of a particularly potent piece of machinery can sometimes turn the tide of a battle. Whether this is part of a clever ruse or mere good fortune brought on by their copious use of blue pigments, as the Deathskulls seem to think, depends entirely on the perspective of the viewer.

TACTICS

Deathskulls sometimes try to pilfer weapons, machinery, and other loot, even in the midst of battle. They might sometimes even attempt to steal a particularly interesting vehicle or weapon without destroying it. Deathskull squads are often accompanied by Weirdboyz (see page 368 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook), whose odd psychic abilities bolster their natural close-combat prowess further.

and other assorted wargear with which the Deathskulls are so enamoured. While they can create anything imaginable from the junk brought to them by their brethren, Deathskull Meks are perhaps best known for the incredibly dangerous kombi-weapons they create from the piles of mismatched weapons they tend to have lying around their workshops. The Deathskulls produce an inordinate number of Lootas, and Lootas from other clans are welcomed with open arms by the Deathskulls as brothers in arms. Deathskulls also make use of numerous looted enemy vehicles, and it is not a rare occurrence to see an Ork armoured column composed not only of trukks and battlewagons, but of looted Lemman Russ tanks, Rhino and Predator tanks, and other esoteric armoured fighting vehicles with numerous Orkish “improvements” bolted on and slathered in barbarous paint schemes and iconography. In longer engagements, Baneblades, the remains of heavy grav tanks, and even the occasional Titan has been seen wearing the horned skull of the Deathskulls. Only the Evil Sunz enjoy using fighting vehicles more than the Deathskulls, who love modifying vehicles and stealing the great war machines of all and sundry when possible.

Deathskull livery is dark blue and black with white highlights. Incredibly superstitious, even more so than the adrenaline junkies of the Evil Sunz, the Deathskulls consider blue to be a lucky colour that protects from harm and misfortune. Everything possessed by the Deathskulls, from arms, armour, and vehicles to mundane workaday gear, is slathered in numerous shades of blue in an attempt to court fate. They even paint their proud green skin in shades of blue to ward off attacks, accidents, wounds, and illness. Their banner is

a bone-coloured horned skull on a midnight blue flag with white accents. The pole upon which they hoist their colours is typically made of the lashed-together skulls and bones of their enemies. Like every other strange idea espoused by Ork kind, or confounding piece of equipment carried about their persons, painting an item or Ork blue does seem to have an effect. The Deathskulls are much luckier than other Orks, and their equipment operates demonstrably better.

Clan Bonus: Orks of the Deathskull clan increase their Agility and Fellowship Characteristics by +5. They also gain the Deceive (Fel), Stealth (Ag), and Tech-Use (Int) Skills at the Trained Rank, and a +5 bonus to any Test involving a weapon, vehicle, or item of wargear that is painted blue (as it is lucky!). Elite- and Master-level Deathskull Orks also gain the Touched by the Fates (1) Trait (or increase the value of this Trait by 1 if they already possess it). These are in addition to all other Ork Traits, Talents, and bonuses found on pages 363 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook.

SNAKEBITES

“Live off ‘da land. Go to find war. Kill wot comes close. ‘Da old ways iz ‘da best ways.”

—Grodd, Snakebite Runtherd

Within Ork “kulture,” the Snakebites clan is seen as a pack of backwards throwbacks, which speaks volumes about their behaviour and tribal customs. Known for their thick, leathery hides and their uncouth practices (even to Orky eyes). Among their many curious traditions, the one that stands out the most to other Orks and gives the clan their name is the tradition of using live, venomous creatures in their coming of age ritual. This strange rite of passage involves a young Ork baiting an extremely venomous serpent into biting him, then sucking the venom out of the wound to prove his toughness. Through this ritual, and subsequent bites received when handling venomous creatures, the Snakebites build up a natural immunity to all but the most potent venoms.



GM ADVICE: USING SNAKEBITES

Snakebites eschew technology, instead preferring to enjoy their kills the old-fashioned way: as brutally as possible.

STRATEGY

Snakebites often drive their beasts to war before them, counting on overwhelming their enemies with Squigs and even Squiggoths so that their Boyz can reach the foe. Their Runtherds work tirelessly to keep these creatures and the clan's Grots in line on the battlefield.

TACTICS

Snakebites are extremely tough, and rely on their innate resilience and the distraction of countless charging Orks, Squigs, and Grots to keep their adversaries from cutting them down with fire as they close to melee. Once they arrive in close quarters, the savagery of the Snakebites usually carries the day.

In fact, Snakebites are never without a lethal serpent, arachnid, or other small beast about their person when moving from planet to planet, just in case the world to which they are travelling has a disappointing paucity of venomous fauna.

Along with their known proclivity for venomous snake handling, the Snakebites have a reputation as the finest breeders of Grots and Squigs among all the clans. Their Runtherds breed the fiercest, toughest, and most easily biddable stock, and their sprawling, pungent menageries are a credit to the art of breeding. Indeed, so great is their prowess at breeding that only the Snakebites possess the skill and knowledge to breed, and mix the special feed for, the terrible Squiggoth. These massive Squiggoths and ferocious Grots come in extremely handy in battle, as the Snakebites favour a fast, savage, frontal assault backed up with Grots armed with all manner of crude melee weapons. These swarming tactics serve the Snakebites well against more technologically advanced foes, and many an Imperial Guard squad has met its end beneath a massive avalanche of frenzied Orks, snapping, hissing Squigs, and frantically slashing Grots.

Snakebites prefer muted earth tones for their liveries, with an emphasis on greens and browns with dusty yellow and white highlights. Their clan sigil is a venomous serpent, typically green on a yellow banner, and the like to festoon themselves in venomous serpents, hides, and furs as they trundle exuberantly into battle.

Clan Bonus: Orks of the Snakebite clan increase the value of their Unnatural Toughness Trait by 1. Additionally, they gain the Natural Armour (3) and Brutal Charge Traits. They also gain the Frenzy and Resistance (Poisons) Talents. These are in addition to all other Ork Traits, Talents, and bonuses found on pages 363 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook.

GOFFS

"Dai's enuf outta you, git. You watch yer mouf around yer betters, an' don't be talkin' while grown folkz 'as got things ta say."

—Borzarl Gitstompa, Goff Mekboy

Toughness, meanness, and savagery are the traits most valued among the Ork clans. Indeed, an Ork only needs to be big, tough, and ambitious enough to seize power to rise through the ranks. In this society where might makes right, the mightiest are the great Orks of the Goff clan. The biggest of the Greenskin clans, both in height and bulk, and unmatched in their savagery, the Goffs are the archetypal Ork. They are the Ork that comes to mind when the Greenskins are discussed in the camps and war rooms of the Imperial Guard and the echoing halls of the Departmento Munitorum, and the monster with which parents all across the Imperium threaten their disobedient children. Their size, savagery, and ambition make them natural leaders among the Orks, and among their ranks the Goffs count some of the most infamous and brutal Ork Warbosses in history. Brutes of great renown, including the legendary Prophet of the Waaagh!, Ghazghkull Mag Uruk Thraka, have worn the black and white livery of the Goff clan, and most of the successful smaller warbands in the galaxy are led by these ill-tempered bullies. Goffs are also stiff and humourless in the extreme, which puts them at odds with many of their more easy-going Greenskin brethren.

Perhaps their defining characteristic, aside from their generally bad attitudes, is their sheer size. Goffs are longer of arm and broader across the shoulder than nearly any other Ork. With their reach and their immense strength and endurance, they can out-swing, out-punch, and outlast all but the toughest foes, such as the Battle-Brothers of the Adeptus Astartes, making them powerful and incredibly capable brawlers and melee fighters. Cross-grained and much given to casual brutality, Goffs are always spoiling for a fight. When not directly engaged with their enemies, they fall to fighting amongst themselves or antagonising other Ork clans. In battle, they rely mainly on infantry, and prefer an up-close and personal fighting style.

Goffs eschew the misdirection and subterfuge that certain other clans employ, and, Gork and Mork forbid, sneaking about in the trees like a coward. This is all largely due to their ingrained notions of how things should be in Waaagh!, namely, a full-frontal assault and tearing apart the enemy with tooth, claw, and choppa. As such, huge, snarling mobs are the calling card of the Goff clan, and their armies tend to be larger and more homogeneous than those of other clans. While they make decent battlefield strategists, their tactics lack any kind of subtlety, and begin and end largely with the time-honoured "screaming charge directly into the enemy guns" manoeuvre. Their preferred weapons for this kind of action are the ubiquitous slugga, often with some kind of bayonet or other melee attachment, and the heaviest, choppiest, wickedest choppas they can carry. Goffs also love a good explosion, and typically carry about their persons a clutch of stikkbombs for lobbing into trenches and clearing out bunkers and pillboxes.

Thanks to their bull-headed view of battlefield tactics and their love of close quarters battle, the majority of Goff forces tend to be Sluggaboyz and 'Ard Boys. Occasionally carried into battle on trukks and dismounted for their final charges, but mostly content to walk wherever the fight is, these powerful infantry fighters are supported by the usual groups of Weirdboyz, Mekboyz, Runtherds, Killa Kans, and the occasional Deff Dread. Goff Nobz frequently don mega-armour, as they see it as the best way to get right in the middle of the fighting to dispense some violence on their enemies.

Goff livery is predominantly black with white highlights. The sombre monochrome of their colours is considered, among their ranks, the only proper attire for a grim and serious Ork warrior. Their clan symbol is a black bull's head over a red circle on a black banner, often with a black and white chequer pattern around the edges for contrast.



GM ADVICE: USING GOFFS

Goffs are brutally straightforward in battle. They are the biggest and most ferocious Orks, and are a terrifying sight to behold when they strike as a ceaseless tide of Green violence.

STRATEGY

Goffs believe that the viability of any plan is in the execution (namely, the execution of anyone with the foolish gall to stand before them). As such, they tend to surge across the field of war in vast, crushing waves of Boyz and Nobz, all following their Warboss.

TACTICS

For Goffs, strategy and tactics are largely indistinct (even more than for other Orks). Anything that stands before them must be smashed, and anything less than immediately bludgeoning a challenger to death with the objects on hand is decidedly un-Orky.

They occasionally repeat this chequer pattern on their armour, wargear, and vehicles, but this is as far as any self-respecting Goff warrior goes in the way of ornamentation. The very idea of camouflage is anathema to the Goffs, for they consider its use both cowardly and an affront to Gork and Mork. In addition, the use of bright colours and flashy bits of chrome or polished metals as ornamentation for clothes, armour, and wargear is frowned upon, and the use of such fripperies is sure to get an offending Goff a savage tongue-lashing from a surly elder. The only kind of ornamentation countenanced among the Goffs are bighorns, massive curved horns cut from the heads of dangerous beasts and worn on helmets as a sign of the Ork's utter fearlessness and brute resilience.

Clan Bonus: Goffs gain a +5 bonus to their Strength and Weapon Skill Characteristics, improve their Intimidate Skill to the Experienced level, and gain the Crippling Strike, Crushing Blow, Unarmed Warrior, and Unarmed Master Talents.

These are in addition to all other Ork Traits, Talents, and bonuses found on pages 363 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook.



THE
SHADOW
WALKERS



- THE DARK ELДАР
-
- FORCES OF THE
KABAL
-
- KROOT
MERCENARIES
-
- KROOT FORCES
-
- TRAITORS AND
HERETICS
-
- FORCES OF CHAOS



Chapter V, Section I (The Insidious Eldar), Sub-Section I (Introduction)

Commissariat Memo MCCXVI to Troopers in the Spinward Front:

As the Departamento Munitorum has found that dwelling excessively on the actions of xenos is perilous to the soul, all discussions pertaining to recent actions on Kalf are henceforth forbidden under Morale Code Sigma-Alpha-CXXXVI. Please report any such discussions to your Commissar for appropriate review. Note that refusing to disclose such discussions is forbidden under Morale Code Sigma-Beta XXXV, and may be punishable by death and/or transfer to a penal legion or servitor facility, depending on the content of any known or suspected undisclosed discussions.

ON THE SUPPOSED DIFFERENCES AMONG THE CAPRICIOUS ELДАР

Certain scholars of the Imperium have posited that Eldar, like humans, might differ by their regional origins. The Departamento Munitorum has found no compelling evidence that this is the case, and refers all troopers with further questions on the matter to their regiment's Commissar.

REGARDING THE COWARDICE OF THE RAIDER

Eldar are piratical by nature, preying upon the weak. This is because they dare not face the full might of the Emperor's forces. As such, they almost invariably strike at unguarded targets, fleeing while laying down panicked fire when met with stiff resistance. The Eldar lack the fighting spirit of the Imperial Guard as well as its discipline, and often break and run after suffering even a single casualty.

They're trying to lure you in. Do not pursue!

Eldar lack constitution both spiritual and physical, and so they are most dangerous when they have the element of surprise for without it, they cannot hope to triumph over the righteous. Therefore, troopers should remain ever vigilant. Neglecting patrol duties, failing to post sentries, forgetting prayers, and other such moral failings can allow the cowardly xenos to extend their vile influence, and thus should be reported to a regimental Commissar.

HOW BEST TO UPLIFT A POPULACE SUFFERING

THE SCOURGE OF ELДАР RAIDS

The worlds of the Spinward Front are periodically beset by Eldar pirates who practice various atrocities upon their populations before fleeing into the night. Though this scourge might be seen as the God-Emperor's wrath upon these worlds for the treachery of Duke Severus, the heresy of the Severan Dominate does not give the Eldar the right to plunder planets belonging to the Imperium of Mankind. Thus, when serving on worlds that have been pillaged by these xenos fiends, remember to remind the populace of the God-Emperor's infinite mercy in sending His Imperial Guard to free them from the oppression of both Duke Severus and marauding creatures of the night. So long as their faith holds, the Emperor and his Imperial Guard stand with them, and shall always.

The spikes aren't just for show. Don't touch.

The armour is sharp, but it's not very thick. The problem is hitting them. Lead your shots as much as you can.



These guns are poisoned. Try to get extra de-tox doses before fighting Eldar.

There's never anybody left. There are just corpses.

CHAPTER III: THE SHADOW WALKERS

"The darkness is ours to stride. It is our domain, where the pale light sanity flickers and dies. Follow if you dare..."

—Idris Cwn'Anwn, Commorite Raider

Though the Spinward Front is dominated by the savage conflicts between the Imperial Guard, the Severan Dominate, and Waaagh! Grimtoof, there are more foes still lurking on the fringes of the larger confrontations. Some of these are opportunistic predators, striking at targets left vulnerable by the cataclysmic battles. Others have more sinister purposes, and seek to use the confusion brought on by constant warfare to reclaim ancient secrets of terrifying power, conduct unspeakable rituals, or undermine the Imperium's grip on the Spinward Front.

This chapter contains cruel Dark Eldar raiders, carnivorous Kroot mercenaries, and wicked champions of Chaos, including Chaos Space Marines. The profiles, strategies, and tactics in this chapter can be used alongside the enemies in the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook (see **Chapter XI: Adversaries and NPCs**, starting on page 350), letting GMs wield the full might of these forces.

THE DARK ELДАР

"There are powers in the galaxy that do not know virtue, mercy, or honest worth. They would tear down the Emperor's light if they could, for no other reason than to see it go out. Men of the Guard! Remember that the Emperor's light will never falter! Remember that no power in the galaxy rivals Him on Earth! Do not fear the threats and taunts of these marauders, for they utter them knowing the true fear that is the Emperor's Wrath! No force can take this fortress whi—!"

—Final words of Colonel Frederic Yorke of the 199th Argosi Heavy Infantry, at the Agony of Ironwall Garrison

The dreaded Dark Eldar comprise only a tiny sliver of the foes that the Imperium faces in the Spinward Front. Few troopers have the misfortune of encountering them on the fields of war, and fewer still live to tell the tale.

The scarcity such unfortunates who have faced the Dark Eldar in battle only makes the prevalence of the dark rumours that haunt many Imperial Guard camps all the more disquieting. Stories of savage, slender killers appearing out of the shadow and flaying entire camps alive, tales of feathered horrors descending from the sky on wings of night, and whispers of things more terrible still pervade the Spinward Front. Despite the best efforts of the Commissariat, such pernicious rumours refuse to die, for something incomprehensibly awful does indeed lurk in the shadow fringes of the Spinward Front.

AREAS OF ACTIVITY IN THE FRONT

Dark Eldar raiding forces are active throughout the whole of the Spinward Front, including those areas thought secured and fortified by the other major factions. Their xenos technology allows them a singular disregard for what the other races might consider their front lines, causing no end of consternation among those on the Lord Marshal's staff charged with securing the Imperium's territories. Certain worlds seem to suffer from their attentions more commonly than others, but Lord Marshal Ghanzorik is reluctant to gamble his forces on the word of an intelligence corps that is still scraping to make up for the failures at Avitohol.

The Treacherous Sands

The deserts of Kalf have long carried a reputation for mysterious disappearances and death, with boundaries that shift suddenly to swallow entire villages at the change of the wind. When reports of xenos raiders striking from the dunes reached High Command, it initially dismissed them as idle chatter of soldiers. High Command revised its thinking on the matter when an entire infantry regiment vanished without a trace from a fortified staging ground located in the world's temperate zone.

Several regiments newly arrived to the staging area were diverted from their intended destination to investigate, and managed to bring a sizeable Dark Eldar force to battle in a desperate assault that crippled both sides. Further reconnaissance has indicated that a number of other raiding parties are still operating on Kalf or in the surrounding



systems, although they have become more circumspect in their activities. Although a battlegroup of four full regiments is now operating out of the Kalf staging area, efforts to root out the raiders have been thoroughly unsuccessful. Casualties mount daily due to hostile conditions, vicious wildlife, and clashes with the enemy, and there is rarely enough evidence left in any case to indicate which foe was responsible.

The Imperium's intelligence has tentatively identified the xenos force on Kalf as part of the Haemonculus coven calling itself the Eyeless Watchers, and its leader as the fleshcrafter Tevriel Vektesh. Highly classified reports have linked Vektesh and his coven to atrocities across the Segmentum, but his covert raids on Kalf bear little resemblance to the brutal displays for which he is known. Reports of his warriors disengaging despite clear advantages, or of disproportionate assaults on the world's least significant backwaters continue to mystify strategic planners. It is becoming apparent that the coven is working towards a specific goal on Kalf, one which their twisted master values above slave-taking or pride.

Recent rumours of massive excavations in the deepest wastes have begun to draw attention from the Lord Marshal himself, despite his distrust of the intelligence corps, and he has assigned several xenosavants attached to his staff to investigate any possible link between Kalf and certain sites plundered by the Children of Thorns. Other members of his command staff are not privy to the rationale behind this interest, and a few have begun to speculate behind closed doors about a possible Inquisitorial interest.

Twisted Hearts and Twisted Flesh

Imperial Guard troopers tend to have little information on the world of Sisk, but rumours abound nonetheless. These outlandish stories are sometimes fed by the return of a regiment from a tour of duty guarding the planet from some vaguely-hinted threat. These veterans are invariably made tight-lipped by their reluctance to revisit the matter of the planet's dank miasma, or the loping charges of the mutant warbands that haunt its wastes. The recent return of the 75th Barsapine Infantry was marked by curiously different behaviour, with the veterans murmuring drunken tales about "pale, putrescent harvests" by cruel and graceful warriors. Brutal purges by the Commissariat eventually silenced those who could not learn to silence themselves, but the rumours that erupted from around the illicit distilleries the 75th had visited could not be quieted so easily. Eventually, a Commissarial edict was issued, mandating that those spreading such tales would be transferred to a penal legion stationed upon Sisk itself, and the tales are now only issued in hushed and hurried whispers when they circulate at all.

Most of the stories being swapped on the topic no longer have any ties to either Sisk or the 75th, having long since traded out their limited factual content for fearful embellishment. A few regiments, especially those stationed alongside the Barsapinian Guardsmen, have some limited knowledge of the truth: the Dark Eldar have come to Sisk. However, those with what is perhaps the best grasp of the situation are not among the 75th Barsapine, their comrades, or even among the offices of the Commissariat. In distant systems across the Spinward Front, mutants bearing the telltale genetic deviations of Sisk's strains have been herded into battle as disposable shock troops by Dark Eldar raiding forces. The raids have been attributed to the Cult of the Twisted Knife, one of the xenos' "Wych Cult." Reports filtering their way up the chain of command are beginning to indicate a link between the slave-warriors of the Twisted Knife and the suppressed activities upon Sisk.

Although strategic planners in the Lord Marshal's office have long been aware of the predilection among these xenos forces for enslaved warbeasts, the idea of this unholy collaboration between mutant and alien has deeply unsettled certain elements of the command structure. Those with the fortitude to probe deeper into the matter have found reports from other warzones confirming the matter, as the Twisted Knife appears to favour warped and aberrant creatures in their efforts. Some in High Command are pushing for a full military and naval quarantine of Sisk, but most remain sceptical that such an effort would impede the Dark Eldar's efforts enough to warrant the investment of resources—at least for the time being.

Glimpses of Terror

For every confirmed sighting of Dark Eldar raiders, there are a dozen shadowy legends and a hundred mysteriously desolate settlements. Although the protocols of the Imperial Guard dictate that all engagements be reported to High Command, there are always battlefields without survivors capable of providing coherent details. The true strength of the Dark Eldar threat in the Spinward Front is nearly impossible to properly assess. The incredible speed with which they can travel between warzones means the same force can engage in numerous conflicts across the Front with impossible haste, or abandon the entire Sector for a fight halfway across the galaxy. The Departamento Munitorum is currently investigating over a dozen worlds for possible evidence of Dark Eldar activity or interest, with dozens more archived as leads to be followed upon receiving sufficient manpower. The worlds of the Spinward Front are far from tame, however, and not every mystery is hidden behind a Kabalite war-mask.

Among the circumstances marked for suspicion are the unusual number of disappearances that have been reported in regiments recently dispatched to the world of Cyclopea to organize tithing. Subversive or criminal elements of the populace are the official suspects, but many officers privately doubt whether the locals could eliminate so many of their troops without being detected. Though the local legends of inhuman laughter that echoes about the planet's monoliths have received no external confirmation, at least one regimental commander has begun drilling his men to deal with the possibility of an Eldar raid.

Incidents drawing more open and direct attention have been reported on Ohmsworld, where the brutally dismembered corpses of missing patrols and reconnaissance platoons have been found scattered about the mist-shrouded plains. These forces are essential to continued operations under the limited visibility the planet's atmosphere allows, but the mounting casualty rate has begun to take its toll. Attempts to safeguard these operations with additional troops or to reinforce them via rapid-response units have thus far been unsuccessful. The only hint at the killer comes from a panicked vox transmission sent by a Sentinel patrol, which warns only of "shadows that walk like men."

The most controversial of the reports under consideration comes from tribal legends among the barbaric tribes of Tethys. Amidst the moors and valleys of the northern continent, ancient legends have been passed down for generations about cruel fiends with skins of barbed metal and strange weapons that could defeat a whole tribe. These fiends have reportedly murdered or stolen away weak or isolated tribes throughout all of Tethys's history, and many details of the legends match the effects of Kabalite weaponry and tactics. While some of the Lord Marshal's advisors are convinced there is some connection between the world of Tethys and the goals of the Dark Eldar, most of High Command is dismissive of the legends of a backwards and isolated people.

INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER FACTIONS

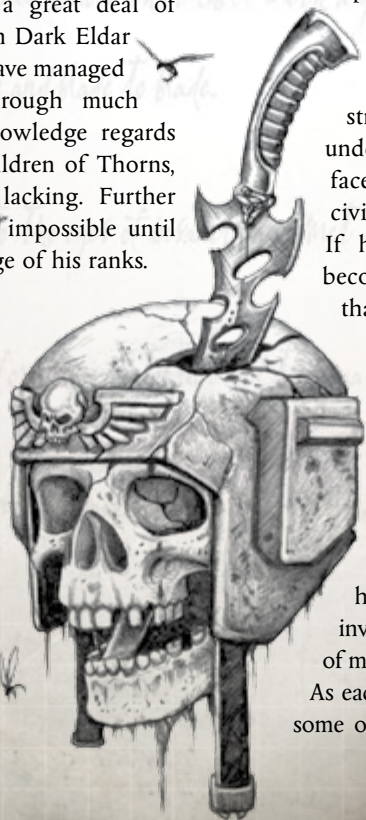
"Only a madman deals with the alien. Only a fool relies on the alien. Only the dead have trusted the alien, although the last may be deluded into claiming that they yet live."

—Lord Militant Tarkus Hol in his memoirs, *Observations on the Inevitability of War*

The Departamento Munitorum has had a great deal of difficulty gathering reliable intelligence on Dark Eldar activities in the Spinward Front, but they have managed to assemble a basic understanding through much painstaking effort. Even this limited knowledge regards only the xenos faction known as the Children of Thorns, as reliable reports on other forces are lacking. Further intelligence gathering will remain nearly impossible until such efforts recover from Ghanzorik's purge of his ranks.

INTERACTIONS WITH THE IMPERIUM

The Children of Thorns have shown themselves to be universally and unreservedly hostile to Imperial forces, and have been noted to seemingly prioritise targets of importance to the Imperium or the war effort over easier prey. Arguments are still being filed as to whether these attacks are in support of the Severan Dominate, or if they might be indicators of a deeper antipathy.



The Imperial Guard

According to the official reports issued by strategic analysts in the Departamento Munitorum, the Children of Thorns are considered a minor threat. Despite this, those with both the fortitude to wade through these dense documents and an inquiring frame of mind might wonder at the over-strength and heavily fortified garrisons placed throughout areas known to be of interest to this "minor threat." Behind closed doors, the contradiction takes on a new light, as top planners attempt to find a way to submit the Children to the crushing blows of massed Imperial Guard forces—an effort that has thus far been almost entirely futile.

Though there is not a single officer amongst the Lord Marshal's command structure who would admit to it, the standard doctrines of the Imperial Guard are singularly unsuited to warfare against a foe like the Dark Eldar. While the raids and lightning strikes typical of the breed can be stymied or driven back by fortified garrisons or well-manned defensive lines, there are not enough soldiers in the Imperium to fortify every possible target to the necessary degree. This uneven distribution inevitably leads to weak points in the defensive line, with supply posts and listening stations being crippled by lightning fast raids in preparation for a major assault. The officer commanding the defences is then left with the unenviable choice of holding his position while he is left blind and isolated, or weakening his main garrison to chase after an army of mocking phantoms. Whatever choice is made usually ends poorly, as devious war leaders of the Children of Thorns have learned to torture Guardsmen for information on their commander's strategic inclinations, and prepare accordingly. The Fall of Ursid Bastion may stand the ultimate example of this tactic, when the garrison commander led his offensive sally personally, only to be gunned down by his own seized defences when he returned empty-handed.

Matters only become more complicated when the Imperial Guard must contend with protecting a civilian population.

Expanding defensive perimeters to include every significant settlement is generally impossible to achieve, much less to include isolated or fringe-dwelling outposts. When raids begin striking at the defenceless populace ostensibly under the Imperium's protection, the garrison is faced with every previous problem, on top of civil unrest and potential drops in troop morale. If handled poorly, the agitated populace can become every bit as much a threat as the raiders that drove them to their panic.

Given the incredible difficulties posed by pitting the massed ranks of the Imperial Guard against such foes, the victories that they have claimed against their Kabalite foes stand as even greater testaments to the indomitable backbone of the Imperium's warriors. The officers who have commanded such victories can be found across a variety of regiments and hail from all manner of worlds, but they are invariably those who can bring a flexible frame of mind to bear on an ever-changing battlefield.

As each triumphant strategy is applied, it loses some of its potency, as the swift and devious

xenos adapt more easily than the dogmatic guardsmen. However, if there is one thing as bottomless as the reserves of the Imperial Guard, it is the arrogance of the Eldar race. The insane showmanship that drives much of Dark Eldar society can be exploited into a deadly weakness, one that becomes all the more vulnerable when their defeated leader is unable to admit his plan was flawed. Veteran commanders across the Spinward Front are learning how to bait the Children of Thorns into suicidal confrontations across a killing field only the Imperial Guard could provide. Unfortunately, it remains to be seen whether this tactical mastery can survive its pioneers, who have already become targeted for the twisted revenge of the Kabal's wicked and vindictive overlords.

Nightmare Raids

If the Dark Eldar are a threat and a terror to the trained soldiers of the Imperial Guard, then their effect on the helpless and superstitious populations of the Imperium at large is nearly beyond description. Though most worlds live in a sheltered ignorance of anything but the blessed truth of the Imperial Creed, some have seen this cherished veil of ignorance stripped away as their homes burn with lightless flames. Even what little knowledge of the xenos is allowed to the rank and file of the Imperial Guard is utterly forbidden to the civilian populace of Imperial worlds, a measure that keeps the faith and fervour of such populations burning strong with pride in humanity. When these foundational truths of their existence are stripped away, entire cities have been known to fall to a frenzy of madness and panic. For this reason, Guardsmen rarely find any time for celebration after a hard-won victory against Dark Eldar raiders, instead being put on immediate clean-up and containment duties to strip the battlefield of the signs of the xenos attack.

When settlements come into direct contact with the Dark Eldar, there are rarely any inhabitants left behind to bring their complaints, which often makes the matter of strategic significance only. However, finding the remnants of a once-thriving outpost to be home to nothing but empty houses and the unburied dead can pose a severe blow to a regiment's morale, sometimes impairing their fitness for duty to unacceptable degrees. However, the worst after effects of a Dark Eldar raid are, paradoxically, those that typically result from a successful intervention in defence of a civilian populace. When the civilians are told they have been saved with the mocking laughter of the raiders still echoing in their ears, and commanded to return to work before the streets are cleared of corpses, blame for their suffering is often transferred to the very soldiers whose intervention saved them from a fate worse than death.

Only the most diplomatically minded commanders are able to restore a raided settlement to anything resembling efficiency, and many have found it more expedient for Imperial interests to raze the area at the first sign of unrest, and place a call for new settlers or colonists to take the place of the survivors. No matter how cunning or ruthless the solution, such efforts often leave weak links behind in the local garrisons, which are often targeted for follow-up attacks, thus perpetuating a chain of misery without a visible end.

INTERACTIONS WITH THE ORKS OF WAAAGH! GRIMTOOF

The Children of Thorns have largely avoided antagonising the Greenskin forces in the Spinward Front. While propaganda points to this as evidence of xenos cowardice and perfidy, it seems more likely that Grimtoof's Waaagh! has yet to claim any territory that the Kabal holds to be of significance, or to have acted to provoke their ire. Most of the notable engagements known to have occurred between these xenos breeds were Kabalite offensives deep into territory held by the Git-Slaver's hordes. As far as is known, the Dark Eldar struck swiftly and ruthlessly in each attack, took a specific site for a matter of days, or even mere hours, and then vanished before the Nobz could instil enough order for an effective counter-attack. Rumour has it that the Warboss himself is beginning to notice these attacks, and may be readying a brutal response with typically single-minded and brutal Ork ingenuity, which could potentially open several fronts against his horde.

One of the last intelligence reports gathered from Avitohol before the withdrawal hints at a possible catalyst for change in the Dark Eldar's disinterest. Slaves freed from one of Grimtoof's work camps told a tall tale about an Eldar warrior, who butchered her way out from under the shadow of the Warboss' throne. The report was filed for deletion before being re-archived after an Imperial force received aid against the Orks from an entirely unexpected quarter. Reinforcements sent to Garrison Sigma-XVII on Kulth reported that the Greenskin assault they were to repel was found lying in scattered piles of entrails, forming a perfect circle around the garrison, over a kilometre wide. The garrison troops swore that the attack had been repelled by Eldar warriors on swift grav-craft, led by a frenzied champion with a single livid scar running down her back. Their descriptions were cross-referenced with the claims of the escapee from Grimtoof's palace, and found to be an unerring match.

Since then, reports have come in from across the Front of a Succubus calling herself Vyruiel the Scarred. She has been found leading efforts by a variety of Dark Eldar factions, but seems to most closely align herself with the Cult of the Twisted Knife. These strikes have done much to cripple the Waaagh!, but the capricious raiders do not hesitate to turn their attention towards any vulnerable target nearby after claiming their revenge. It seems that not even Vyruiel's single-minded hunts can curb the appetites of those under her command, but the Succubus herself is rarely seen taking the field against any foe but the Git-Slaver's most brutal warriors.

INTERACTIONS WITH HERETICS AND TRAITORS

The rising number of heretical cults and traitor warbands throughout the Spinward Front has not gone unnoticed by the Children of Thorns. It is suspected that they may have a link to such activity, as they have been able to engage in surgical strikes at almost the same moment that the peace of a world is overthrown by heretic saboteurs. It was once believed they were fomenting such insurrection through their own agents, but more current reports indicate they exact a brutal and uncompromising toll on the followers of the

Ruinous Powers in most such situations, with their objective seeming to be as much to neutralize the cult as to exploit the gaps in Imperial defences. If these cults are their pawns, they are ones held to be of little continued value.

Further complicating the issue are the reports of temporary alliances and compacts formed between the Children of Thorns and certain of the stronger warbands in the region. Such efforts seem to be little more than a pooling of forces in the common cause of slave-taking and mayhem, and they rarely last all the way to the splitting of spoils. Imperial strategists have begun to note the pattern of combined operations between the Children and the warband of Slydeon the Sensate with growing unease, as the alliance has thus far endured the paranoid and treacherous tendencies of both sides. Reports on the topic are universally restricted and censored, as knowledge of the depravities accomplished by the combination of Kabalite sadism and the heathen madness of Chaos-worshippers has been deemed a threat to morale across the Front. Even the hardened officers of High Command make a point to fast before any consultation of such reports that proves necessary.

This curious mix of ruthless opposition, treachery, and wary alliance has made the relationship between the Children of Thorns and the various heretic forces impossible to categorize with any single designation. High Command passed down orders to cease any further efforts towards this end rather than risk further exposure to the works of the Ruinous Powers, a measure reputedly authored by Lord Marshal Ghanzorik himself. Since the edict was passed down, several officers were publicly executed for authorizing intelligence operations against the Children of Thorns, and many other high-ranking commanders have decided limited intelligence to be a more acceptable risk than the charge of heresy. Others question the cost of self-enforced blindness to enemy actions, and accumulate support for their viewpoint with each raid past Imperial lines, even as their names are noted by their Commissars.

INTERACTIONS WITH THE SEVERAN DOMINATE

It is beginning to become clear to the higher echelons of the war effort that the Children of Thorns are operating in direct support of Duke Severus's bid for secession. Most of the details of his pact have yet to come to light, and these few facts are jealously hoarded by High Command. Even the most careful observers are finding that this precarious secrecy is unlikely to last under the pressures of open war. As the conflict wears on and the struggles of the Spinward Front become more overt, the veil has begun to draw so thin that even veteran infantry can piece together some of the details.

A Pact Sealed in Blood

The origin of the blasphemous alliance between Duke Severus and the Children of Thorns is completely unknown to High Command in the Spinward Front. Some clues or hints at how it came to be may be locked in the data-vaults of the all-knowing Inquisition, but military men generally find themselves better off without questing after such secrets. Lord Marshal Ghanzorik himself has expressed contempt for



any such inquiries, ordering his staff to stay focused on the wars of the present rather than seeking to dig up lost conflicts from the past. Some few mavericks who have been tolerated to learn of the alliance believe that better understanding this alliance would allow them to break it, and set what assets can be spared towards an investigation of such matters.

Despite their ignorance of the pact's foundations, High Command has managed to assemble a picture of the dealings between the factions that seems to be both reliable and coherent. As more details come to light, confirming suspicions of the Duke selling out his own worlds to xenos raiders, this picture becomes at once more unbelievable and more indisputably factual. The private services in command chapels across the Front have started to incorporate a litany of worlds betrayed by their lord and sacrificed to the unholy thirsts of the Dark Eldar.

It is believed that the Children of Thorns primarily provide indirect aid to Severus's regime, rather than outright military support. The interrogations of captured troopers seem to indicate that his army is largely unaware of the dark bargain for which so many of their kin of have been sacrificed. The Kabal's most obvious and traceable services are rendered in their deadly services against the Imperial Guard, but Severan Dominate units rarely see their unknown allies striking. Instead, they merely discover camps full of butchered enemies or fortresses that have been emptied entirely. The troopers of the line are ordered to overlook such grisly discoveries, and their superiors assure them that the matter is in hand.

The Children of Thorns have also proven willing to aid the Dominate's war efforts more directly, although these operations are, ironically, more difficult to conclusively trace back as acts of support. Many of the Kabal's most devastating raids have been timed with unerring precision to match with mobilisations against the Duke's forces, either crippling the assault force before it could arrive, or swooping in to terrorise whatever territory has been temporarily deprived of its full garrison. Reports indicate that the Dominate also suffers attacks at such times, usually on isolated or strategically insignificant settlements, removed from patrol routes and relief frequencies shortly beforehand. It is apparent that the Dark Eldar are not content with the rich plunder seized from vulnerabilities opened in the Imperial lines, but press the debts owed to them, to claim ever more souls to sate their infernal appetites.

Uncommon Causes

Despite the masterful political mind of Duke Severus, it seems that the Dominate is ever worsening in its bargaining with the treacherous Dark Eldar. As his reliance on them grows and his ability to satiate them diminishes, they grow bolder in their claiming of payments from his territories. However, certain entries in the archives kept by High Command show evidence of the Kabal taking actions against their supposed ally's interests that clearly predate any lapses in the Duke's payment. These would be dismissed as simply more proof of the perfidious and treacherous nature of xenos races, and of the devious Eldar in particular, were it not for the curious degree to which these betrayals centre around a handful of specific worlds. Detailed analyses, run through the logic-engines of the Mechanicum and illuminated by the Emperor's Tarot, show that the Children of Thorns are seeking some goal entirely unrelated to their pacts with Duke Severus, one that may very well be valued more than any amount of slaves they can wring from their existing bargain.

The nature of this secret prize, if it truly exists, remains unknown to Imperial strategists. Many Astropaths serving alongside the forces of the Imperial Guard in the Spinward Front have begun to be plagued with terrible visions of a hollow-eyed visage wreathed in shadowy flames after being tasked with divinations on the topic, but this apparition has not been conclusively linked with their assignments, let alone their goal, to the satisfaction of their Commissariat handlers. It is an omen almost entirely without precedent in the archives of the Prognosticators, although certain librams brought from dusty data-stacks on Scintilla indicate that a similar sign was reported at certain stages of the Angevin Crusade.



STRATEGY IN THE FRONT

"The Mother of Shadows comes! She walks in a path carved by the Father of Sin, and seeks the faceless visage that guards his legacy. To ducal power she attaches herself, and a duke's legacy she seeks, but her footsteps on the way shall lead her where no mortal bloodline has tread. Fear what was lost in the dawn of glory, for it may be found when night falls on the souls of men."

—Strategic Prognosticator Thaddeus Tal
(fate pending Commissariat review)

Imperial Guard High Command has had extremely little success in determining what (if any) overarching strategy motivates the actions of the Dark Eldar factions in the Spinward Front. Thus far, all of their manoeuvres appear to be random acts of depredation, but those experienced in fighting the pernicious xenos know better than to dismiss them as mere raiders of opportunity.

AN ALLIANCE OF TRAITORS

It might seem a difficult task for the Children of Thorns to act in support of an ally who must disavow his ties and denounce their actions to his supporters, as Duke Severus does with his duped followers. In actuality, such an effort of duplicity and misdirection hardly even rates notice for those who have braved the intrigues of Commorragh. What details have been given away are due more to their disdain for their supposed patron or the finely-honed paranoia that follows the strategists of the Imperium than any actual lapse in their judgment or technique. The Kabal most commonly offers support to the Dominate through indirect means, such as the disruption of Imperial operations in warzones away from the Duke's heartlands.

