



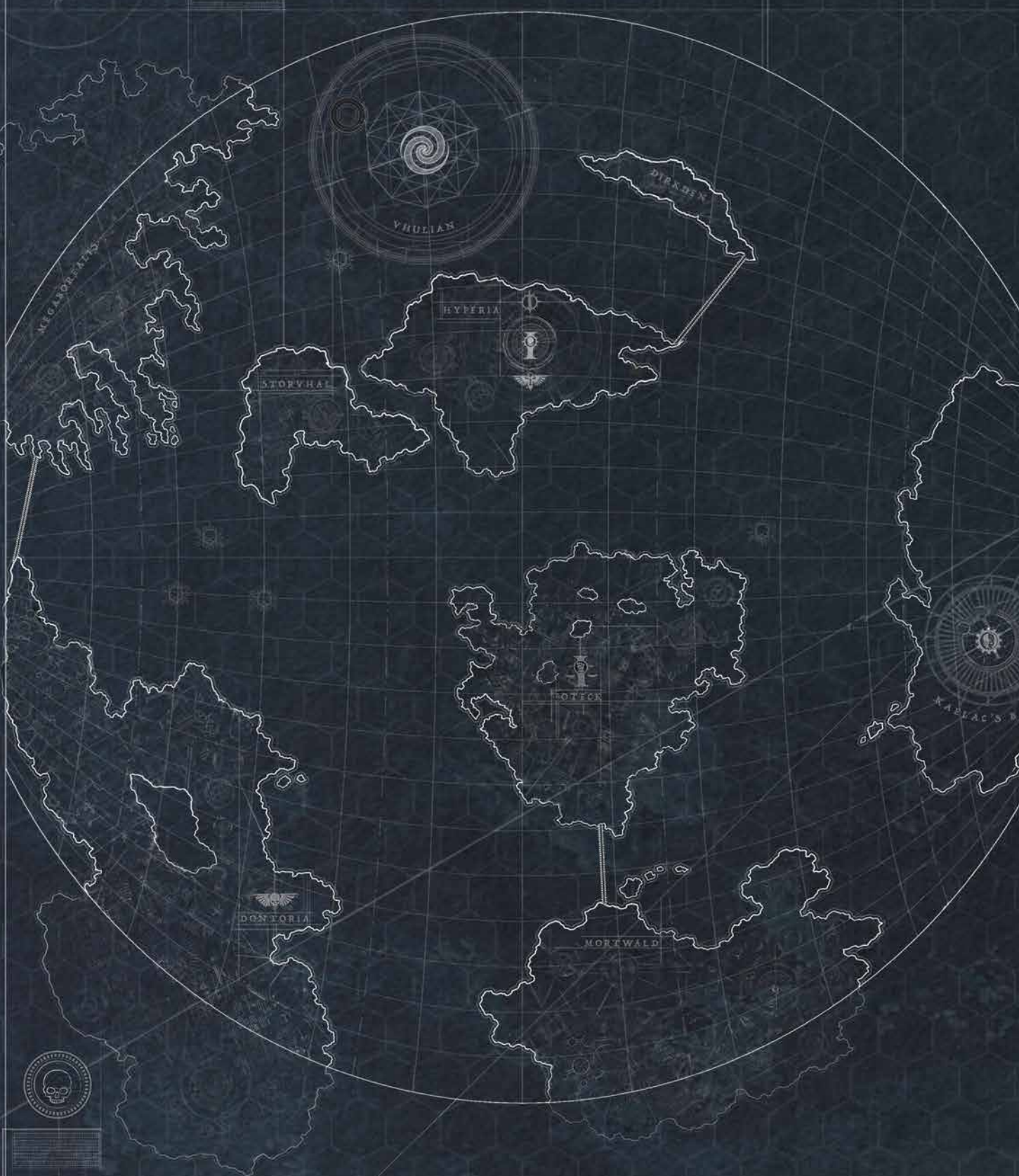
WARHAMMER  
VAULT  
WARHAMMER

# WARHAMMER 40,000



IMPERIUM NIHILUS  
**VIGILUS DEFIANT**

PLANET	CONQUERED
Planet A	1000-1000
Planet B	1000-1000
Planet C	1000-1000
Planet D	1000-1000
Planet E	1000-1000
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Planet H	1000-1000
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Planet N	1000-1000
Planet O	1000-1000
Planet P	1000-1000
Planet Q	1000-1000
Planet R	1000-1000
Planet S	1000-1000
Planet T	1000-1000
Planet U	1000-1000
Planet V	1000-1000
Planet W	1000-1000
Planet X	1000-1000
Planet Y	1000-1000
Planet Z	1000-1000



The Warhammer Vault exists to preserve the rich lore and background of Warhammer 40,000 and Warhammer Age of Sigmar. As such, outdated game scenarios and unit rules have been removed from this publication.