Even when the Children of Thorns muster for what amounts to a joint operation with Dominate troops, concrete links on the nature of their involvement remain vanishingly few. The two forces never truly fight in unison or launch concerted attacks, but there is an implausibility of coincidence in otherwise unrelated attacks that sets frontline commanders on edge. In some cases, otherwise single-minded raiders find the time and interest to sabotage arms caches or detonate ammo dumps on their way to strike behind a garrison's lines, just as entrenched forces on a Dominate world begin a push to repel the invading Guardsmen. In others, the crippling of communication posts silences a warning against the incoming counter-attack by the Duke's elite shock troops just as it keeps the Dark Eldar's involvement silent until the post can be reclaimed.

The Dark Eldar have been extremely subtle about the purpose behind their actions in the Spinward Front. Duke Severus is clearly guilty of conspiring with the xenos, but the accusations of High Command are built around a lifetime guided by zealous wrath, rather than careful reasoning. Thus, a handful of their more introspective colleagues fear that the deceit of the Dark Eldar might find a way to turn the virtue of suspicion against the forces of the Imperium. After all, the mercurial Eldar are known for their mastery of subtle manipulations of other species, and the fires of faith can blind the zealot as surely as the shadows in which these creatures tread. Thus, even the proper paranoia of the Spinward Front's commanders might fall within their sinister plots.

BATTLEFIELD TACTICS

"Explain your meaning, slave, and in plainer words. My translator unit has clearly fouled on your primitive tongue, as it continues to incessantly repeat some nonsense phrase about a 'fair fight,' whatever that might be intended to mean."

—Archon Morygis, to a defiant captive

War, as it is commonly considered in the Imperium, is a notion entirely anathema to Commorrite sensibilities. To the Dark Eldar, the only objective worth seizing is power, and any method, tactic, or stratagem that can claim it is valid so long as it succeeds. The ruthless struggles of their society quickly weed out anyone capable of grasping concepts such as "civilians," "lines of battle," or "rules of engagement" as anything but weaknesses to exploit. The Imperium may practice total war, but the Dark Eldar only practice slaughter.

DEATH OF A THOUSAND CUTS

The Dark Eldar rarely commit to any sort of conflict with another race without considering themselves assured of victory, whether it is a lengthy campaign of raiding and harassment across a whole Segmentum, or the razing of a single backwater settlement found offensive to an Archon's sense of aesthetics. While their legendary arrogance sometimes colours their views on this matter, there is no room in the Dark City for a leader who has proven himself fallible. After millennia of carefully plotted and mercilessly seized triumphs, the arrogance of their forces has proven largely justified.

All of the military arts of Commorragh are centred around the notion of the raid. Even in the scope of larger conflicts, such as when the pride of a mighty Archon drives him to bring ruin on a great foe, or when some great treasure is sought on the muddy worlds beyond the Webway, the art of the raid is paramount. Cunning and stealthy scouts are sent ahead to find worthwhile targets, or to warn against guarded ones. By the time a Kabal has committed any true measure of its strength, it knows all that can be learned about its foe, while showing no sign of its intentions. Every Webway gate within range flares with a sudden life, and more are opened by the arts of the forward leaders. Such raids are invariably over strength compared to what is actually necessary to take the objective, but the crushing force of the assault allows them to shatter any resistance and seize whatever prize they might like before even the word of their presence can be spread.

In most cases, this is the whole of their strategy, followed by a swift return to the Dark City to trade away their slaves and plunder. Larger conflicts see the same pattern repeated endlessly against new targets, always striking at the openings forced wide by their most recent assault. Eventually the terror and confusion brought into their foes collapsing infrastructure becomes as deadly as the serrated blades carried by the Kabal's warriors, and the triumphant xenos seize whatever they please from the shambles of their enemy before quitting the warzone entirely.

PURPOSES AND PREPARATIONS

The Dark Eldar do not send their forces into realspace without a specific objective in mind. Their withered souls cannot last long outside the shelter of the Webway's labyrinthine passages, and so every raid must be carefully planned and plotted to ensure that total victory is achieved before their thirst for agony begins to turn inwards. Since there are only a few things of interest to the Dark Eldar that they cannot find within their own domain, they have spent the long millennia of their lives perfecting tactics that best enable them to snatch away what they desire.

Slave-Taking

The single most common goal for realspace raids is the acquisition of slaves, to slake the endless thirst for agony that drives Commorrite society. As such, the slave raid is something of a template from which all other notions of battle held by the Dark Eldar are derived, and is a rare conflict where they cannot find an opportunity to take captives. More dedicated slavers acquire mindphase gauntlets, stunclaws, and phantasm grenades, or more esoteric devices that allow them to easily take captives. Dark Eldar are also quite skilful at preserving the lives of their targets to eke out every drop of their suffering and frequently bring their victims back from the brink so that they might drag them to the slave pits of Commorragh. There, these wretches taste death countless times before it can finally claim them for good.



Power from Pain

Where the majority of raids are launched with the purpose of taking captives, a goal found without exception on some level of the planning for every raid is the spreading of terror and pain to those involved. In most cases, this is a secondary goal, with torments inflicted during the raid serving to invigorate the Kabalite forces and help them endure the vitality-sapping effects of realspace. The outmatched defenders who oppose them are slowly vivisected under the guise of combat, and potential captives without the fortitude to reach the slave markets are tortured to death in their own homes. These macabre indulgences are usually the only proof left after a successful raid that the lifeless settlement had once known inhabitants.

On some occasions, this frenzied brutality is the true purpose behind the entire raid. Entire hive spires have been butchered, hab by hab, simply to break the will of an enemy commander, or to spread terror to nearby worlds in order to sweeten the coming harvests. Such callous displays are often part of a calculated message designed to bring about a specific end, whether baiting the vengeful enemy into a trap, or driving a powerful but skittish force away from territories where they could apply their advantage.

The Hope of Escape

Given the careful preparations that go into each raid undertaken by Commorrite forces, and the terrible weapons they can bring to bear against any opposition, it is exceedingly rare for their forces to be bested in any significant fashion. However, this means that when an arrogant leader overcommits to a foolhardy attack, or when the target is protected by some means beyond its assumed strength, the results can be entirely disastrous. The swiftness of Kabalite assaults can turn into their undoing, as vast swathes of their force can be shot from the sky before the danger is registered.

In most cases, such an outmatched force will prefer to cut their losses and retreat from the field. While the ensuing loss of face can be potentially lethal in Dark Eldar society, the breaking of their powerbase that would otherwise ensue is assuredly so. The losses incurred can typically be offset by redirecting their offensive to a new target, or returning for a renewed assault once the enemy overextends themselves in pursuit. In extreme or desperate circumstances, some of the raid will be sacrificed in what amounts to a sort of rearguard action, being sent off to assault any nearby secondary targets and draw off fire from the main force. Despite the danger, some reckless volunteers can usually be found who are willing to gamble their lives against the promise of greater shares of plunder and the glory that could come from success.

More commonly, the triumphant defenders are content to remain behind whatever walls and guns sheltered them, and be thankful for the victory. This attitude is not always condoned by those leading the defence, but driving soldiers away from proven security to chase the nightmare

tide of a Kabalite raid over open ground can tax even the sternest Commissar. On more than one occasion, the victory celebrations were proven premature when the raiders returned to capitalise on strife within the defending forces.

Vengeance

On those occasions where a Dark Eldar force is truly bested, the survivors of their force are rarely content to let such an insult stand. Even a total rout might provoke interest from an Archon eager to prove himself superior to his failed rivals. Regardless of who originates such a raid, the intent is uniformly simple. An attack struck for vengeance must serve to remind the galaxy of the race who truly mastered it in ages past, and shock the upstarts who came after them, and have not seen their true power. The Dark Eldar are perhaps never more brutal than when they feel their superiority is being questioned.

If the offense is held to be the affair of a single Kabal, particularly if that Kabal has lost much of its powerbase in the failed raid, then the response is typically a decapitation strike aimed at those among the enemy held to be the most accountable. The leaders of the victorious defenders may find themselves being hunted like animals the moment they leave the security of their command bunkers, but they will not be the only targets. All those on the enemy force who were seen rallying their fellows or striking down the forces of the Kabal will be singled out for spectacularly gruesome deaths. In one particularly extreme case, a sniper who wounded a powerful Archon found himself being hunted across the surface of the world to which he was stationed over five years later, before being driven through the Webway to die at his original post.

In some cases, the defeat of a Kabal is thorough enough to provoke outrage across Commorragh. The prowess or daring of the enemy commander may prove to be more than is judged proper for a lesser race to possess. After disposing of the failed Kabal that so humiliated the lords of the Dark City, a new raid may be planned that combines the efforts of many prominent factions. Fortunately for the rest of the galaxy, these raids are rarely executed in actuality, typically falling apart in a frenzy of power plays and opportunistic strikes. When they last through the initial planning stages, such efforts often see potent and eldritch weapons unearthed from ancient vaults and huge hosts assembled for war, but not even a blow to their pride can stir the inhabitants of the Dark City to true warfare. Instead, the soldiers and materiel that might be mustered for a campaign of decades or even centuries are wielded in a single, brutal stroke, to utterly expunge those who have offended the Lords of Twilight.



FORCES OF THE KABAL

"These are not soldiers, nor warriors. This enemy is the act of murder given flesh, and they will not stop until terror is the only thing that lives."

—Captain Jefta Kull, executed for cowardice

The Dark Eldar are terrifying adversaries for any Imperial Guard trooper to face. Even the lowest Kabalite Warrior can have centuries of experience in battle, and the elite of the Kabals and Wych Cults often boast millennia of practise at slaughter.

ARCHONS

These terrifying xenos warlords are the absolute rulers of their Kabals, by whose whims whole cities are stolen and populations kidnapped. The treacherous and brutal societies in which they live hone every aspect of their being to a razor's edge, so that they are nearly impossible to surprise, outmanoeuvre, or best in personal combat. Archons have taken to the field in only a scant handful of engagements throughout the Spinward Front, but in each case, their presence was worth an entire company of battle tanks. This equivalence was made terrifyingly literal when the 129th Scintillan Artillery saw the crews of an entire battery of Basilisks butchered outside the mines of Kokytos by such a warrior. Subsequent interrogation of deserters from the battle led to a heavily suppressed report to High Command, but the limited access granted to lower-ranking officers has already spawned countless rumours that plague the nightmares of Guardsmen across the Spinward Front.

LORDS OF SHADOW AND TERROR

Although most actions against the Dark Eldar in the Spinward Front are fought against factions with a particular interest in the area, such as the Children of Thorns or the Eyeless Watchers, there is no area of the galaxy that an Archon considers barred to him. Worlds throughout the Front, as well as the Calixis Sector proper and even the distant Koronus Expanse, have suffered the sporadic attentions of several major Kabals whose names and iconography are known to commanders throughout the Front.

After the Children of Thorns, the force given the most attention by High Command is the Kabal of the Obsidian Gauntlet. They execute bold strikes against heavily fortified targets, seemingly heedless of risks or casualties. The Kabal seems to take its name from a relic of arcane technology borne by their Archon, which has enabled many of these seemingly-suicidal raids to succeed, as he tears down ferrocrete bastions with its blackened grip.

Warriors from the Endless Howl Kabal have been reported making sporadic raids across the Periphery since its first Imperial contact, as well as occasional forays into the Calixis Sector proper. They are said to be led by a withered and decrepit ancient who knows the terrain and conditions on worlds he raids better than the natives. All other information about this individual mysteriously disappears on a regular basis, as if being suppressed.



The Kabal of the Shattered Throne has also been recently sighted in the Spinward Front, although their actions have yet to undergo strategic analysis. They are infamous in certain quarters for a delight in regicide and the humbling of noble houses, leading some in High Command to suspect that they might target the Severan Dominate. Archon Sothios the Thronebreaker leads many of their raids, which often throng with great numbers of Kabalite Warriors, but few of the elite Trueborn caste.

ARCHONS AMONG THE CHILDREN OF THORNS

There is only ever one true Archon in a given Kabal, as the cutthroat politics embraced among the Dark Eldar do not lend themselves to sharing power. The Children of Thorns follow a mysterious and rarely-glimpsed figure known only as the Mother of Shadows, who holds this position in their hierarchy with an unyielding grip.

However, the Archon profile here can be used for other figures within the Children of Thorns. Though the Mother of Shadows is the ruler of the Kabal and directs it in full, she must contend with a number of ambitious and capable lieutenants. Some of these lieutenants are extremely potent warriors, from outcast scions of the mightiest Commorrite houses to deposed and desperate Archons fleeing other Kabals. Such lieutenants can use this profile, despite not holding the actual rank of Archon.

III: THE SHADOW WALKERS



Archon (Master)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
68	68	48	44	66	58	58	59	57	

Movement: 9/18/27/54

Wounds: 25

Armour: Ghostplate armour† (6 All).

Total TB: 3

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag) +20, Awareness (Per) +30, Charm (Fel) +10, Command (Fel) +30, Deceive (Fel) +30, Dodge (Ag) +20, Inquiry (Fel) +10, Interrogation (WP) +30, Intimidate (S) +30, Parry (WS) +20, Scrutiny (Per) +30, Sleight of Hand (Ag) +10, Stealth (Ag) +10, Tech-Use (Int).

Talents: Air of Authority, Ambidextrous, Combat Master, Deflect Shot, Die Hard, Disarm, Deadeye Shot, Disturbing Voice, Hard Target, Heightened Senses (Hearing, Sight), Jaded, Leap Up, Light Sleeper, Lightning Attack, Lightning Reflexes, Nerves of Steel, Paranoia, Precise Blow, Rapid Reaction, Sharpshooter, Step Aside, Sure Strike, Swift Attack, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee, Ranged), Whirlwind of Death.

Traits: Dark Sight, Unnatural Agility (3).

Weapons: Agoniser (Melee; 1d10+7 E; Pen 6; Flexible, Power Field, Tearing, Shocking) *or* venomblade (Melee; 1d10+8 R; Pen 2; Felling [2], Toxic [4]), blast pistol (Pistol; 20m; S/-/-; 2d10+7 E; Pen 4; Clip 6; Reload 3 Full; Lance), Eldar plasma grenades (Thrown; 12m; S/-/-; 1d10+6 E; Pen 4; Clip 1; Reload -; Blast [4], Shocking).

Gear: Combat drugs††, 2 spare clips for blast pistol, translator unit. Note that Archons possess the plunder of whole worlds gathered over centuries, and can reasonably possess any wargear that the Game Master feels is appropriate.

†**Ghostplate Armour:** The cunningly constructed armour favoured by many Archons includes an integrated force field, operating by principles beyond the grasp of the Mechanicum. An individual wearing Ghostplate Armour benefits from a force field with a Protection Rating of 20 that Overloads on a result of 1–5.

††**Combat Drugs:** Despite their undisputed martial mastery, Archons often take combat drugs to further enhance their incredible abilities. An Archon under the effects of combat drugs gains one of the effects listed under **Chemical Enhancements** (see page 80).

KABALITE TRUEBORN

The Kabals of the Dark Eldar do not conform to what anyone in the Imperial Guard would recognize as a proper hierarchy, acknowledging authority only as far as it can be enforced. The source of a Kabalite leader's primacy is irrelevant compared to the power it grants him, as constant power plays enforce a lethal meritocracy. The elite status of the so-called "Trueborn" warriors seems to be in contradiction of this to outside observers, as their rank seems drawn solely from an indulgence of their forebears. The truth of the matter is more complicated than it appears, as with so much else of the Dark City's workings.

The majority of a Kabal's ranks are grown rather than birthed, and brought to maturity by the sciences of the Haemonculi, rather than the attention of their biological progenitors. Dark Eldar who hold themselves especially powerful will flaunt their status by indulging in the expense and effort of raising a naturally born scion of their blood. However, the new Trueborn is not as pampered as the heir to a noble house of the Imperium might be, for no power in Commorragh can protect those too weak or foolish to look after their own care. Instead, great and lavish

GM ADVICE: USING AN ARCHON

Thanks to years of surviving the deadliest political intrigue the galaxy has to offer, Archons are attuned to even the subtlest of strategies. Well-versed in traps, feints, and counter-feints, it might often seem to an enemy commander that an Archon is capable of predicting all of his manoeuvres—and frequently, this is the case.

ENGAGEMENT

Dark Eldar use their incredible mobility to engage enemy forces in the most advantageous ways possible, striking from unexpected angles to paralyse their foes with fear. Archons are masters of this sort of warfare, and lead their forces in this way. However, over the centuries and millennia, each Archon develops an independent style, with subtle flourishes and signature stratagems of incredible complexity. If caught in a disadvantageous position, a Dark Eldar force frequently vanishes into the shadows from whence it came only to emerge again when it is least expected.

STRATEGIES

Different Archons develop different combat styles, but many Archons surround themselves with powerful servants such as Medusae, Ur-Ghul, Lhamaeans, and Sslyth mercenaries and lead their retinues into the heat of battles (see pages 80–83). Though they rarely deign to engage troopers of the line, preferring to send more disposable minions to wipe out such nuisances, many Archons personally enjoy ripping out the heart of an enemy force by butchering its commander or champions in full sight of the army. To do this, they often launch ambushes or use their less favoured soldiers to draw the enemy out before delivering the decapitating strike with their own retinues.

COMBAT TACTICS

Archons are proficient with most melee and ranged weapons that the Dark Eldar wield, but most Archons outfit themselves for close-quarters combat, to best drink in the sorrow as they dominate their foes. When engaged in melee, many Archons seek out the most powerful enemies in a group to decapitate the formation and traumatise the survivors.

expenditures go towards the expunging of any weakness, flaw, or sentiment in the young warrior from little after the moment of birth. Those who survive to join the ranks of a raiding force have honed their skills and appetites to a degree even beyond the inhuman prowess of their half-born fellows.

The Trueborn typically shun the company of other Kabalite Warriors, and form independent squads of those few they consider peers. Such groups are constantly jockeying for position and status, and may suffer greater casualties from internal strife than from enemy fire. However, their superior training is often backed up by the most expensive and potent weapons to be found, and even the smallest group of Trueborn warriors can turn the tide of a battle with their firepower.

Kabalite Trueborn (Elite)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
47	51	37	41	59	41	49	39	49	

Movement: 8/16/24/48

Wounds: 13

Armour: Kabalite armour (4 All).

Total TB: 4

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag) +10, Awareness (Per) +20, Command (Fel) +10, Deceive (Fel) +10, Dodge (Ag) +10, Inquiry (Fel), Interrogation (WP), Intimidate (S) +20, Parry (WS) +10, Scrutiny (Per) +10, Sleight of Hand (Ag), Stealth (Ag), Tech-Use (Int).

Talents: Combat Master, Deadeye Shot, Disarm, Hard Target, Leap Up, Light Sleeper, Lightning Reflexes, Resistance (Fear), Sure Strike, Swift Attack.

Traits: Dark Sight, Unnatural Agility (3).

Weapons: Poisoned blade (Melee; 1d5+3 R; Pen 2; Toxic [2]), Eldar plasma grenades (Thrown; 12m; S/-/-; 1d10+6 E; Pen 4; Clip 1; Reload -; Blast [4], Shocking), and one of the following choices:

- Good Craftsmanship splinter pistol (Pistol; 30m; S/3/5; 1d10+2 R; Pen 3; Clip 50; Reload 2 Full; Reliable, Toxic [1]) and Good Craftsmanship mono sword (Melee; 1d10+3 R; Pen 2)
- Shardcarbine (Basic; 60m; S/3/5; 1d10+2 R; Clip 50; Reload 2 Full; Storm, Toxic [1])
- Shredder (Basic; 40m; S/-/-; 2d10+5 R; Pen 2; Clip 12; Reload 2 Full; Blast [3], Reliable, Tearing)
- Blaster (Basic; 75m; S/-/-; 3d10+7 E; Pen 4; Clip 12; Reload 2 Full; Lance)
- Splinter cannon (Heavy; 150m; -/5/10; 2d10+2 R; Pen 4; Clip 300; Reload 2 Full; Toxic [4])
- Dark lance (Heavy; 200m; S/-/-; 3d10+7 E; Pen 4; Clip 9; Reload 2 Full; Lance)

Gear: Grisly trophies, bloodline token, 4 clips for weapons.

GM ADVICE: USING KABALITE TRUEBORN

Kabalite Trueborn are sadistic and entitled killers. Their training makes them excellent marksmen, arrogant and deadly in equal measure.

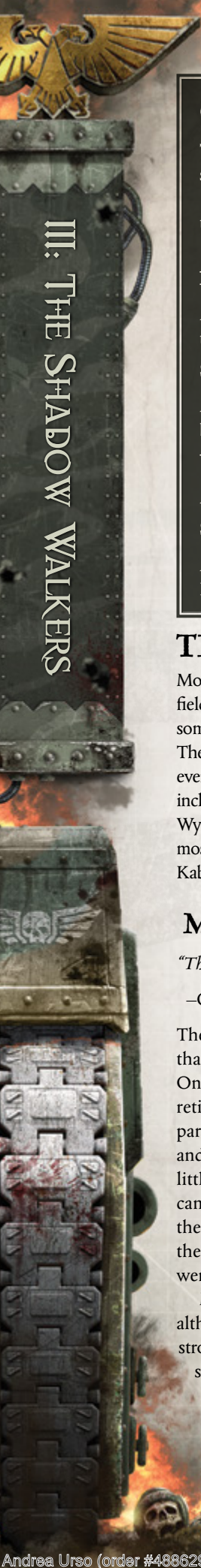
ENGAGEMENT

Kabalite Trueborn prefer to ambush their foes or strike from an advantageous position, be that from a Raider or Venom transport or from suitable cover. If they are on the receiving end of an ambush, Kabalite Trueborn make a disciplined move towards cover, casting deadly projectiles and stinging insults behind them as they regroup.

COMBAT TACTICS

Kabalite Trueborn typically engage at range, where their extravagant and powerful heavy weapons can inflict the most gratuitous harm. If forced to fight in melee (or as bloodlust overtakes them), they can prove highly lethal with their bladed rifles and knives, gutting slow-moving human foes with contemptuous ease.





CHEMICAL ENHANCEMENT

The Haemonculi of Commorragh never cease in their search for new and dreadful concoctions that push the limits of flesh and sanity alike. Many elite Dark Eldar carry combat drugs, increasing their already inhuman abilities to terrifying heights.

If a Dark Eldar takes combat drugs while under the effects of a previous dose (or anyone else attempts to imbibe drugs tailored for the Dark Eldar), he must make a **Hard (-20) Toughness Test**. If he fails, the drug has no effect and he suffers 1d10 I Damage ignoring Armour. Player Characters who imbibe these combat drugs also gain 1d5 Corruption Points.

NIGHTMARISH POWER

A Dark Eldar who imbibes this drug gains the Unnatural Strength (1d5) and Brutal Charge (5) Traits until the end of the encounter.

SWIFTER THAN THOUGHT

A Dark Eldar who imbibes this drug counts as rolling a 10 on all Initiative rolls and increases his Unnatural Agility Trait by 1d5 until the end of the encounter.

UNNATURAL VITALITY

A Dark Eldar who imbibes this drug gains the Regeneration (4) and Undying Traits until the end of the encounter.

SLAUGHTERER'S CONTEMPT

A Dark Eldar who imbibes this drug gains the Unnatural Weapon Skill (2) Trait. Whenever this character inflicts Critical Damage, increase the value of that Trait by 1 (to a maximum of 10). These effects last until the end of the encounter.

THE ARCHON'S COURT

Most reported actions involving an Archon taking to the field also include mention of a strange cavalcade of followers, somewhere between a bodyguard troop and a courtly retinue. The makeup of such groups seems to vary from battle to battle, even where the same Archon is concerned. In some cases, it includes favoured warriors from amongst the Kabal or associated Wych Cults, or even packs of ravaging war-beasts. These retinues most commonly feature otherwise unknown elements of the Kabal structure, including mercenaries of other xenos races.

MEDUSAE

"The eye opens! The eye opens, and sanity dies!"

—Graffiti scrawled across the walls of the Outpost KVii-95b

There is at least one position among the Archon's Court that seems to be more a punishment than a sign of favour. On several occasions, one or more members of an Archon's retinue has arrived on the battlefield as the host of an alien parasite known as a Medusae, forced to operate as a puppet and vehicle for the creature's hungers. The Imperium knows little about Medusae, but it is believed that this relationship can become permanent in the later stages of merging, with the host's mind and body becoming wholly subsumed into the parasite—and that the examples present on the field were in this late stage of development.

Medusae have a natural affinity for certain psychic forces, although weak and narrowly focused. They are drawn to strong emotion, which is believed to provide a degree of sustenance for their kind. When threatened, they can project these energies in an assault on the attacker's mind. The Medusae found in their service have been outfitted with devices to amplify this attack into a truly deadly weapon that liquefies brains.

The exact method by which the Kabals tame Medusae is unknown, as are their motivations in sacrificing their own to the beasts. Some theorise that the Medusae's known affinity for emotional energies has some connection to the Dark Eldar's thirst for pain, although others argue that this makes them a natural competitor for the raiders. Whatever the reason, some Archons seem inordinately fond of the creatures, with the infamous Lord Shyrinthul once taking to the field amidst a troop of thirty Medusae harnessed to treacherous Trueborn warriors. The bizarre squad was undeniably effective, with the natural affinities of the parasite enhanced by the sciences of the Dark Eldar.

GM ADVICE: USING MEDUSAE

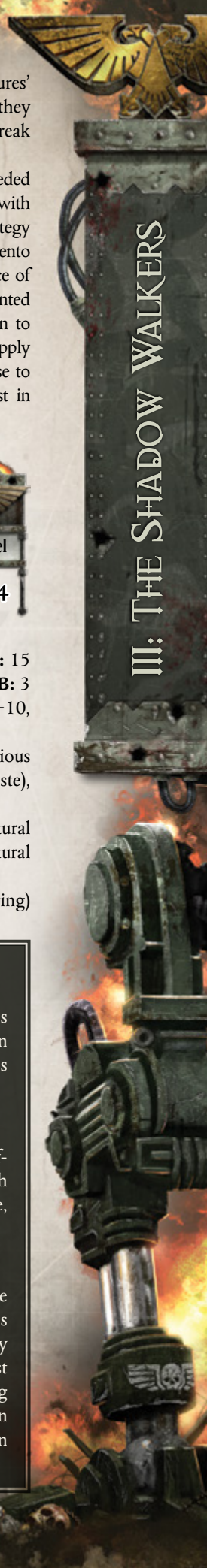
Due to their sweeping, baleful stare and horrifying presence, Medusae are extremely difficult to engage in battle and can make an otherwise straightforward encounter very complex for the Player Characters.

ENGAGEMENT

Medusae behave in much the same way regardless of combat circumstances, staying near the Archon who controls them and unleashing their agonising gaze upon their victims.

COMBAT TACTICS

Medusae sometimes target those foes with the most potent emotions first, especially psykers, whose manifest emotions will fuel their powers. If, for any reason, the Medusae's host is slain, the parasite might attempt to seek out a new host from amongst those nearby.



Medusae (Elite)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
33	33	35	35	55 ⁸	28	36	58	11	

Movement: 8/16/24/48
Armour: Kabalite armour (4 All).
Skills: Awareness (Per), Dodge (Ag), Psyniscience (Per), Stealth (Ag) Survival (Per).
Talents: Lightning Reflexes.
Traits: Dark Sight, Fear (1), From Beyond, Unnatural Agility (3), Unnatural Senses (Emotional Resonance; 30m).
Weapons: Medusae visor† (Pistol; 20m; S/-/-; 2d10 E; Pen 2; Clip -; Reload -; Eyeburst††, Recharge).
Gear: Arcane harnesses and restraints.

†**Medusae Visor:** The strange sciences mastered by the Dark Eldar enhance the inherent powers of their harnessed Medusae to incredible levels. Their alterations are extensive, and involve surgical grafts and chemical enhancement more than external equipment. The Medusae Visor is always considered to be ready for use, and cannot be disarmed from the wielder. Any attempt to remove the device from a deceased host will yield only a useless array of forbidden technologies, dripping with inhuman viscera.

††**Eyeburst:** The Medusae visor does not fire normally; instead, all creatures within the weapon's path (a 45-degree arc from the Medusae out to the weapon's range) must make an **Opposed Willpower Test** against the Medusae. Each target that loses this Opposed Test to the Medusae suffers Damage from the weapon. Increase the Penetration of the weapon by 2 for every Degree of Success by which the Medusae wins the Opposed Test. Damage dealt by the Medusae Visor is always applied to the victim's Head location.

UR-GHUL

"We had their leader for sure. Our ambush was perfect. But even as our sniper was lining up the shot, that thing let up an awful howl and raced towards us. Maybe it heard us. Maybe it smelled us. It doesn't matter now. It was on us before we could react. The leader didn't even bother to follow it. Just sat back and laughed as it tore us apart."

—Field Report from Sergeant Gerlaf Slerne of the Desoleum Oathsworn 433rd

These scabrous aliens are found in the retinues of many Archons, although they are never truly a part of it, as a favoured Lhamaean courtesan or Sslyth bodyguard might be. They do not even serve the role of instructional example, as the unfortunates playing host to Medusae might. Instead, Ur-Ghuls are granted the place of a hunting hound that an Archon can release to run down prey or chase away would-be challengers he considers beneath his notice. The blind, snuffling muzzle of a well-trained Ur-Ghul can also detect many threats that even the keen perception of their master might overlook.

While Ur-Ghuls are most commonly found in the service of Archons, either at their side or unleashed to hunt their foes, it is not unknown for packs of the beasts to be released into

the enemy's lines before the assault truly begins. The creatures' loping strides can put on a tremendous turn of speed as they scent prey, and their sudden charge can panic or even break defensive positions well in advance of the Kabal's arrival.

Many assaults by the Children of Thorns have been preceded by wave after wave of the ravaging troglodytes, expended with less concern than the life of a single Kabalite warrior. The strategy has been noted as anomalous by the analysts of the Departamento Munitorium, but the Imperium is unaware of the significance of Shaa-dom, much less of its ruin or the forbidden and haunted hellscape that it has become. As such, they have no reason to spend time or resources questioning this seemingly endless supply of Ur-Ghul shock troops—a disinterest they may have cause to regret if the abundance is noted by those with an interest in ensuring Shaa-dom lies buried and dead.

Ur-Ghul (Elite)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
48	11	55 ⁷	36	54 ⁷	24	48	29	14	

Movement: 7/14/42/42
Armour: Toughened skin (2 All).
Skills: Acrobatics (Ag), Athletics (S), Awareness (Per) +10, Dodge (Ag), Stealth (Ag), Survival (Per) +10.
Talents: Berserk Charge, Catfall, Fearless, Frenzy, Furious Assault, Hard Target, Heightened Sense (Smell and Taste), Nerves of Steel, Preternatural Speed, Sprint.
Traits: Blind, Bestial, Brutal Charge (3), Deadly Natural Weapons, Natural Armour (2), Unnatural Agility (2), Unnatural Strength (2), Unnatural Senses (Smell and Taste; 50m).
Weapons: Scabrous claws (Melee; 1d10+7 R; Pen 0; Tearing)

GM ADVICE: USING UR-GHULS

Ur-Ghuls are agile, savage hunters, utterly merciless and relentless. Whether part of an Archon's Court, on their own, or in a hunting pack, an Ur-Ghul's actions are always dictated by the same predatory bloodlust.

ENGAGEMENT

Whether ambushing its foes or (rarely) caught off-guard, an Ur-Ghul's strategy is much the same: rush forward, following its keen senses to the nearest foe, and tear it apart in a gruesome frenzy.

COMBAT TACTICS

In battle, an Ur-Ghul enters a maddened frenzy before racing towards its enemies, tracking them with its sense of smell and then ripping them to pieces, one by one. The GM could consider having the Ur-Ghul first target the weakest member of a Squad before moving on to whoever happens to be nearest, continuing in this vein until killed—or until all of its prey has been reduced to red chunks of charnel.



LHAMAEAN

"Agony's Breath and Wrackbane would bring that creature down most quickly, Archon. Of course, if I know your tastes, a hasty death is hardly preferable."

—Morin, Sister of Lhilitu, to Lady Aileas

Many of the greatest and most powerful Archons who have warred against the Imperium were accompanied by these deadly female warriors, tentatively identified by the Imperium's xenographers as belonging to the Sisterhood of Lhilitu. The workings or hierarchy of the sisterhood are largely unknown, but certain facts have been determined from devoted intelligence work, or the boasts broadcast by particularly proud Archons. The members of the Sisterhood are called Lhamaeans, and devote themselves to the studies of venoms, drugs, and other ways to kill indirectly. They are considered to be among the foremost poisoners in all of the Dark City, an accomplishment as impressive as it is sinister.

Lhamaeans revere the mysterious figure known as Shaimesh, Father of Poisons. Certain xenographers hold him to be a mythological figure, and others a historical one. The tendency of Eldar mythic cycles to blur the line between the two has not helped what studies exist on the topic. Whether this Shaimesh was ever real, his influence lives on the deadly brews of his devoted followers. Such is the Sisterhood's mastery that they can alter the poisons of others to enhance their effect, intuiting how best to maximise a weapon's potency with a glance.

Lhamaean (Elite)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
49	44	33	33	58	52	44	39	51	

Movement: 8/16/24/48

Armour: Kabalite armour (4 All).

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Charm (Fel) +30, Command (Fel), Deceive (Fel) +20, Dodge (Ag) +10, Inquiry (Fel) +20, Intimidate (S) +10, Parry (WS), Scrutiny (Per) +20, Sleight of Hand (Ag) +10, Stealth (Ag).

Talents: Blessings of Shaimesh†, Leap Up, Light Sleeper, Lightning Reflexes, Rapid Reaction, Resistance (Poisons).

Traits: Dark Sight, Unnatural Agility (3).

Weapons: Blade of the Sisterhood (Melee; 1d10+3 R; Pen 2; Balanced, Crippling [4], Felling [4], Toxic [4]), enhanced splinter pistol (Pistol; 30m; S/3/5; 1d10+2 R; Pen 3; Clip 50; Reload 2 Full; Crippling [4], Felling [4], Toxic [5]).

Gear: Noxious vials, 4 clips for splinter pistol.

†**Blessings of Shaimesh:** A Lhamaean can enhance the weapons of the Archon and his retinue before battle. A Lhamaean always treats her own weapons this way (already included in her profile, above), and can also enhance an additional number of weapons equal to her Intelligence Bonus (5). All weapons chosen for her attentions must possess the Toxic Quality. Each weapon blessed this way increases the value of its Toxic Quality by 2, gains the Felling (4) Quality (or increases the

GM ADVICE: USING LHAMAEANS

These uniquely gifted and highly trained poisoners often take the battlefield alongside powerful Archons.

ENGAGEMENT

Lhamaeans share their deadly concoctions with other favourites of the Archon, making the toxic arms used by those in his retinue even more lethal. If a group of Dark Eldar including a Lhamaean ambushes its enemies or engages them with foreknowledge of the battle, she uses her skills to improve the weapons of her allies. If caught unawares, the Lhamaean might not have time to distribute her deadly blessings to any weapons but her own.

COMBAT TACTICS

Less heavily armoured or intrinsically resilient than some other members of the Archon's Court, Lhamaeans typically attempt to avoid battles of stamina and attrition, staying out of reach of the deadliest opponents. In personal combat, their true attacks are their diabolically inventive array of poisons, for which their weapons are merely delivery systems. As such, Lhamaeans often seek to wound a given foe only once before turning their attentions upon the next victim of their pernicious toxins.

value of its Felling Quality by 2), and gains the Crippling (4) Quality (or increases the value of its Crippling Quality by 2). A given weapon can only be enhanced this way once, even if there are multiple Lhamaeans present.

SSLYTH

"Forget it, trooper. I can't tell you what that creature was. There are more horrors in this galaxy than anyone can explain. There are more terrors than anyone can imagine. Just focus on surviving the next battle. Don't let the monsters in your mind distract you from the ones in front of you."

—Lieutenant Shaima Dreko to Private Kshir Ebb, last survivor of Squad Theta

Kabalite politics are mercurial and shifting, to the point that even their enemies on the battlefield often bear witness to the deadly intrigue and grand betrayals. Many Dark Eldar raids have been undone by the xenos' love of treachery and their disdain for their comrades. Dark Eldar who survive for any length of time learn not merely to anticipate betrayal, but to assume treachery as the default state. Even an Archon must sometimes depend on others, but none reach such a position without realising that their own kin are dependable only in their duplicity.

The ophidian, many-armed Sslyth are particularly favoured by Archons in need of truly reliable warriors. All remnants of the original Sslyth culture are believed to be extinct, and their race's remnants exist primarily as a sort of client species to the Dark Eldar. It is believed that the Sslyth serve so loyally out of a sort of existential lethargy, having been long shorn of any notion of self-direction or purpose beyond what is given to them. Not even their employers can draw them forth on the topic, and most Archons are not inclined to prompt them towards thinking about such matters too closely.

Soldiers of the Imperial Guard who survive confronting these serpentine fiends on the battlefield are often found dogging the heels of their regimental chaplains. These veterans speak in haunted tones of the hollow-eyed, reptilian stares that looked at the battlefield as if from a great distance or the vantage of a long-lost era. This dispassionate gaze is considered by many to be even more unnerving than the gleeful malice of the Kabalite assault, for it does not acknowledge life of any sort, including its own.

Sslyth (Elite)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
45	45	55	52	48	31	38	23	32	

Movement: 5/10/15/30

Wounds: 28

Armour: Scales and Kabalite armour (All 7). **Total TB:** 9

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Dodge (Ag), Deceive (Fel) +20, Intimidate (S), Parry (WS) +10, Stealth (Ag) +10, Survival (Per).

Talents: Ambidextrous, Cold Hearted, Combat Master, Dual Shot, Dual Strike, Heightened Senses (Smell), Jaded, Nerves of Steel, Sprint, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee, Ranged).

Traits: Auto-Stabilised, Fear (1), Multiple Arms (4), Size (5), Unnatural Strength (4), Unnatural Toughness (4).

Weapons: Shardcarbine (Basic; 60m; S/3/5; 1d10+2 R; Clip 50; Reload 2 Full; Storm, Toxic [1]), splinter pistol (Pistol; 30m; S/3/5; 1d10+2 R; Pen 3; Clip 50; Reload 2 Full; Toxic [1]), xenos blade (Melee; 1d10+9 R; Pen 2; Balanced, Razor Sharp).

Gear: 2 ammo clips for weapon, decadent xenos charms.

GM ADVICE: USING SSLYTH

Sslyth are almost always found accompanying Dark Eldar nobles such as Archons. They seek to protect the Archon, staying close to him and slaying those who draw too close—or would otherwise pose a threat—to their employer. They remain dispassionately alert at all times, taking in the details of their surroundings with a cold-blooded stare.

ENGAGEMENT

Thanks to their physical prowess and abundance of arms, Sslyth are extremely dangerous both at range and in melee combat and adapt to combat situations as necessary, firing to keep approaching (or fleeing) enemies suppressed as they and their charge reach an advantageous position at range or in melee combat.

COMBAT TACTICS

The Sslyth uses its four arms and keen senses to engage multiple foes at once, prioritising those who approach their Archon. Otherwise, a Sslyth dutifully follows its employer's lead, killing efficiently, advancing, and retreating as its master sees fit.





SUCCUBUS

"Hold steady, troopers. Keep firing. Nothing can move fast enough to close a gap like that before we ki—"

—Lieutenant Korgein, final words

Although the members of the Wych Cults care less for titles or political influence than their Kabalite counterparts, they share the ruthless, competitive drive of their kind in its full measure. It is not expressed in subtle power-plays or games of assassination, but at the edge of a blade, thrust straight into the heart of a foe. The ultimate competition for any in the Wych Cults is that of the arena, where success can only be proven by survival.

The greatest champions of the arena and the most successful leaders of realspace raids eventually find themselves being referred to as Succubi. The title is not formally bestowed, and carries no guarantee of political power—for every Wych Cult where the Succubus rules as a warrior queen, there is another where Kabalite backers hoard every last scrap of influence in such matters. Despite this, the title is highly respected, and those who bear it are among the most lethal combatants in a species famed for its mastery of death.

GM ADVICE: USING A SUCCUBUS

Succubi are among the most honed killers in the galaxy, faster and more lethal than virtually all challengers. They fight in realspace raids in much the same way they compete in the arenas of Commorragh, dragging out the suffering of their foes as long as possible.

ENGAGEMENT

Succubi sometimes spearhead their forces, leading with an elite cadre that strikes from an unexpected angle and pierces into the heart of enemy formations. If caught off-guard, Succubi are likely to use their mobility to either close the distance to their foes or break off and strike again in a more advantageous setting. Succubi often use their considerable experience with shifting terrain in the pits of the Dark City to their advantage during realspace raids, using cover to close with their foes or evade oncoming fire.

STRATEGIES

No two commanders lead in the exact same manner, but certain Succubi participating in realspace raids use faster forces to harass their prey before moving in to deliver the killing blow themselves. Others eschew the set-up strike, simply driving their force into their enemy's vulnerable points using the vast experience of their warriors.

COMBAT TACTICS

Succubi are masters of melee combat, and though they sometimes carry certain ranged weapons, most prefer to do their killing up close. Succubi often lead cadres of Hekatrix Bloodbrides into battle, working with their subordinates in deadly displays of grace and cruelty. Depending on the quality of her foes, a Succubus might even single out a particularly deadly enemy to fight on her own.

THE CULT OF THE TWISTED KNIFE

The Spinward Front has suffered from the attentions of a variety of Dark Eldar factions, but there have been next to no raids involving any Wych Cult other than the Twisted Knife. Their warriors have been seen fighting at the side of no less than three different Kabals, as well as the grotesqueries fielded by the Eyeless Watchers. Such assaults are typically spearheaded by the monstrous beasts and mutant slaves favoured by the cult.

The reason for the cult's ubiquity in the Spinward Front is simple; the Twisted Knife has spent centuries studying strains of mutation throughout the Periphery and the worlds now claimed by Duke Severus, and regularly draws some of their most favoured chattel from these worlds. This intimate familiarity with the local worlds makes them sought-after partners for any raids in the region, and they eagerly accept twisted and degenerate specimens in payment that their patrons would not be able to sell elsewhere.

Succubus (Master)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
75	55	44	43	72	44	56	54	51	

Movement: 10/20/60/60

Wounds: 23

Armour: Wych suit (3 All)

Total TB: 4

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag) +30, Athletics (S) +2, Awareness (Per) +20, Charm (Fel), Command (Fel) +10, Deceive (Fel), Dodge (Ag) +20, Intimidate (S) +10, Parry (WS) +20, Scrutiny (Per) +10, Sleight of Hand (Ag) +10, Stealth (Ag) +30.

Talents: Ambidextrous, Assassin Strike, Berserk Charge, Blade Dancer, Catfall, Combat Master, Counter Attack, Deflect Shot, Die Hard, Disarm, Hard Target, Heightened Senses (Hearing, Sight), Jaded, Leap Up, Light Sleeper, Lightning Attack, Lightning Reflexes, Nerves of Steel, Paranoia, Precise Blow, Preternatural Speed, Step Aside, Street Fighting, Sure Strike, Swift Attack, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee, Ranged), Unarmed Master, Unarmed Warrior, Whirlwind of Death.

Traits: Dark Sight, Unnatural Agility (3).

Weapons: Paired wych knives (Melee; 1d5+7 R; Pen 0; Balanced) *or* agoniser (Melee; 1d10+7 E; Pen 6; Flexible, Power Field, Tearing, Shocking) and splinter pistol (Pistol; 30m; S/3/5; 1d10+2 R; Pen 3; Clip 50; Reload 2 Full; Toxic [1]) *or* shardnet (Melee; 1d5+5 R; Pen 0; Snare [2]) and impaler (Melee; 1d10+5 R; Pen 0; Toxic [2]) *or* two razorflails (Melee; 1d10+7 R; Pen 2; Flexible) *or* two hydra gauntlets (1d10+5 R; Pen 0; Threshing†), Eldar plasma grenades (Thrown; 12m; S/-/-; 1d10+6 E; Pen 4; Clip 1; Reload -; Blast [4], Shocking).

Gear: Combat drugs††, grisly trophies, kill-recorder.

†**Threshing:** A weapon with the Threshing Quality doubles the amount of hits inflicted on the target.

††**Combat Drugs:** As the leaders and champions of the Wych Cults, Succubi have access to stimulants and other boosts far beyond the reach of their subordinates. A Succubus under the effects of combat drugs gains one of the effects listed under **Chemical Enhancements** (see page 80).

HEKATRIX BLOODBRIDE

"I've never seen anything move like that. Sergeant Hakemi is the fastest knife in the regiment. I've seen her hack open an Ork before it could blink, let alone raise its weapon. But even she said she couldn't track that thing when it hit those Mordians down there. Just flashes and blood. Then screaming. I've never seen her surprised before. Normally, I'd rather stand toe-to-toe with my enemy and let my knife do the talking. But right now, maybe I'm not so unhappy to be stuck up on this wall doing sentry duty."

—Private Kols Kerak of the Brontian Longknives 222nd

The most skilful and deadly from amongst the ranks of a Wych Cult are granted the title of Hekatrix, although they are also called Bloodbrides. Though no more formally obtained than the mantle of Succubus, the role of Hekatrix carries more rigid assumptions. Until the Bloodbride can prove herself worthy of ascending beyond her current role, she must organise squads of wyches for gladiatorial contests and realspace raids alike. Many Bloodbrides lead their underlings in battle, so as to better keep an eye on them, while others gather amongst the company of their peers and seek out deadlier challenges.

Although the Dark Eldar consider this rank to be one of middling significance, and only the first step out of obscurity and towards the legend of a Succubus, all warriors who have been named to the ranks of the Bloodbrides are deadly and lethal champions in their own right. The brutal competition in the fighting pits ensures that not even the lowliest acolyte working there can survive while harbouring weakness. To draw above the competition by even the narrowest margin without being literally cut back down to their level requires dedication and prowess beyond the capabilities of graceless humans or Orks.

Such is the skill of these warriors that even a lone Hekatrix proved enough to tip the scales against hunter-killer units operating in the dunes of Kalf, as her swift blades ruptured the water tanks of extended patrols before she vanished into the burning sands. It is believed the same individual was responsible for no less than eleven such attacks, nine of which led to the patrol's death by dehydration before they could be relieved. The scant few who survived the other incidents are said to be haunted men, tormented by mirages and phantoms at all times, and sustained only by a desire for vengeance against the cruel warrior who killed their comrades without even bloodying her knives.

Hekatrix Bloodbride (Elite)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
52	46	41	41	61	38	49	39	48	

Movement: 9/18/27/54

Armour: Wych suit (3 All).

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag) +30, Athletics (S) +2, Awareness (Per) +20, Charm (Fel), Command (Fel) +10, Deceive (Fel), Dodge (Ag) +20, Intimidate (S) +10, Parry (WS) +20, Scrutiny (Per) +10, Sleight of Hand (Ag) +10, Stealth (Ag) +30

Talents: Ambidextrous, Assassin Strike, Blade Dancer,

Wounds: 13

Total TB: 4

Catfall, Combat Master, Disarm, Leap Up, Lightning Attack, Lightning Reflexes, Resistance (Fear), Step Aside, Street Fighting, Sure Strike, Swift Attack, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee, Ranged), Unarmed Master, Unarmed Warrior.

Traits: Dark Sight, Unnatural Agility (3).

Weapons: Paired wych knives (Melee; 1d5+6 R; Pen 0; Balanced) or wych knife (Melee; 1d15+6 E; Pen 0; balanced) and splinter pistol (Pistol; 30m; S/3/5; 1d10+2 R; Pen 3; Clip 50; Reload 2 Full; Toxic [1]) or shardnet (Melee; 1d5+4 R; Pen 0; Snare [2]) and impaler (Melee; 1d10+4 R; Pen 0; Toxic [2]) or two razorflails (Melee; 1d10+6 R; Pen 2; Flexible) or two hydra gauntlets (1d10+4 R; Pen 0; Threshing†), Eldar plasma grenades (Thrown; 12m; S/-/-; 1d10+6 E; Pen 4; Clip 1; Reload -; Blast [4], Shocking).

Gear: Common combat Drugs (use the rules for Slaughter on page 199 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook), grisly trophies, kill-recorder. Particularly important or successful Hekatrix Bloodbrides, called Syrens, often carry enhanced combat drugs (see **Chemical Enhancement** on page 80).

†**Threshing:** A weapon with the Threshing Quality doubles the amount of hits inflicted on the target.

GM ADVICE: USING HEKATRIX BLOODBRIDES

Hekatrix Bloodbrides are incredibly deadly foes in close-combat, both when leading squads of lower-ranked wyches and when gathered in elite companies of the best their Cult has to offer.

ENGAGEMENT

Hekatrix Bloodbrides are experienced gladiators and frequently launch surgical strikes so that they can choose their battlefield precisely rather than giving their foe that opportunity. If caught unprepared, however, they often use their incredible mobility to scatter and flank their foe, thus turning the tables to their advantage even in an ambush.

COMBAT TACTICS

When leading a group of Wyches (see page 356 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook), Hekatrix Bloodbrides dart in and out of the openings created by their subordinates, attacking those enemies who have already rendered vulnerable by injury or the entangling grip of shardnets. When fighting in elite formations, Hekatrix Bloodbrides often fight in concert, using deft feints and set-up strikes to create opportunities for one another to inflict terrible agony against a particular foe before the group turns its attentions upon the next target. Both Wyches and Hekatrix Bloodbrides prefer to dismember their foes with elegantly placed blows rather than kill them outright, hacking them apart limb by limb until nothing remains but agony and the last vestiges of life. If an encounter becomes unfavourable, Hekatrix Bloodbrides frequently disengage and wait for their wounded enemies to weaken before returning to torment them further, thus dragging out their terrible demise for all the pain it is worth.



HAEMONCULUS

"I've never grafted limbs this massive onto one of your kind before. I wonder if your spine can support the weight of the additional musculature? I have my doubts, but we shall soon find out conclusively. Feel free to express your discomfort as loudly as you find necessary."

—Haemonculus Anasta Skaiene

Of all the monsters that the Dark Eldar create with their miraculous and terrible powers over the flesh, perhaps the most awful are those they choose to become. Haemonculi are the epitome of the arcane flesh-sciences of the Dark Eldar, terrible creatures capable of reshaping themselves and others at their vile whim. These master fleshcrafters are responsible for the creation of many of the abominations that the Dark Eldar bring to war, including the brutish Grotesques, Talos Pain Engines, and other patchwork horrors born of blood and madness. They make their lairs at the bottom of Dark Eldar encampments and surround themselves with Wracks, who serve as aides and accomplices to their insane work.

Haemonculi enjoy a great deal of influence within Commorrhagh and other Dark Eldar cities because of their unnatural mastery over life and death. In this way, they can command the respect and support of even the most powerful Archons, for it is they who allow such individuals to return to life so long as the smallest remnant of their bodies survives. Of course, Haemonculi do not provide this service for free, but those capable of winning their favour with bribes and gifts can benefit from their hideous knowledge.

Never content to leave things as nature or sanity intended, Haemonculi tinker incessantly with their own bodies, transforming themselves until their outward forms begin to resemble their twisted souls. They frequently attach extra appendages, build tools and weapons of flesh into their bodies, and perform other horrific surgeries upon themselves as they pursue their mad art. In battle, they rely in part on their abhorrent strength and on the countless foul concoctions they can create and wield. However, the most dangerous weapon any Haemonculus possesses is its degenerate mind, for it is that fiendish intellect that separates them from the fleshwrought brutes they create. A Haemonculus is a diabolically creative foe, capable of turning nearly any situation to its advantage. This situation is not improved by the fact that a Haemonculus is often surrounded by fanatical or unthinking and highly expendable minions willing to die at its foul whim, giving up their lives that it might rip new secrets from the flesh of any unfortunate enough to fall within its clutches.

Haemonculus (Master)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
54	57	36	45	48	59	54	48	39	

Movement: 7/14/21/42

Wounds: 27

Armour: Gnarlskin (3 All).

Total TB: 7

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Command (Fel) +10, Deceive (Fel) +10, Dodge (Ag), Interrogation (WP) +30, Intimidate (S) +20, Medicae (Int) +30, Parry (WS), Scrutiny (Per) +20, Sleight of Hand (Ag) +10, Stealth (Ag), Tech-Use (Int) +20.

Talents: Ambidextrous, Blind Fighting, Cold Hearted, Combat Master, Die Hard, Deadeye Shot, Disturbing Voice, Heightened Senses (All), Jaded, Leap Up, Light Sleeper, Lightning Reflexes, Paranoia, Precise Blow, Rapid Reaction, Resistance (Poisons), Sharpshooter, Step Aside, Sure Strike, Swift Attack, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee, Ranged).

Traits: Dark Sight, Natural Armour (3), Unnatural Agility (3), Unnatural Toughness (3).

Weapons: Flesh gauntlet (Melee; 1d10+6 R; Pen 0; Toxic [2], Felling [4]) or scissorhand (Melee; 1d10+4 R; Pen 2; Razor Sharp, Tearing, Toxic [1]), stinger pistol (Pistol; 30m; S/-/-; 1d10+1 R; Pen 3; Clip 4; Reload 2 Full; Felling [4] Razor-Sharp, Toxic [4]).

Gear: Assorted drugs, elixirs, philtres, unguents, and toxins (treat as 1d5 doses of all drugs in the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook, as well as other substances, at the GM's discretion), 1 coven artefact, 2 spare clips for Stinger Pistol; and various eldritch substances of the Haemonculi's crafts, such as crystallised sorrow, liquid fear, or the shattered faith of an Imperial Saint.

ARTEFACTS OF THE COVEN

The vaults and weapon-museums of the Haemonculus Covens hold many weapons and tools so far beyond the comprehension of humanity that they appear as more witchcraft or sorcery than technology. These items are as precious as they are terrible, and those who spend their powers too freely or too recklessly often learn the secret lessons of pain hoarded by the Coven's masters, in a way they would rather have avoided. Still, it is a rare occasion when a Haemonculus takes to the open field without such a device. Each artefact is carefully selected for best use in the upcoming battle from among countless mechanisms of torment. Note that only Haemonculi truly know the secrets of their wargear, and merely handling them untrained can result in insanity, death, or fates even more gruesome still.

Crucible of Malediction

This is a weapon much-favoured among Haemonculi who make use of essences extracted from their Craftworld kin, but it serves as a deadly tool against the psychically-inclined of any species. The echoes of psykers tortured to death by the Crucible's maker are trapped within the artefact, bound into a physical space that binds their spiritual essence in a perversion of the Warp and realspace.



The Haemonculus can unleash the Crucible's power as a Full Action, causing any creature with a Psy Rating within 3d10+30 meters to make a **Hard (-20) Willpower Test** or gain 1d10 Insanity points per Degree of Failure. Those who fail by three or more Degrees are rendered totally catatonic for a number of minutes equal to the Insanity Points they gained. No Haemonculus is reckless enough to unleash a Crucible of Malediction a second time without an extended period of work in their laboratory, as each activation changes the nature of the contained force in potentially volatile and ruinous ways.

Orb of Despair

Though they appear to be simple spheres of blackened crystal without any mechanism or design, Orbs of Despair are among the most terrible weapons of the covens. Each has been crafted to channel pain and suffering into its depths like a reservoir of cruelty, and has drunk deep of such darkness over centuries or millennia. When these energies are released, they hammer at those nearby with an indescribable fury, transforming sensation into a physical and psychic blow.

An Orb of Despair is a weapon with the following profile: Thrown; 9m; S/-/-; 2d10+12 X; Pen Special; Clip 1; Reload -; Blast (4). Damage from an Orb of Despair is reduced by the target's Willpower Bonus but ignores its Armour and Toughness Bonus. Any character who survives an attack from this weapon attack gains 1d5+1 Insanity Points. The Orb of Despair does not affect machines and vehicles.

Shattershard

A Shattershard is a particularly deadly Dark Eldar ranged weapon made from a fragment of the transdimensional portal known as the "Mirror of Planes" that cruelly traps its targets reflections before dashing them to pieces. Anyone whose reflection is smashed in this way suffers the same terrible fate. The use of Shattershards is generally reserved for the elimination of dangerous warleaders, champions, and generals, whose presence alone can influence a conflict. Deploying the artefact typically removes such a presence entirely, and often reverses its effects, when the opposing troops see the ruin made of the greatest among them.

A Haemonculus can attempt to catch an enemy's reflection in the shard with an **Opposed Agility Test** as a Half Action. A trapped reflection can be broken by spending another Half Action. An enemy whose reflection is broken must pass a **Hard (-20) Toughness Test** suffer 1d5 Impact Damage ignoring Armour and Toughness Bonus, plus an additional 1d5 Impact Damage ignoring Armour and Toughness Bonus for every Degree of Failure by which he fails the Test. A Shattershard only affects living creatures.



GM ADVICE: USING A HAEMONCULUS

A Haemonculus is a particularly terrible foe to face, especially for an Imperial Guardsman. Though Haemonculi are less devoted to strategy than Archons and less obsessed with martial perfection than Succubi, their twisted intellects are without parallel, and they never cease to concoct new ways to torment their victims.

ENGAGEMENT

Haemonculi are incredibly devious leaders, using a deadly combination of trickery and the unquestioning, unyielding brute force of their more powerful minions. Some Haemonculi in the Spinward Front have been known to lure their foes into deadly traps from which there is no escape, casually sacrificing their fleshwrought pawns to acquire interesting new "samples" for their hideous arcane sciences. If caught unawares, Haemonculi think little of throwing away the twisted lives of their followers cripple their enemies and secure their own escape.

STRATEGIES

Many Haemonculi surround themselves with Wracks, Grotesques, and even more terrifying creatures such as Talos Pain Engines. They hurl these powerful brutes at their foes, seeking to discern weaknesses in their enemies that they can exploit or to draw them into ambushes and other traps that their victims cannot overcome.

COMBAT TACTICS

Haemonculi never stop experimenting, even on the battlefield. As such, it is not unlikely that, if a Haemonculus encounters a creature that it deems an interesting specimen, it might seek to test the limits of its abilities—especially its physical and mental resilience. In such a case, the Haemonculus might use its bodyguards—be these Wracks, Grotesques, or other minions—to isolate a more interesting enemy while it personally oversees the "experimentation." Some Haemonculi enjoy blooding their hands personally, but others prefer to merely observe as their loyal assistants butcher their foes. Many Haemonculi carry a terrible arcane device or have a particularly savage minion that they hold in reserve as a trump card against unforeseen complications, and take horrific glee in unleashing this ultimate weapon upon foes who foolishly believe that they have gained the edge.





SCOURGE

"Arrogant creature, you will pay for the insult of trying to force me to the ground. The mere thought of brushing my feet against the same dirt you tread sickens me. I will take your imminent screams of dying anguish as your crude attempt at an apology."

—Sorakhn Elish, Scourge Solarite

The messengers of the Kabals, Scourges are deadly warriors who take to the skies on lithe, flesh-crafted wings shaped by the Haemonculi. The transformation a Dark Eldar must undergo is in equal parts delicate and brutal, a series of surgeries that hollow their bones, reshape and repurpose their musculature, and add a number of other augmentations that allow the Scourge the ability to fly. Should a Dark Eldar survive this harrowing process—and the equally taxing journey to the topmost spires to prove himself worthy of the title—becomes a Scourge in both name and twisted form.

Scourges occupy an important position in Commorite society, carrying the most clandestine of missives between powerful Archons and other figures of importance in the deadly web of intrigue that eternally consumes the Dark City, and Dark Eldar culture at large. As such, Scourges command considerable respect, and slaying a Scourge is a grievous crime (with even more grievous punishments associated with it). The greatest amongst the Scourges are the Solarites, who rarely resemble Dark Eldar at all, having long ago been twisted into avian horrors.

On the battlefield, Scourges are a true terror, flitting nimbly in and out of range and eviscerating their foes in a rain of lethal fire. Armed with the deadliest infantry weapons that the Dark Eldar bring to bear on their realspace raids, Scourges annihilate their foes with such armaments as blasters, splinter cannons, and dark lances.



Scourge (Elite)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
46	51	45	42	58	36	52	37	41	

Movement: 8/16/24/48
Armour: Ghostplate armour† (6 All).
Skills: Acrobatic (Ag) +10, Awareness (Per) +10, Deceive, Dodge (Ag), Inquiry (Fel) +10, Scrutiny (Per), Sleight Stealth (Ag), Tech-Use (Int).

Talents: Assassin Strike, Bulging Biceps, Hard Target, Heightened Senses (Sight), Hip Shooting, Lightning Reflexes, Nerves of Steel.

Traits: Dark Sight, Flyer (8), Unnatural Agility (3)

Weapons: Poisoned blade (Melee; 1d5+3 R; Pen 2; Toxic [2]), Eldar plasma grenades (Thrown; 12m; S/-/-; 1d10+6 E; Pen 4; Clip 1; Reload -; Blast [4], Shocking), and shardcarbine (Basic; 60m; S/3/5; 1d10+2 R; Clip 50; Reload 2 Full; Storm, Toxic [1]).

Particularly successful Scourges often acquire heavier weaponry, and can replace their Shardcarbine with one of the following options:

- Shredder (Basic; 40m; S/-/-; 2d10+5 R; Pen 2; Clip 12; Reload 2 Full; Blast [3], Reliable, Tearing)
- Blaster (Basic; 75m; S/-/-; 3d10+7 E; Pen 4; Clip 12; Reload 2 Full; Lance)
- Splinter Cannon (Heavy; 150m; -/5/10; 2d10+2 R; Pen 4; Clip 300; Reload 2 Full; Toxic [4])
- Dark Lance (Heavy, 200m; S/-/-; 3d10+7 E; Pen 4; Clip 9; Reload 2 Full; Lance)
- Haywire Blaster (Basic; 100m; S/-/-; 1d10+5 E; Pen 5; Clip 8; Reload 2 Full; Haywire [1])
- Heat Lance (Basic; 75m; S/-/-; 2d10+2 E; Pen 4; Lance, Melta)

Gear: 2 spare clips for chosen weapon, tokens of favour, grisly trophies, scope-mounted kill-recorder.

†**Ghostplate Armour:** An individual wearing Ghostplate Armour benefits from a force field with a Protection Rating of 20 that Overloads on a result of 1–5.

GM ADVICE: USING SCOURGES

Scourges are extremely mobile fighters, and are exceptionally fast for the potency of the heavy weapons they often equip.

ENGAGEMENT

Like almost all Dark Eldar, Scourges see little value in giving prey-beasts a chance to ready themselves for battle. Scourges almost always seek to ambush their prey from afar, creating a crossfire from as far outside the range of their enemy's weapons as their own arms allow. If ambushed, Scourges take flight, scattering like carrion birds before regrouping at a safe distance to repay the insult with death.

COMBAT TACTICS

Scourges rarely stay in one place for long, using their superior mobility to fly from one piece of elevated cover to another while peppering their enemies with fire. When possible, Scourges prefer to shoot at targets who cannot shoot back and withdraw while firing if the enemy attempts to close the gap. Like most Dark Eldar, Scourges do not always attempt to kill their foes outright, instead seeking to debilitate them by shooting off limbs or other less necessary body-parts—although the heavier weapons they carry often annihilate their targets too thoroughly to allow for such extended torment.

HELLION

The fractious Kabals and ever-shifting alliances of the Dark Eldar inevitably mean that many Dark Eldar fall from the grace of the lofty spires, if they ever had the opportunity to earn it. Anti-authoritarian and iconoclastic individuals also frequently reject the strangling grip of the Kabals, preferring the savage freedom of the skies. Some of these dispossessed Dark Eldar band together into gangs of Hellions, who spurn the presumptuous authority of the Kabals and choose to hunt Commorragh's bruised atmosphere as Hellions. Of course, as with all Dark Eldar, the desire for power burns deep within the heart of each Hellion, and so the many gangs fight incessantly amongst themselves and with groups of Reavers and Scourges, jockeying constantly for position and prestige in the aerial underworld of Commorragh.

Hellions stay aloft on delicately-calibrated anti-gravity boards called skyboards, which carry them to their prey and given them unparalleled manoeuvrability in combat. Most wield double-headed polearms called hellglaives, the hooked blades of which allow Hellions to perform incredible acrobatic stunts midair, twirling around the spires of Commorragh with lethal precision and speed. These weapons are also honed to a killing edge, of course, and can sever flesh and bone with a single swipe.

Despite their hatred of the Kabals, Hellions gangs are capricious and opportunistic, and thus frequently join Kabals as shock troops for realspace raids. These alliances usually last only as long as the payment—and the patience of the battle-hungry and drug-crazed Hellions—can suppress their

anarchic urge to sow terror upon the nearest potential prey. Still, Kabals rarely bother to annihilate Hellion gangs entirely, even as retribution, as they consider such petty miscreants unworthy of the effort extermination would require.

Hellion (Troop)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
48	48	38	36	6I	3I	34	3I	44	

Movement: 9/18/27/54

Wounds: 12

Armour: Scavenged wych suit (3 All).

Total TB: 3

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag) +10, Awareness (Per), Dodge (Ag), Intimidate (S), Parry (WS), Operate (Surface) +20, Stealth (Ag).

Talents: Ambidextrous, Catfall, Hard Target, Nerves of Steel, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee).

Traits: Dark Sight, Unnatural Agility (3).

Weapons: Hellglaive (Melee; 1d10+8 R; Pen 3; Razor Sharp), skyboard-mounted splinter pods (Front-Facing; 75m; S/5/7; 1d10+2 R; Pen 3; Clip 200; Reload 2 Full; Toxic [1]).

Gear: Hellion skyboard (see page 361 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook), scavenged valuables.

GM ADVICE: USING HELLIONS

Hellions are savage and feral warriors who descend upon their prey from above on their skyboards, tearing them apart with a flurry of well-placed blows.

ENGAGEMENT

Hellions use the incredible manoeuvrability of their skyboards to gain the advantage on their targets, dropping from above or wheeling nimbly from around cover to launch their assaults before their prey can react. If caught off-guard, they use their speed to shriek towards their prey, relying on their inhuman reflexes and their own suppressing fire to carry them through oncoming attacks.

COMBAT TACTICS

Once they reach their targets, Hellions circle their enemies again and again on their skyboards, attempting to hack off limbs and heads as their cruel whims direct them. Hellions also occasionally enjoy the tactic of grabbing a single victim and swooping away, launching their target into the air and letting gravity do its work. Hellions are extremely aggressive, and this trait is only intensified by the combat drugs that many imbibe, but they are not completely fearless. Many Hellions prefer to fight enemies they outmatch, and flee if faced with superior forces, spouting a cackling river of obscenities as they retreat.



INCUBUS

"You fought well enough that killing you was not a complete waste of my abilities. Had you had another two centuries to prepare for this encounter, you might have approached being a challenge. It is almost a pity that you did not live that long."

—Incubus Valstran Doomblade,
to the dying Commissar Kolve

Incubi are amongst the most dangerous warriors in the dark city of Commorragh, fighters devoted body and soul to slaughter. Clad in imposing, horned Incubus warsuits and wielding vicious two-handed blades called klaives, Incubi are among the last of the Dark Eldar to dedicate themselves to any of the Eldar gods from before the fall of their species. These killers venerate to Khaine, the Bloody-Handed God, whose iron statues decorate their obsidian shrines, lit by the burning corpses of those too weak to achieve the status of Incubus. Aspirates clash under the harsh gaze of the temple's Heirarch, butchering one another to gain the skills necessary to best a full-fledged Incubus and claim his wargear. Once an Incubus has done this, he must hunt and destroy an Aspect Warrior in a duel, defiling his foe's soulstone to create a psychic torture device aptly named a tormentor.

Though Incubi do not have a sense of honour in the way humans would define such a thing, they are highly disciplined and obsessed with an ideal of perfection through ascetic study of the art of murder. As such, they are somewhat less capricious than many

GM ADVICE: USING INCUBI

Incubi are incredibly lethal close-combat fighters and are far more resilient than most of their Dark Eldar brethren thanks to their heavy Incubus warsuits.

ENGAGEMENT

Incubi often approach their foes silently despite the relative weight of their perfectly-fitted armour, launching into melee combat before their enemies can fire. Whether they have the initiative in battle or not (though the latter is rare, given their inhuman senses), Incubi attempt to close to melee combat, using their blistering speed to avoid fire.

COMBAT TACTICS

Incubi are spectacular duellists, and though they are highly effective in group combat, they truly shine in one-on-one deathmatches. Once they reach their foes, the Game Master could consider having a group of Incubi split roughly evenly between their enemies in an attempt to turn the melee into a series of duels. By manoeuvring their targets apart, the Incubi can both break the formation and keep their enemies from helping one another in their battles. Incubi are extremely efficient killers, however, and are not prone to dragging out a fight by inflicting superficial injuries upon their enemies as some of their brethren do. Instead, an Incubus typically prefers to kill with a single severing stroke to the head or torso before moving on to the next quarry. If a combat turns particularly sour, Incubi are not above retreating to re-group and execute a new ambush or even falling back to lead their foes into a trap—though they prefer not to share their kills whenever they can avoid it.

of their kin, but what they lack in mercurial treachery, they more than compensate for in raw brutality. Though Incubi are extremely accomplished duellists, they are still Dark Eldar, and are never above taking any advantage they can get in battle that allows them to shed blood more efficiently. Some say that Incubi can be trusted to keep their word once it has been given, but whether or not this is true, these warriors are true mercenaries, willing to fight for anyone if the conditions are favourable.

The most skilled champions amongst the Incubi hold the vaunted title of Klaivex. These icy killers wield demi-klaives, one-handed variants of the massive klaive that can be linked to eviscerate foes with a two-handed strike. Such elite warriors are a true terror to face on the fields of war, moving with savage grace from one target to the next, dismembering each with clean, cruel blows and the sort of jaded contempt that can only take root after centuries of unquestioning slaughter.

Given this vast quantity of experience that even the least amongst the Incubi brings to bear, only the most masterful melee combatants in the Imperial Guard can hope to survive a one-on-one duel against an Incubus, let alone come out victorious. Still, a number of soldiers in the Spinward Front have had the skill, tenacity, and good fortune to best an Incubus. Most of these troopers carry the Warden's Commendation for their heroism.

Incubus (Elite)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
59	44	45	45	57	35	37	39	30	

Movement: 8/16/24/48

Wounds: 16

Armour: Incubus warsuit (8 All).

Total TB: 4

Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness (Per) +10, Command (Fel), Dodge (Ag), Intimidate (S) +20, Parry (WS) +20, Scrutiny (Per) +10, Stealth (Ag).

Talents: Ambidextrous, Cold Hearted, Combat Master, Disturbing Voice, Hard Target, Heightened Senses (Hearing, Sight), Jaded, Leap Up, Light Sleeper, Lightning Attack, Lightning Reflexes, Nerves of Steel, Paranoia, Precise Blow, Rapid Reaction, Sure Strike, Swift Attack, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee).

Traits: Dark Sight, Unnatural Agility (3).

Weapons: Klaive (Melee; 1d10+12 E; Pen 8; Power Field). If one of the Incubi is the Klaivex (a squad leader), he is armed with two demi-klaives (Melee; 1d10+8 E; Pen 6; Power Field), which can be joined together to form a two handed weapon (Melee; 1d10+16 E; Pen 8; Power Field, Unwieldy), and a bloodstone (Basic; 10m; 1d10+3 E; Pen 7; Spray).

REAYER

Dark Eldar move and think much more swiftly than humans, and can thus pilot vehicles at greater speeds without losing control. Reavers are Dark Eldar who seem determined to test the limits of this ability, piloting screaming jetbikes through the air at incredible velocity, killing their foes without slowing. In Commorragh and other Dark Eldar outposts, they shriek their way around the arenas of the Wych Cults, whirling around the spires in life-and-death races as each seeks to slash apart his competitors with the bladed edges of his own jetbike.

Frequently, less skilled or fortunate pilots will be torn apart with well-placed passing strikes from their competitors, their spilled blood and shredded flesh splattering down upon the arena audiences below. However, the carnage they inflict is not simply wanton, for Reavers seek to perfect the “elegant kill.” They seek the power and skill to slay their competitors in the manner of their choosing, cutting them apart with a single, immaculate blow rather than simply mauling them to death like a brute.

On the battlefield during realspace raids, Reavers can be expected to behave much as they do during their lethal bloodsports. Few creatures are prepared to deal with foes moving at such high velocities, and Reavers revel in striking with the element of surprise, killing before shrill cry of their approach has even reached their prey.

Imperial Guardsmen in particular are vulnerable to Reavers, as their jetbikes are very difficult for infantry to engage directly. On the battlefields of the Spinward Front, many Guardsmen have died beneath the blade-vanes of skilled Reavers.

GM ADVICE: USING REAVERS

Reavers use their speeding jetbikes to slam into their prey without warning, dismembering them before they are even aware of the attack.

ENGAGEMENT

Reaver jetbikes are blisteringly fast, even compared to swift Hellions on their skyboards, and so Reavers sometimes forgo stealth in favour of raw acceleration when ambushing their victims. If suddenly thrown into battle, Reavers frequently speed away before whipping back to strike from an unexpected angle.

COMBAT TACTICS

Reavers typically strike their prey with repeated hit and run attacks, tearing by at breakneck speed on their jetbikes to deliver deadly bursts of fire from the jetbikes' inbuilt splinter rifles or slashes with their blade-vanes before speeding out of range of any retaliatory shots and turning for another pass. Some groups of Reavers are willing to attack superior forces, using their jetbikes to avoid retaliation, but most withdraw if they find themselves at a serious disadvantage. As part of larger battlefield operations, Reavers are sometimes deployed to harass infantry formations with hit and run strikes, but are also frequently sent to annihilate vehicles if they are equipped with mounted blasters.

Reaver (Troop)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
47	49	35	37	66	33	34	33	39	

Movement: 9/18/27/54

Wounds: 12

Armour: Wych suit (3 All).

Total TB: 3

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag) +10, Awareness (Per), Dodge (Ag), Parry (WS), Operate (Surface) +20, Tech-Use (Int) +10.

Talents: Ambidextrous, Catfall, Hard Target, Nerves of Steel, Rapid Reaction.

Traits: Dark Sight, Unnatural Agility (3).

Weapons: Jetbike blade-vanes (Melee; 1d10+7 R; Pen 4; Unwieldy, Hit-and-Run Only†), jetbike-mounted splinter rifle (Front-Facing; 100m; S/3/5; 1d10+2 R; Pen 3; Clip 200; Reload 2 Full; Toxic [2]) or jetbike-mounted blaster (Front-Facing; 75m; S/-/-; 3d10+7 E; Pen 4; Clip -; Reload -; Lance), Wych Knife (Melee; 1d5+5 R; Pen 0; Balanced).

†**Hit-and-Run-Only:** This weapon is mounted on the Reaver jetbike itself, and can only be used as part of the Hit and Run vehicle action (see page 273 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook).

Gear: Reaver jetbike (see pages 361–362 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook), grisly trophies.



MANDRAKE

"Just when you're watching the ceiling, they come through the walls. If the things we fight ever run out of ways to surprise you, I expect it's because their most recent surprise finally did the job for good."

—Private Mercito Grant

Dark Eldar are creatures that thrive on the fear of others, and their jaded minds have little space for terror. And yet, even their dark dreams are haunted by some creatures too terrible to fully imagine, things that tug at the corners of reality by their mere, abominable existence. Mandrakes are such creatures, vile things that hail from the labyrinth dimensions. Perhaps mercifully, the true nature of these monsters is nearly as hard to isolate as they are, fading into the shadows of forgotten time. While their form recalls that of the Eldar, they are shadowy, half-real creatures that simultaneously inhabit both reality and somewhere beyond the grasp of such logic. Twisting veins of fire and frost burn through the cracked obsidian of their flesh. Light itself seems to scorn them, obscuring them and making them even more terrible in their victims' final imaginings.

Mandrakes feed directly upon the essence of life, casting a pall of frost over any place they enter and stealing energy from their hapless victims. As a Mandrake partakes in its entropic feast, the sigils of destruction wrought into its flesh begin to glow ever more terribly. Once infused with this stolen life, a Mandrake can unleash terrible bursts of balefire that devour all heat in those they strike.



Archons periodically seek the service of these vile creatures, both to fight in their deadly games of political intrigue with rival nobles and to accompany them on realspace raids. Mandrakes have been known to occasionally ask for truly unfathomable payments in lieu of their usual toll of slaves, such as an unheard noise, a forgotten word, or things even stranger.

Mandrake (Elite)								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
48	46	51	41	58	33	33	40	35

Movement: 8/16/24/48

Wounds: 14

Armour: None.

Total TB: 6

Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness (Per) +10, Dodge (Ag), Intimidate (S) +20, Parry (WS) +10, Stealth (Ag) +30, Survival (Per) +10.

Talents: Assaassin Strike, Blademaster, Cold Hearted, Disturbing Voice, Fearless, Hard Target, Leap Up, Nerves of Steel, Rapid Reaction, Resistance (Cold, Heat), Unarmed Warrior.

Traits: Dark Sight, Daemonic (2), Frozen Flame†, Nightstrider††, Phase, Shadow-dweller†††, Unnatural Agility (3), Unnatural Strength (2).

Weapons: Sickle blade or wickedly-honed knife (Melee; 1d10+7 R, Pen 3, Crippling [3], Tearing).

Gear: Grisly trophies, ragged loincloth.

†**Frozen Flame:** A Mandrake that has slain a living being within the past 24 hours can use the Baleblast attack listed below:

Baleblast (Basic; 50m; S/3/-; 1d10+6 E; Pen 4; Clip -; Reload -; Crippling [3], Corrosive).

††**Nightstrider:** As a Full Action, a Mandrake can slink into one shadow only to emerge from another within 16 metres, filling the air within 10 metres around it with an icy chill. After moving, it makes a **Challenging (+0) Opposed Stealth Test**, against all nearby. Any character who loses the Opposed Test is unable to follow that Mandrake's flitting movements—until it strikes!

†††**Shadow-dweller:** Whenever a Mandrake successfully Dodges an attack, it may immediately gain the Incorporeal Trait until the beginning of its next Turn.

GM ADVICE: USING MANDRAKES

Mandrakes are terrifying assassins, killers that walk between worlds and stride the shadows themselves.

ENGAGEMENT

Mandrakes almost invariably choose their battles, slipping in to strike from behind and vanishing into the darkness if they have somehow been ambushed.

COMBAT TACTICS

Mandrakes often seek to split their prey up so that they can kill the weakest members. In an ambush, they emerge from the shadows to strike at the weakest members of the group, attempting to wound or even slay one and drink deep of his life essence before vanishing into the darkness and preparing to strike again.