# VIGILUS DEFIANT

WAR OF BEASTS



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# A NEW KIND OF BATTLEGROUND

In the period that led up to the War for Vigilus, the planet was poised on the edge of destiny. Its proximity to the Eye of Terror had long put it on a war footing, but with the dawn of the Cicatrix Maledictum, Vigilus became incalculable in value to the Imperium, and a tempting target for xenos and Chaos invaders alike.

The planet Vigilus was always famed as a linchpin of the Segmentum Obscurus. When the Great Rift opened, its status escalated from important to indispensable.

So vital was Vigilus to the Imperium that when a teeming Waaagh! of Orks burst from the Great Rift, the system's defenders responded with terrific force. The Astra Militarum and Adepta Sororitas stationed there contained the Ork invasion and kept it from wrecking the densely populated hivespawls, while several Space Marine Chapters sent reinforcements from the Stygius sector and beyond. The latter waves were led by none other than Marneus Augustus Calgar, Chapter Master of the Ultramarines, and with him came some of the finest minds in the Adeptus Astartes.

These counter-assaults pulled Vigilus back from the brink. The psychic apocalypse of the Great Rift had disabled the planet's defences and made it vulnerable, allowing the Orks to raid from the wastelands, barging through each defence perimeter to wage war in the city sprawls. In conjunction, a great uprising of Genestealer Cultists was triggered, revealing an infestation that had festered upon Vigilus for hundreds of years.

As the races of the galaxy desperately tried to prosper in the horror-filled reality of the Imperium Nihilus, millions of eyes turned towards Vigilus. Were it to fall, so would the hopes of all trapped in the Dark Imperium. With the Cadian Gate broken to the west and War Zone Stygius raging to the east, Vigilus was wide open to invasion by the forces of Chaos.

## IN THIS BOOK

This book is the first of a two-part series set in the Vigilus System. It contains an account of the opening stages of the War for Vigilus, then builds to a nerve-shredding climax as the xenos invasion is revealed to be a precursor of dooms to come – amongst them the schemes of the Warmaster of Chaos, Abaddon the Despoiler.

Inside you will find:

- The history of the War of Beasts on Vigilus.
- Rules for playing an epic campaign set on Vigilus, or another planet in the Imperium Nihilus.
- Battlezone and war zone rules that represent the perilous environs of this planet.
- Detachments, special rules and Stratagems for the main armed forces of this great struggle.