DARK ELДАР VEHICLES

The Dark Eldar design their vehicles with the same cruel extravagance that they put into all of their other weapons. Indeed, they do not see the distinction between vehicles and weapons, and thus made to be as terrifyingly lethal as possible. They sail across the terrain effortlessly, scorning gravity's grip and eviscerating foes who draw too close with powerful weapons and razor-edged vanes alike.

RAVAGER

Ravager gunships are based on the same skimmer chassis as Raider Transports (see page 362 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook). However, while Raiders are swift transports meant to deliver troops into the enemy's heart, Ravagers are designed to inflict maximum harm with their three advanced, on-board heavy weapons. Whether these are dark lances or disintegrators, Ravagers have an incredible capacity for killing, and are capable of laying down torrents of fire as they careen past their foes.

Type: Skimmer **Tactical Speed:** 21m
Cruising Speed: 130 kph **Manoeuvrability:** +15
Structural Integrity: 36 **Size:** Enormous
Armour: Front 27, Side 27, Rear 20
Vehicle Traits: Enhanced Motive System, Open-Topped, Skimmer.

Crew: 1 Pilot and 3 Gunners

Carry Capacity: None

Weapons: Three Sponson-mounted weapons (choose from the following):

- Dark lance (Front Facing /Left Facing/Right Facing; 200m; S/-/-; 4d10+7 E; Pen 5; Clip -; Reload -; Lance)
- Disintegrator (Front Facing/Left Facing/Right Facing; 200m; -/-/10; 2d10+6 E; Pen 9; Clip -; Reload -)

Special Rules: Dark Eldar vehicles are often equipped with advanced optic shielding known as Flicker Fields, which cause them to appear as though they are flickering in and out of existence. All ranged attacks against a vehicle equipped with Flicker Fields suffer a -20 penalty.

TANTALUS

The Tantalus is a massive skimmer originally commissioned by a powerful Archon, Duke Surasis Grief of the Kabal of the Dark Mirror, to wreak bloody havoc against other Dark Eldar in the incessant infighting of the dark city of Commorragh. Duke Surasis was eventually slain by his rivals and the plans for the Tantalus distributed, letting other Kabals who wished to enact particularly opulent slaughter to do so in this massive, bladed vessel.

Though the Tantalus is not a particularly common vessel and is only occasionally used in realspace raids in the Spinward Front, its value as a weapon of terror is inestimable. It seems an aerial impossibility that spurns the grip of physics, an elegant mass of razors sliding along through the sky to dismember anything in its path. To a squad of Imperial Guardsman (or any other exposed infantry squads), a Tantalus is particularly deadly foe, capable of eviscerating large groups in a single pass while annihilating any armoured defences such as bunkers or vehicles with its potent ranged weapons.



Though more fragile than other vehicles of its scale, its speed and agility make it extremely difficult to hit with many of the infantry weapons that are even capable of damaging it, such as meltaguns and grenades. Further, the array of blades on the craft's underbelly forces anyone who wishes to approach close enough to use such weapons to contemplate the awful death by repeated evisceration that he would suffer should he fail.

Type: Skimmer **Tactical Speed:** 20m
Cruising Speed: 80 kph **Manoeuvrability:** +15
Structural Integrity: 40 **Size:** Massive
Armour: Front 30, Side 30, Rear 20

Vehicle Traits: Enhanced Motive Systems, Open-Topped, Orbital Deployment, Skimmer.

Crew: 1 Pilot

Carry Capacity: 16 Dark Eldar and their spoils of war

Weapons: Two Fixed pulse-disintegrators (Front-Facing; 200m; -/-/10; 2d10+6 E; Pen 9; Clip -; Reload-; Storm).

Scythevanes: The frame of a Tantalus is defined by the vast, power field-shrouded scythes running along its sides. For the purpose of making Hit & Run attacks, the pilot of a Tantalus is considered to be armed with a melee weapon with the following profile: Scythevanes (Melee; 2d10+9 E; Pen 9; Unwieldy). Note that, due to the nature of the weapon, the pilot does not add its Strength Bonus to the Damage of such attacks.

Flickerfields: This holographic projection causes the Tantalus to appear as though it are flickering in and out of existence. All ranged attacks against a vehicle equipped with Flicker Fields suffer a -20 penalty.

Chapter V, Section VIII (Other Pernicious Xenos), Sub-Section II (The Kroot)

Commissariat Memo MCCXXVIII to Troopers in the Spinward Front:

Kroot are notorious scavengers, of both flesh and metal, and often seek to steal the advanced weaponry of superior forces, such as the Imperial Guard. Kroot often carry arms with complex arcano-mechanisms and machine spirits well beyond their primal ken. Such contraptions, no matter how potent or useful they might seem, must be relinquished to one's regimental Engineeers for ritual purification and dismantling. Any Guardsman possessing or in excessive proximity to such devices will be subject to execution and/or punishment for tech-heresy at the discretion of the regiment's Engineeers.

IDENTIFYING THE KROOT

Recognisable by their wiry, emaciated frames, sickly brownish-green hides, and the spiny quills sprouting from their ugly, beaked heads, the Kroot seem on the surface little more than beasts. However, this bestial appearance belies their depraved intelligence. The most repulsive aspect of these xenos is their ghoulish habit of eating the dead, devouring the flesh of their foes. Imperial xenologists theorise that this vile custom is fuelled by the primal superstitions of the Kroot, which erroneously suggest that they can steal the essence of their foes by consuming their flesh and organs. Fortunately, this practice makes the Kroot easy to identify by the stench from the rotting flesh they so greedily consume.

TELLTALE SIGNS OF KROOT IN THE FIELD

As bestial carrion feeders, the Kroot rely on surprise rather than any real strength of arms or stalwart courage. Fortunately, there are five obvious and unmistakable signs of a Kroot infestation or impending ambush, as listed here:

- The stench of the carcasses they devour
- Shed quills (possibly toxic, do not touch)
- Beak marks in nearby foliage
- Caches of gnawed bones and sundry offal
- Pungent spoor

DISPATCHING KROOT IN THE EMPEROR'S NAME

Should a Kroot force ambush you in spite of your precautions, do not panic or flee. Kroot can smell fear, and are driven into a bloodlust by it. Instead, hold firm and fire your weapon at them. Loud recitation of the Litanies of Duty and Smiting can also help to drive Kroot back, as they are known to be afraid of loud noises. If you are blessed with artillery support, the very sound of its righteous thunder can often drive the Kroot away like panicked Grox. Be cautious not to let your desire to spill their foul xenos blood up close with your own hands overwhelm you, however, as the Emperor's holy shells are liable to obliterate you as well as the xenos if called down too near your own position.

Kroot are wiry, but they're much stronger than they look. Their beaks are also very sharp. Watch out for the beak.

They seem to have a strong sense of smell. Attacking from downwind is a bad idea.

This scribe has never been in the field, let alone hunted Kroot. Ignore these "signs." Just listen for screaming.



If this advice is what stopped you from bombing your own position, you probably deserve what you get.

THE KROOT

“The galaxy is large, and full of many strong creatures. We admire their strength. We honour that strength as we consume their meat. You humans are not so strong, but you are tenacious, and your meat is more palatable than Orkflesh.”

—Shaper Lok Ch’kreen of the Oathbreakers Kindred

The Kroot are a highly adaptable alien species hailing from the world of Pech in the Eastern Fringe, at the edge of the Tau Empire. Believed to have descended from an avian species that prowled the thick, evergreen jagga forests and tundra of their home world, the Kroot are warriors born, raptor-like predators preying on the other races of the galaxy. At some point in their evolution, the Kroot developed the peculiar ability to rapidly absorb the genetic information of the prey they consumed into their own bodies, and pass this on to their descendants. This rapid adaptation can be both a boon and curse to the Kroot, allowing them to literally shape their own evolution, but also threatening them with the very real danger of journeying down the path of an evolutionary dead end.

Opportunists by their very nature, the Kroot are a naturally mercenary and adventurous race, willing to work for virtually anyone willing to pay them. While their home world of Pech is fully integrated into the Tau Empire, the Kroot Kindreds operating in the Periphery are far removed from the influence of the Greater Good, and are free to pursue their own ends. Exactly how the Kroot have come to be so far from their home world remains a mystery, but Imperial scholars speculate that they most likely entered the Koronus Expanse sometime prior to its rediscovery, through the Warp gateway known as the Well of Night.

Scores of different Kindreds have been identified operating in the Periphery, and often band together into larger mercenary groups. In turn, the Shapers that lead these mercenary bands will contract with the highest bidder to provide a ready army of capable and vicious warriors. Though they show little preference or loyalty to one side or another in the conflicts raging on the Spinward Front, the Kroot are generally scrupulously honest in their dealings, abiding by the terms of their agreements to the letter. Because of the chaotic nature of the struggle in the sub-sector, Kroot Kindreds occasionally even find themselves fighting each other. Though Kroot on the battlefield show no restraint in killing (and eating) their own kind, such encounters don’t seem to engender any lasting resentment, and former enemies will readily fight beside each other once their commitments end and new alliances are formed. At the Second Siege of Tumbledown, following twelve weeks of intense fighting, the period of service agreed to by the Kindreds fighting with the armies of the Dominate expired. The Kroot promptly attacked their erstwhile allies, relieving the beleaguered hive, whose pragmatic governor-militant had secretly negotiated a new contract with the Kroot mercenaries.

THE HUNTING GROUNDS

Thanks to their Warspheres, the Kroot are remarkably mobile, and though relative newcomers to the Spinward Front, they can be found throughout the Periphery. The Ordos Xenos is still at a loss to explain the Kroot’s ability to construct and operate such advanced vessels, though some theorise that it is perhaps the product of innate genetic information obtained from devouring Ork Mekaniaks at some point in the past. The Kroot Warspheres are peculiar vessels, with no two alike, that serve as both homes and warships to the Kroot who travel among the stars. While relatively slow and ungainly, the Warspheres are sturdy and reliable, and unlike Tau vessels, they are capable of long-distance Warp travel. How the Kroot manage to safely navigate the dangerous ebbs and tides of the Empyrean without the benefit of Navigators is a mystery.

The first Warsphere seen in the Periphery was that of the Bonegnashers, which appeared in orbit around Lukius and quickly blasted its way past several Ork Kroozers before descending to the planet’s surface to disgorge its lethal cargo. Since then, several other Warspheres have been sighted in the sub-sector, from Kulth to Orbiana. Kroot mercenaries can be found on at least a half dozen worlds of the Severan Dominate, including Kulth, Lukius, Janus, Virbius, Cuyavale, and the moons of Karacallia.

A naturally arboreal species, the Kroot are most at home in woods, forests, and jungles, where they can use their skills to the utmost advantage. The massive rain forests of Cuyavale have proven a siren’s call to the Kroot, in particular the Oathbreakers, who seem to view the world as a second Pech; it is rumoured that the Oathbreakers hope to permanently colonise Cuyavale, even if they have to wrench it from the grasp of both the Severan Dominate and Grimtoof’s Orks.

THE LAMB AND THE WOLF

With few deeply held prejudices against the other races of the galaxy and no allegiances to any particular faction beyond the boundaries of the Tau Empire, the Kroot don’t particularly care who they fight for or why, only that they get paid. While most of the Kindreds on the Spinward Front find themselves fighting for the Severan Dominate, Kroot can be found in the service of nearly every group vying for power in the Periphery.

His alliance with the Children of Thorns in question, Duke Severus has sought other allies to assist in fending off the armies of the Orks and the Imperium and retaining control of his burgeoning empire. Though the worlds of Dominate can provide supplies and materiel in abundance, the endless war had drained the Severan Dominate of its most important resource: manpower. To that end, the Severan Dominate has sought out mercenaries to bolster its rapidly dwindling armies, leveraging its vast treasury to retain its tenuous hold on the sub-sector.

Desperate, the Severan Dominate has sent scores of agents throughout the Calixis Sector and beyond, into the wilds of the Koronus Expanse, in search of new allies and mercenaries to help stem the relentless advance of the Imperial Guard and the Ork hordes of Waaagh! Grimtoof. Enoulian warbands, Stryxis slave-armies and battalions of vat-brutes, and other notorious soldiers of fortune have fought for the Dominate on various worlds across the sub-sector, but

the Kroot are rapidly becoming the preferred mercenaries of Duke Severus. Unlike the Dark Eldar, the Kroot scrupulously honour their contracts, and while they might occasionally eat a few inhabitants of Severan Dominate-held worlds, they do not harvest entire planets of their populations.

Having confronted the Kroot on the battlefield, it is rumoured that some Imperial commanders have struck their own deals with the Kroot, though such arrangements with xenos are strictly forbidden. Kroot have also been reported fighting alongside the forces of Chaos on the Spinward Front, especially those belonging to the Fleshtaker Kindred. Kroot mercenaries have even been spotted amongst the Orks of Waaagh! Grimtoof.

For their part, most other species—and humans in particular—tend to feel somewhat uncomfortable in the presence of Kroot. Though nearly all citizens of the Imperium are raised to have an almost pathological hatred of xenos, the utterly alien features and predatory nature of the Kroot can inspire an almost visceral aversion in humans when first encountering them. Being exposed to the xenos' dietary habits only serves to increase the sense of unease felt in their presence. After a period of acquaintance, humans can become more accustomed to the presence of Kroot allies, though undoubtedly the lingering concern remains that they might become the xenos' next meal.

THE WAY OF THE HUNTER

The Kroot are predators. Hunters without parallel, they have turned their deadly natural instincts to war, and employ their preternatural skills to great advantage on the battlefield. In the primeval forests of Pech, the Kroot stalk their prey, silently

slipping through the trees and underbrush in coordinated packs to bring down their quarry. This intuitive behaviour translates well to combat, allowing Kroot Kindreds to efficiently track and hunt their foes as a well-synchronised unit.

In the field, small groups of Kroot act in unison under the leadership of a Shaper, without need for a cumbersome command structure or communications gear. To human ears, the Kroot language sounds like nothing more than a series of glottal hisses, clicks, and whistles, easily mistaken for the calls of birds or other fauna. Moreover, it is postulated that Kroot Shapers are able to silently issue basic commands by secreting pheromones, which are instantly detectable by the sensitive olfactory receptors and sensory ganglia of other, nearby Kroot.

The dominant Tau tactical doctrines—the Kauyon and the Mont'ka—are essentially hunting techniques, practiced by the Kroot long before they came into contact with the Tau. The Kauyon, or Patient Hunter, is nothing more than baiting the trap with a lure, to allow the hunter to strike from a hidden position. The Kroot, masters of stealth and ambush, will often attempt to lure their foes into carefully orchestrated traps, either by offering the enemy a tempting or seemingly vulnerable target, or by having the lure retreat and draw their pursuers into a killing ground.

Mont'ka, or the Killing Blow, is a method not regularly practiced by the often impetuous Kroot, though it is a favoured technique of some strategically minded Shapers. There are effectively two variants of the Mont'ka. The first relies on patience and clear tactical vision to wait for a target of opportunity to present itself, and strike at the precise moment to cause the greatest harm. The more aggressive alternative is to actively seek out the exposed target, often the enemy's

USING THE KROOT IN A CAMPAIGN

The Kroot make excellent adversaries for seasoned campaigners on the Spinward Front. Tough and wily, they can be a serious challenge for players more used to fighting rampaging Orks, blood-maddened Chaos cultists and renegades, and Dominate militiamen. Unless forewarned of their presence, the first hint that Kroot are in the area comes when they have already killed the Guardsman next to you, and are swinging their blades at your neck. A group ambushed by a Kroot hunting party are likely to face a tough fight just to survive the initial encounter, especially if Kroot Hounds, Krootox, or Knarllocs are present.

Though not quite as intimidating as Ork mobs or as sinister as the Dark Eldar, the Kroot's extreme "alienness" and cannibalistic propensity for eating the dead can make them quite a terrifying opponent. Stalked by the Kroot, the players might soon start jumping at shadows, fearing a trap around every corner, and Kroot behind every tree and bush. GMs should play up this aspect of uncertainty and imminent attack, allowing the tension to build as the players push deeper into the unknown. The group might come across the remains of a squad of fellow Guardsmen, their flesh sliced and gnawed away. A rustling in the shadows might draw their attention and put them on their guard, only to prove to be some innocuous local wildlife. This slow ratcheting up of disquiet and nervousness will make the ambush all the more harrowing when it at last occurs, and the ensuing fight all the more memorable for the players.

Other complications could also arise. During the course of a battle, the Kroot might drag off a wounded comrade, intent on devouring him, and forcing the rest of the group to make a desperate pursuit to recover their squad mate before it is too late. The group might also find themselves faced with the dilemma of completing their primary mission objective, or diverting from it to save a group of civilians—which might or might not include several high-ranking Administratum officials—from becoming a Kroot Kindred's next meal.

Alternatively, the Kroot need not always be hostile. A mission might involve trying to make contact with a Kroot Shaper or Master Shaper in order to sway a particular Kindred to the side of the Imperium (though getting to him might mean running a gauntlet of hungry Kroot Hounds, or even a pack of hunting Knarllocs). If an Ogryn happens to be in the group, he might not be able to resist trying to wrestle a Krootox to the ground along the way (a feat that might even impress the Shaper enough to influence his decision). The Kroot might also go from being enemies to allies of convenience in the face of a common enemy, such as the Orks, Chaos, or the Dark Eldar.

Precisely what motivates the Kroot on the Spinward Front is something of a mystery, left to the GM to decide.

command element, and eliminate it with a swift, fierce strike.

Though predisposed to ambush and guerrilla-style hit and run tactics, the Kroot are quite capable foes when confronted in the open, often relying on fearsome charges to carry the day. Swift and sure-footed, a Kroot onslaught can catch foes unaware through its speed and sheer brutality. Using their long, powerful legs, the Kroot often leap at their foes in the last few metres of an assault, knocking them to the ground, and making them easy prey for the raptor-like xenos. However, against the massed firepower of Imperial Guardsmen entrenched in a fortified position, the Kroot are at a severe disadvantage, and avoid exposing themselves to enemy fire if at all possible.

While few Kroot really have the mindset or strategic vision to plan out prolonged campaigns, they can pursue their goals with bloody single-mindedness and determination, relying on their skills as warriors and hunters to achieve their objectives.

KROOT KINDREDS OF THE SPINWARD FRONT

Various Kroot mercenary groups have come to the Spinward Front from the Koronus Expanse and other areas of Kroot activity, but most Kroot fighting in this region of space hail from one of four major Kindreds.

THE BONEGNASHERS

The first Kroot known to have entered the fray on the Spinward Front were the Bonegnashers, an adventurous and violent Kindred, so called for their propensity to consume the flesh of their enemies completely, leaving nothing but bone. Enlisted by the Severan Dominate to help thwart the advance of Waaagh! Grimtoof, they were thrown into the grinder of Lukius. There, the Bonegnashers quickly proved their mettle, preying on Orks more used to fighting the disorganised and motley natives of the war-torn world than cunning, disciplined hunters. Having fought Orks on Pech and in the Koronus Expanse, the Bonegnashers anticipated the Greenskins' mad assaults, and drew them into large-scale ambushes that cost Grimtoof's Orks dearly. For the Severan Dominate, desperate to halt the inexorable tide of the Ork Waaagh!, the Kroot mercenaries proved an inestimable boon. Moreover, the Kroot were largely self-sufficient, putting little strain on the Dominate's overburdened supply lines. While the rumours of the native Lukians eating the flesh of their foes might be mere campfire chatter, there is no doubt that the Bonegnashers regularly subsist on the Orks who fall beneath their blades.

THE OATHBREAKERS

Eager to capitalise on the success of the Bonegnashers, Duke Severus's agents sought out other Kroot Kindreds to bolster their overstretched forces. Among the Kroot to heed the call for mercenaries were the Kindred known as the Oathbreakers. Kroot of this Kindred have a particular abhorrence of machines, and generally disdain the use of advanced weaponry and technology in favour of a more primal existence. Known to have been among the first to have pledged support for the Tau on the Oathstone of Pech, the Kindred seems to have subsequently rebelled against the changes to Kroot culture brought about by the alliance, especially what they view as the enfeeblement of their species. Abandoning

Tau space, the Oathbreakers made their way to the wilds of the Koronus Expanse before being drawn into the conflict on the Spinward Front. The Oathbreakers live for the thrill of the hunt and the bounty of the kill, seeking out the strongest, fiercest prey to consume, and cultivate their genetic inheritance.

Though the Oathbreakers have little use for gold or other trade goods, on the death world of Cuyavale they have found prizes worth having—the Drakons. The massive rain forests and arid mountains of Cuyavale—not too dissimilar from those of Pech, but on a larger scale—appeal to the arboreal Kroot like few other planets in the sector, and the massive flying reptilian beasts are the ultimate prey for these consummate hunters. The native fauna of Cuyavale have given the Severan Dominate something with which to bargain with the Oathbreakers. To the Oathbreakers, the human population of the world is utterly inconsequential, but the invading Orks are perceived as competition to the Kindred, threatening their access to their newfound hunting ground.

THE COLDFIRE KINDRED

Unlike the Oathbreakers, the Coldfire Kindred makes extensive use of hi-tech weaponry, often going to battle in scavenged bits of armour and wielding the pulse weapons of their Tau allies. While the Kroot are known to adapt and use the technology of other races, particularly weaponry, the Coldfire Kindred has a genuine affinity for advanced technology. Other Kroot look on the Coldfire Kindred as somewhat eccentric and perverse, putting too much reliance on technology, but the Kindred pays them little heed. Though not a particularly large or numerous Kindred, the Coldfire Kindred has earned a reputation in the Periphery as reliable and effective mercenaries, willing to work for anyone willing to meet their price. They have been known to hire themselves out as mercenaries in exchange for bits of archeotech and Dark Age technology, and it is rumoured that their Warsphere, the *Avar*, is fitted with some of the most sophisticated and powerful weaponry in the sector—a rumour borne out by the reported destruction of an Imperial squadron led by the Dauntless-class cruiser *Warspite*, which attempted to interdict the Warsphere en route to Ohmsworld.

THE FLESHTAKERS

Stranger still is the Kindred known as the Fleshtakers. Among the Kroot, it is considered an almost inviolable taboo to consume the flesh of the Warp-tainted, which has been declared by most Shapers to be “inedible” (a term that has far darker implications to a Kroot than to a human). For the Fleshtakers, this prohibition holds little application, however. It is believed that the Kindred only recently entered the Periphery, but they quickly came to the attention of the Dark Apostle known as Sektoth the False Whisper. To the Kroot, one human seems very much the same as another, and whether a man worships the God-Emperor or the Ruinous Powers makes little difference to them. However, the strength and resilience of Sektoth's followers impressed the Kindred's Shapers, and they readily agreed to fight beside the forces of Chaos on the Spinward Front. How long this peculiar alliance can be sustained is uncertain, but the terror of the ravenous Kroot waging war alongside the ravaging hordes of Chaos has brought ruin and untold misery to several worlds in the Periphery.



KROOT FORCES

"They say they'll eat anything. Me, I haven't asked 'em. Don't want to find out too late that they've got a taste for Guardsmen who ask questions."

—Private Wouldrin Adevit, 59th Brontian Longknives

Kroot are a rare sight in the Spinward Front, but Imperial Guard High Command has nonetheless watched their emergence in this battlefield with considerable concern. Although few in number, the Kroot currently present in the Spinward Front have already had a sizeable impact in several warzones, such as on Lukius.

Further, the longer the conflict with the Severan Dominate drags on, the more mercenaries flock to the region to win their share from the fighting, whether that be paid in coin or in blood. Some in High Command even fear that if the Kroot are seeking out these combat zones, other xenos might have also begun to suspect the growing vulnerability of the Calixis Sector. As the number of Kroot mercenaries doing battle in the sector grows, such concerns—whether valid or not—begin to look all the more plausible.

KROOT SHAPER

Chance and circumstance have, in many ways, guided the development of the Kroot, but it is the job of the Shapers to judiciously pilot their brethren through the dangerous currents of unchecked evolution. For most of their history, the evolution of the species (including the mutation that allowed the Kroot to absorb the genetic characteristics of their prey) was largely random, determined only by factors such as accident and environment. The swiftness with which the Kroot began to evolve and change led several lines of the genus to become so highly specialised as to be evolutionary dead ends, unable to survive outside of very specific environmental conditions.

At some point, some Kroot developed the innate ability to isolate and determine the suitability (or lack thereof) of the genetic traits of a creature's flesh before actually absorbing it. By instinctively isolating and analysing the DNA contained within the flesh of potential food sources, these exceptional Kroot, known as Shapers, can determine whether the prey's characteristics are favourable or detrimental to the genetic advancement of their Kindred, and can thereby guide the development of the other Kroot. They are the wardens and caretakers of their Kindred's genetic inheritance, and they guard it against regression, corruption, and unwanted mutation.

III: THE SHADOW WALKERS

KROOT TRAITS

Many Kroot and related creatures possess one or more of the following Traits.

EATER OF THE DEAD

Kroot have an astounding metabolism, and can quickly recover from even grievous injuries—provided that they can find sufficient meat to sate their voracious appetites.

Once per encounter, as a Full Action, this creature may devour a large quantity of raw flesh (such as that from a corpse) to remove 1d10 Damage (removing Critical Damage first).

HYPERACTIVE NYMUNE ORGAN

The Kroot's nymune organs are hyperactive, storing great amounts of energy. The Kroot's metabolism is sped up, improving his raw muscle speed, reflexes, and reactions.

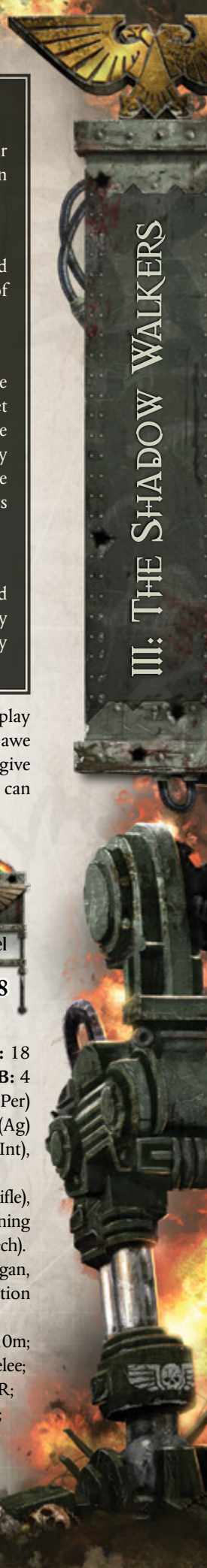
Once per Round, a creature with this Trait may gain one level of Fatigue to make an additional Reaction.

KROOT LEAP

Kroot are adept at using their long legs to jump, hop, and leap long distances. The Kroot have learned to use this to their advantage whilst rushing enemies in close combat.

When making a Charge action, the Kroot can ignore obstacles between him and his target by making a Running Vertical Jump (see page 34 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook). This Talent can only be used if there is room for the Kroot to land next to his target, and if there is enough overhead space for the Kroot to leap over the intervening obstacles. If the Kroot successfully strikes his target whilst using this Talent, the Kroot may make a Knock-Down Action against the target (see page 246 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook) as a Free Action.





GM ADVICE: USING A KROOT SHAPER

Kroot Shapers guide their people, both leading them in battle and subtly shepherding their genetic destiny to favour the strongest traits. Many Shapers are cunning and highly adaptable leaders, shifting their combat tactics as they learn the weaknesses of their foes.

ENGAGEMENT

Kroot Shapers are very patient, and prepare their ambushes in intuitive ways. Though many Kroot Mercenaries respond to ambushes by launching themselves into the fray, Shapers often temper the blood-hunger of their charges. A group of Kroot led by a Shaper is more cautious and cunning than one without such guidance.

STRATEGY

Many Kroot Shapers are cautious leaders, and often counsel patience when leading the hunt. As such, more conservative Shapers are extremely careful in committing their forces, only engaging in earnest if their prey displays a worthy set of traits from which the Kindred could benefit. If a Shaper is present, he might make probing attacks first, testing the strength and weakness of his foe rather than committing to a more aggressive attack. Further, such a Shaper would likely avoid engaging his enemy outside of his warriors' favoured terrain, perhaps luring his foes into his chosen field of battle with a feigned retreat or a trail of dead sentries. Some Shapers are even whispered to have the ability to see future events and predict the actions and reactions of their foes.

COMBAT TACTICS

Different Shapers favour different tactics in battle, but all Shapers are master hunters and excellent warriors in hand-to-hand combat. Further, some Shapers grant spiritual blessings to their warriors in battle. Though the Adeptus Ministorum would likely deny the efficacy of these xenos superstitions, it is certain that, at the very least, the Kroot themselves take such boons very seriously. Shapers often anoint their chosen cadre during battle, bolstering their resolve and making them even more lethal.

Since their fellow Kroot would indiscriminately consume the corpses of those they have slain in battle (an urge that is an almost overwhelming biological imperative for the species), it is the Shaper's task to restrain their fellow Kroot, if necessary. Through some unknown physiological or cultural mechanism, the Shapers can exert an absolute control over their fellow Kroot, and with a single hiss, they can prevent their subordinates from consuming the flesh of undesirable prey. Once a particular prey creature has been deemed suitable and safe for consumption, the Shapers will allow their kin to indulge their primal urges and devour the flesh of the fallen. Most humans and other creatures the Shapers have already determined to be edible will be consumed almost immediately by the Kroot, especially if they haven't eaten recently.

The genesis of the Kroot Shapers stemmed from the wild rampage of their species' unrestrained and random evolution, which, if left unchecked, would most certainly have brought the Kroot to the brink of extinction. Their role in Kroot society naturally places them in leadership positions, and they tend to guide their race in matters beyond their normal duty of determining what can and cannot be consumed. Shapers act as commanders on the battlefield, elders and patriarchs of their Kindreds, and diplomats to other races (they are often the only Kroot capable of communicating in anything other than their native language). Contract negotiations are also undertaken by the Shapers, and it is they who determine the course of Kroot activities in the wider galaxy. Within larger mercenary bands and communities, elder Shapers will form ruling councils, led by particularly respected and wise Kroot referred to as Master Shapers, and their word is law among the Kindred.

Though physically similar to other Kroot, Shapers tend to be slightly larger and stronger than their underlings, and often adorn themselves by dying their quills brilliant colours and

wearing trophies, talismans, and magical amulets that display their status among the Kindred. Such is the respect and awe afforded most Shapers that other Kroot would willingly give their lives to protect them, and any who slay a Shaper can expect violent retribution from the fallen Kroot's kin.

Kroot Shaper (Elite)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
50	36	45	44	52	35	54	40	28	

Movement: 5/10/15/30

Wounds: 18

Armour: Hide armour (Body 2).

Total TB: 4

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag), Athletics (S) +10, Awareness (Per) +10, Command (Fel) +10, Commerce (Int), Dodge (Ag) +10, Linguistics (Kroot, Tau, Low Gothic) (Int), Logic (Int), Stealth (Ag) +20, Survival (Int) +30.

Talents: Crippling Strike, Exotic Weapons Training (Kroot Rifle), Foresight, Furious Assault, Leap Up, Lightning Attack, Lightning Reflexes, Resistance (Fear), Sprint, Weapon Training (Low Tech).

Traits: Eater of the Dead, Hyperactive Nymune Organ, Kroot Leap, Natural Weapons (Beak), Unnatural Perception (2), Unnatural Strength (2).

Weapons: Good Craftsmanship Kroot rifle (Basic; 110m; S/-/-; 1d10+5 E; Pen 1; Clip 6; Reload 2 Full or Melee; 1d10+6 R; Pen 2; Balanced), beak (Melee; 1d5+6 R; Pen 0), bolas (Thrown; 10m; S/-/-; Dmg -; Pen 0; Clip 1; Reload -; Primitive [1], Snare [1], Inaccurate).

Gear: Fetishes and talismans, bandolier of 30 spare charges for rifle.



KROOT MERCENARY

"I joined up with the Imperial Guard, and now I am accurst, The Commissar will shoot me dead, if the Kroot don't eat me first!"

—Lyrics from an illicit song popular among soldiers in the Spinward Front

It is believed that virtually every animal on Pech is related to the Kroot, at least distantly, with each species in the genus descended from the same ancestral taxon. Yet the diversity of life on Pech is testament to the capability of the Kroot to rapidly change and evolve, sometimes transforming into wholly new species in a matter of just a few generations. Though many of the sub-species descended from the Kroot are effectively nothing more than evolutionary dead ends, the mother species has continued to evolve gradually, along a few relatively stable genetic lines. The Kroot Carnivore, officially designated *Krootis Aviana* by Imperial xenobiologists (reflecting their presumed avian ancestry) is that dominant species, and by far the most commonly encountered beyond the confines of their home world.

Standing around two metres tall, the Kroot have a deceptively frail appearance, but their wiry bodies possess inhuman strength and speed. The arboreal xenos are able to spring among trunks and branches of trees with amazing swiftness and dexterity, and move with a loping, bounding gait on the ground. They tend to wear simple hides and leather harnesses, adorned with talismans and amulets crafted from ivory and bone, and wield exotic hybrid weapons that combine primitive slug rounds with advanced pulse technology, with vicious blades at the muzzle and stock for close-quarters combat.

Known for ritually eating the dead, the efficient Kroot digestive system is capable of breaking down nearly any organic material and converting it into energy that can be stored in specialised organs called nymunes. Additionally, through some peculiar chemical mechanism, the Kroot are able to extract and absorb useful strands of DNA from the flesh of their prey, incorporating it into their own genetic makeup and passing it on to their descendants.

Perhaps due to their predatory nature, the Kroot are prone to be mercenaries, plying the stars in their Warspheres and selling their services as warriors and hunters to the highest bidder. It is believed that this wide-ranging life of war might actually be spurred by the Kroot's desire to strengthen their race as a whole, consuming and assimilating the valuable DNA of the species they encounter in battle.

Though not particularly disciplined on the battlefield, the Kroot are fierce warriors and fearsome opponents in close combat, capable of overpowering most foes with whom they come to grips. Intimidating, ferocious, and relatively reliable, Kroot mercenaries have carved a lucrative niche for themselves in the war-torn 41st Millennium, and they are a force to be reckoned with on the Spinward Front.



III: THE SHADOW WALKERS

Kroot Mercenary (Troop)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
42	33	40	4I	52	26	44	30	19

Movement: 5/10/15/30

Wounds: 12

Armour: Hide armour (Body 2).

Total TB: 4

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag), Athletics (S) +10, Awareness (Per), Dodge (Ag) +10, Stealth (Ag) +20, Survival (Int) +30.

Talents: Exotic Weapons Training (Kroot Rifle), Furious Assault, Leap Up, Lightning Reflexes, Resistance (Fear), Sprint, Swift Attack, Weapon Training (Low Tech).

Traits: Eater of the Dead, Hyperactive Nymune Organ, Kroot Leap, Natural Weapons (Beak), Unnatural Perception (2), Unnatural Strength (2).

Weapons: Kroot rifle (Basic; 110m; S/-/-; 1d10+5 E; Pen 1; Clip 6; Reload 2 Full or Melee; 1d10+6 R; Pen 2; Balanced), beak (Melee; 1d5+6 R; Pen 0), bolas (Thrown; 10m; S/-/-; Dmg -; Pen 0; Clip 1; Reload -; Primitive [4], Snare [1], Inaccurate).

Gear: Small chunks of meat, bandolier of 30 spare charges for rifle, fetish pouch.

GM ADVICE: USING KROOT MERCENARIES IN COMBAT

Kroot Mercenaries are cunning and skilled hunters who use the terrain to gain the advantage over their foes, sniping from cover or launching close-quarters ambushes that capitalise on their impressive athleticism and savagery.

ENGAGEMENT

Kroot Mercenaries usually track their foe for some time before launching their attacks. They prefer to fight in wooded areas or other regions with dense cover, where they can silently stalk their enemies while waiting for the perfect moment to launch an assault. If ambushed by an overwhelming number of foes, Kroot Mercenaries often scatter into cover. However, their urge to feed is considerable, and Kroot sometimes grow more aggressive if they believe that their prey carries traits that would make their Kindred more powerful. As such, Kroot Mercenaries occasionally engage in unfavourable battles, relying on instinct and ferocity to carry the day.

COMBAT TACTICS

Kroot Mercenaries typically either fire from cover, using their stealth skills to keep their prey confused and disoriented, or launch ambush assaults, attempting to overwhelm their foes quickly before other nearby enemies can respond. Kroot are more powerful than your average Guardsman in terms of raw might, and so they sometimes leverage this advantage by sneaking into close-quarters and eliminating patrol groups one at a time before striking at the main force when fighting the Imperial Guard.

KROOT HOUND

"Oi! Wat's dat howlin'? Ave some of da ladz check it out."

—Last words of Ork Warboss Griznak Gobsmasha

As their name suggests, Kroot Hounds are canine-like creatures belonging to the same genus as the Kroot themselves, seemingly bred to an evolutionary halt. Vicious beasts about the size of a large mastiff, Kroot Hounds can be found alongside their masters in peace and in war. Though thin and wiry, their seemingly frail appearance is deceptive, as the corded muscles that ripple beneath their tough hides make them incredibly swift and powerful, and their sharp, strong beaks are quite capable of rending flesh from bone. With a series of sensory ganglia running along their spines, as well as keen senses of smell and hearing, Kroot Hounds are able to detect their prey through even the most dense terrain, darkest night, and most extreme weather conditions. As such, they are most frequently used as sentries and trackers.

As watch-beasts, Kroot Hounds are almost without parallel, as effective as the most sensitive auspexes and scanners. Though their visual acuity is only slightly better than the Kroot themselves, their hearing and sense of smell is phenomenal, and they are frequently used to guard Kroot encampments and patrol the halls and corridors of their Warspheres. Should they catch the scent of any non-Kroot in the vicinity, the Kroot Hounds

will emit an awful, shrieking howl and snarl, alerting their Kroot masters to the presence of intruders and usually deterring all but the most determined interlopers. If properly trained and commanded to do so by their handlers, Kroot Hounds can also emit low warning growls that won't alarm intruders, allowing the Kroot to stalk their prey in near-absolute stealth.

The Kroot also bring their hounds with them to war. With their handlers, they often accompany high-ranking Kroot, such as Shapers, protecting them in the chaos of battle. Occasionally, the Kroot unleash packs of Kroot Hounds on the enemy's front lines, counting on the terror sown by the fearsome beasts to break their foe's will to fight, and tearing them apart as they flee. More often, the fleet-footed handlers swiftly and quietly lead their charges around the enemy's flank, falling upon the unsuspecting adversary in a flurry of violence and gore. Under attack from the leaping forms and snapping beaks of frenzied packs of Kroot Hounds, many Imperial Guardsmen have fled in terror—heedless of their Commissars' bolt pistols—or become food for the creatures.

Kroot Hound (Minion)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
44	--	4I	34	40	18	45	30	06	

Movement: 8/16/24/48

Wounds: 16

Armour: None.

Total TB: 3

Skills: Athletics (S) +20, Awareness (Per) +20, Stealth (Ag) +20.

Talents: Frenzy, Heightened Senses (Hearing, Smell), Sprint.

Traits: Bestial (without its handler, a single Kroot Mercenary)
Deadly Natural Weapons (Beak), Eater of the Dead, Hyperactive Nymune Organ, Kroot Leap, Natural Weapon (Beak), Quadruped.

Weapons: Ripping beak (Melee; 1d10+8 R; Tearing).

GM ADVICE: USING KROOT HOUNDS

Kroot Hounds are bestial hunters that track and kill by instinct. In the absence of Kroot handlers, they are simply animals, albeit cunning and lethal ones. 3–5 Kroot Hounds with a handler are good candidates for a Minion Formation (see page 125).

ENGAGEMENT

Kroot Hounds rush into battle with reckless abandon, seeking to cripple their prey before rending them limb from limb. If they are caught unawares or met with exceptional resistance, they react like cornered beasts, fighting or fleeing as their situation dictates.

COMBAT TACTICS

Kroot Hounds attempt to close to melee with the nearest foe and tear it apart with their claws and fangs. Group of Kroot Hounds tend to focus on the weakest or most vulnerable targets, circling, snapping at their heels, and attempting to create openings for other members of the pack. If led by a Kroot handler, they instead act as directed.



KROOTOX

"I've heard some officers tell their men to hold their fire until they see their beady black eyes. Of course, they're all dead now."

—Sergeant Lochnaw Gridley, 21st Laskin Fusiliers

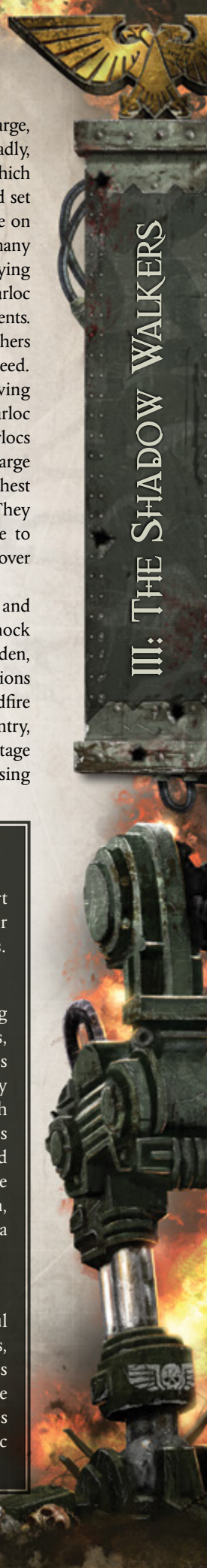
A brutish, monstrous member of the Kroot genus, the Krootox is a prime example of an evolutionary dead-end. After consuming the flesh of some particularly strong and barbarous creature, these unfortunate Kindreds devolved into bestial, unthinking brutes, incapable of rational, independent thought. Muscular, ape-like beasts, the Krootox would likely have been hunted to extinction did the other Kroot not find them useful as beasts of burden and war.

After taming these creatures, the Kroot saddle them and lashed large, unwieldy guns—essentially oversized Kroot rifles. These weapons are affixed to the broad, powerful shoulders of the Krootox. Incredibly strong and sturdy, the Krootox serve as mobile gun platforms for the Kindreds, providing both invaluable fire support, as well as living battering rams, capable of smashing through lines of enemy soldiers with contemptuous ease. While relatively docile when under the control of their riders, the Krootox can be spurred into a blind, raging frenzy, pummeling enemy soldiers with massive fists able to crush skulls and power armour alike.

Krootox are most commonly seen individually accompanying a small group of Kroot warriors on the frontline, providing cover fire for the Kroot to advance under and close with the enemy. Once engaged, the Krootox and rider will either hold back and provide heavy fire support, or charge into the fray, scattering any foes unfortunate enough to stand in the way. On occasion, the Kroot mass several Krootox together to form a nigh-unstoppable vanguard of muscle and sinew, laying down a withering hail of gunfire and smashing through even the most heavily fortified positions.

When confronted with Krootox, the most effective tactic thus devised by the Imperial Guard has been to direct sniper fire against the rider, in hopes of leaving the beast without direction and causing it to revert to its bestial nature. This is, however, easier said than done, as very little of the rider is usually exposed behind the massive bulk of the Krootox, unless the sniper manages to flank the beast. More commonly, Imperial Guard commanders resort to the massed firepower of their venerable autocannons to bring the beasts down. Among the Ogryn assigned to the Spinward Front, it has become something of a fundamental test of strength to attempt to overpower a Krootox in the heat of combat, a quirk that has cost more than one Ogryn a limb or two.





Krootox (Minion)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
40	--	60	55	30	10	25	25	08	

Movement: 8/16/24/48

Armour: Resilient hide (2 All).

Skills: Athletics (S) +10, Stealth (Ag) +10.

Talents: Furious Assault, Leap Up, Resistance (Fear).

Traits: Auto-Stabilised, Bestial (without its rider or handler, a single Kroot Mercenary or Shaper), Brutal Charge, Deadly Natural Weapons, Natural Weapons (Beak, Fists), Quadruped, Size (5), Sturdy, Unnatural Strength (3), Unnatural Toughness (2), Warbeast†, Weapons Platform††.

Weapons: Beak (Melee; 1d10+18 R; Pen 2), fists (Melee; 2d10+18 I; Pen 0; Unwieldy).

†**Warbeast:** When an attack hits a Krootox with a rider, use the percentile dice result from the attack and reverse the digits (e.g. a result of 32 becomes a 23). On a result of 01–70, the attack hits the Krootox; if it is a 71 or higher, it hits the rider.

††**Weapons Platform:** The following weapon can mounted on a Krootox's back, to be fired by the rider:

Kroot gun (Heavy; 150m; S/2/–; 2d10+14 I; Pen 6; Clip 10; Rld Full).

Wounds: 65

Total TB: 7

GM ADVICE: USING KROOTOX

Krootox are bad-tempered and respond to all provocation with overwhelming violence. The heavy guns that their Kroot riders strap to their backs serve only to make them more dangerous.

ENGAGEMENT

Krootox are lumbering beasts, less well-suited to the stealthy ambushes that their smaller relatives prefer. Instead, Krootox riders often keep their mounts within cover, slowly advancing before opening fire with the heavy weaponry they carry. If caught off-guard, Krootox respond to most threats by smashing them apart, while their riders sometimes prefer to have the beasts slowly retreat to better positions as they lay down withering hails of suppressive fire with the mounted guns.

COMBAT TACTICS

Krootox riders frequently use their mounts to smash open fortifications, having them lumber forward while firing upon massed foes or bunkers with their heavy weapons. In the absence of a rider, a Krootox responds to most threats by charging them and pounding them over and over again with their muscular limbs.

KNARLOC

Prized by the Kroot as cavalry mounts, Knarlocs are large, voracious predators native to Pech. Strong, agile, and deadly, Knarlocs are also surprisingly intelligent pack hunters, which frequently coordinate complex pursuits of their quarry and set ambushes for their prey. Like virtually every other creature on Pech, Knarlocs are distant relatives of the Kroot, sharing many of the same characteristics as their arboreal cousins. Preying on the abundant variety of life on their home world, Knarloc packs display a broad variety of breeds and temperaments. Some are broad, muscular, and highly aggressive, while others are tall, swift, and lean, capable of tremendous bursts of speed.

[The Kroot have a peculiar reverence for Knarlocs, viewing them as supremely successful predators, and having a Knarloc mount is a sign of great status among the Kindreds. Knarlocs are most often used for scouting and hunting, as the large creatures are easily able to negotiate even the roughest terrain, from dense forests to war-torn urban jungles. They are also remarkably stealthy for their hulking size, able to move with cat-like silence, and clever enough to use cover and concealment wherever possible.

Some Kindreds, such as the Bonegnashers and Oathbreakers, use their Knarlocs as heavy cavalry, a shock force to crash into and roll over opposing units with sudden, irresistible charges, often coming from concealed positions on the enemy's flanks. Others, in particular the Coldfire Kindred, tend to fight as dragoons or mounted infantry, using their Knarlocs to quickly gain a positional advantage and dismounting to fire on the enemy, sometimes even using their mount's large forms as cover.

GM ADVICE: USING KNARLOCS

Knarlocs are savage hunters that rend their prey apart with their massive jaws, relying on speed and their innate resilience to carry them to their hapless targets.

ENGAGEMENT

Knarlocs are capable of launching ambushes, leaping out onto unsuspecting victims from stands of trees, masses of rubble, or other sufficiently large pieces of cover. However, if they are sufficiently hungry or without riders, Knarlocs sometimes eschew such subtlety, especially when hunting prey as small as Guardsmen, taking them unawares by racing forward on their powerful legs and devouring their prey before it can react. Knarlocs are dominant predators on Pech, and thus rarely retreat unless directed to do so by a rider or faced with an extremely large threat.

COMBAT TACTICS

Knarlocs rely on their savage beaks and powerful talons to tear apart their prey. When striking in packs, they often work together to bring down larger foes (or particularly tenacious small ones), focusing on the largest threat in a group before devouring the less dangerous members. If controlled by a rider, a Knarloc usually follows its lead, at least to some extent.

The Knarlocs themselves are just as deadly as the Kroot who ride them. Using their speed and agility to bear down on their prey, Knarlocs will often use their clawed forearms to pin their victims and haul them in close before finishing them off with a vicious bite from their powerful, razor-sharp beaks. The last thing seen by many an unfortunate Guardsman is the clamping beak of a hungry Knarloc.

Knarloc (Minion)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
46	--	52	47	46	15	36	40	04	

Movement: 8/16/32/48

Armour: Thick hide (3 All).

Skills: Athletics (S) +20, Awareness (Per).

Talents: Frenzy, Thunder Charge.

Traits: Bestial (without its rider or handler, a single Kroot Mercenary or Shaper), Deadly Natural Weapons, Eater of the Dead, Hyperactive Nymune Organ, Natural Weapon (Beak), Size (Hulking), Unnatural Strength (2), Warbeast†.

Weapons: Vicious beak (Melee; 1d10+10 R; Pen 4; Tearing).

†**Warbeast:** When an attack hits a Knarloc with a rider, use the percentile dice result from the attack and reverse the digits (e.g. a result of 32 becomes a 23). On a result of 01–70, the attack hits the Knarloc; if it is a 71 or higher, it hits the rider.

Wounds: 50

Total TB: 4



GREAT KNARLOC

“It’s easy to dismiss such beasts as just that, little more than pests, when you’re sitting in the turret of a battle tank. At least until you’ve seen one rip the turret off a Leman Russ and eat its crew.”

—Captain Torvus Grymm, 14th Synford Armoured Brigade

A monstrous, solitary predator and scavenger on Pech, the Great Knarloc is an evolutionary offshoot of its smaller cousins, with full-grown specimens standing four-and-a-half to five metres or more at the shoulder. Though the creature has a decidedly saurian appearance, it is actually related to the Kroot, sharing many of the same genetic and physiological characteristics. Its powerful hind legs are well-adapted to ranging long distances in search of prey and sustenance, and thanks to its strong synovial hinged ankle structure and nymune organs, it is capable of sudden bursts of speed, allowing it to pursue and run down its quarry over short distances. Though less intelligent than its smaller, more numerous kin, the Great Knarloc makes up in size and brawn what it lack in brains and animal cunning.

The Kroot have found several uses for the Great Knarloc. Mercenary Kindreds find them particularly useful as beasts of burden, packing huge quantities of munitions, supplies, and other sundries on the sturdy backs of the creatures while campaigning on alien worlds. Great Knarlocs used as baggage animals are typically muzzled and attended by one or more handlers, who guide the creatures using long, sharp goads. While Great Knarlocs in the baggage train aren’t typically used in battle, if attacked, the beasts and their handlers are fully able to defend themselves. Unmuzzling their charges, the handlers can use their goads to spur the Great Knarlocs into a mad frenzy and drive them towards their attackers, who would have good cause to regret being caught in the stampede.

The strongest and most aggressive Great Knarlocs are reserved for use on the battlefield, where they serve as living tanks for the Kroot Kindreds. Some are used as battering rams, driven forward in a mindless rage to smash through the enemy lines, their thunderous charges tearing through men and machines alike. Unlike other Kroot methods of war, there is no subtlety or finesse in this tactic, and the thick hides and sharp beaks of the Great Knarlocs are counted on to overcome any obstacle. Though attacking or stampeding their own Kroot masters is always a possibility when the gigantic beasts are goaded to anger, the Kroot naturally excrete chemicals and pheromones that generally prevent this from occurring.

Older Great Knarlocs, trained to fight and accustomed to the sights and sounds of battle, can also be mounted by skilled riders and used as towering gun platforms on the battlefield. A Great Knarloc might carry a Kroot Gun, similar to those lashed to the backs of the more common Krootox, or they might sport huge crossbows or ballistae with explosive-tipped bolts, or even scavenged Imperial battle cannons. So equipped, these Great Knarlocs can range across virtually any field of battle, providing much needed heavy fire support and anti-armour capability, or wade through an opposing force, spewing death and wreaking havoc. Few who have seen an enraged Great Knarloc on the battlefield ever forget the image, and for many, it is the last thing they ever see.



Great Knarloc (Minion)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
55	--	62	50	30	14	32	44	03	

Movement: 6/12/18/36

Armour: Tough hide (6 All).

Skills: Athletics (S) +30, Awareness (Per).

Talents: Frenzy, Thunder Charge.

Traits: Bestial (without its rider or handler, a single Kroot Mercenary or Shaper) Brutal Charge (6), Deadly Natural Weapons (Beak), Eater of the Dead, Hyperactive Nymune Organ, Natural Weapons (Beak), Size (7), Unnatural Strength (4), Unnatural Toughness (3), Warbeast†, Weapons Platform††.

Weapons: Massive beak (Melee; 2d10+18 R; Pen 10; Razor Sharp, Tearing).

†**Warbeast:** When an attack hits a Great Knarloc with a rider, use the percentile dice result from the attack and reverse the digits (e.g. a result of 32 becomes a 23). On a result of 01–70, the attack hits the Great Knarloc; if it is a 71 or higher, it hits the rider.

††**Weapons Platform:** One of the following weapons can be mounted on a Great Knarloc's back, to be fired by the rider:

Twin-linked Kroot gun (Heavy; 150m; S/2/-; 2d10+14 I; Pen 6; Clip 10; Rld Full; Twin-linked) *or* Kroot bolt thrower (Heavy; 60m; S/-/-; 2d10+10 X; Pen 2; Clip 20; Rld Full; Blast [3]).

GM ADVICE: USING GREAT KNARLOCS IN COMBAT

Great Knarlocs behave much in the same way as their smaller kin (see pages 103–104). However, being solitary, apex predators, Great Knarlocs are even less likely to rely on stealth to launch their attacks or withdraw until their hunger has been sated. If mounted by a rider, a Great Knarloc is usually somewhat compliant to its direction, depending on its individual temperament and how long it has been since it fed.

KROOT KINDREDS OF THE SPINWARD FRONT

The four major Kroot Kindreds active in the Spinward Front all have different characteristics and preferences in combat style. To create Kroot from one of these Kindreds, apply the listed bonuses to the standard profiles in this chapter.

BONEGNASHERS

Kroot of this Kindred gain +5 to their Toughness and the Hatred (Orks) Talent. Their Shapers and beasts also gain the Die Hard Talent.

COLFIRE KINDRED

Kroot of this Kindred gain a +5 to their Ballistic Skill Characteristic and tend to wear scavenged, modified Tau armour (Body 5, Arms, Legs 2) and use the Tau pulse rifle (150m; S/2/4; 2d10+3 E; Pen 4; Clip 36; Reload Full; Reliable) *or* Tau pulse carbine (60m; S/-/3; 2d10+2 E; Pen 4; Clip 24; Reload Half; Reliable). Additionally, they gain the Tech-Use Skill and Weapon Training (Plasma) Talent. Their Shapers also gain the Deadeye Shot Talent.

OATHBREAKERS

Kroot of this Kindred gain +5 to their Weapon Skill Characteristic and generally eschew the use of the Kroot rifle in favour of the Krootbow (40m; S/4/8; 1d10+3 R; Pen 3; Clip 20; Reload 2 Full; Tearing, Toxic) and Krootblade (1d10+2 R; Pen 0; Balanced, Tearing). Their Shapers and beasts also gain the Frenzy Talent.

FLESH TAKERS

Kroot of this Kindred gain +5 to their Strength Characteristic and the Regeneration (1) Trait. Their Shapers also gain the Skill Intimidate (S) and the Disturbing Voice Talent.

Chapter VII, Section I (Sundry Heresies), Sub-Section III (Twisted Traitors and Wretched Mutants)

Commissariat Memo MCVII to Troopers in the Spinward Front:

What isn't?

Failing to report any of the signs or malignancies in squad mates or oneself listed in this document to a Commissar is heresy.

THE MORAL THREAT

One of the most pernicious and subtle dangers an Imperial Guardsman can face is that of a moral threat of heresy and corruption. Mutation, witchcraft, heresy, and treachery are all symptoms of this most loathsome and unspeakable peril. Loyal troopers must gird their souls in the armour of contempt and stoke the fires of righteous hatred in their hearts to stand victorious against this foe.

The soldiers of the Imperial Guard must always be vigilant for any hint of a moral threat not only to themselves, but also to their regiment. To ignore the warning signs is to damn one's soul, and those of one's comrades, for eternity. Learn to recognize the common characteristics of a moral threat. By learning to identify the signs of corruption in the environment and in traitors who have fallen from the Emperor's light, loyal troopers can protect their souls against the greatest danger: heresy. Beware of outsiders and other unfamiliar individuals, especially those outside of the Imperial Guard. However, familiarity cannot be allowed to dim one's vigilance, either. Never forget that apostasy can lurk in any heart, even those of your comrades and allies on the field of battle (except for those anointed by the Emperor as spiritual guardians such as Commissars, priests of the Adeptus Ministorum, representatives of the Adeptus Mechanicus, and any superior officers).

MARK OF THE MUTANT

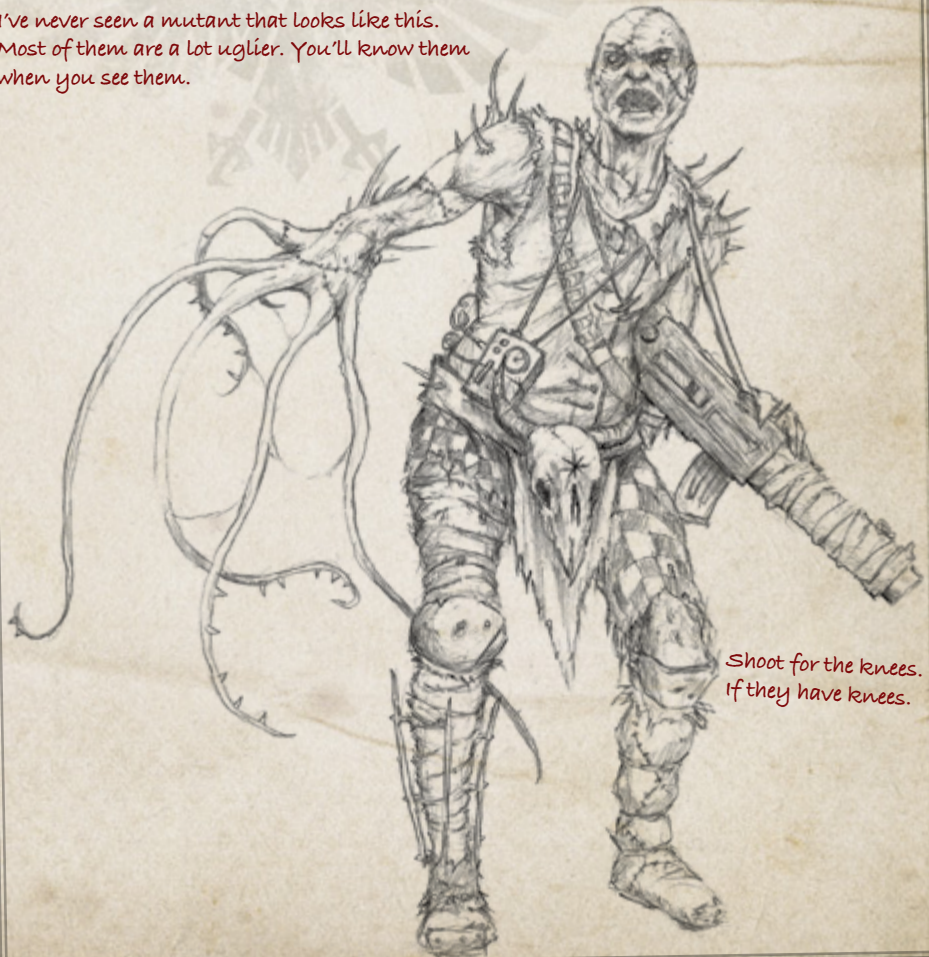
Those who defile their souls with corruption exhibit signs of impurity upon their bodies. Their flesh may be twisted, they may possess more than the usual number of facial features or limbs, or they may have a misshapen body part that they attempt to hide. Mutants exhibit

horrid, unnatural hungers and frenzied hatred of Imperial iconography. Watch for clumsy fingers when attempting to make the sign of the Aquila, shifty or watery eyes, and the unmistakable smell of rotting flesh, as these can be signs of mutation and heresy.

SIGNS OF THE WITCH

Unsanctioned use of psychic abilities, foul sorcery, and other such heresies threaten the souls of all, and must be dealt with harshly and swiftly with the help of one's regimental Commissar or an agent of the Ecclesiarchy. Any of the following can indicate the presence of a witch: spontaneous frost, nasal bleeding, the appearance of strange glyphs, poor sleep, gravitic anomalies, paranoia, aversion to holy symbols or fire, evil omens, and implausible buoyancy.

I've never seen a mutant that looks like this. Most of them are a lot uglier. You'll know them when you see them.



Shoot for the knees. If they have knees.

TRAITORS AND HERETICS

"Hear my warning, unbelievers, carried to your minds by the power of the Prince of Excess himself. We have raised altars in this land so that we may sacrifice you to our gods. Veterans of ten millennia of unholy war wait to grind you beneath the treads of their mighty boots. The chosen of Khorne hunger to add you to their bloody tally. The Blood God himself has marked this land, and will claim your skulls for his throne. There is no hope in opposing the inevitable. Put down your arms, unbelievers, and bow before the forces of Chaos."

—Dark Apostle Eliphaz the Inheritor

The Spinward Front plays host to a vast array of battles. From minor skirmishes to planetary invasions, world after world has felt the impact of war on a grand scale. In the shadows of these central conflicts lurk other forces. Not content with minor raids or flank attacks on the armies of the Orks, the Imperium, or the Severan Dominate, these heretic warbands have their own agenda. Unnoticed by many of the top commanders in the Spinward Front, the forces of Chaos have slowly grasped a piece of this hotly contested region for themselves.

Centuries before the Spinward Front erupted into war, a Chaos Space Marine force took root in the mostly unexplored reaches of the Stygian Deep. There, a powerful Chaos Lord named Cryth the Hellbringer ruled a sizable army, forged from many sources. The dregs of the Calixis Sector provided a nearly endless supply of cultists and heretics to serve as his foot soldiers, whilst the nearby Screaming Vortex contained no small number of Chaos Space Marines eager to prove themselves in the eyes of the Dark Gods. Over many decades, the Hellbringer vanquished all rivals to his sole claim of leadership, and had made detailed plans to attack and destroy several vital worlds in the Periphery. The Hellbringer had ambitious dreams of reaching deep into the Drusus Marches, and carving out a new realm to rule for his own.

However, everything changed for the Hellbringer and his forces when he encountered Malebolge—a blasted, seared rogue planet that had drifted far from any star. Hidden upon this world was an ancient, whispering tome of great power, and within that tome was a prophecy. Unable to decipher the tome's sibilant predictions, the Hellbringer took his prize in a search for answers. Cryth eventually discovered what he sought within the Screaming Vortex, in a place named the Temple of Lies, on the planet Kymerus.

There, a sightless Warp-witch read the tome's contents and divulged its meaning, mere moments before her mind was consumed by black fire. According to the witch, a great relic of the Dark Gods is hidden somewhere within the Spinward Front, and he who first lays claim to the relic will be granted his fondest desire. Upon hearing the witch's words, Cryth's trusted advisors instantly turned upon him and cut the Hellbringer down, causing a bloodbath of slaughter that led directly back to the Stygian Deep. The Chaos forces that the Hellbringer had so carefully consolidated into one shattered into fragments. Dozens of smaller warbands fell upon each other in ritual

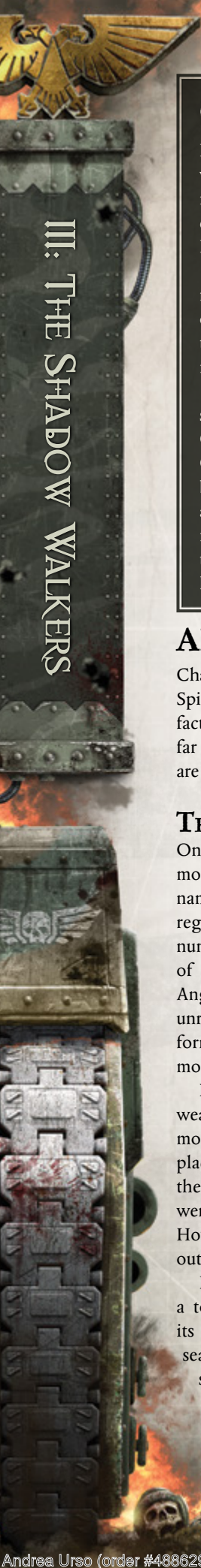


carnage, voidships burned amongst the Stygian Deep, and many worlds in that dire region were soaked in blood.

Since that time, the Spinward Front has been haunted by these scattered Chaos warbands, each led by a would-be Champion of Chaos. Many of these leaders seek to honour the Dark Gods with the lives of Imperial Guardsmen, hoping to be gifted with a hint or clue as to the relic's location. Other aspiring champions scour the region, searching world-by-world for any signs of the relic, and slaying anyone who gets in their way – Orks, Imperial Guard, or Severan Dominate alike.

However, not every Chaos warband is consumed with the hunt for the relic – others merely revel in the Spinward Front's disorder and bloodletting. These groups reserve their hatred for the Imperium, and prefer to strike at the Imperial Guard when possible, seeing the Orks and the Severan Dominate as mere targets of opportunity.

Of particular note is a Chaos warband led by a Dark Apostle known as Slydeon the Sensate. Slydeon's warband operates near Orbiana, and has made contact with at least one Dark Eldar Kabal in that region. It is rumoured that Slydeon has reached an uneasy alliance with the alien raiders, and the two groups have often been spotted in the same theatres of war.



CHAOS WARBANDS IN THE SPINWARD FRONT

Intelligence officers in Lord Marshal Ghanzorik's war councils have estimated that at least a dozen different Chaos warbands are at large in the Spinward Front. This number seems to be growing steadily, if slowly, as more and more information is transmitted back from the front lines and confirmed. Although identifying individual Chaos warbands can be quite difficult, there are a handful who have been positively determined to have been involved in the Spinward Front: The Scourged, the Deathmongers, and the Flawless Host.

Naturally, these analyses are sealed under high-level code ciphers to keep the information secure. Nevertheless, rumours about the involvement of Chaos Space Marines in a number of flank attacks have been filtering out to some of the regiments deployed against the Orks and the Severan Dominate. Regimental Commissars have been instructed to keep their men focused on Waaagh! Grimtoof and Duke Severus' separatists by any means necessary so as to keep morale high and momentum moving forward.

These Chaos warbands are often mostly made up of cultists and renegades. These human traitors and heretics have sworn dark pacts and damned their souls, trading their servitude for a chance to earn glory and draw the eye of the Dark Gods. Cultists can emerge from nearly any origin—whilst many are former soldiers, bodyguards, and even Imperial Guardsmen, others were little more than clerks, beggars, or even outcast mutants. These ragged warriors are ill-equipped by Imperial standards, wielding stub guns, hand cannons, and other primitive solid-shot weapons, as well as cleavers and rusty knives. Cultists often wear improvised armour, torn robes, or filthy uniforms, and the strongest among them may be found hoisting a heavy stubber or improvised flamer. However, what the cultists lack in wargear and training, they make up for with numbers and fervour. Even a disciplined, well-equipped force can be drowned under a screaming horde of cultists who have little regard for casualties or fear.

AREAS OF ACTIVITY

Chaos warbands operate largely on the fringes of the main Spinward Front, nipping at the exposed flanks of the battling factions. Isolated Chaos warband activity has been reported as far afield as Sleef and Deluge, but in the main, the warbands are found largely in four distinct areas.

THE STYGIAN DEEPS

On the fringes of the Severan Dominate lies a sinister and mostly unexplored nebula that Imperial chroniclers have named the Stygian Deeps. The rare few star charts of the region show that it is mostly composed of lonesome stars, numerous, scattered asteroid fields, and a few dozen planets of questionable value. Surveys of the region during the Angevin Crusade marked the Stygian Deeps as "mostly unremarkable," and in the aftermath of the Calixis Sector's formation, it is extremely rare for anyone to take even a modicum of interest in areas like the Deeps.

Far from any major trade routes and seemingly devoid of wealth in the eyes of the Imperium, the Stygian Deeps were mostly forgotten—making the region a perfect mustering place for the forces of Chaos. During the ascent of Cryth the Hellbringer, numerous staging areas, caches, and temples were established from one end of the region to the other. However, after the Hellbringer's downfall, most of these outposts have fallen into disuse and ruin.

Possibly the most important of these places is Malebolge, a tomb world honeycombed with ancient crypts beneath its featureless surface. Many of these chambers are still sealed, and it is rumoured that the planet once served as a storage receptacle for a long-absent collector of all things rare and unusual. Some travellers have encountered a field of derelict vessels near the orbit of Malebolge, each vessel echoing empty, although often in serviceable condition.

SISK

The world of Sisk resonates in the Warp like a finely tuned chord. Several Chaos warbands have seen fit to intervene from time to time on Sisk, and there exists a handful who have made the planet their home base in the region. A deep thread of heresy and genetic corruption has poisoned much of Sisk's population, aided by whispered lies and seductive promises from the lips of Dark Apostles. The warbands operating on Sisk have set their goal as the slow and gradual corruption of the entire planet. Many of the mutants lurking in the planet's mist-ridden highlands have sworn dire oaths to the Dark Gods, and a surprising number of nobles in the Lord Governor's court have joined them. The Governor, Lord Gavvit, remains mostly unaware of these plots and schemes amongst his own followers, but he has begun to suspect that the "mutant problem" far from his capital is much more severe than anyone truly understands.

A great swamp on the southernmost continent has recently come under the sway of Malaghent, a Chaos Lord who has dedicated himself to the foul embrace of Nurgle. In the burbling depths of the marsh, Malaghent has begun a horrific breeding program amongst the mutants, attempting to use his own noxious sorcery to create a new strain of mutation, capable of spreading his patron's gifts of plague and filth far and wide. So far, patrols on Sisk are completely unaware of Malaghent's location, but the misshapen results of his experimentation have begun to acquire notice amongst the Imperial Guard advisors in the region. At least one platoon of Valhallans have gone missing in this area, and it is only a matter of time before the Imperium's military takes a much greater interest.

NOX

Sidelined by the upheavals within the Calixis Sector and threatened by the war in the Spinward Front, the population of Nox has begun to grow restless and truculent. A dark cancer beats at the planet's heart, festering in the massive hive city

known as Nellos. The metropolis has been subdivided into five distinct boroughs, each with its own demagogue leader and each with its own distinct form of heresy. Various Chaos warbands visit Nellos for many reasons, often to resupply, acquire fuel and ammunition, or to simply revel in the festive atmosphere. Nellos settles all disputes with gladiatorial conflicts in mass bloodsport pits. Ritual sacrifice is offered before each match, and the gladiators are usually made up of captured Imperial Guardsmen, Severan Dominate separatists, and occasionally Orks or some other, more exotic species. Nellos is also home to a handful of debauched nobles and merchants, each scheming to take advantage of the constant games—and the threat of the Imperium taking a greater interest in the city's affairs—to secure benefits for himself.

VOLUPTUA

Not far from the main thrust of Waaagh! Grimtoof, the planet of Voluptua has weathered its share of Ork attacks. In fact, the Imperial forces under Lord Marshal Ghanzorik have reinforced the planet with some re-activated orbital stations to defend against additional assaults. However, the veneer of piety on Voluptua is, in fact, quite thin—and a number of hidden cults in the planet's upper classes have secretly invited agents of the Ruinous Powers into their midst. A few Chaos warbands have used these cults to gain access to one of the orbital stations that is still mostly under construction. Inside the warrens of this outpost, mutants and cultists alike openly declare their allegiance to one or more of the Dark Apostles. Under threat from the Orks, the planetary population has turned a blind eye to many oddities and perversions, but if the Dark Apostles are left to build their covens unchecked, Voluptua is destined to become one of the first sites for an open Daemonic incursion.

INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER FACTIONS

As the forces of Chaos begin to make their own plans amongst the devastation and uproar of the Spinward Front, they have encountered the many factions involved in this conflict—some few as allies, and many more as their direst foes.

THE IMPERIUM

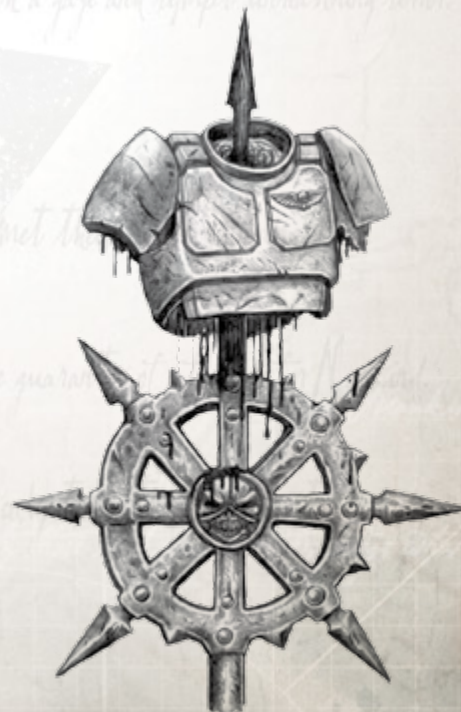
The Chaos forces in the Spinward Front have polished their hatred to a razor's edge and aimed it squarely at the Imperium of Man. The warbands in the Stygian Deepes have a particularly bitter grudge against the Imperial Guard and seek to damage, corrupt, and slay as much as they can, as often as they can. In the grand scheme of the war, encounters with Chaos warbands are but a tiny fraction of the engagements fought across the breadth of the Spinward Front, but those Imperial Guardsmen who do survive a battle with Chaos Space Marines—not to mention the cultists, renegades, and mutants that often accompany such warriors—bear the scars on their bodies and their psyches for the rest of their lives.

The blighted world of Sisk seems to be drawing more than its share of attention from Chaos forces seeking an opportunity to drive home an attack against the Imperium. The mutant

hordes indigenous to Sisk and the planet's own feudal society often work in favour of infiltrating in a small and determined Chaos warband. Some of the mutants have lately begun to whisper about a certain warband that is plotting some kind of assassination attempt against the Lord Marshal, but there is so far nothing more than rumours about such a plot. At least two other warbands believe that the secret of the Hellbringer's great relic lies somewhere on Sisk, and are currently scouring the planet's moors for any sign of their quarry.

The Inquisition has begun to take notice of a certain highly-placed Departamento Munitorum agent assigned to Voluptua. This agent's responsibility is overseeing shipments of raw promethium to supply dumps on the front lines, but there have been reports that this agent has made contact with Slydeon the Sensate. Whether this agent is truly under the sway of Chaos or if he has wholeheartedly thrown in his lot with traitors and heretics is unclear at this time, although there are signs that a small number of the alien Dark Eldar are also involved. Should the promethium flow be disrupted, it could have dire consequences for many operations in the Spinward Front, and would represent a setback that could be manipulated and escalated into a serious problem for the entire region.

One of the most persistent Chaos warbands to plague the Imperium's efforts in the Spinward Front is also the most unusual—a large wing of Hell Talon fighter-bombers has somehow acquired a hidden flight base near the Letum system. This group—dubbed “the Winnowers” by Battlefleet Calixis officers—has been the bane of Imperial Navy patrols in the Spinward Front for months. The unknown commander of the Winnowers seems to have an uncanny sense of just the right time to pounce, and his Hell Talons have shot down significant numbers of Furies and Starhawks operating nearby. Flight officers aboard the Dictator-class cruiser Divine Inspiration have sworn retribution on the Winnowers, but have yet to find a way to exact their revenge.



THE ORKS

For the most part, the Chaos warbands in the Spinward Front leave Waaagh! Grimtoof alone, preferring to focus their activities on the Imperial Guard and the Severan Dominate. There are exceptions, however, if targets of opportunity present themselves, as few Dark Apostles would pass up the chance at honing their warband's skills in a skirmish they are likely to win. Whenever a Chaos warband and a group of Orks encounter each other, the outcome is nearly always a battle, and the numerically superior Orks have the greatest advantage along the Spinward Front.

Being outnumbered does not seem to bother Chaos Lord Sigayl, however. He and his warband have been preying with relative impunity on many Ork groups along the flanks of the Waaagh! Some say Sigayl has developed a sorcery that clouds the minds of Ork Weirdboyz, while others instead say that he has made a pact with a powerful daemon and uses its gifts to his advantage. A popular theory amongst Severan Dominate advisors is that Sigayl believes that the Orks have somehow uncovered the Hellbringer's relic. Such a reason would certainly explain Sigayl's preoccupation with the interrogation and autopsies of captured Ork Weirdboyz.

Boss Gonzark is an Ork Nob who has taken a special interest in tracking down and slaying any Chaos Space Marines he can find. Gonzark is a veteran of many battles against the Imperium, and Warboss Grimtoof considers him a valuable underling. However, the Git-Slaver also believes that Gonzark has an unhealthy obsession with fighting Space Marines and Chaos Space Marines alike. More than a few power armour helmets adorn Gonzark's bosspole, and the Ork has boasted that he plans to bring a double handful of warband banners to the Warboss' throne.

Recently, a daring Chaos warband raided an Ork force en route to Avitohol. The raid almost became a rout, for the Orks threw themselves into the ambush with such unbridled enthusiasm that the Chaos forces were nearly decimated. In the end, victory was gained through the liberal use of virus bombs, and the Ork vessels were scuttled not far from the Avitohol system. A handful of grots managed to escape the raid with some information—the Chaos warband made off with a large number of Squiggoths, many of them yet immature. Warboss Grimtoof is uncertain as to the purpose or eventual consequences of this raid, but he has instructed his ship Kaptins to keep a wary eye out for Chaos fleets in the region.

THE SEVERAN DOMINATE

Duke Severus the Thirteenth and his breakaway nation are, in the main, mostly untroubled by Chaos incursions. Most of the Chaos Lords and Dark Apostles at large in the Spinward Front prefer to focus their efforts against the Imperium, and the most common targets of opportunity are the disorganized Ork mobs of Waaagh! Grimtoof. Severan Dominate analysts believe that the Chaos warbands are simply preoccupied with the Imperial Guard, but the Duke himself suspects that the Dark Apostles are merely biding their time until the hour is ripe for them to intervene.



The truth is much darker; many of the Chaos leaders in the Spinward Front believe that Severus is in personal possession of Hellbringer's relic, and further predict that he plans to use it as a last-ditch weapon against both the Orks and the Imperium alike should his soldiers fail. Accordingly, the Chaos warbands in the region prefer to wait, and instead help prolong and escalate the conflict in the region—a strategy that should push Severus further towards the limit of his desperation.

Viscount Illiar is one of the Duke's advisors, and is highly placed amongst the Severan Dominate's ruling councils. This nobleman has spent a considerable portion of his personal wealth and resources to investigate the Stygian Deeps, and Illiar is not pleased at what he has learned. Illiar's agents are hard at work to expose the influence and staging points of the Chaos warbands nearest to the Severan Dominate, and the Viscount has personally authorized that such information should, if possible, be discreetly delivered to Imperial Guard commanders in nearby theatres. By disseminating this data, Illiar hopes that the Imperial Guard will deal with these Dark Apostles for him and be weakened in the process, gaining benefits twofold for his despotic Duke.