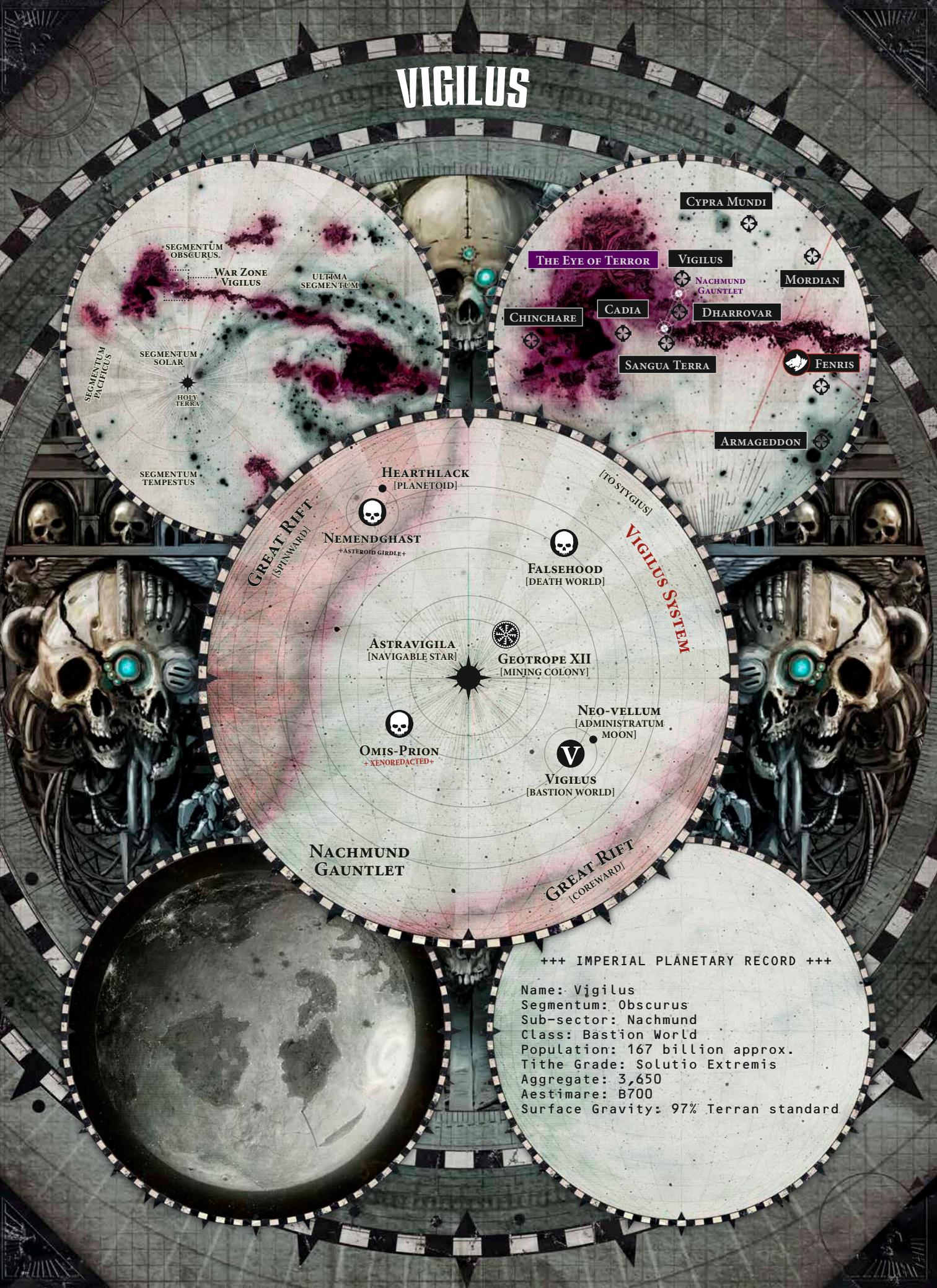
## AT THE THRESHOLD OF DAMNATION

With the opening of the Cicatrix Maledictum and the passing of the Noctis Aeterna, Vigilus found itself in that dark region of space known as the Imperium Nihilus, upon the threshold of the Nachmund Gauntlet. As one of the two relatively stable paths between the half of the Imperium that contained Holy Terra, known as the Imperium Sanctus, and the far-flung Imperium Nihilus on the other side of the Great Rift, the Nachmund Gauntlet was of immense value to Mankind. It allowed the Imperium to continue the movement of its forces across the interstellar gulf of the Great Rift, and also to maintain a line of astropathic communication – albeit an unstable and dangerous one – with the worlds stranded in the Dark Imperium. Should the Imperium ever truly be divided it would likely fall apart entirely. Hence the importance of Vigilus; it acted as a vital beachhead that kept the Imperium Nihilus under a semblance of Holy Terra's control.

None truly knew how or why the Great Rift formed – but the fight to gain passage across it quickly became intense. Vigilus had always boasted a vast amount of manpower, and had inherited a great number of Imperial Guard regiments since the clearing of the Cadian Gate – an event the Ministorum referred to as the Pre-tempestine Exodus – but it soon became evident that the threats facing the planet would test its defenders to their limit.

The planet was traditionally ruled over by a loose confederation of elders and nobles called the Aquilarian Council, known to the Adeptus Mechanicus as the Council of Cogs. The fact that the different delegates could not even agree on a name demonstrates how divided they were; the palatial areas of Saint's Haven were riven by political wars for decades. Only the spectre of complete annihilation saw Vigilus' rulers united.

# VIGILUS



SEGMENTUM  
OBSCURUS.

WAR ZONE  
VIGILUS

ULTIMA  
SEGMENTUM

SEGMENTUM  
SOLAR

HOLY  
TERRA

SEGMENTUM  
TEMPESTUS

SEGMENTUM  
PACIFICUS

CYPRAMUNDI

THE EYE OF TERROR

VIGILUS

NACHMUND  
GAUNTLET

MORDIAN

CHINCHARE

CADIA

DHARROVAR

SANGUA TERRA

FENRIS

ARMAGEDDON

HEARTHACK  
[PLANETOID]

NEMENDGHAST  
+ASTEROID GIRLDE+

FALSEHOOD  
[DEATH WORLD]

ASTRAVIGILA  
[NAVIGABLE STAR]

GEOTROPE XII  
[MINING COLONY]

OMIS-PRION  
+XENOREDACTED+

NEO-VELLUM  
[ADMINISTRATUM  
MOON]

VIGILUS  
[BASTION WORLD]

NACHMUND  
GAUNTLET

GREAT RIFT  
[COREWARD]

VIGILUS SYSTEM

GREAT RIFT  
[SPINWARD]

[TOSTYGIUS]

+++ IMPERIAL PLANETARY RECORD +++

Name: Vigilus  
Segmentum: Obscurus  
Sub-sector: Nachmund  
Class: Bastion World  
Population: 167 billion approx.  
Tithe Grade: Solutio Extremis  
Aggregate: 3,650  
Aestimare: B700  
Surface Gravity: 97% Terran standard



# WAR ON ALL FRONTS



'The fate of this distant world is worth a thousand others. If it falls, if the Nachmund Gauntlet collapses, the Imperium Nihilus is all but lost to us. The empire of Terra will soon follow.'

- Tigurius, Chief Librarian  
of the Ultramarines





# AT BOILING POINT

Roboute Guilliman himself designated Vigilus invaluable. The planet was something between a sentinel bastion and a staging post for further conquest, and its many Astra Militarum regiments and Adeptus Mechanicus macroclades formed a second line of defence against Chaos incursions from outside the Cadian Gate.

At the onset of the xenos invasion, Vigilus' vast and contiguous landmasses were broken only by a series of fortified reservoirs. The dust-bowl wastelands between each city-sprawl were analogous to oceans, and just as difficult to cross. They were not only arid and barren, but also hydrophagic – in places the chemical composition of their dust dunes was so saline it could desiccate bare flesh in a matter of hours. In theory, simply wearing enough protective clothing could have assuaged this. Unfortunately, the dust storms and twisters that were spun out from the giant tempest in the east – known as the Vhulian Swirl – caused this desiccant to creep into every chink of a traveller's armour. The dunes were hence populated only by tough-skinned or shell-armoured predators that preyed upon the unwary.

The planet's rare areas of productive land were highly sought after, but rampant industrialisation saw most of them developed into urban metropolises called hivesprawls. These were so large they formed entire continents.



The world was formally ruled by its Planetary Governor, Lucienne Agamemnus IX. That dynasty had overseen the planet's affairs from the spires of the capital, Saint's Haven, for millennia. Yet the planet was famous for being a stronghold of the Adeptus Mechanicus.

Vigilus' relative proximity to War Zone Stygius saw it serve as a way-station for incoming Imperial forces, including the Space Wolves and various Skitarii Legions. Its placement in the cosmos alone made it a valuable asset, but its exports too were vital for the Imperial war machine.

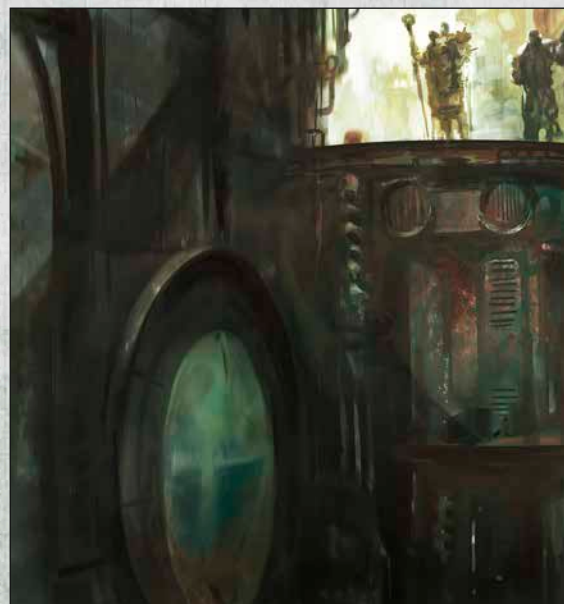
Vigilus was once one amongst a hundred Imperial worlds in the Segmentum Obscurus considered important primarily for the war materiel and manpower it exported. The planet's principal export was its exceptional defensive technology. The Adeptus Mechanicus of Vigilus were blessed with the Standard Template Construct for psy-tech force fields, and were sanctioned by Mars to put them into production. As well as being shipped out to aid the defences of countless other worlds, these Bastion-class