THE OTHERS

The fragmented nature of the Chaos warbands operating in the Spinward Front means that they have made contact with a large variety of other forces in the region—many of them completely unknown to the humans and Orks so vigorously struggling for control over the Front.

Slydeon the Sensate and his warband have made a fragile alliance with a Kabal of Dark Eldar to prey upon human populations, and he is not alone in seeking outside help. The warband of Karrigar the Unseen has made a series of overtures to the Amaranthine Syndicate, in an effort to join forces with strange and unknown xenos lurking in the sector. Karrigar once bore witness to a rare raid by the murder-minds on Sleaf, and was highly impressed with the creature's bizarre technology. However, these strange, worm-like aliens have responded to Karrigar's diplomats with disdain—meaning that the emissaries return horribly mutilated, if at all—and the Unseen has grown more and more certain that he must have a reckoning. It seems inevitable that a fierce battle will break out between the Unseen's warband and the strange aliens, though none can predict the outcome of such a battle.

Yet another warband is trying to acquire the attention of the Warp-spawned creatures known as Enslavers. This seemingly suicidal act is all part of a Dark Apostle's convoluted plan to attract the attention of the nearby Space Marine Chapter, the Storm Wardens, and entice them into a trap. Several Chaos Space Marines have abruptly left the service of this Dark Apostle, and have spread tales that he has received one "gift" too many from the Dark Gods.

BATTLEFIELD STRATEGIES

Chaos warbands do not have one singular style of making war—each warband is different, and subject to its commander's preferences. When one considers that the commander of a Chaos warband is most likely mutated or insane, it becomes obvious that a coherent pattern cannot always be expected. That having been said, the Chaos warbands operating in the Spinward Front can be grouped into four broad categories of tactics they employ: terror, shock, infiltration, and corruption.

TERROR

Some Chaos warbands prefer to use fear as a weapon, and choose to strike at their enemies' morale. These warbands execute assassinations of key leaders, isolate and destroy small units, and leave gruesome displays of their handiwork where an early-morning patrol is sure to discover it. The warbands who practice terror tactics do not simply rely on surprise assaults and night attacks—they also ensure that there is a single survivor to spread the story of how his unit was systematically wiped out, piece by piece. Chaos Space Marines are merciless at the best of times, but when they are actively seeking to incite panic in their foes, they can be truly monstrous. Gory piles of bodies or artfully composed sacrifices of severed limbs are merely the beginning of a much more creative bag of tricks. A cleverly timed program of intimidation can cause even a veteran unit to hesitate at a fatal moment, or drive a normally cautious commander to give reckless orders. One Arkturion, a Warpsmith of the Alpha Legion, has grown particularly notorious for his campaigns of deception and terror against both the Imperium and the Severan Dominate, raising nightmarish Daemon Engines to obliterate his foes.

SHOCK

Savage assaults and swift strikes are the hallmarks of a Chaos warband that embraces shock tactics. The main goal of this approach is to hit the enemy as hard as possible, and maintain the momentum until the optimal time for an orderly retreat. Keeping the enemy off balance is another key point for shock tactics, so generally no exact assault is used more than once. For example, a surprise ambush utilizing hidden, shallow trenches would be quite effective against an unprepared force in the field—but for true shock value, surprise is necessary. Thus, the second ambush would instead focus on leaping down from the walls of a canyon cliff. Due to the nature of many Chaos warbands, shock tactics can often devolve into simple berserk charges, which can be surprisingly effective due to the typical strength, speed, and prowess of Chaos Space Marines.

INFILTRATION

A rare few Chaos warbands emphasise a subtle approach to war in the Spinward Front. These warbands have adopted infiltration tactics, which are based around stealth, surprise, and numbers. Chaos warbands using this approach often begin by fomenting and organising rebellion in the local population. Usually this means contacting the lower castes of the citizenry, most often outcasts, mutants, and the like. These warbands also prefer to make contact with any existing cults or heretics, to recruit them to their cause. It is not unknown for an Imperial Guard regiment to believe that everything is in order when the first sign of trouble erupts as a massive uprising of the underclasses, led by carefully placed Chaos Space Marines to orchestrate the mayhem.

CORRUPTION

Rather than straightforward attacks, the tactics of corruption focus instead on physical and spiritual defilement. This goal can be accomplished in a number of ways, all of them generally clandestine. Introducing psychotropic drugs or mutated human flesh into an Imperial Guard platoon's food supply is one method that was successfully carried out at least twice at staging areas near the Stygian Deep. Spiritual corruption often takes the form of seduction—whispers of ambition, wealth, or forbidden lusts in the right ears can bring down supply lines and medicae stations from within. Damning the soul of a unit's commander can spell defeat for an entire battle force without firing a single shot. At the extremes, this approach can involve exposing enemy forces to specialised plagues, viruses, chemical weapons, radiation, or even the horrific energies of the Warp itself. This tactic was used most successfully on the planet of Nox, where an ill-fated platoon of Brontian Longknives was selected as a target by a Chaos warband. The Imperial Guardsmen were exposed to a transgenic virus, causing the regimental Commissar to order other nearby units to open fire on the victims in an effort to contain the infection before it spread.

FORCES OF CHAOS

"As terrifying as a galaxy full of horrific xenos monsters and deadly new species might seem, there are things that chill me even more. The worst terrors are those we make of ourselves."

—Inquisitor Schuld

The Imperium of Mankind's intervention in the Spinward Front has created an incalculable array of opportunities for marauders to strike at unguarded targets, and the servants of Chaos have not been sitting idle during this time. A number of warbands have made their way to the Spinward Front seeking to uncover lost artefacts, pillage valuable supplies, ruin the works of the Imperium of Mankind, or simply spill blood in the name of their unspeakable gods.

DARK APOSTLES

"The only lie is that there has ever been anything but Chaos. The only ones who have misled you are those who sent you here to die for a cause you cannot understand. But I shall grant you a new purpose. Accept your deaths as the will of the Ruinous Ones and I shall open your eyes the true nature of this universe."

—Sektoth, the False Whisperer

The priests and clerics of the Dark Gods are known as Dark Apostles. Similar to the role played by Chaplains in the loyalist Space Marine Chapters, Dark Apostles are fanatical adherents of the Ruinous Powers, and have dedicated themselves to spreading their unholy religion across the galaxy. To propagate worship of the Dark Gods is the core responsibility of a Dark Apostle, and in return for his devotion, he is granted many gifts. Among these is a daemonic aura that protects him from harm—a shimmering, writhing field of Warp energy that surrounds the Dark Apostle, responding to the chanting of his blasphemous litanies.

The Dark Apostles preach that the Imperial Creed is naught but lies, a superstitious veil used to trick believers away from the truth. Instead, Dark Apostles compare the Ecclesiarchy's ranting to their own thunderous and savage sermons, and they can demonstrate the power of their patrons in a most direct fashion. Dark Apostles can channel the power of the Dark Gods through themselves, and act as a mouthpiece for the Ruinous Powers to make their will known to the material universe. At times, a Dark Apostle may spontaneously go stiff, his gaze filmed, his lips writhing with unintelligible words in an inhuman voice. Such is the power of these words that the Apostle's mouth may bleed, and those who claim to comprehend this guttural language say that these messages are direct commandments from the Dark Gods themselves.

Dark Apostles command great respect from other servants and champions of Chaos. They possess magnetic charm and powerful gravitas that can ignite wild and frightening passions in those they inspire.

The brutal regime of the Imperium can give rise



to boiling tensions and bitter animosity in those with weak faith or convictions. Dark Apostles are masters at targeting this underlying resentment with their sermons, exposing horrifying truths to inflame the population into revolt. Many worlds have been infiltrated by Dark Apostles seeking to make contact with secret cults and cement long-contemplated pacts, sealing the destiny of those seeking personal advantage. Afterwards, time is short until the Imperium's authorities are cast down, their defenders corrupted or hung, and the planetary population infected with rampant insanity, mutation, and plague. At the pivotal moment before the raving mobs tear each other apart in an orgy of violence, the Dark Apostle gathers them into a mighty host and leads them into an unholy war against the Imperium's forces.

The followers of a Dark Apostle are not limited to heretics, mutants, and traitors. On some occasions, entire formations of Imperial Guard or even an isolated group of Space Marines have fallen under the sway of a Dark Apostle's seductive charisma. Subverting otherwise loyal adherents to the Imperium is a sublime pleasure to devotees of Chaos, and the Dark Apostles are masters of their craft. Recidivism and uprisings can erupt nearly anywhere within a galaxy consumed by endless war, and the Inquisition has many reports of individual Dark Apostles who led the citizens of an entire world into blasphemy and damnation, until the Warp responded and daemons were unleashed into the cities. The power of a Dark Apostle is fuelled by the serried tide of devotees he gathers unto him, a horde of frenzied believers who throw themselves against the Imperium's bulwarks at his command.

When prepared for battle, a Dark Apostle is an impressive warrior. He wears power armour that has seen numerous battles and is adorned with tomes of forbidden lore. His mighty frame is decorated with scrolls of tanned human flesh, crackling with eldritch sorceries and unspeakable prayers. Runic tattoos screaming out paeans to the Dark Gods are engraved upon his skin. He bears with him a talisman of his position—a desecrated Crozius Arcanum. This arcane weapon is a dark, corrupted reflection of the Chaplain's signature wargear. However, the Dark Apostle's greatest and most feared weapon of all is his ability to inspire others to follow his example—a voice that summons a call to war, or inflicts a curse of the Dark Gods upon those who hear it.

Dark Apostle (Master)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
65	55	53 ¹⁰	61 ¹¹	51	67	55	60	66	

Movement: 6/12/18/36

Wounds: 45

Armour: Corrupted power armour
(Arms 8, Body 10, Head 8, Legs 8)

Total TB: 11

Skills: Athletics +20, Awareness (Per) +10, Charm (Fel) +20, Command (Fel) +30, Common Lore (Imperium, War) +20, Deceive (Fel) +20, Dodge (Ag) +20, Forbidden Lore (Adeptus Astartes, Codex Astartes, Daemonology, Mutants, The Warp), Inquiry (Fel) +20, Interrogation (WP) +20, Intimidate (S) +20, Linguistics (Low Gothic, High Gothic, Unholy Tongue) (Int) +20, Scholastic Lore (Legend, Occult, Philosophy, Tactica Imperialis) (Int) +20, Scrutiny (Per) +10, Stealth (Ag), Survival (Int).

Talents: Air of Authority, Dark Intercession†, Ambidextrous, Demagogue††, Die Hard, Fearless, Hatred (Loyalist Space Marines), Heightened Senses (Hearing, Sight, Smell), Into the Jaws of Hell, Iron Discipline, Jaded, Lightning Attack, Master Orator, Quick Draw, Rapid Reload, Two-Weapon Wielder (Ballistic, Melee), Swift Attack, True Grit.

Traits: Dark Sight, Fear (2), Size (Hulking), Touched by the Fates (3), Unnatural Strength (5), Unnatural Toughness (5).

Weapons: Legion bolt pistol (Pistol; 30m; S/2/-; 1d10+9 X; Pen 4; Clip 24; Reload Full; Tearing), defiled Crozius (Melee; 1d10+16 E; Pen 7; Balanced, Power Field), 3 frag grenades (Thrown; 36m; S/-/-; 2d10 X; Pen 0; Clip 1; Reload -; Blast [3]), 3 Krak grenades (Thrown; 36m; S/-/-; 2d10+8 X; Pen 6; Clip 1; Reload -).

Gear: 2 bolt pistol reloads, unholy charms, blasphemous texts, sigil of corruption†††.

†**Dark Intercession:** When a character within 10 metres of a Dark Apostle (including the Dark Apostle) rolls on **Table 3-1: Chaos Rewards** (see page 122), he may re-roll the result.

††**Demagogue:** The Dark Apostle may spend a Half Action orating to embolden his allies and terrify his foes. He makes a **Challenging (+0) Fellowship Test**; if he succeeds, allies within 30 metres gain the Fearless and Hatred (All) Talents until the end of his next Turn and enemies within 30 metres must make a **Hard (-20) Willpower Test** or suffer a -10 penalty to Weapon Skill and Ballistic Skill Tests until the end of his next Turn.

†††**Sigil of Corruption:** Dark Apostles are protected by Daemonic power that acts as a Force Field (see page 196 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook) with a Protection Rating of 45 that Overloads on a result of 10 or lower. Instead of the usual effects, when the Warp Aura Overloads, it remains active, but the energies inflict 1d5 Energy Damage upon the Dark Apostle, ignoring Armour and Toughness Bonus.

GM ADVICE: USING A DARK APOSTLE

Dark Apostles are charismatic and terrifying warriors who frequently take to the field flanked by hordes of slaving mutants, insane cultists, or even other Chaos Space Marines. A single Dark Apostle can easily swing the outcome of a battle with the strength of his arm, but he can turn the tide of a war with the might of his words.

STRATEGY

In the Spinward Front, where there are few major Chaos warbands, Dark Apostles often lead forces comprised largely of highly disposable servants rather than mighty squads of Chaos Space Marines. As such, many Dark Apostles in the Spinward Front rely on terror tactics while conducting their raids, fomenting rebellion in a population and then leading their newfound followers into battle before abandoning them to claiming the relics, slaves, or resources they desired in the first place. If a Dark Apostle is lucky enough to have a core of Chaos Space Marines serving him, he might engage in larger-scale military actions, seeking to destabilise worlds held by the Imperium as part of wider campaigns or simply to sacrifice the armies of lost souls they raise for the glory of Chaos.

ENGAGEMENT

Dark Apostles are ancient, fearless warriors empowered by the Dark Gods. Especially when fighting foes such as Imperial Guardsmen, Dark Apostles rarely bother to conceal their presence, instead cowering their foes into submission and madness with dreadful deeds the aura of dark glory that surrounds them. If ambushed, a Dark Apostle rushes forward to meet his attackers, his minions surging forth around him to spill the blood of those who challenge their wicked master.

COMBAT TACTICS

Most Dark Apostles prefer to fight surrounded by minions, chanting prayers to the Ruinous Ones and inspiring their followers to ever more depraved acts of devotion. Often times, a Dark Apostle first sends his disposable underlings to fight with his foes, standing back intoning while wicked supplications to the Chaos Gods to empower his warriors and dishearten his foes. Once his enemies are overwhelmed (or if they make progress against the Dark Apostle's underlings), the Dark Apostle himself strides into the combat, killing with deadly, corrupted weapons and relying upon the blessings of his wicked gods to protect him.



CHAOS SPACE MARINE

"It was fury! It was death! Hatred clad in steel! War bound in flesh! Before it, we could do nothing. Nothing but die."

—Lieutenant Honat of the Mordian Iron Guard 349th, executed for cowardice after the loss of his platoon

A Space Marine, one of the Emperor's Angels of Death, possesses every possible advantage on the battlefield, from extraneous organs to inhuman strength and celerity to an iron will. However, with immense power can come pride in equal measure, and there are those among these champions of the Imperium who have fallen to darkness. Space Marines were first seduced by Chaos over 10,000 years ago, during the tumultuous events of the Horus Heresy. There are many reasons a Space Marine might surrender his soul to the Dark Gods—it may be for the highest of ideals, or in pursuit of the basest desires. Ripped from the bosom of the Imperium and with their bond to the Emperor shattered, these brutal soldiers face but one fate—reconciliation and atonement are forever forbidden to them. Instead, they have wholly damned their souls and cast their lot with the eternal forces of Chaos. Those they once named Battle-Brothers shall show no mercy, for the Chaos Space Marines know nothing of any such virtue.

Chaos Space Marines wield ancient, arcane wargear, much of it from before the Horus Heresy. The primary weapon for Chaos Space Marines is the bolter, constructed in a multitude of marks over the millennia. These weapons are capable of burst-firing explosive, mass-reactive shells that instantly reduce most infantry targets to splattered clumps of meat and viscera.

Some squads of Chaos Space Marines prefer the furious melee of close assault, and in turn those squads utilize bolt pistols and ritual knives, whilst others equip themselves with chainswords, axes, or other brutal weapons capable of hacking apart a foe in power armour or reducing a victim in flak armour to red paste.

Squads of Chaos Space Marines rarely possess any unifying characteristics—unity of standards and patterns are sundered as they tread the path to glory to please the Dark Gods. Instead of each squad containing its own sergeant, Chaos Space Marines are led by the mightiest, fiercest, and most ruthless of their number. These merciless and implacable warriors have their sights set upon the goal of becoming a champion of Chaos and gaining the favour of the Dark Gods.

These superhuman killers seek to gain the fickle gifts of the Ruinous Powers—flesh tainted by the touch of the Warp—in return for destroying any foes they can find or, from time to time, performing human sacrifice. The selfish bitterness and hatred that burn in the Chaos Space Marine's dark heart are both the source of his greatest strength and his greatest weakness, for whilst he is a savage warrior without peer, he also charges into battle against odds that would make the most hardened human veteran baulk.

Chaos Space Marines are figures of nightmarish legend and terror amongst the rank and file of the Imperial Guard—few Guardsmen have ever survived an encounter with these traitors, and those that have tell spine-chilling stories of slaughter and mayhem on a scale difficult to compare to other, more mundane enemies. Even regimental Commissars have been known to pause when confronted with a Chaos Space Marine, and it is not unknown for squads or even entire platoons to rout when faced with such superhuman murderers in close-quarters combat.

III: THE SHADOW WALKERS



Chaos Space Marine (Elite)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
56	55	51	48	45	42	45	50	29

Movement: 5/10/15/30

Armour: Power armour

(Arms 8, Body 10, Head 8, Legs 8)

Skills: Athletics (+20), Awareness (Per), Command (Fel), Dodge (Ag) +10, Forbidden Lore (Daemons, Warp) (Int), Intimidate (S) +20, Literacy (Low Gothic, High Gothic, Unholy Tongue) (Int) +10, Scrutiny (Per), Survival (Int).

Talents: Die Hard, Fearless, Hatred (Loyalist Space Marines), Heightened Senses (Hearing, Sight, Smell), Jaded, Quick Draw, Rapid Reload, Swift Attack, True Grit.

Traits: Auto-Stabilised *or* Fear (1), Dark Sight, Size (Hulking), Sturdy, Unnatural Strength (4), Unnatural Toughness (4).

Weapons: Legion bolter (100m; S/3/-; 1d10+9 X; Pen 4; Clip 28; Reload Full; Tearing), legion bolt pistol (Pistol; 30m; S/2/-; 1d10+9 X; Pen 4; Clip 24; Reload Full; Tearing), ritual combat knife (Melee; 1d10+10 R; Pen 0; Balanced) *or* legion chainsword (Melee; 1d10+11 R; Pen 3; Balanced, Tearing) *or* legion chainaxe (Melee; 1d10+13 R; Pen 3; Tearing) *or* legion power sword (Melee; 1d10+14 E; Balanced, Power Field), 3 frag grenades (Thrown; 30m; S/-/-; 2d10 X; Pen 0; Clip 1; Reload -; Blast [3]), 3 Krak grenades (Thrown; 30m; S/-/-; 2d10+8 X; Pen 6; Clip 1; Reload -).

Gear: 2 bolt pistol reloads, 4 bolter magazines, icons of wicked devotion, vicious trophies of war (skulls, flayed skin, maddening marks of Chaos).

Wounds: 29

Total TB: 8



GM ADVICE: USING CHAOS SPACE MARINES

Chaos Space Marines are cunning and lethal foes forged in centuries or millennia of warfare, and even a single Chaos Space Marine can threaten any squad of Imperial Guardsmen. GMs should take care in deploying these foes against their Squads, and remember that using them sparingly can help to make them both more manageable to a given Squad and more intimidating on the battlefield and in the greater context of the narrative.

ENGAGEMENT

Individual Chaos Space Marines vary in terms of their practices, but all are masters of warfare, capable of launching ambushes despite their hulking stature and combatting even the best-laid traps with disciplined bolter fire or brutal counter-charges. Ambushing a Chaos Space Marine is extremely difficult, given their acute senses and inhuman reaction speed. However, millennia of ceaseless slaughter can cloud even the shrewdest minds with hubris.

COMBAT TACTICS

Chaos Space Marines are tactically flexible and utterly ruthless. Some prefer to wade into close quarters and bash open the skulls of their foes with their mighty, armoured fists. Others kill at range, using their corrupted boltguns to rip apart their foes with inhuman precision. Regardless of preference, Chaos Space Marines are incredibly deadly at any range. In the Spinward Front, Chaos Space Marines are rarely seen in full squads, typically hunting alone, in pairs, or with a group of disposable cultist followers from their warband. Chaos Space Marines often attempt to neutralise the largest danger in a group first, killing each target with cruel efficiency in the order of the threat it poses before moving on to the next.





HELLBRUTE

"Bring this tank about! If that thing is inside of the Earthshaker cannon's firing arc, then we have no choice but to ram it. If the Emperor did not intend for you to fight His enemies in close-quarters, he would not have seen fit to put bayonets on your lasguns. Now bring this Basilisk about and charge, you pi-"

—Commissar Daniel Sterne, final words

A Hellbrute is a corrupted reflection of a Space Marine Dreadnought, although it hardly resembles what it once was. Hellbrutes combine heavy firepower with the intellect of a berserk madman, for each Hellbrute contains a living mind within its armoured torso. Entombed within is a single Chaos Space Marine, his sanity shattered by endless centuries of blood-soaked battle.

Loyalist Space Marine Chapters believe that being placed into a Dreadnought's mighty frame is a singular honour, a means by which they can endlessly fight alongside their battle-brothers. Chaos Space Marines, however, view the process somewhat differently—amongst their kind, it is akin to a sentence of endless torture and violation. Chaos Space Marines fear little, but they loathe the possibility of being locked into the amniotic sarcophagus that forms the heart of the Hellbrute. Inside, the pilot's brain and nervous system is linked via mind impulse units and other implants into the Hellbrute's controls. The sarcophagus is like a pitch-black cage, a chamber from which the pilot can no longer witness the glories of war with his own

senses, never again taste the spray of an opponent's blood upon his own flesh. Chaos Space Marines who have endured mortal wounds on the battlefield are eligible to join with a Hellbrute, but nearly all such candidates would prefer to die and feed the Dark Gods with their soul than to suffer millennia imprisoned inside the Hellbrute's armoured plates. It is no surprise that Hellbrutes are utterly insane from the moment they awaken.

Over time, Warp-energies begin to fuse flesh with metal, bonding the pilot's body to the armoured machine in which he is entombed. Desperate and furious, the pilot's mind deteriorates further with each passing year, until he is little more than a ravaging beast, unleashed when his aggression is most useful. When the Hellbrute is not in the midst of battle, the pilot's sarcophagus is unplugged from the armoured shell and dragged into storage. Massive chains are used to restrain the Hellbrute's machine form like an animal during transport, for there is a chance that the pilot's soul may have left a signature within the walker's control system that could cause it to frenzy, and lash out at anything nearby.

In preparation for battle, the Hellbrute's weaponry is loaded and primed, its power scourges and heavy, armour-crumpling fists are anointed with freshly spilled blood, and then the pilot's sarcophagus is dragged out of its storage space and re-connected to the walker's control system. As the Hellbrute begins to fully awaken, the fractured mind of the Chaos Space Marine pilot seethes with rage, building his fierce lust for battle to the boiling point. At last, the Hellbrute is finally released to gorge itself upon the blood of its enemies, transformed into a single-minded machine of murder and devastation.

GM ADVICE: USING A HELLBRUTE

Hellbrutes are crazed killing machines that vent their rage and pain upon anything unfortunate enough to come within their terrible reach.

ENGAGEMENT

Regardless of circumstance, a Hellbrute attempts to annihilate its foes in the most brutal and direct manner possible, tearing them apart with its massive claws or annihilating them with gratuitous amounts of gunfire.

COMBAT TACTICS

A Hellbrute usually engages the closest target and seeks to destroy it utterly. If harmed by an attack (a rare case, given its solid construction), it might shift its fury towards the enemy who damaged it, but otherwise, it relentlessly pursues the most obvious foes and smashes them to pieces. A Hellbrute is a slave to its insane ferocity, following its crazed instincts and shredding everything in its path without thought or hesitation.

Hellbrute (Master)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
50	50	71	--	25	34	33	40	02	

Type: Walker

Cruising Speed: 20kph

Structural Integrity: 35

Size: Enormous

Armour: Front: 37, Side 37, Rear 20

Vehicle Traits: Enclosed, Reinforced Armour, Walker.

Crew: One insane Chaos Space Marine.

Carry Capacity: None.

Weapons: Crushing stomp (Melee; 1d10+14 I; Pen 4; Unwieldy).

Arm Weapon Options: A Hellbrute has any two of the following weapons. Note that a Hellbrute cannot reload its own ranged weapons, which must be resupplied after the Hellbrute exhausts its ammunition:

- Hellbrute Power Scourge (Melee; 2d10+22 E; Pen 6; Flexible, Power Field, Unbalanced).
- Hellbrute Power Fist (Melee; 2d10+24 R; Pen 10; Power Field, Tearing, Unwieldy).
- Hellbrute Thunder Hammer (Melee; 2d10+24 R; Pen 10; Concussive (2), Power Field, Unwieldy).
- Twin-linked Heavy Bolter (Front Facing; 150m; --/6; 1d10+12 X; Pen 5; Clip 60; Reload Full; Tearing, Twin-linked).
- Twin-linked Autocannon (Front Facing; 300m; S/3/--; 3d10+8 I; Pen 6; Clip 20; Reload 2 Full; Reliable, Twin-linked).
- Twin-linked Lascannon (Front Facing; 300m; S/--/--; 5d10+10 E; Pen 10; Clip 5; Reload 2 Full; Proven [3], Twin-linked).
- Plasma Cannon (Front Facing; 150m; S/--/--; 2d10+12 E; Pen 10; Clip 16; Reload 5 Full; Blast [3], Maximal, Overheats).

- Missile Launcher (Heavy; 300m; S/--/--; by missile; by missile; Clip 10; Reload Full) (This missile launcher may fire any of the missiles listed on page 182–183 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook).

- Multi-melta (Front Facing; 60m; S/--/--; 2d10+16 E; Pen 12; Clip 12; Reload 2 Full; Blast [1], Melta).

Special Rules: A Hellbrute has the Fear (3), Mindless Fury†, and Unnatural Strength (7) Traits. Additionally, it has the Lightning Attack, Swift Attack, and Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee, Ranged) Talents.

†**Mindless Fury:** A Hellbrute is an insane, howling killing machine that bellows out unintelligible roars of hatred and gunfire alike, smashing anything that comes within reach. It is nearly impossible to guide or control such a creature; one can merely unleash it and then hope that its fury carries it elsewhere.

At the beginning of each of its Turns, a the maddened Space Marine locked within the Hellbrute makes a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test**. If it succeeds, it gains a +5 bonus to its Ballistic Skill and Weapon Skill Characteristics until the end of the Turn for every Degree of Success it scores. If it fails by an odd number of Degrees of Failure, it gains a +10 bonus to its Weapon Skill Characteristic, increases its Tactical Speed to 10m, and cannot make Ranged Attacks until the end of the Turn. If it fails by an even number of Degrees of Failure, it gains a +10 bonus to its Ballistic Skill Characteristic and cannot make Melee Attacks or Movement Actions until the end of the Turn.

If a Hellbrute fails its Willpower Test this way but cannot reach any foes, it settles for venting its rage upon the nearest target—whether or not that target is nominally an ally or even a living creature, as its hatred knows no sanity nor bounds.





Chaos Spawn (Minion)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
35	--	66 ¹²	63 ¹²	22	03	16	25	01

Movement: 9/18/27/54

Wounds: 35

Armour: None

Total TB: 12

Skills: Athletics (S) +20, Awareness (Per).

Talents: Furious Assault, Die Hard, Swift Attack, True Grit.

Traits: Fear (2), From Beyond, Multiple Arms (1d10), Regeneration (1d5), Size (1d5+3), Stuff of Nightmares, Unnatural Strength (6), Unnatural Toughness (6).

Weapons: Claws, pincers, beaks, vicious maws, etc. (Melee; 1d10+12 R; Pen 0; Tearing).

DAEMON PRINCE

"Now, my ascension is complete. Feeble flesh has been cast out, and in its place is power manifest. Let me show you."

—Modrun the Fiendlord, before the Third Massacre at Adolorata

One of the most terrifying foes an Imperial Guardsman might face, a Daemon Prince is a mortal worshipper of Chaos who has achieved a form of depraved apotheosis and become a Daemon upon the fickle whim of the Dark Gods. Daemon Princes wield incredible power, and a single such adversary could easily butcher squad upon squad of Imperial Guard troopers with ease, its Daemonic hide deflecting almost all blows and its brutal weapons or claws tearing apart those nearby with contemptuous ease. Some Daemon Princes even wield foul sorceries on top of their formidable physical abilities, bringing the raw, unadulterated might of Chaos to bear on those who oppose them.

Perhaps the only mitigating factor is that few mortals achieve such heights in the eyes of the Chaos Gods, and so relatively few worshippers of the Ruinous Powers are gifted with Daemonhood. Far more are condemned to spawnedom, becoming mindless, shambling amalgamations of flesh and hatred, or are eventually destroyed utterly by their dark masters' whims. In rare cases, however, mortal worshippers of the Ruinous Ones prove themselves worthy of transcending their flesh and becoming creatures of the Immaterium itself, no longer bound by such trivial laws as material reality or sanity. Once a mortal has achieved this status, even death cannot put it to rest for good, for Daemons merely return to the mad realms of the Immaterium when banished from the battlefield. Further, Daemons rarely forget those responsible for such humiliations.

Each Daemon Prince is different, wielding strange powers and possessing ineffable knowledge that make it a true champion of Chaos. Some are capable of great subtlety and craft intricate plans to corrupt whole worlds, while others are raving killers who butcher everything around them without thought. The temperament of the individual—and its patron deity—determines how a Daemon Prince carries out its vile, grandiose tasks. All, however, are utterly devoted to the pursuit of power, still burning with the inhuman ambition that made their ascension a dread reality.

CHAOS SPAWN

"Keep firing, trooper! Don't stop even if you think you've killed it! Keep shooting until you're out of ammo, then throw your grenades!"

—Sergeant Graflak, Malfian 585th Infantry

Chaos promises only one thing: power. It does not, however, make any guarantees about the form in which strength arrives. While some who prove themselves worthy are blessed with potent gifts from their patron deities that grant them incredible new abilities and a rare few mortals even transcend their flesh, the vast majority of worshippers of Chaos suffer fates too horrible to contemplate.

Some of these unfortunates are transformed into Chaos Spawn. These mindless masses of voracious appendages are the wretched counterpoint to Daemon Princes. While the latter have surpassed their bodies through the might of Chaos, those who are condemned to spawnedom are consumed by its power entirely. While Daemon Princes bask in their newfound glory, Chaos Spawn serve as a warning to all who treat with the Ruinous Ones.

Some Chaos Warbands keep Chaos Spawn as beasts of war, herding them to battle and letting them run rampant on the field. Mercifully for any Guardsman, such occurrences are rare.

GM ADVICE: USING CHAOS SPAWN

Chaos Spawn are mindless killers, shambling forward to rip at all around them with their horrifying maws and flailing limbs; they devour anything they can catch.



Daemon Prince (Master)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	
75	60	67	65	48	54	43	75	3	I

Movement (Size 5): 5/10/15/30
Movement (Size 6): 6/12/18/36
Movement (Flight): 9/18/27/54
Wounds: 80
Armour: Sigil-wrought hide (All 4). **Total TB:** 12
Skills: Athletics +20, Awareness (Per), Command (Fel) +20, Dodge (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Daemons, Warp) (Int), Intimidate (S) +20, Literacy (Any) (Int) +20, Scrutiny (Per), Survival (Int).
Talents: Die Hard, Heightened Senses (Hearing, Sight, Smell), Lightning Attack, Never Die, Swift Attack, Touched by the Fates (2), True Grit.
Traits: Brutal Charge (3), Daemonic (6), Fear (4), Flyer (9), From Beyond, Size (5 or 6), Stuff of Nightmares, Unnatural Strength (6), Vile Ascension†.
†**Vile Ascension:** If a character becomes a Daemon Prince due to **Table 3-1: Rewards of Chaos**, its profile becomes that listed here. It can retain elements of its old profile (a favoured Daemon weapon, armour, Characteristics, Talents, or other rules the Game Master deems appropriate to its new form).
Weapons: Chaos-forged sword, rune-wrought claws, fanged flail, or other suitably unholy and devastating melee weapon (Melee; 2d10+16 I, R, or E; Pen 12; Felling [6], Unwieldy).

GM ADVICE: USING A DAEMON PRINCE

Daemon Princes are incredibly potent, and without considerable military support, ingenious planning, or the grace of the Emperor himself, a Squad of Imperial Guardsmen has little hope of overcoming a fully materialised Daemon Prince.

ENGAGEMENT

Different Daemon Princes use different tactics to join the battle. Most are too large to effectively hide themselves in their true form, and are sufficiently resilient to simply ignore oncoming fire as they close to melee. Daemon Princes are highly dangerous when their ascension happens on the battlefield (such as via the Dark Apotheosis result from **Table 3-1: Gifts of Chaos** on page 122). However, they are also briefly vulnerable during this transformation.

COMBAT TACTICS

Some Daemon Princes prefer to fight at range, unleashing deadly psychic powers upon their enemies, many others tend to use their brute strength to crush their foes in close combat, wielding cursed weapons, rune-scribed claws, and instruments more horrible still. Different Daemon Princes use different tactics as dictated by their core identity and patron deities, but all are terrible foes to face.





MARKS OF CHAOS

Mortal servants of the Dark Gods who attain great renown or achieve great deeds in the name of their patrons are sometimes known as Champions of Chaos. These Champions may receive special gifts and exhibit powerful abilities related to the Ruinous Power whom they serve—such rewards take the form of the Marks of Chaos. A Mark of Chaos acts as a badge of glory amongst many Chaos warbands, designating a specially recognised servant of the Dark Gods, and one with a powerful destiny before him.

USING THE MARKS OF CHAOS

At the GM's discretion, the Marks of Chaos can be given to any profile found in this section as a way to create a new variation on the existing enemy, or as a way to personalise the profile for a specific role in the **ONLY WAR** campaign.

The Mark of Khorne

Khorne is the Blood God, lord of murderous slaughter and battle. The God of Battles takes notice of but a few warriors, and only the most skilled and brutal fighters in the galaxy attract his attention. Those Marked by Khorne often lead great armies of blood-thirsty murderers and leave a trail of conquest and subjugation in their wake. A warrior favoured by Khorne has fought hundreds of duels, battled bizarre creatures in ritual combat, or has simply accrued an unspeakable body-count at the point of his sword. The abilities granted to those marked by Khorne inevitably lead to carnage and bloodshed. However, Khorne himself does not care about his Champions... all that matters is that blood is spilled, and from whence the blood flows is of no concern.

Effects: Bearers of the Mark of Khorne gain the Berserk Charge, Frenzy, and Resistance (Psychic Powers) Talents and the Unnatural Strength (4) Trait. If the recipient already possesses the Unnatural Strength Trait, increase the value of this Trait by 2 instead.

GM ADVICE: USING THE WORSHIPPERS OF KHORNE

Dedicants of Khorne give themselves over completely to violence, spilling oceans of blood, unhindered by thought.

ENGAGEMENT

Particularly dedicated worshippers of Khorne often ignore strategy entirely, charging straight into battle with a blood-curdling scream regardless of combat circumstances.

COMBAT TACTICS

Khorne does not care from whom the blood flows, only that it flows copiously! Worshippers of Khorne slaughter any foes (a category that includes virtually anyone and anything) they encounter. Many Khorne worshippers arm themselves only with melee weapons, or wield their ranged weapons as such instead of firing them.

The Mark of Tzeentch

Also known as the Great Sorcerer, Tzeentch is the Dark God of magic, conspiracy, and fate. Those marked by Tzeentch command powerful sorceries and possess a talent for subtle manipulations. All too often, a Champion of Chaos pursuing his own agenda discovers that all along, he had been fulfilling the goals of Tzeentch, his reward an arcane rune branded into his flesh and the surrender of his soul to the God of Change. The Mark of Tzeentch lends its bearer a portion of understanding of Tzeentch's great plan for the universe—just enough to provide mutations or unusual abilities without blasting the recipient's mind into oblivion.

Effects: Bearers of the Mark of Tzeentch gain the Psyker Trait, a Psy Rating of 4, and the Unnatural Willpower (4). Recipients count as Unbound Psykers (see page 224 of the **ONLY WAR CORE** Rulebook). If a recipient already possesses a Psy Rating or the Unnatural Willpower Trait, increase the value of its Psy Rating or that Trait by 2 instead. Recipients of this Mark also gain any Psychic Powers that the Game Master deems appropriate, based on the specifics of the sorceries they wield and the challenge that he wishes to present to the Player Characters.

GM ADVICE: USING THE WORSHIPPERS OF TZEENTCH

Worshippers of Tzeentch plan every move in triplicate, considering countless mad scenarios and twisting their minds in inconceivable ways to prepare for anything.

ENGAGEMENT

Worshippers of Tzeentch are sometimes gifted with foresight that allows them an unparalleled ability to choose their battles. Some prepare elaborate traps and deadly sorceries for their foreseen foes, while others tailor unfathomable strategies against their opponents.

COMBAT TACTICS

If they are psykers, worshippers of Tzeentch often fight from a distance, slinging the foul sorcery of their capricious god. Of course, no list of tactics can encompass the madness of Tzeentch and his followers, and acolytes of Tzeentch often use the most unexpected or seemingly nonsensical tricks, all of which play a small role in the schemes of the Master of Change.





The Mark of Nurgle

Nurgle is the Lord of Decay, the grandfather who embodies corruption and decay in all forms. Those Marked by Nurgle become bloated with corruption, their flesh deadened to pain and fatigue. As the recipient's flesh rots, he gestates within his body the sacred plagues of his patron, eager to share such "blessings" with all he encounters. Unlike Khorne, Nurgle is often very willing to respond to pleas from those who suffer from weakness or poverty. These pathetic cries for aid are sweet music to Nurgle, a joyful chorus welcoming his touch. Nurgle is pleased to grant life to those on death's door, eternally amused by the nature of his assistance—those who accept it become damned for eternity, endlessly serving to incubate virulent strains of noxious sickness.

Effects: Bearers of the Mark of Nurgle increase their Wounds by 1d10 and gain the Stuff of Nightmares and Unnatural Toughness (4) Traits. If a recipient already possesses the Unnatural Toughness Trait, increase the value of this Trait by 2 instead.

The Mark of Slaanesh

Slaanesh is the Prince of Pleasure, the God of Unnatural Beauty and Sensual Delights. Slaanesh's nature is hedonism and excess, secret pleasures kept hidden, and addiction to forbidden lusts. To gain the attentions of the Dark Prince of Chaos, a mortal champion must push his senses far beyond any normal limits in an eternal quest for perfection. The champion must be insatiable, a living embodiment of

GM ADVICE: USING THE WORSHIPPERS OF NURGLE

Dour and fatalistic, worshippers of Nurgle cling to life by any means, even as they choke out all life around them.

ENGAGEMENT

Nurgle's champions trudge forward with inevitable purpose, favouring neither ambush nor reaction. They rarely employ stealth in their approach, allowing their enemies to see the futility of their struggles as they lumber forward in plain sight.

COMBAT TACTICS

Worshippers of Nurgle rely on their resilience to carry them through, knowing that their mere presence corrupts and destroys all life around them. They butcher their foes at range as they slowly approach and then with deadly, plagued weapons once within melee range, feeling neither pleasure or anguish, seeing only the inevitability that their enemies struggle in vain to reject.

unending sacrilege and fulfilment. Few champions survive the experience of gaining the favour of Slaanesh, their bodies and minds warped beyond repair by the unholy pleasures they have experienced. Those who gain the Mark of Slaanesh exude a sinister aura of seduction, and move with fluid grace unlike any normal being.