## THE WATERS OF VIGILUS

Water was scarce on Vigilus, for the planet had a very low water table, and, aside from the wide-scale recyc operations, there were few ways to replenish used stores. In addition, plant growth and arable farming were a rarity. The planet's food production came from various inventive sources, amongst them cactus farms, vermin abattoirs and subterranean nutri-vats. These latter methods recycled the fat-rich run-off and nutrient-rich sweat that dripped from the grates of the planet's grossly overpopulated manufactorum habs.

On Vigilus, the kind of water a person drank was a powerful

status symbol, indicative of their wealth and position. The majority of people in the under-classes and working populations drank water from deep underground, known as aqua subterra. This was dirty, foul-tasting and yellowish, but affordable. The rich and powerful drank aqua gladius, mined in vast cuboid icebergs on the polar continent of Kaelac's Bane. The faithful flock of the Ministorum in Hyperia Hivesprawl drank recyc water purified with holy oils – aqua sanctus – whereas the Adeptus Mechanicus drank aqua meteoris, which was mined from frozen asteroids they harnessed with the Greater Omnisian Hoist.



force fields were installed around the perimeter of every Vigilant continent as part of a treaty that had been agreed between the Tech-Priests and the Agamemnus Dynasty. Until the opening of the Great Rift and the xenos invasions that followed, these defences kept the planet's industry and populace safe from outside invasion.

In exchange, the Adeptus Mechanicus were largely left to their own devices on the forge continent of Megaborealis – one of the 'false continent' cityscapes that covered Vigilus' crust – but as time went on this proved a high price. Much of Megaborealis was given over to the unearthing of a strange black mineral that ran like veins through its crust, which the Tech-Priests obtained through vast and destructive mining operations. For the most part, these excavations were powered by energy produced in the volatile volcanic region of Storvhal to the south.

The deep drilling of the Adeptus Mechanicus' bore-hives caused such violent earthquakes across the planet that many a hive was toppled,

many a ruler's statue cast down, and the water table disrupted to the point that potable water became extremely scarce. Still, the Machine Cult of Stygies VIII delved ever deeper in their search to unravel the mysteries of the universe – no matter their provenance, or cost.

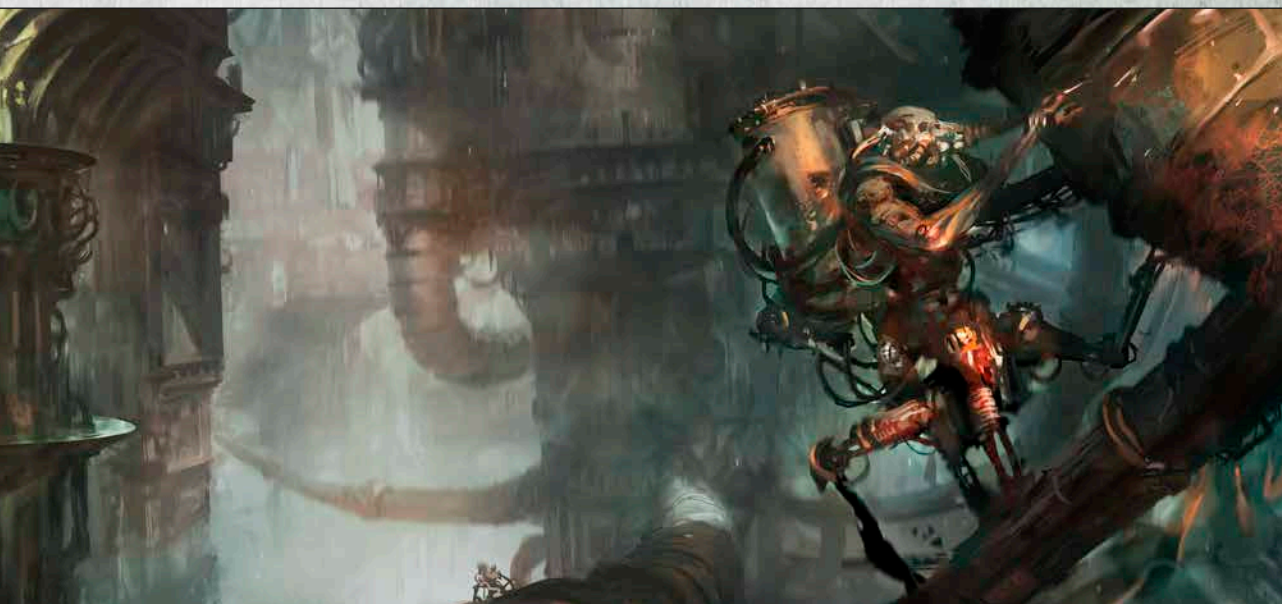


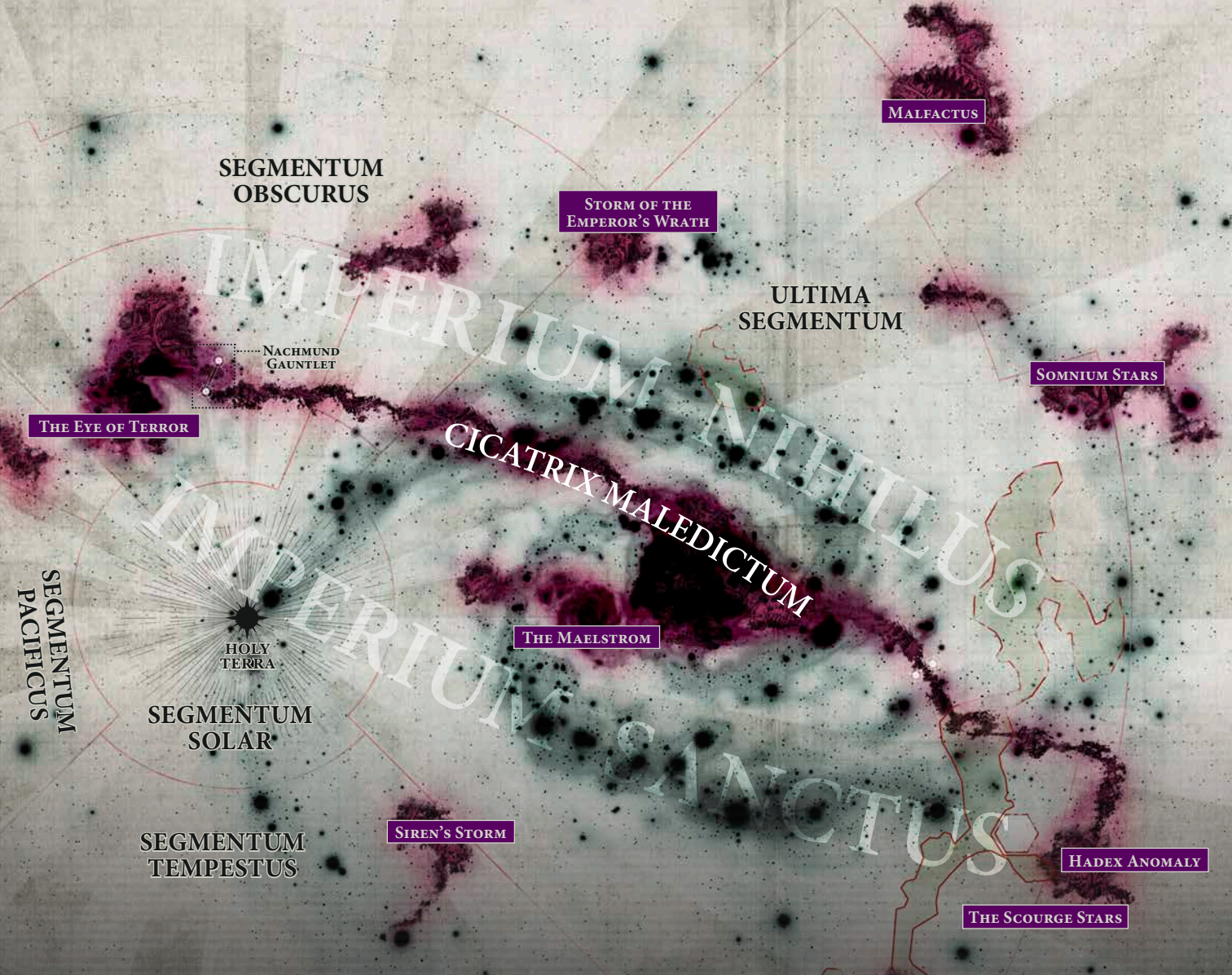
Meanwhile, the gradual but undeniable influence of the Ministorum was to see the Agamemnus Dynasty slowly infiltrated by agents of the Ecclesiarchy. None could gainsay their encroachment, for to challenge them was to challenge faith in the Emperor himself. The Ministorum Priests installed amongst the local Vigilant Guard worked ceaselessly to indoctrinate their Astra Militarum charges until they too