Effects: Bearers of the Mark of Slaanesh gain the Heightened Senses Talent for all appropriate senses, and the Unnatural Agility (4) and Unnatural Fellowship (4) Traits. If the recipient already possesses the Unnatural Agility or Unnatural Fellowship Traits, increase the values of these Trait by 2 instead.

GM ADVICE: USING THE WORSHIPPERS OF SLAANESH

Slaanesh's disciples are consumed by their own excesses, living testaments to their god's pervasive power.

ENGAGEMENT

Worshippers of Slaanesh rely on their words and appearance to disorient their foes. Whether engaged normally or ambushed, they close the distance to where to where they can inflict the most harm.

COMBAT TACTICS

Slaanesh's worshippers frequently possess incredible rhetorical skills, or at least the ability to leverage their unnatural charms to put their enemies off-guard. These alluring monstrosities also possess incredible grace, allowing them to weave between their foes, slashing out cruelly or goading them to give in to excess (or often both at the same time).



CHAOS REWARDS

When a champion of Chaos seeks to prove his devotion to the Ruinous Powers, they sometimes notice and grant him a boon, although these gifts do not always represent a benefit. At the GM's discretion, a Chaos Space Marine, Dark Apostle, or similar leader can appeal to the Dark Gods during a pivotal moment and receive some sort of reward. He can choose a reward choose or roll on **Table 3-1: Rewards of Chaos** to determine the gift.



TABLE 3-1: REWARDS OF CHAOS

Roll	Result
1-5	Unworthy Offering: The character desiring the reward is left with nothing but the taste of failure.
6-10	Spawndom: The character desiring the reward is transformed into a Chaos Spawn! For the profile of a Chaos Spawn, see page 118. This transformation takes one full Round, during which it uses its new profile but is Stunned.
11-15	Warp Frenzy: This character desiring the reward gains the Frenzy Talent and immediately enters a Frenzy as per that Talent (see page 144 of the ONLY WAR Core Rulebook). While in a Frenzy, this character's Melee Attacks inflict an additional 1d5 Damage.
16-20	Fragment of Immortality: The character desiring the reward gains the Regeneration (4) and Undying Traits. If it already possessed the Regeneration Trait, increase the value of this Trait by 4 instead.
21-25	Strength of the Berzerker: The character desiring the reward gains the Unnatural Strength (5) Trait. If it already possesses the Unnatural Strength Trait, increase the value of this Trait by 5 instead.
26-30	Arcane Occulum: The character desiring the reward gains the Unnatural Senses (100) Trait or increase the value of this Trait to 100 if it already possessed it at a lower value. Its ranged attacks ignore any AP Targets gain from Cover.
31-35	Bloated Form: The character desiring the reward increases its Wounds by twice its Toughness Bonus and immediately removes all Damage it is currently suffering. It can no longer take the Run Action.
36-40	Crystalline Body: The character desiring the reward gains the Natural Armour (8) Trait. If it already possesses the Natural Armour Trait, increase the level of that Trait by 8 instead. Whenever it is hit with an attack, reduce the value of its Natural Armour Trait by 1 until the end of the encounter.
41-45	Shield of Force: The character desiring the reward gains the effects of a Force Field with a Protection Rating of 35 that does not Overload. If it already possesses a Force Field, increase the value of its Protection Rating by +20. It can no longer Overload.
46-50	Mechanoid: The character desiring the reward gains the Machine (4) Trait. If it already possessed the Machine Trait, increase the level of that Trait by 4 instead.
51-55	Blade of Annihilation: The character desiring the reward selects one of his melee weapons. That weapon gains the Warp Weapon Quality. The weapon inflicts an additional 1d10 Damage.
56-60	Cosmic Fate: The character desiring the reward gains the Touched by the Fates (2) Trait. If it already possesses this Trait, the level of that Trait is increased by 2 instead.
61-65	Venomous: The character desiring the reward selects one of his weapons. That weapon gains the Toxic (4) Quality. If it already possesses a melee weapon with that Quality, increase the value of that Quality by 4 instead.
66-70	Unholy Crusader: The character desiring the reward increases gains the Unnatural Agility (5) Trait. If it already possesses this Trait, increase the value of that Trait by 5 instead.
71-75	Meteoritic Charge: The character desiring the reward gains the Brutal Charge (7) Trait. If it already possesses this Trait, increase the value of this Trait by 7 instead. Additionally, it doubles the distance of his Charge Move.
76-80	Icy Aura: The character desiring the reward gains the ability to shroud his form in icy vapours. At the end of each of the character's turns, each enemy within 5 metres of it suffers 1d10+5 E Damage with a Penetration of 4.
81-85	All-Consuming Hatred: The character desiring the reward gains the Hatred (All) Talent. Whenever it deals Critical Damage with a melee attack, increase the Damage it inflicts with Melee Attacks by +2 until the end of the encounter (to a maximum of +10).
86-90	Lifetaker: The character desiring the reward's melee attacks gain the Felling (4) Quality or increase this Quality by 4 if they already possess it. Whenever the character that receives this reward inflicts Damage upon an enemy (after reductions for Armour and Toughness Bonus), it gains the Regeneration (1d5) Trait until the end of its next Turn.
91-95	Multiple Rewards: Roll another 1d5-1 (to a minimum of 0) times on Table 3-1: Rewards of Chaos and apply all of the results.
96-100	Dark Apotheosis: The character desiring the reward is transformed into a mighty Daemon Prince (see page 119). This ascension takes 1d5 Rounds, during which time the character uses its new profile but is Stunned.



VETERANS
OF THE
FRONT

FORMATIONS
•
SURVIVING THE
FRONT
•
VETERAN TALENTS
•
MEDALS AND
HONOURS OF
THE FRONT

CHAPTER IV: VETERANS OF THE FRONT

"They'z all the same size, see, so they'z always arguin' about oo's in charge, 'cos there's no way a' tellin' 'cept fer badges an' ooniforms an' bats an fings. Dey do seem to like dem big bats. Wot a lot of mukkin' about, if yer asks me."

—Ruzkrak, Ork Nob, on the intricacies of the Imperial Guard command structure

The Spinward Front is full of deadly enemies for the stalwart men and women of the Imperial Guard, and the battles that take place in this small corner of the galaxy are still vast and brutal on an unfathomable scale.

This chapter adds new resources to reflect the savagery of the war in the Spinward Front. Formation rules streamline squad-scale combat encounters, allowing the Game Master to control large groups of foes more easily. This chapter also contains new Medals and Honours, awards given to those Player Characters who survive the meat grinder long enough to distinguish themselves with impressive martial achievements against the many enemies of humanity that lurk in the Spinward Front.

FORMATIONS

"These heretics are organised. Disciplined. They won't just away after we kill a couple of them. With any luck, they will hold—that way, we won't have to chase them down to deliver the Emperor's justice!"

—Commissar Morgulis

The battlefields of the Spinward Front are teeming with combatants from across the galaxy; ferocious Ork Warbosses pushing mobs of Boyz into the fray, Severan Dominate Sergeants leading squads of troopers into the hearts of raging battles, and cruel Dark Eldar Sybarites leading gangs of thrill-seeking Kabalite warriors on lightning raids. These are only a few of the terrors the soldiers of the Imperial Guard must face in the Spinward Front.

Instead of keeping track of each of these adversaries individually, discrete squads of enemy armies can be represented in a game of **ONLY WAR** using the Formation rules. A Formation allows one powerful NPC to command a number of subordinate NPCs in battle. In this way, a group of enemy NPCs can act as a cohesive whole, allowing for streamlined combats on a larger scale.



At its core, each Formation represents an organised enemy grouping. The Formation acts as a single unit, and carries with it all the benefits and drawbacks of unit-level combat. Members of a Formation must remain within 10 metres distance of their Overseer (see **In Rank** on page 125). While in Formation, they attack and takes Damage differently from adversaries not in a Formation, and must deal with potential morale complications (see **Breaking Rank** on page 127). Additionally, the Overseer of a Formation can issue squad-wide Commands to his Troops or Minions, much as how a Player Character can issue Orders to his Comrade (see **Commands** on page 128). Finally, an enemy Overseer is much harder to attack directly while he is safely ensconced within a Formation (see **Attacking Formations** on page 126).

The system for Formations provides a new and interesting method for the Game Master to ratchet up the intensity and scale of battles in his **ONLY WAR** campaign by allowing him to run much larger, unit-centric combat encounters.



FORMATION COMPOSITION

Formations consist of two elements: the Overseer (usually an Elite-level, Handler-level, or Master-level NPC, who possesses the Overseer Trait) and the Underlings, which are usually Troop-level or Minion-level NPCs under the Overseer's authority.

Formations whose Underlings are Troop-level NPCs are Troop Formations, in which a battlefield Overseer (usually an Elite-level or Master-level foe) leads a unit of front-line soldiers. Formations comprised of Minion-level NPCs are Minion Formations, in which the Overseer (usually a Handler-level NPC) leads a group of lesser creatures, thralls, or other untrained rabble.

PROFILES AND EQUIPMENT

Except as noted, all Underlings in a Formation must have identical profiles and identical equipment. One ranged weapon that all of the standard Underlings possess is the Formation's Primary Ranged Weapon, and one melee weapon that all of the standard Underlings possess is the Formation's Primary Melee Weapon. If the Game Master sees fit, the members of a Formation can switch weapons as appropriate.

UNIT STRENGTH

A Formation's Unit Strength is equal to the number of Underlings it contains. Unit Strength decides the strength at which the Formation attacks, is affected by the Damage the Formation takes, and plays a role in unit psychology and Tests to maintain order on the battlefield (see **Breaking Rank** on page 127). Along with the Profile of the Underlings and their Overseer, Unit Strength is all that the GM needs to keep track of a Formation.

MINION FORMATIONS

A Minion Formation consists of a number of Minion-level NPCs (frequently 3 to 5, but perhaps more at the Game Master's discretion) and one Handler-level NPC with the Overseer Trait. These types of Formations are less organised than other types of enemy units, with the Minions of the unit often requiring a great deal of goading and prodding from their Handlers.

Most Minions are noteworthy for being mindless or poorly trained, and a great deal of effort is required on the part of the Handler to keep them pointed towards the enemy. A good example of a Minion Formation would be a Dark Eldar Beastmaster controlling a baying pack of Clawed Fiends, a Renegade Psyker manipulating a mob of psychically-controlled Sorcerous Pawns, or an Ork Runtherd pushing a pair of screeching Snotling Swarms forward with his grot-prod.

TROOP FORMATIONS

A Troop Formation consists of a number of Troop- or Elite-level NPCs (frequently 5 to 10, but perhaps more at the Game Master's discretion) and either a Master- or Elite-level NPC with the Overseer Trait. The Troop Formation is by far the most common type of Formation seen in the Spinward Front. Such Formations can be anything from a Severan Dominate Sergeant readying a firing line of lasgun-wielding Severan Dominate traitors to a Kroot Shaper guiding a kindred of mercenaries silently through a forest to a Dark Apostle leading his gibbering, delirious coven.

THE OVERSEER TRAIT

The Overseer Trait is a Trait for NPCs who lead Formations. Any appropriate NPC can be given this Trait at the GM's discretion. In addition, the Overseer Trait bestows the following advantages:

- An NPC with this Trait can form and lead Formations.
- An NPC with this Trait gains the ability to issue both Generic Commands (see page 128) and a limited number of Faction-Specific Commands (see page 130) depending on his faction so long as he is leading a Formation.
- An NPC granted this Trait is provided certain protections while in Rank with his Formation (see **Attacking Formations**, page 126).
- Any NPC granted this Trait gains the Command Skill at the Trained level if he does not already have it.
- Troop-level NPCs and Minion-level NPCs in this NPC's formation Formation count as Comrades for the purposes of Talents and Traits (such as for receiving the bonuses from the Into the Jaws of Hell Talent). They do not count as Comrades in any other capacity.

Special Weapons Troops (Optional)

In addition to its standard compliment of weapons, a Troop Formation can, at the GM's discretion, arm a number of Underlings of the Formation with weaponry that is different from the rest of the Formation. These Underlings manoeuvre with the unit as normal, but fire their more potent weapons separately in some Orders. Much like the Formation Overseer, Special Weapons Troops are difficult to target independently (see **Attacking Formations** on page 126).

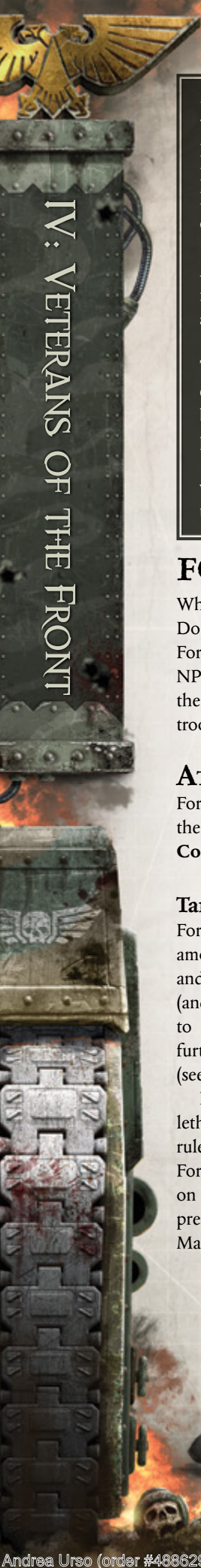
IN RANK

Just as a Squad of Player Characters must remain within Cohesion with their Comrades to use them to full effect, a Formation must keep its members coordinated and within range to act as a cohesive unit. For Formations, this is referred to as remaining within Rank.

An NPC is considered to be in Rank with his Formation if he is within 10 metres of the Overseer and is not separated from the rest of his unit by any sort of physical barrier. While in Rank, an adversary gains all of the benefits of being in a Formation. If an enemy NPC strays outside of his Formations' Rank range for any reason, he is not considered to be part of the Formation until he moves into Rank once again.

Maintaining Rank

While in Rank, the Troops or Minions that comprise the Formation are considered to take their actions at the Overseer's Initiative. Whenever the Formation's Overseer issues a Command (see **Commands** on page 128) all Troops or Minions are considered to have engaged in that Action simultaneously. The members of a Formation act as a single entity while they remain in Rank.



FORMATIONS AND TESTS

Formations act as a single entity for the purposes of Skill and Characteristic Tests, and Test only once for the entire Formation. Skill and Characteristic Tests based on mental Characteristics (Intelligence, Perception, Willpower, and Fellowship) are made by the Overseer controlling the Formation, as that individual has been charged (or has unilaterally decided) to making such decisions for those around him.

Skill and Characteristic Tests based on physical Characteristics (Weapon Skill, Ballistic Skill, Strength, Toughness, Agility) are made by one of the Minion-level or Troop-level NPCs who populates the Formation (as such grunt work is obviously beneath the leader), Assisted by as many of the other NPCs in the formation as the Game Master deems appropriate for the specific Test (see **Assistance** on page 32 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook).

For instance, large numbers of troops are very effective when working together on some kinds of Test (such as a Strength Test to shove aside a boulder) but actually hinder the group's progress for others (such as a Stealth Test to sneak through a hostile encampment), and the Game Master must decide how many members of the Formation can reasonably assist with the effort before their additional intervention starts to cause more harm than good. Note that for Actions covered by **Commands** (see page 128), the bonuses or penalties for the Unit Strength of the group have already been included in the descriptions.

If for any reason a Formation would have multiple different bonuses or penalties for a given Action (for example, when splitting fire between two targets at different distances with the Volley Fire Command (see page 128)), always use the lowest bonus or the most severe penalty.

FORMATIONS IN COMBAT

Whether a Formation is an orderly firing line of Severan Dominate Troopers or an unruly mob of charging Boyz, Formations attack and suffer Damage differently than lone NPCs. Formations use a streamlined combat system, so that the Game Master can easily keep track of large amounts of troops in larger combats.

ATTACKING WITH FORMATIONS

Formations attack exclusively via Commands issued by the Overseer. These specific Commands are covered under **Commands** (see page 128).

Targeting

Formations can spread the attacks they make with Commands amongst any number of targets within range and line of sight, and distribute them between these targets at the Overseer's (and thus the Game Master's) discretion. The first hit assigned to a given target this way always hits the Body location; further hits are distributed per **Table 8-2: Multiple Hits** (see page 246 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook).

Due to the general chaos of the battlefield, as well as how lethal massed fire against a single character can be under these rules, the Game Master should consider splitting any given Formation's fire amongst several targets instead of focusing on a single infantry target. Of course, if there is a particularly pressing enemy (or if it is otherwise appropriate), the Game Master is the ultimate arbiter of who the Formation shoots.

ATTACKING FORMATIONS

When attacking a Formation, a character gains bonuses or suffers penalties as though he was attacking the most favourable target within the Formation (for instance, if the nearest member is 10 metres away, the entire Formation is considered to be 10 metres from him for the purposes of range and bonuses to attacks). Characters never gain bonuses for Outnumbering a Formation.

On a successful attack, a character normally inflicts any hits he scores against the standard Underlings in the formation of his choice (rather than the Overseer or one of the Special Weapon Troops). However, whenever a character scores one or more hits against a Formation with an attack roll that resulted in doubles (for example, a result of 11 or 44), he chooses which member of the Formation it strikes (this can be the Overseer, the Special Weapons Troops, or standard Underlings).

Alternatively, a character can target the enemy Overseer or Special Weapons Troops (if they are present) specifically with a Called Shot Action (see page 244 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook). This allows the character to both hit the target of his choice and also applies the normal effects of a Called Shot Action.

Damaging Formations

The Underlings in a Formation do not take Damage as normal NPCs do. Instead, whenever an attack strikes one of the Underlings in a Formation and inflicts Damage after the reductions for its Armour and Toughness Bonus, the target simply dies. All attacks that hit Underlings in a Formation count as hitting the Body location.

Unlike the Underlings in a Formation, the Overseer still has his full complement of Wounds, and suffers Damage in the normal manner when struck.

Formations and Reactions

As with Actions, the rank-and-file members of Formations (the Underlings) can only make Reactions through specific Commands. Overseers can either make one Reaction per Round from their normal list of options or issue one appropriate Command (see pages 128-134) as a Reaction per Round.



Formations and Cover

A Formation benefits from Cover so long as a majority of the NPCs that make up the Formation are inside of a given piece of protective Cover. If the Overseer is in Cover, he benefits from that Cover whenever an attack would strike him, even if the majority of the Formation is not within Cover.

Weapon Special Qualities

Certain weapons are more effective against massed troops. Grenades and spray weapons are far more effective against a bunched group of enemies than lasguns and plasma pistols.

Spray Weapons: If a weapon with the Spray Quality inflicts Damage upon a Formation (after the reductions for Armour and Toughness Bonus) and would kill 1 Underling, it kills 1 additional Underling. If the attack inflicts Righteous Fury, it kills 2 additional Underlings instead.

Blast Weapons: If a weapon with the Blast Quality inflicts Damage upon a Formation (after the reductions for Armour and Toughness Bonus) and would kill 1 Underling, it kills 2 additional Underlings. If the attack inflicts Righteous Fury, it kills an additional number of Underlings equal to the value of its Blast Quality instead.

BREAKING RANK

The psychology and morale of a unit is tied directly to its commanding officer. As many a wartime leader has learned over the millennia, if the troops begin to lose confidence in their commander, the entire unit will falter. A Formation has its benefits, such as tying Fear and Pinning Tests to the Overseer's presumably superior Characteristics rather than those of his presumably more feeble-minded minions.

If a Formation loses its Overseer (most likely due to death, but potentially for other reasons), it ceases to be a Formation; each Underling within it becomes an independent actor once again. If it is a Minion Formation, the Underlings return to their bestial instincts. If it is a Troop Formation, the Underlings behave as though the Overseer had just failed a Break Test by 1d5 Degrees of Failure.

FEAR AND PINNING

Underlings in a Formation do not take individual Fear or Pinning Tests. As described in **Formations and Tests** (see page 126), if the Enemy Overseer passes his Willpower Test to avoid the effects of Fear and Pinning, the entire unit stands firm.

If the Overseer fails a Fear Test, the Formation dissolves. Each of the Underlings within the Formation counts as having rolled a result of 81-100 result on **Table 9-5: Shock** (see page 304 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook). A Formation Overseer who has failed a Fear Test rolls on **Table 9-5: Shock** as normal.

If the Overseer fails a Pinning Test, the Formation should fall back or move to cover, and the Formation can only take Half Actions, cannot leave cover, and cannot advance towards the enemy until the Overseer recovers from the effects of Pinning.

If either the Underlings or the Overseer of a Formation is immune to Fear or Pinning, the entire Formation ignores these effects at the GM's discretion.

BREAK TESTS

Under certain battlefield conditions, a Troop Formation might break and run, deserting its Overseer. If a Troop Formation (see page 125) has taken too many losses, if the tide of combat has turned against them, or if the Overseer has made one tactical misstep too many, he can expect his Formation to be routed on the battlefield. Minion Formations do not make Break Tests, as their slavering beasts or rampaging rabble constituents are already largely disorganised except as directed by their Overseer.

If a Troop Formation loses one half (rounded up) or more of its current Unit Strength over the course of a single Round, the Overseer must make a **Routine (+20) Command Test** with a -5 Penalty for each point of Unit Strength it lost that Round at the beginning of the Formation's next Turn. If he fails, the Formation dissolves immediately, turning back into a number of separate NPCs. Each Underling in the unit counts as having rolled a result of 81-100 result on **Table 9-5: Shock** (see page 304 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook).

At the GM's discretion, Formation with Underlings who are immune to Fear or Pinning Tests, or that have the Fearless or Frenzy Talent, do not make Break Tests.

Get Back Here, You Cowards!

Some particularly tenacious Overseers might attempt to recreate their Formations (or forge the remains of several shattered Formations of the same type back into a single unit). An NPC with the Overseer Trait who is not currently part of a Formation can make a **Hard (-20) Command** or **Intimidate Test** to browbeat nearby minions into some semblance of order. If the Overseer succeeds, a number of Underlings equal to his Fellowship Bonus plus one additional Underling per Degree of Success he scores on the Test fall back into rank, forming a new Formation around him.

FORMATIONS AND STATUS EFFECTS

The Game Master is encouraged to apply any relevant status effects to Formations in a manner he finds logical. For instance, if a group of Severan Dominate Troopers lead by a Ducal Legate are caught by a photon flash grenade (see page 183 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook), it would be very reasonable to say that, if they fail the Toughness Test to resist its effects (see **Formations and Tests** on page 127), they are all Blinded by it. For a weapon with the Toxic or Flame Quality, however, it seems most probable that its effects would only extend to a single Trooper (who has likely already been slain by the attack), and so the Formation would ignore the additional effects in this particular case. Members of Formations do not gain Fatigue except that the GM's discretion. The GM should use common sense when dealing with Formations in this capacity.



COMMANDS

“Command is sending other people to die for you. That’s a simple fact. A leader’s job is to make sure that they die for reasons greater than his own foibles and miscalculations.”

—Lord-General Covington Pasheen

Instead of taking Actions individually, NPCs comprising a Formation act simultaneously via the Commands given by the Formation’s Overseer. A Formation always acts at its Overseer’s Initiative.

At the start of a Formation’s Turn, the Overseer issues his Commands to the Formation. Except where explicitly stated, issuing a Command does not require a Test from the Overseer. Once the Overseer issues a given Commands, the Formation enacts it immediately, performing the Action that the Command dictates. Each Command has a corresponding Action cost and Subtype listed with it. A Formation can only undertake one Command with the Attack Subtype and one Command with the Concentration Subtype each Round.

Like any adversary, a Formation can take a single Full Action (or two Half Actions) during its Turn each Round. A Formation can only undertake a single Reaction per Round, and can only do so when its Overseer issues a Reaction Command (which also expends one of his Reactions for the Round). Except at the GM’s discretion, Formations only act through Commands in combat.

GENERIC COMMANDS

Generic Commands are simple combat orders that any Enemy Overseer can issue to his Formation. There are three basic types of Generic Commands: Manoeuvre Commands, Attacks Commands, and Tactical Commands.

In addition to these options, each of the major factions of the Spinward Front has available to them Faction-Specific Commands (see page 130), which allow enemy Overseers further strategic options, and alters the unit profile of a Formation to reflect the battlefield strengths of a given type of foe.

MANOEUVRE COMMANDS

This type of Command represents an orderly advance or retreat during Structured Time. If it should become relevant, the Movement Rate for a Formation is equal to the Movement Rate of the slowest character in its ranks during Narrative Time. Members of the Formation are considered to be in Rank so long as they both begin and end a move within Rank (in other words, they are considered to move as a group without breaking Rank).

Move

Action: Half

Subtype: Movement

Description: Each member of the Formation moves a number of metres equal to his Half Move (see page 33 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook).

Run

Action: Full

Subtype: Movement

Description: Each member of the Formation moves a number of metres equal to his Run Move (see page 33 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook). Until the beginning of the Formation’s next Turn, Ballistic Skill Tests made against the Formation suffer a –20 penalty and Weapon Skill Tests made against the Formation gain a +10 bonus.

Disengage

Action: Full

Subtype: Movement

Description: Each member of the Formation moves a number of metres equal to his Half Move (see page of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook 33). Opponents engaged with members of the Formation cannot make free attacks upon it as it falls back.

ATTACK COMMANDS

Attack Commands represent the attack options available to the Formation. Formations attack differently than individual NPCs (see **Formations in Combat** on page 126), and can only attack via Commands (either those listed below or the Formation’s relevant Faction-Specific Commands).

Volley Fire

Action: Half

Subtype: Attack, Ranged

Description: The Formation makes a **Challenging (+0) Ballistic Skill Test** with a bonus equal to 5 times its Unit Strength. For every Degree of Success it scores, it inflicts one hit on a single target within range with its Primary Ranged Weapon (divided between targets as the GM chooses). It can score up to a maximum number of hits equal to the number of Underlings in the Formation within Range and line of sight to fire their Primary Ranged Weapons upon at least one target this way.

Any member of the Formation with divergent equipment (such as the Overseer, or Special Weapon Troops, as described on page 125) may make an appropriate Half Action Ranged Attack Action as a part of this Command.

Close Combat Attack

Action: Half

Subtype: Attack, Melee

Description: The Formation makes a **Challenging (+0) Weapon Skill Test** with a bonus equal to 5 times its Unit Strength. For every Degree of Success it scores, it inflicts one hit on a single target within range with its Primary Melee Weapon (divided between targets as the GM chooses). It can score up to a maximum number of hits equal to the number of Underlings within the Formation engaged with at least one target this way.

Any member of the Formation with divergent equipment (such as the Overseer, or Special Weapon Troops, as described on page 125) may make an appropriate Half Action Melee Attack Action as a part of this Command.

Charge!

Action: Full

Subtype: Attack, Melee

Description: Each member of the Formation moves a number of metres equal to its Charge Move (see page 33 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook). The Formation makes an **Ordinary (+10) Weapon Skill Test** with a bonus equal to 5 times its Unit Strength. For every Degree of Success it scores, the Formation inflicts one hit on a single target within range with its Primary Melee Weapon (divided between targets as the GM chooses). It can score up to a maximum number of hits equal to the number of Underlings within the Formation engaged with at least one target after moving this way.

Any member of the Formation with divergent equipment (such as the Overseer, or Special Weapon Troops, as described on page 125) may make a Standard Melee Attack Action after moving as a part of this Command.

TACTICAL COMMANDS

Tactical Commands are advanced combat options available to Formations. Tactical Commands require a level of coordination and training beyond that of the average Minion, and as such, these Commands are only available to Troop Formations.

Tactical Advance

Action: Full

Subtype: Concentration, Movement

Description: Each member of the Formation moves a number of metres equal to his Full Move (see page 33 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook). If the Formation was in Cover in its previous position and is also in Cover in its new position, it is considered to benefit from the Cover of its previous position for the duration of the movement despite briefly leaving cover altogether (see **Formations and Cover** on page 127).

Suppressing Fire

Action: Full

Subtype: Attack, Ranged

Description: The Formation makes a **Difficult (-10) Ballistic Skill Test** with a bonus equal to 5 times its Unit Strength. For every Degree of Success it scores on the Test, one foe within range must make a **Challenging (+0) Pinning Test** with a penalty equal to 5 times the Unit Strength of the Formation. Additionally, for every three Degrees of Success that the Formation scores on its Ballistic Skill Test, it inflicts one hit with its Primary Ranged Weapon on a target within range.

Overwatch

Action: Full

Subtype: Attack, Concentration, Ranged

Description: The Formation chooses a 90-degree arc and declares it as a kill zone that extends as far as the Range of its Primary Ranged Weapon until the beginning of its next Turn. When an enemy enters the kill zone, the Formation makes a **Difficult (-10) Ballistic Skill Test** with a bonus equal to 5 times its Unit Strength. If the Formation succeeds, it inflicts one hit on the target with its Primary Ranged Weapon, plus one additional hit for every two Degrees of Success it scores beyond the first. It can score up to a maximum number of hits this way equal to the number of Underlings in the Formation within Range and line of sight to fire their Primary Weapons upon at least one target this way.

If the Formation's Overwatch would resolve at the same time as an Action of an enemy who entered the kill zone, the Formation whose Overseer has the higher Agility Characteristic acts first. If they are tied, the two Overseers make an **Opposed Agility Test** to determine who acts first. If the Formation undertakes any Reaction Commands, it loses the benefits of the Overwatch Command.

Scatter!

Action: Reaction

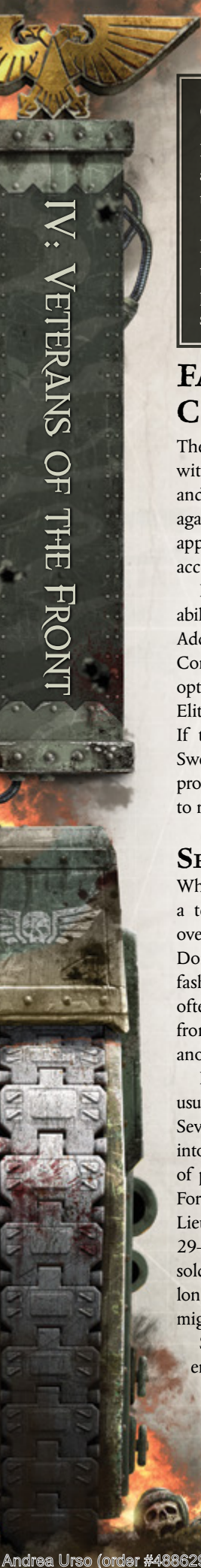
Subtype: Movement

Description: The Overseer spends one Reaction and the Formation makes a **Challenging (+0) Agility Test** with a penalty equal to 5 times its Unit Strength. If it succeeds, each member of the Formation moves a number of metres equal to his Half Move (see page 33 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook). For every Degree of Success it scores on the Test, the Formation reduces the number of Underlings slain by attacks with the Spray or Blast Quality by 1 (to a minimum of 1).

ALLIED FORMATIONS

Formations need not be limited to enemies. If the GM wishes, he can also use Formations to represent masses of allied troops. Frequently, it is best to abstract out the actions of allied NPCs on the battlefield to maintain focus on the Player Characters, but if it is necessary to know how NPC squads are performing on the battlefield, the Formation rules can help to streamline their use.

Another option that the GM might consider is giving the players control of one or more Formations of allied NPCs, allowing them to direct the actions of these soldiers in battle. This allows the Game Master to run larger battles and still involve the players in the heart of the action.



CONTROLLING FORMATIONS

Formations give the GM the opportunity to portray enemy forces as cohesive battlefield units instead of individual attackers. With antagonists marching and firing in formation and dying by the score, the Formation rules allow the GM to portray the massive scope and sweeping scale of the battles of the 41st Millennium.

The Faction-Specific Commands below provide various examples of battlefield behaviours and types of orders that leaders of various kinds give to their subordinates. Each one has hints and tips on how to relay that adversary's battlefield tactics and sense of tone and atmosphere to the players. A memorable and effective Formation should have a sense of personality and character all its own, whether it is an unruly and crass band of Orks, a neatly ordered Severan Dominate squad, or a group of ruthless Kabalite Warriors.

FACTION-SPECIFIC COMMANDS

The many factions competing for supremacy or spoils within the Spinward Front use a host of different strategies and tactics on the battlefield. Many of the enemies arrayed against the Imperium of Mankind have a markedly different approaches to war, and these are reflected by a Formation's access to its faction's Faction-Specific Commands.

Each Troop Formation gains access to a single Passive ability that represents its faction's unique battlefield strengths. Additionally, a Formation can have a variety of Sweeping Commands, each of which allows the unit further combat options. As a general rule of thumb, if the Formation is led by an Elite, give that NPC one of his faction's Sweeping Commands. If the Formation is commanded by a Master, choose two Sweeping Commands to which he has access. Certain foes with profiles in this volume have recommended sets of Commands to represent their particular areas of expertise.

SEVERAN DOMINATE COMMANDS

Whether it is a Severan Dominate sergeant commanding a ten-man squad of common troopers or a Ducal Legate overseeing a unit of jackbooted Severan Enforcers, Severan Dominate units are disciplined and armed in much the same fashion as Imperial Guardsmen. Severan Dominate Troops are often indistinguishable in terms of temperament and training from traditional Guard squads, marching lock-step with one another and arrayed in lined formation.

Battlefield orders from a Severan Dominate Overseer are usually gruff, terse, and shouted over the din of combat. A Severan Dominate Formation responds to these orders and falls into position based on strict training regimens, for discipline is of paramount importance to any seasoned Severan Dominate Formation Overseer such as a Severan Dominate Sergeant, Lieutenant, Commander, or even a Ducal Legate (see pages 29–32). Without the hard-earned battlefield discipline of its soldiers, the Severan Dominate could not have survived this long in the face of the brutal Orks or the raw, overwhelming might of the Imperial Guard.

Severan Dominate Faction-Specific Commands are similar enough to Imperial Guard Faction-Specific Commands that the two are functionally interchangeable. An Imperial Guard unit using the Formation rules should take its Faction-Specific Commands from the Severan Dominate Commands list.

Ballistic Drill

Passive

Description: Severan Dominate forces are trained to tune out all distractions, focus, and pour fire into the enemy.

The first time a Severan Dominate Formation undertakes a Ranged Volley Command in a Turn in which it has not yet moved, it may re-roll one failed Ballistic Skill Test that it makes as part of the Action.

Incoming!

Action: Reaction

Subtype: Concentration, Movement

Description: Having a skilled Overseer can mean the difference between life and death in a Severan Dominate squad, as experienced veterans often see attacks coming.

When the Formation is the target of a Ranged Attack,, Overseer may spend his Reaction to make a **Challenging (+0) Perception Test**. If he succeeds, all members of his Formation count as benefitting from 2 APs of Cover on all Locations until the end of the Turn.

Move! Move! Move!

Action: Reaction

Subtype: Concentration, Movement

Description: The Overseer orders his men forward with all possible haste, sending them from one position to another in a flurry of stamping boots.

When giving a Run Command, the Overseer may spend his Reaction to make an **Ordinary (+10) Command Test** to spur his troops on further. If he succeeds, each member of the Formation moves an additional number of Metres equal to the Formation's Unit Strength and the Formation imposes an additional –10 penalty on any Ballistic Skill Tests made to attack it until the beginning of its next Turn.

First Rank, Fire! Second Rank, Fire!

Action: Full

Subtype: Attack, Concentration

Description: Severan Dominate and Imperial Formations alike are trained to pour fire into the enemy, even as a battle rages around them.

As a part of this Command, the Overseer makes a **Routine (+20) Command Test**. If he succeeds, the Formation immediately executes two consecutive Volley Fire Commands as a Free Action. If he fails, the Formation has expended its Action to no benefit. This Command can only be issued once per encounter.



ORK COMMANDS

Orks are a loud and unruly bunch, and most squads of Ork Boyz are large, half-disorganized mobs, some ten to twenty strong, usually led by a bigger, stronger Ork Nob. Orks shout their orders to their Formations, though usually only half a unit at any time will appear to be listening. If the mob has gotten particularly unruly, an Ork Nob or Warboss will usually reach out and bash some heads together to get the lot of them back in line. Orks will sometimes fight amongst themselves at the first sign of a lull in the fighting, but when an enemy presents itself, they'll start towards them enthusiastically.

When charging towards the enemy, however, the Ork Formation becomes a different beast entirely. When an Ork mob has reached a frenzied point, controlling the Formation more often than not becomes an exercise in following the boss's lead, rather than any thought out or coherent strategy on the Overseer's part. At this point, Ork orders are relayed through loud roars, guttural howls, and displays of violence.

Da Toughest, Da Meanest, Da Greenest

Passive

Description: Orks are almost absurdly hardy, and can shake off seemingly grievous wounds with ease. When an Ork Underling in a Formation would be slain by an attack that did not deal Damage greater than its Toughness Bonus (after the normal reductions for Armour and Toughness Bonus), it makes a **Difficult (-10) Toughness Test**. If it succeeds, the Ork does not die, fighting on despite its newly missing limb, the smoking crater in its chest, or other comically gruesome but seemingly ineffectual wound.

Further, Orks grow bolder in numbers (and tend to fear those Orks large and brutal enough to lead them more than the enemy in any case). Ork Formations receive a bonus equal to their Unit Strength times 10 to all Willpower Tests to resist the effects of Fear and Pinning, and Ork Overseers may use their Intimidate Skill in place of the Command Skill when commanding other Orks, Gretchin, Squigs, or Snotlings (these bonuses are applied in place of those of the Might Makes Right and Mob Rule Traits).

'Ere We Go!

Action: Full

Subtype: Concentration, Movement

Description: The Orks bellow in excitement and make a disorganised surge forward, building up speed for an overwhelming charge.

Each member of the Formation moves a number of metres equal to his Full Move (see page 33 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook), plus an additional 1d10 metres. If the Overseer issues a Charge Command on the Formation's next Turn, members of the Formation deal an additional +3 Damage on attacks they make as part of that Command.

More Dakka!

Action: Half

Subtype: Concentration

Description: The Orks fire wildly, concerned more firing the greatest raw amount of ammunition as possible rather than how many shots connect with the enemy.

Until the end of its next Turn, the Formation's Primary Weapon gains the Storm Quality. However, the indiscriminate fire has the consequence of causing some amount of friendly fire. Until the end of its next Turn, whenever the Formation (including the attached Overseer and any Special Weapons Troops) rolls a result of doubles on a Ballistic Skill Test (such as a 22, 33, or 66), 1d5 of the Underlings in the Formation are immediately slain by the ballistic exuberance of their peers.

Get Ready ta Waaagh!

Action: Full

Subtype: Concentration

Description: The Orks' Boss lets out a mighty Waaagh!, and his cry incites da Boyz to new heights of exuberant bloodlust.

The Overseer makes a **Challenging (+0) Intimidate Test**. If he succeeds, the Formation gains the Fear (1) Trait and may re-roll one failed Weapon Skill or Toughness Test per Turn for a number of Rounds equal to his Degrees of Success on the Test.



DARK ELДАР COMMANDS

Dark Eldar are particularly long-lived, and so a veteran cabal or coven may have fought and trained together for centuries. A Dark Eldar Overseer rarely needs to go so far as to vocalize orders to his or her subordinates. Usually, a simple and preternaturally graceful gesture or nod relays all of the information these artful and deadly warriors require.

Power From Pain

Passive

Description: The Dark Eldar thrive on inflicting fear and misery; the more of this terror they can harvest, the more their own vitality swells to nightmarish extremes, allowing warriors to ignore injuries that should slay any creature.

When a Dark Eldar Formation kills, inflicts Critical Damage, causes a target to fail a Fear or Pinning Test, or otherwise causes major pain or suffering (at the GM's discretion), the Formation receives a Pain Token. For each unused Pain Token a Formation has, it counts its Unit Strength as +1 higher for Commands.

What Artful Torment!

Action: Half

Subtype: Concentration, Movement

Description: With inhuman grace, and faster than the human eye can track, the Dark Eldar Formation scatters into a myriad of different directions and vanishes into the darkness.

The Overseer makes a **Challenging (+0) Opposed Stealth Test**, Opposed by the Perception of each enemy trying to track them. Each member of the Formation moves

a number of metres equal to his Half Move. If the Overseer succeeds at the Opposed Test, and the Formation vanishes from the target's view and is now considered to be hidden from him. The Dark Eldar Formation must have some type of cover, darkness, or other obscuring terrain or battlefield condition in order to undertake this Command.

Such Nightmarish Ecstasy!

Action: Reaction

Subtype: Concentration

Description: The Dark Eldar are filled with delight in the slaughter, and it sustains them when mere flesh fails.

The Overseer expends one Reaction to activate this Command. As a part of this Command, the Formation expends any number of Pain Tokens. It revives up to 2 Underlings slain during that Round for each Pain Token spent this way.

Now They Are Ripe for the Slaughter!

Action: Half Action

Subtype: Concentration

Description: The Dark Eldar are masters of illusion, deceit, and misdirection, and wield these weapons as skilfully as their knives.

As a part of this Command, the Formation expends any number of Pain Tokens. The Formation gains the Fear (2) Trait for a number of Rounds equal to the number Pain Tokens spent on this Command. Any character who fails a Fear Test caused by this Fear Trait suffers a -10 penalty to Weapon Skill and Ballistic Skill Tests made against the Formation until the end of the encounter in addition to any other penalties.



KROOT MERCENARY COMMANDS

Kroot stalk the battle in small, mobile units, usually led by an experienced Kroot Warrior or Shaper. If the group is moving openly, the leader delivers orders in clicks, grunts, whistles, and other sounds even less comprehensible to most human ears. If the unit is lurking in ambush, however, the mercenaries silently communicate with one another using simple gestures and other bodily cues to distribute information without betraying their position to the enemy.

Blood of the Stalker

Passive

Description: The Kroot are patient and skilled hunters, and are thus extremely deadly ambushers on the battlefields of the Spinward Front. They lurk in dense foliage, shattered ruins, or other cover that can give them the element of surprise, waiting until the right moment presents itself. When their leader gives his signal, the kindred strikes, flying forth from their hiding places to maul their vulnerable foes.

A Kroot Mercenary Formation gains a bonus to Weapon Skill and Ballistic Skill Tests equal to twice its Unit Strength when attacking Surprised targets (see Surprise, page 241 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook, for further information). Additionally, Kroot Formations may use the Overseer's Stealth Skill (instead of that of the Underlings) for Stealth Tests (see **Formations and Tests** on page 126).

Forest Stalkers

Action: Half

Subtype: Concentration

Description: Kroot warriors are experts at using battlefield terrain to their advantage, slipping through cover even as fire tears apart everything around them. They are particularly adept at weaving between trees and other types of large planetary foliage, bounding in and out of sight and making themselves extremely difficult to pin down.

Until the end of its next Turn, whenever the Formation benefits from Cover, it gains 1 additional AP from that Cover. If it is within a forest or other suitable dense foliage, the Formation gains 2 additional AP from that cover instead.

Hunter's Prowess

Action: Reaction

Subtype: Movement

Description: Shapers and other Kroot leaders know well the value of evasion when stealth has failed, and many ways to take advantage of whatever cover their surroundings contain.

Whenever the Formation is targeted with a ranged attack, the Overseer may spend his Reaction to use this Command. If he does so, he makes a **Difficult (-10) Dodge Test**. If he succeeds, he negates one attack that would have hit the Formation, plus one additional attack per Degree of Success he scores. The Overseer can only use this Command while the Formation is benefitting from Cover.



Carnivore's Urge

Action: Half

Subtype: Concentration

Description: With the savage efficiency characteristic of a pack of predatory beasts, the Kroot Mercenary unit readies itself to rush into the fray. When it moves, the group strikes to kill, seeking to end the battle before it can escalate further.

Until the end of its next Turn, members of the Formation ignore the penalties for moving over Difficult Terrain, gain a +20 bonus to Athletics and Acrobatics Tests. Further, the Formation imposes an additional -20 penalty on the Ballistic Skill of any attackers targeting it with ranged attacks.

Heed the Shaper's Wisdom

Action: Half

Subtype: Concentration

Description: The Kroot are masters of adaptability and of reading the changing tides of battle, and Kroot Shapers embody this flexibility above even the rest of their kindred.

Once per encounter, the Overseer of a Kroot Mercenary Formation may choose a single Talent, Trait, or Faction-Specific Command of any enemy or ally whose flesh they have tasted (including the Faction-Specific Commands of opposing forces) and make a **Challenging (+0) Survival Test**. If the Overseer succeeds, each member of the Formation gains access to this Talent, Trait, or Faction-Specific Command until the end of the encounter.



CHAOS WARBAND COMMANDS

The minions of Chaos take to battle in large bands, with hordes of Chaos cultists and Renegade Militia ten or twenty strong being led by fearsome prophets and crazed cult leaders. Occasionally, Chaos Space Marines or even dreaded Dark Apostles walk amidst these gibbering masses, wielding their vile faith as a weapon against the righteous.

Sanity is for the Weak

Passive

Effect: For the faithful, there is little more terrifying than witnessing the depravity of those who have given themselves over completely to the Ruinous Powers.

The first time a loyal member of the Imperium (or sane individual) perceives a Chaos Formation during a Combat Encounter, he must make an **Easy (+30) Willpower Test** with a penalty equal to 5 times the Unit Strength of the Formation. If he fails, he suffers a -10 on Tests until the end of his next Turn. If he fails by 3 or more Degrees of Failure, he suffers 1 Willpower Damage and suffers a -20 on Tests until the end of his next Turn instead. Talents that provide a bonus to resisting the effects of Fear also apply to this Test. A character only makes this Test once per Combat Encounter, even if he fights multiple Chaos Formations.

Tremble before My Might!

Action: Half or Reaction

Subtype: Concentration

Description: The Overseer calls on the terrifying power of the Warp, and his twisted followers' dark faith in it.

As a part of this Command, the Overseer makes a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test** and immediately kills 1 of the Underlings in his Formation. If he succeeds, he gains a Force Field (see page 196 of the **ONLY WAR CORE** Rulebook) that does not Overload with a Protection Rating equal to his Degrees of Success on the Test multiplied by the Unit Strength of his Formation (to a maximum Protection Rating of 80). This Field lasts for 1d5 Rounds and applies only to the Overseer himself (and not to his hapless and disposable minions). Whenever this Field prevents an attack against the Overseer, the attacker must make a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test** or suffer 1d5 Willpower Damage.

Rejoice in this Flowing Blood!

Action: Half or Reaction

Subtype: Concentration

Description: The Ruinous Powers exult in carnage and destruction, and the promise of bringing ruin to the enemies of the Dark Gods fills the Formation with mad glee and exhorts them to further acts of mayhem and depredation.

As a part of this Command, the Overseer makes a **Routine (+10) Willpower Test** and immediately kills 1 of the Underlings in the Formation. The Overseer immediately recovers a number of Wounds equal to his Degrees of Success (removing Critical Damage first) and all members of the Formation gain the Hatred (All) Talent for a number of Rounds equal to his Degrees of Success.



Let the Galaxy Burn!

Action: Full

Subtype: Concentration

Description: There is nothing the scions of Chaos desire more than to smash the edifices of the Imperium to the ground and set fire to the rubble, no matter the cost.

As a part of this Command, the Overseer makes a **Difficult (-10) Willpower Test** and sacrifices 1d5 of the Underlings in the Formation, casting them upon the æthric blaze spreading at his feet. For a number of Rounds equal to the Overseer's Degrees of Success on the Test, whenever any member of the Formation (including the Overseer and any Special Weapons Troops) attacks as part of the Volley Fire, Melee Attack, or Charge Commands, its attacks gain the Flame and Tearing Qualities.

Accept These Wretched Souls!

Action: Full

Subtype: Concentration

Description: After striking down a worthy foe, the Overseer begins to hack apart his hapless minions, spilling their blood to release their souls to the Ruinous Ones.

As a part of this Command, after killing a particularly deadly enemy (or forcing a Player Character to burn a Fate Point), the Overseer slaughters up to 5 of the Underlings in his Formation and makes a **Very Hard (-30) Willpower Test** with a +10 bonus for each Underling he sacrificed. If he succeeds, he rolls once on **Table 3-1: Rewards of chaos** (see page 122).

SURVIVING THE FRONT

“Alright, listen up! You are all entering this breach as scoundrels, criminals, traitors, and scum! But those of you who make it to the other side will be coming out heroes of the Imperium of Mankind!”

—Sergeant Cato Kallus of “The Dregs,”
12th Fensworld Penal Regiment

On the battlefields of the 41st Millennium, an Imperial Guard squad often finds itself beset on all sides by the enemy. Whether the foe is an Ork Waaagh!, a Dark Eldar Kabal, a Chaos Warband, a Kroot Kindred, or a Severan Dominate regiment matters little to a Guardsman’s duty, but it has a definite impact on the tactics and resources that a Squad needs to bring to bear in order to successfully mete out the Emperor’s justice, win their campaign, and survive.

The Spinward Front is a Subsector torn by gruesome conflict, and only the staunchest or cleverest Guardsman has any hope of prolonged survival. As the Squad and its members forge their way through the battlefield, they earn skills, abilities, honours, and titles unavailable to untested troops. Though these vary by regiment and region, they all mark their bearers as soldiers of renown.

The Veteran Talents and Medals and Honours of the Spinward Front are rewards for characters that have survived their first, tentative battles. These Talents and Commendations represent specialized experience against specific foes of the Imperium of Man, and are the sorts of rewards that require a trial by fire. Veteran Talents and Medals and Honours are hard-won, and should be a source of great pride for Player Characters who have, through sheer grit and determination and against all odds, seen their Squads to multiple victories.

VETERAN TALENTS

Veteran Talents are special Talents that Player Characters who have gone above and beyond the call of duty on the battlefields can purchase to reflect their singular martial achievements. Each of these Talents is tied to one of the foes of the Imperium active on the Spinward Front. Unlike the Talents found in the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook, Veteran Talents have an added Battlefield Prerequisite, and can only be purchased with the Game Master’s permission after a Guardsman has proven himself against the enemy, in the way listed on the Talent or in a similarly spectacular manner.

COMMENDATIONS

There are two types of Medals and Honours most common to the Spinward Front. First are Kill Markers, which are informal Regimental Awards given to Guardsmen for successful engagements with the enemy. The second type is the Distinguished Service Medal, a type of Campaign Honour awarded for heroism. These medals are awarded for effectively and efficiently taking out the most fearsome enemy forces likely to be encountered in the Spinward Front.

VETERAN TALENTS

“If it’s anything like the rest, the trick to killing it is getting your knife up under the muscle in the arm and then using leverage to split it clean off. No, that won’t kill it, but if you can get rid of an arm or two, it’s a bit less dangerous. Try to keep clear of its mouth, though. Stinks like a...”

—Trooper Bjarki, to the new recruits
of the Gautlend 81st Rifles

It is a harsh truth of Imperial service that many Guardsmen do not make it past their first battle, let alone their first campaign. The battlefields of the Spinward Front are littered with the corpses of fresh recruits, those newly-minted Guardsmen who lacked the cleverness, fortitude, or simple luck to survive the harsh realities of front line combat in the 41st Millennium. Then there are the Imperial Guard veterans, the combat-hardened, battle-practiced survivors of a dozen campaigns against the most deadly foes the galaxy can muster. Those who have survived the unforgiving battlefields of the Spinward Front time and time again, through a combination of natural talent, learned skills, and pure fortune.

To reflect this level of expertise fighting the terrible and varied enemies of mankind, **ENEMIES OF THE IMPERIUM** introduces Veteran Talents. Veteran Talents are optional Talents that reflect certain accomplishments against the deadly foes who threaten the Spinward Front. Thus, Veteran Talents can only be purchased by those Player Characters who have achieved the Battlefield Requirement associated with the particular Talent (in addition to the usual Prerequisites it carries) or another feat that the Game Master deems suitably impressive to merit such a Talent.

The Game Master is ultimately charged with the decision of whether or not to use Veteran Talents in a given campaign, as well as the final decision over whether or not a player has completed the listed requirements for a Veteran Talent’s Battlefield Requirement. Game Masters are encouraged to be creative in offering Player Characters the chance to earn Veteran Talents, in the listed ways or others of their own invention, or to create new Veteran Talents for particularly impressive acts of violence, cleverness, creativity or bravado against the foes of humanity on the part of the Player Characters.

Although Veteran Talents are broken down by the specific foes against whom they are most likely to be useful, they can be earned while fighting against any appropriate enemy. The cost of a Veteran Talent is determined by the associated Aptitudes and the Tier of the Talent as set forth in **Table 3–18: Talent Advances** (see page 103 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook).





TABLE 4-1: TIER 2 VETERAN TALENTS

Talent	Prerequisites	Aptitude 1	Aptitude 2	Benefit
Armour-Breaker	BS 35, Common Lore (Tech)	Ballistic Skill	Finesse	Inflict +2 Critical Damage when firing upon Vehicles.
Battlefield Awareness	Int 30, Scholastic Lore (Tactica Imperialis)	Fieldcraft	Intelligence	Use Scholastic Lore (Tactica Imperialis) to establish Surprise.
Heroic Resilience	WP 35	Defence	Willpower	Suffer Damage to stay conscious through Critical Effects and Fatigue.
Mob Fighter	BS 35	Ballistic Skill	Offence	Spend a Fate Point to increase the Blast Quality of a weapon for one attack.
Shield of Piety	Fel 30, WP 30, Unshakeable Faith	Defence	Fellowship	Spend a Fate Point and make a Fellowship Test to help an ally resist Corruption or Insanity.

TABLE 4-2: TIER 3 VETERAN TALENTS

Talent	Prerequisites	Aptitude 1	Aptitude 2	Benefit
Blistering Evasion	Per 35, Dodge +10 or Parry +10	Finesse	Perception	Foes suffer a -10 penalty to hit the character after a successful Evasion.
Demoralising Decapitation	WS 40, Fel 35, Combat Master	Social	Weapon Skill	When vanquishing the leader of a group of enemies, inflict penalties on foe's minions.
Jungle Stalker	Per 35, T 35, Survival +10	Fieldcraft	Perception	Grant self and allies +2 AP from Cover when in a forest or other foliage.
Scourge of War	Fel 35, S 35, Hatred (Chosen Foe)	Leadership	Strength	Gain the Fear (1) Trait against a hated foe by succeeding at an Intimidate Test.
Warp Banisher	WP 40, Resistance (Psychic Powers)	Psyker	Willpower	Spend a Fate Point after winning an Opposed Willpower Test against a Psyker to prevent it from using its powers.

SEVERAN DOMINATE FIGHTER VETERAN TALENTS

The arrayed regiments of the Severan Dominate fight much like the regiments of the Imperial Guard. Large artillery formations, tank warfare, and reliance on sturdy troop lines are the main tactics of a Severan Dominate fighting force. Severan Dominate Fighter Veteran Talents focus on demoralising the enemy and attacking armoured vehicle and supply convoys.

ARMOUR-BREAKER

Tier: 2

Prerequisite: Ballistic Skill 35, Common Lore (Tech)

Aptitudes: Ballistic Skill, Finesse

Battlefield Requirement: If a Squad destroys three or more enemy vehicles in the course of a single mission, each member gains the ability to purchase the Armour-Breaker Talent.

Description: The character has proven himself an expert at taking down enemy armour, and has intimately familiarised himself with the weak points and manoeuvring capabilities of dozens, if not hundreds, of types of enemy vehicles.

When one of this character's attacks inflicts Critical Damage on a vehicle, add +2 to the Damage result.

SCOURGE OF WAR

Tier: 3

Prerequisite: Fellowship 35, Strength 35, Hatred (Severan Dominate or Other)

Aptitudes: Leadership, Strength

Battlefield Requirement: If a character personally slays at least seven foes and gains four or more Degrees of Success on an Intimidate Test when fighting against the forces of a specific kind of enemy over the course of a single mission, he gains the ability to purchase the Scourge of War Talent.

Description: Such is this character's reputation for cutting a bloody swathe through the forces of his enemies that traitors shudder at the mention of his name or his unit insignia. On the battlefield, dark whispers say that he is the righteous instrument of the God-Emperor, striking with greatest vengeance upon all betrayers.

Once per encounter as a Free Action while fighting the chosen foe, this character may spend a Fate Point and make a **Challenging (+0) Intimidate Test**. If he succeeds, he gains the Fear (1) Trait against the chosen foe until the end of the encounter.



ORK FIGHTER VETERAN TALENTS

Waaagh! Grimtoof fights in massed hordes, led by rampaging Warbosses. A Ork unit at full strength is nigh-unassailable, the Orks within whipped into a frenzy both by the leadership of their Nobz and by virtue of their numbers. Ork Fighter Talents focus on fighting large waves of enemies and going head-to-head with frontline enemy commanders, two of the strengths of an Ork Horde.

HORDE FIGHTER

Tier: 2

Prerequisite: Ballistic Skill 35

Aptitudes: Ballistic Skill, Offence

Battlefield Requirement: If a character kills four or more enemy troops with a single attack during a mission, he gains the ability to purchase the Horde Fighter Talent.

Description: The character is adept at taking out massed enemy units. If he focuses, he knows just where to place a grenade, rocket, or artillery strike for maximum damage.

When using a weapon with the Blast Quality, this character may spend a Fate Point as a Free Action to increase its Blast Quality by 1d5 until the end of his Turn.

DEMORALISING DECAPITATION

Tier: 3

Prerequisite: Weapon Skill 40, Fellowship 35, Combat Master

Aptitudes: Social, Weapon Skill

Battlefield Requirement: If a character fights a Elite-level or Master-level NPC in hand-to-hand combat during a mission without aid and not only survives but wins, he gains the ability to purchase the Demoralising Decapitation Talent.

Description: The character has mastered the art of causing panic in an enemy by taking out its leadership, either with a stoic flourish of the blade or a triumphant cry of victory.

Once per encounter, when the character kills an Elite-level or Master-level foe who is in charge of a unit (whether that enemy is a Formation Overseer or leading individual NPCs), all of that foe's subordinates who witness the death of their leader must make a **Hard (-20) Willpower Test**. Orks affected by this ability do not apply the bonuses from their Mob Rule Trait to the Test. Each foe who fails is shaken by the upset victory and suffers a -10 penalty to all Tests for the remainder of the encounter.

DARK ELДАР FIGHTER VETERAN TALENTS

The cruel Dark Eldar are masters of small, lightning raids. The Dark Eldar focus on quick strikes and exhausting their enemies, and so those with experience fighting these fiends know all too well to focus on avoiding these particular perils in battle.

HEROIC RESILIENCE

Tier: 2

Prerequisite: Willpower 35

Aptitudes: Defence, Willpower

Battlefield Requirement: If a character suffers five or more points of Critical Damage in a single battle during a mission (and lives), he gains the ability to purchase the Heroic Resilience Talent.

Description: The character can endure exertion that would fell a lesser fighter, pushing past safe limits to finish the fight.

If this character would be rendered unconscious by a Critical Effect or excessive levels of Fatigue, he may make a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test**. If he succeeds, he remains conscious, but suffers 1 Damage ignoring Armour and Toughness at the end of each of his Turns. At the beginning of each of his Turns, he may choose to collapse (falling unconscious) to end this effect.

BLISTERING EVASION

Tier: 3

Prerequisite: Perception 35, Dodge +10 *or* Parry +10

Aptitudes: Perception, Finesse

Battlefield Requirement: If a character successfully Evades three consecutive attacks without being struck while on a mission, he gains the ability to purchase the Blistering Evasion Talent.

Description: The character has fought foes swifter than himself on numerous occasions, and has learned how to preempt movements too fast for human eyes to track.

Whenever this character makes a successful Evasion Test against an attack, he imposes a -10 on Ballistic Skill Tests and Weapon Skill Tests to hit him with attacks until the start of his next Turn.



KROOT FIGHTER VETERAN TALENTS

The Kroot are masters of ambush and concealment. Kroot Fighter Talents focus on protecting the squad from being Surprised and using terrain to the squad's advantage, using two of the tactics of the perfidious Kroot against them.

BATTLEFIELD AWARENESS

Tier: 2

Prerequisite: Intelligence 30, Perception 30, Scholastic Lore (Tactica Imperialis)

Aptitudes: Intelligence, Fieldcraft

Battlefield Requirement: If the Squad successfully surprises a group of foes that is attempting to remain concealed (with at least one Degree of Success on its Stealth Test), each member gains the ability to purchase the Battlefield Awareness Talent.

Description: The character has honed his understanding of tactics and battlefield strategy to a razor's edge, and he is often able to anticipate his enemy's next move.

Whenever this character spends a Fate Point to re-roll a failed Perception Test, roll 1d10. On a result of 9, he regains the spent Fate Point (he still gains the benefit of spending it).

JUNGLE STALKER

Tier: 3

Prerequisite: Perception 35, Toughness 35, Survival +10

Aptitudes: Fieldcraft, Perception

Battlefield Requirement: If a character catches at least three foes unawares in a forest, jungle, or similar area over the course of a single mission, he gains the ability to purchase the Jungle Stalker Talent.

Description: The character is a master of jungle and forest fighting, slinking through the shadows to strike at his foes.

This character counts any Cover provided by dense foliage, wooded forests, and other, similar natural environments as providing an additional +2 AP to himself and any allies within 5 metres.



CHAOS WARBAND FIGHTER VETERAN TALENTS

The servants of the Ruinous Powers are terrifying to the uninitiated, and the threat they pose to a Guardsman's sanity and soul are almost as great as the threat they pose to his body. Chaos Fighter Talents focus on protecting the squad from the corruptive power of Chaos and neutralising enemy Psykers, two of the greatest dangers facing any squad fighting a Chaos Warband.

SHIELD OF PIETY

Tier: 2

Prerequisite: Fellowship 30, Willpower 30, Unshakeable Faith

Aptitudes: Defence, Fellowship

Battlefield Requirement: If the Squad succeeds on three or more Fear Tests or Malignancy Tests (or any combination of the two totalling 3 successful Tests) over the course of a single mission, each member of the Squad gains the ability to purchase the Shield of Piety Talent.

Description: The character has learned to share a portion of his unwavering faith with those around him. He is a bulwark of calm and resilience, even in the most horrific circumstances, and can use his oratory skills to keep the minds of those around him clear of the taint of madness and Chaos.

Whenever a member of his Squad within communication range would gain Corruption Points or Insanity Points, this character may spend a Fate Point and make a **Difficult (-10) Fellowship Test** as a Reaction. If he succeeds, that character gains 1d5 fewer Insanity Points or Corruption Points (to a minimum of 0) instead.

WARP BANISHER

Tier: 3

Prerequisite: Willpower 40, Resistance (Psychic Powers)

Aptitudes: Psyker, Willpower

Battlefield Requirement: If a character succeeds on an Opposed Willpower Test to resist the effects of a Psychic Power by four or more Degrees of Success while on a mission, he gains the ability to purchase the Warp Banisher Talent.

Description: This character's mind is extraordinarily resilient against the power of the witch, allowing him to throw off foul sorceries and other attempts to pry into his mental realm and subvert him from within.

Whenever this character succeeds on an Opposed Willpower Test to resist the effects of a Psychic Power, he may spend a Fate Point. If he does so, the enemy who targeted him with the Psychic Power cannot use Psychic Powers until the end of its next Turn. If that enemy has the Daemonic Trait, it also suffers 1d5 Energy Damage with the Sanctified Quality that ignores its Armour and Toughness Bonus.

MEDALS AND HONOURS OF THE FRONT

“Uh, well, sir, they call our squad the ‘Ork Killers’ ‘cause we’ve killed ourselves a lot of Orks.”

—Gunnery Sergeant Uruth Veilit, 212th Brontian Longknives, to a Strategic Command Officer

Each front of the Imperial war effort has its own, unique command structure, its own battlefield conditions and foes to fight. To reflect this, each Strategic High Command has been authorized to award Campaign- and Sector-specific awards for Imperial Guard troopers of particular skill, heroism, or stubborn tenacity.

Included below are those commendations unique to the Spinward Front. These medals and honours are a tradition of the Subsector, and represent meritorious service against the main foes of the Spinward Front: the arrayed forces of the Severan Dominate, the Ork Horde of Waaagh! Grimtoof, the Dark Eldar cabals operating in the area, those Chaos Warbands that call the Spinward Front their home, and the Kroot mercenary Kindred active in the area.

Additionally, there are informal awards, marks of reputation rather than formal commendation, given by regimental command. These honours are recognized by a given regimental commander to acknowledge a squad’s skill and history fighting one of Mankind’s many foes. For further examples of the medals and commendations common to the Calixis Sector and the Spinward Front, see Campaign Honours, page 295 of the **ONLY WAR** Core Rulebook.

KILL MARKERS (INFORMAL REGIMENTAL AWARDS)

For many Guardsmen, each victory is accompanied by a simple ritual: a notch on a weapon or a chalk tally on the side of a tank, a mark for every enemy killed in service to the Imperium of Mankind. These simple marks add up over time, to eventually become a full-fledged part of the soldier’s identity, fully incorporated in a squad’s heraldry or regimental markings. As the squad moves through the ranks, their reputations as favoured fighters of a given enemy grows, eventually adding to the fearsome reputation of the regiment as a whole.

These markings are collectively known as Kill Markers. Kill Markers are an informal honour, which means that most regiments will not award the squad a medal or perform a ceremony when they reach a new threshold. Kill Markers are a part of the reputation of a squad, and are more a measure of the squad’s respect and status, both within the Imperium and among its enemies, than an adornment for a Guardsman’s uniform.

Kill Markers are a form of recognition for victory in battles, for causing damage and destruction to the goals and forces of a given adversary of the Imperium. As such, Kill Markers are generally recognized after a certain number of successful operations against a given foe. Optionally, the GM may wish to keep a running tally of every confirmed kill made by the squad at the end of each battle, and have Kill Markers be a true count of the death toll the squad has inflicted on the forces arrayed against Mankind.

Kill Markers are always applied to a particular enemy of the Imperium. The types of Enemies represented by Kill Markers have more to do with troop disposition and tactics than political divisions. Each of the major types of enemies and adversaries active within the Spinward Front is an acceptable type of antagonist to be recognized by Kill Markers, including rebels, Orks, Dark Eldar, Chaos worshippers, and Kroot.

Each Regiment records their Kill Markers differently. Markers may be stencilled onto tanks, painted onto a helmet, notched into weapons, represented with elaborate body scars or tattoos, or displayed as a myriad of trophies hanging from banners, vehicles, or armour.

Each type of Kill Marker gives the Squad bonuses for fighting their adversaries, and additionally marks the Squad as an implacable foe of one of the Imperium’s most hated enemies.





HUNTERS

The Squad has become recognized and adept at rooting out a particular adversary of the Imperium of Man. Over the course of a long campaign, the squad has learned to recognize the telltale signs of one of Mankind's enemies, and can recognize common battle tactics and troop formations.

The Squad has likely developed a reputation throughout their platoon as skilled combatants against a given foe. They will often be given a nickname based off of the foe they face: "Ork Hunters," "Rebels' Bane," or "Krootstalkers," for only a few examples. The Game Master and players are encouraged to come up with an appropriate appellation for any Squad that receives this status, based on their particular regiment and the specifics of their exploits.

Awarded For: The Squad has been blooded against a particular enemy of the Imperium, with a successful full campaign against that adversary under their belt. Optionally, the GM might wish to keep a full tally of the enemies a Squad has killed. If this is the case, this Kill Marker is awarded for 75 or more confirmed kills of a given enemy of the Imperium by the Squad.

Squad Bonus: The Squad is well versed in discerning the troop movements for their given enemy. The each member of the Squad gains a +10 bonus to Perception Tests to spot or track the particular enemy on the battlefield (such as Survival Tests to track them and Tests to avoid Surprise in combat).

KILLERS

The squad has slain a large number of a given foe, and the entire regiment has taken notice. Just as with other Kill Markers, the Squad is likely to have gained a reputation. The squad is likely known throughout its regiment with a nickname like "Eldar Killers" or "Heretic Redeemers."

Awarded For: The squad has been an implacable foe of this enemy. Award this honour for successfully completing two or more campaigns against a given adversary. Optionally, the GM can award the squad this honour for 150 or more confirmed kills of a given enemy by the squad.

Squad Bonus: The squad has experienced first-hand the behaviours and tactics of their foe, and can now begin to predict their behaviours and exploit their idiosyncrasies. Each member of the Squad gains a +10 to any Intelligence Tests having to do with the chosen enemy, including and especially Scholastic Lore (Tactica Imperialis) Tests.

Additionally, members of the Squad are extremely adept at finding gaps in this foe's preferred types of armour. Whenever a member of the Squad attacks one of the chosen enemies, he increases the Penetration of his attack by 1.

SLAYERS

The squad has developed a reputation throughout the entire campaign command structure as expert fighters against a certain threat, and might be treated to such hushed sobriquets as "Orkbreakers," "The Butchers," or "Traitor Slayers." More likely than not, the Squad has also developed a reputation with the enemy themselves, and might even be picked out for bombardments, targeted for assassination, or face other such reactive measures whenever their presence becomes known to their foes on the field of war.

Awarded For: The Squad has slaughtered scores of enemies of the Imperium. Award this medal for having successfully completed five full campaigns against a particular foe. Optionally, the GM can award this Kill Marker if Squad has decimated the enemy forces in numerous engagements, likely over the course of years or decades, and has earned 500 or more confirmed kills against this foe.

Squad Bonus: The Squad has faced this enemy in innumerable battles, and their battlefield prowess against this foe has become legendary. The Squad knows exactly how the enemy behaves, and how and where to hit that enemy when it is weakest. Members of the Squad inflict Righteous Fury on a result of 9 or 10 when attacking the chosen enemy.

Additionally, the enemy has learned to fear the Squad's status as anathema to their kind. Award any member of the Squad a +10 to Intimidate Tests against any enemy who is aware of the unit's fearsome reputation. If the Squad has been particularly effective at routing and disrupting the plans of one of the several sub-factions operating within the Spinward Front (such as the Children of Thorns cabal, or a particular regiment of the Severan Dominate), the GM might wish to give those enemies the Hatred Talent against the Squad to properly reflect their sworn vendettas and oaths of vengeance.

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDALS (CAMPAIGN HONOURS)

Distinguished Service Medals are gallantry medals awarded by Campaign Command for service to the Imperial Guard “above and beyond the call of duty.” Considering how much Strategic Command often expects out of the average Guardsman, receipt of one of these commendations is a rare honour, indeed.

These medals are considered very important, and their titles are long-winded. For example, the full title of the Cannonade Breachman’s Medal would be, “For Distinguished Service, Against the Severan Rebellion, Cannonade Breachman’s Medal.” Distinguished Service Medals are usually very large and ostentatious, though there is considerable variance in this regard.

Receipt of these medals does not go unnoticed by the common soldiery. Distinguished Service Medals are always awarded for specific feats of bravery and skill; each one is accompanied by a scar and a story. Their fellow Guardsmen will often ask the bearers to recount their tales of bygone battles, partly out of curiosity and a sense of camaraderie, but also in the hopes that they might pick up a few helpful pointers along the way.

AGAINST THE SEVERAN REBELLION

These commendations are newly minted, appearing only after the conflict with the Severan Dominate began in force. Campaign commanders award these honours to Guardsmen who have proved themselves lynchpins in the battle against the Severan Dominate. There are those within Subsector High Command who believe that the fight against the Severan Dominate is the most crucial in the Subsector; that without the resources gained by bringing the Dominate back into compliance with Imperial mandate, the rest of the battlefronts of the Spinward Subsector are doomed to failure. These commanders hold honourees of these medals in the highest esteem.

Cannonade Breachman’s Medal

The Cannonade Breachman’s Medal is an honour given to those heroes of the Imperium who have made their way past enemy lines and into the true heart of Dominate formations to take out one of their most fearsome and devastating weapons—lined artillery formations. A Guardsman showing this medal can expect respect and appreciation from the ground infantry in a campaign, as they are usually the most affected by massed artillery barrages.

Description: A silver medallion with a bronze circle stamped in its centre.

Awarded For: Destruction of an active artillery battery.

Squad Bonus: +10 to Dodge Tests to avoid attacks from weapons with the Blast Quality.

Commandant’s Commendation

This Distinguished Service Medal is awarded for spearheading an operation to capture or kill one of the heads of the Dominate’s armies. Dominate Generals are heavily relied upon by the Dominate rank-and-file, and their loss is a devastating blow to the enemy.

Description: A bronze star, inlaid with a teardrop-shaped ruby.

Awarded For: Capturing or killing a Severan Dominate General.

Squad Bonus: The wearer of this medal’s ranged attacks against targets benefitting from Cover increase their Penetration by +2.

AGAINST THE ORK MENACE

These commendations are awarded for exemplary service against the green tide that threatens to engulf the Spinward Front. Awards given for service in fighting against Waaagh! Grimtoof are seen as some of the Subsector’s most prestigious, as many in Strategic Command consider the Ork menace the truest threat in the Spinward Front.

Frontsman’s Honours

The Frontsman’s Honours badge is a great credit to the will of those Guardsmen who have earned it. The vast majority of fortifications in the way of Waaagh! Grimtoof have been definitively overrun. This honour shows that these soldiers defend their battle line no matter the costs, as they held their ground in the face of the great Ork horde and lived to tell the tale.

Description: A gold medallion, inlaid with iron.

Awarded For: Holding a pass, fortification, or entrenchment against an Ork horde of at least 100 for 24 hours or longer.

Squad Bonus: +20 to Pinning Tests made while benefitting from Cover.

Champion’s Commendation

A Champion’s Commendation is awarded for eliminating one of the leaders of the Waaagh! The Warbosses of Grimtoof are the fuel that keeps the fires of the Ork horde moving. Without a Warboss driving them forward, the Ork menace becomes disorganized and loses its momentum.

Description: A silver star with gold inlay, held by a green ribbon.

Awarded For: Killing an Ork Warboss.

Squad Bonus: The wearer of this medal’s melee attacks against Orks gain the Felling (2) Quality.





AGAINST XENOS DESIGNATE ELДАР

Officially, there is no distinction in the commendations awarded for fighting any type of Eldar. Veterans might notice some differences between Dark Eldar and their Craftworld cousins if they have the misfortune of fighting both, but in the eyes of the Imperial Guard as a body, all Eldar are the same.

Liberator's Honourium

The Dark Eldar are endlessly cruel, and falling into their clutches is a terrible fate indeed. This medal came about after the rescue of a particularly influential sector noble, who personally funded the creation of the honour to thank his rescuers.

Description: A platinum medallion encrusted with gemstones.

Awarded For: Saving an important Imperial official, cleric, or noble from the clutches of the Dark Eldar.

Squad Bonus: +10 to Fellowship Tests when interacting with Campaign Command and Nobility.

Warden's Commendation

This award is given for vanquishing one of the Dark Eldar's most elite warriors. Those who receive this medal have beaten the odds and survived such a deathmatch, acquiring their victory through tenacity, stubbornness, or self-sacrifice.

Description: A platinum cross with gold inlay.

Awarded For: Slaying a powerful and dangerous Dark Eldar warrior such as an Archon, Succubus, Haemonculus, or Incubus Klaivex in melee combat.

Squad Bonus: Whenever the wearer of this medal is required to make a Toughness Test due to a Critical Effect, he may use his Willpower Characteristic in place of his Toughness Characteristic for this Test.

AGAINST XENOS DESIGNATE KROOT

These commendations are slightly rarer than the other types of Distinguished Service Medals common in the Spinward Front, as the Kroot are usually not considered as pressing a threat as the other enemies of the Imperium active in the Subsector. There are a few campaign commanders, however, who have, for whatever reason, taken a particular dislike to the Kroot. These commanders have created service medals for victory over Kroot forces, and a few other campaign commanders have followed suit.

Star of Vigilance

Kroot are known to operate under the Imperial radar, and many times a commander will not be aware of their presence until they have already taken out a valuable Imperial target. This medal was created in the hopes that Guardsmen in service even in theatres where Kroot were not known to be operating would keep an eye out for their threat.

Description: A bronze star with silver filigree.

Awarded For: Destroying a group of Kroot infiltrating into Imperial territory.

Squad Bonus: +10 to Stealth Tests.

Vanguard's Commendation

Many Imperial rumours surround the Kroot Shaper. It is believed by numerous frontline soldiers and officers alike that Kroot Shapers wield dark magics, and many Ministorum Priests and Imperial Commissars alike have found it difficult to suppress such superstitions, even if they border on heresy. This medal is meant to remind all who see it that these creatures are mortal, and can be slain with discipline, righteousness, and copious gunfire.

Description: A square silver medal, embossed with bronze.

Awarded For: Killing a Kroot Shaper.

Squad Bonus: +10 to Awareness Tests.



ASSORTED RECIDIVISTS AND HERETICS

Campaign High Command does not acknowledge the existence of Chaos itself in any meaningful sense. Instead, they see only a disorganized class of enemies on the battlefields of the Spinward Front who have turned their face from the Emperor, and have been driven mad from being cut off from his beneficence. Those who have faced the followers of Chaos and their Daemonic allies, however, have likely been exposed to horrifying glimpses of the dark truth.

These commendations are often a double-edged sword for the Squad receiving them, as the acceptance of too many honours of this calibre might bring unwanted attention from the clandestine agents of certain powerful individuals in the Imperium.

Demolitionist's Award

The servants of the Ruinous Powers are known for many things, but few terrify the stalwart soldiers of the Imperial Guard as much as their lumbering war machines. From the horrific, lumbering Chaos Titans, to the depredations of Daemon-possessed Baneblade super heavy tanks and the rampaging hatred of Helbrutes, Daemonic engines of war are often the first priority for destruction in a battle with Chaos.

Description: A red ceramite medallion, emblazoned with gold filigree.

Awarded For: Destruction of a Chaos engine of war.

Squad Bonus: Whenever the wearer of this medal inflicts Righteous Fury against a vehicle, add +1 to the resulting roll on the appropriate Critical Hit Table.

Clandestine Order of St. Meleum

The men and women of the Imperial Guard are taught to revere the Space Marines of the Adeptus Astartes as mighty embodiments of the Emperor's martial power made manifest. Consider the horror, then, at the revelation that some of these mighty champions have turned from the Emperor's grace and embraced the foul and twisted gods of Chaos.

This is a set of medals, usually awarded in secret, and marks the bearer as a member of this secret order. The official reason for the award is always given as something else, a service medal, for example, or an honour for exemplary marksmanship. Those who know what to look for, however, can spot the true nature of this commendation immediately. They and others like them remember full well the horrors of facing a Chaos Space Marine in battle.

Description: Varies, depending on the type of medal being mimicked. Most medals of this type, however, have a small silver skull etched somewhere on their face.

Awarded For: Killing a Chaos Space Marine.

Squad Bonus: Whenever the wearer of this medal is required to make a Fear Test, he may spend a Fate Point to automatically pass that Test with 1d5 Degrees of Success.

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