became dogmatic soldiers of faith. As the decades slid by, the inner districts of Hyperia Hivespawl, Vigilus' capital continent, echoed to the march of ever more Adepta Sororitas and their pious Vigilant Guard allies, until some said the Planetary Governor was ruler in name only. Vigilus was becoming host to several distinct power bases, all determined to pursue their own agendas no matter the cost.

The planet's disparate continents came into conflict over resource monopolies many times, but outright war was always avoided due to the efforts of the Aquilarian Council. Unfortunately, as resources were sequestered in ever more blatant power grabs, the grievances of the Aquilarian Council escalated from bickering and infighting to sabre-rattling and threats of violence that saw the planet brought to the brink of deadly civil war.

Then, under the malignant light of the Great Rift that broke across the galaxy, Vigilus and the other planets orbiting the star Astravigila entered a new phase of their tempestuous existence.





## CHRONOLOGY OF A DARK AGE

The chronology of Vigilus, as denoted in records of the War of Beasts, uses as its anchor point the opening of the Great Rift above the planet. This was an event of such incredible magnitude it rewired the planet's temporal logic altogether, much as it did a thousand other war zones across the Imperium.

The first element of Vigilus' timestamp is the annual designator. It starts with the number of years either before or after the rift opened, and then a number of chronosegments within that year as the second element. Imperial days are broken down into chronosegments of eight hours. After this is a third element – either 'previo' if the events occurred before the opening of the Great Rift, or 'post' if after it. This third element is sometimes denoted as a minus sign or a plus sign.

The fourth element of the Vigilus timestamp is the system's designator initials; in essence, the initials

of the system to which it refers. For Vigilus, this is VCM which stands for 'Vigilus Cicatrix Maledictum'. For its neighbouring planet, Omis-Prion, the designator initials would be OPCM.

By way of a full example, if the time of an event in the Vigilus System was three days (nine chronosegments) before the opening of the Great Rift, the timestamp would be '0.9 previo VCM.M41', also expressed as '0.9-'.<sup>2</sup>

This translates as '0 years and 9 chronosegments (three days) previous to the Vigilus System's first instance of the Cicatrix Maledictum in the 41st Millennium.'

If it was one year and eight hours after, the timestamp would be '1.1 post VCM.M41', also expressed as '1.1 post' or '1.1+'.<sup>2</sup>

# THE GREAT RIFT YAWNS WIDE

Before the onset of the conflict known as the War of Beasts, Vigilus witnessed a cataclysm so great it all but split the galaxy in half. The Cicatrix Maledictum ripped from the Eye of Terror in the galactic north-west to the Hadex Anomaly in the south-east. Aside from a few corridors, the rift was all but impassable.

When the skies split around Vigilus, many feared the planet would be consumed forever. Instead, as the swirling nebulae dissipated, it seemed that Vigilus had held the Cicatrix Maledictum at bay. The planet's strange aegis linked it with the Knight world of Dharrovar and the distant planet of Sangua Terra to form the corridor known as the Nachmund Gauntlet.

Whether it was faith, the Emperor's Will, a fluke of quantum entanglement or some other phenomenon that kept this rift passage open, none knew. But the route from the reaches of the Imperium to the desperate realms of the Imperium Nihilus remained stable. Vigilus became more vital than ever, and not only to the Imperium. Traitor generals and xenos masterminds

looked upon it with covetous eyes, and hatched secret plans to conquer it. Drukhari raids struck from the arctic webway portal on Kaelac's Bane, whilst Craftworld Saim-Hann sent emissaries to warn of a doom to come.

A dark new era dawned across Vigilus' desert wastes and overpopulated hives. With the sky rent in twain by a warp rift that bled purple light into the heavens, and civil unrest reaching new heights, draconian laws were put into place by the planet's governing bodies. It was forbidden to look at the night sky on those rare occasions it could be glimpsed through the thick banks of cloud that choked the stratosphere, and a strict curfew was imposed that ensured all citizens would be indoors by nightfall – or flogged for a full hour. The

repression that resulted saw many civilians look to new cults and underground orders for succour. Ironically, it was this heavy-handed lawmaking that sowed the seeds of anarchy.

With the warp rift of the Cicatrix Maledictum scarring the Vigilus sky, the doom that many had feared would consume the planet from outside instead began to take its toll from within. To one extent or another, every citizen of Vigilus found themselves harrowed by dark dreams and recurring nightmares. The sleep deprivation and foul tempers that resulted spilled over into a hundred new conflicts every day, from small skirmishes and beatings in alleyways to industrial strikes, organised uprisings and spates of assassinations that scoured the upper spires.

## TO RUN THE GAUNTLET

The Nachmund Gauntlet ran from Vigilus to the planet of Sangua Terra in the Imperium Sanctus. Near the northern end of the warp corridor was the world of Dharrovar, the stronghold of an ancient dynasty of Imperial Knights ruled over by King Kaligius. Once considered cautious, the king's behaviour had become ever more paranoid and erratic, and it was said he protected his holdings with the ferocity of an enraged drake. His defenders claimed he was like that with good reason, for on either side of the Nachmund Gauntlet was a seething tide of Chaos that constantly sought to break its metaphysical bonds and spill into realspace.

At the dawn of the Great Rift, ships that sought safe passage through the gauntlet had no choice other than to pass near Dharrovar. Those who gave the planet a wide berth were allowed to slink past without interception. Those who sought safe haven or attempted to contact the Knight world under a

flag of parley were treated with hostility, suspicion or even violence. A staunch independent, Kaligius was already convinced that no good would come from allowing the Imperium to draw him back into the fold. Instead he turned to tyranny and oppression. Even as the term 'Imperium Nihilus' was coined, he was declared Excommunicate Traitoris.





# THE SPEEDWAAAGH!

The Ork invasion of Vigilus was sudden, and its scale caught the Imperial defenders off guard. At first it was contained, though it brought to light threats that had lingered unseen for years.

At the end of the 41st Millennium, the tensions upon Vigilus had risen sky-high, what with the Adeptus Mechanicus triggering ever more frequent earthquakes, and the power struggle between the Planetary Governor's dynasty and the Ministorum developing into covert violence. Then the Great Rift, a new celestial phenomenon appearing like a slowly opening wound in the sky, spat out a hurtling fleet of ramshackle Ork spacecraft into the Vigilus System.

With the rift scrambling the foresight of the planet's sanctioned seers and prophets, there was little warning of the Ork invasion's approach – the fleet punched through Vigilus' naval cordon with sudden, overwhelming force, then crash-landed its ships in the great deserts between the hivespraws. Those that survived, protected from destruction by bubble-like force fields, formed ready-made fortresses, which became the heart of the Scrap Cities from which the Orks would attack the hivespraws. What they lacked in organisation and structural integrity they made up for in sheer mass and firepower.

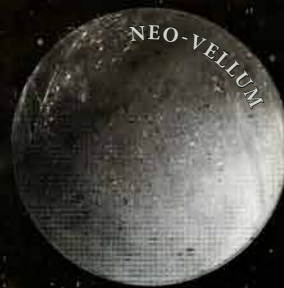
For days the wastelands echoed to the hammering of metal, the thudding of rivet guns, the guttural commands of Ork Mekaniaks and the throaty roar of smoke-spewing engines. Vehicle by vehicle, then swarm by swarm, a hundred mechanised invasion forces emerged at great pace from the dust-bowls. The Speedwaaagh! had begun, and at their head rode the Speedlord Supreme, Krooldakka.

The Orks were stymied, at first, by the Bastion-class force fields that surrounded each hivesprawl. The

invaders were forced to content themselves with raiding the convoys and armoured regiments that braved the wastes and deserts, either to escort dignitaries or move materiel from one continent to another. Some Orks took to racing one another around the planet, even skirting the edge of the vast dust storm known as the Vhulian Swirl.

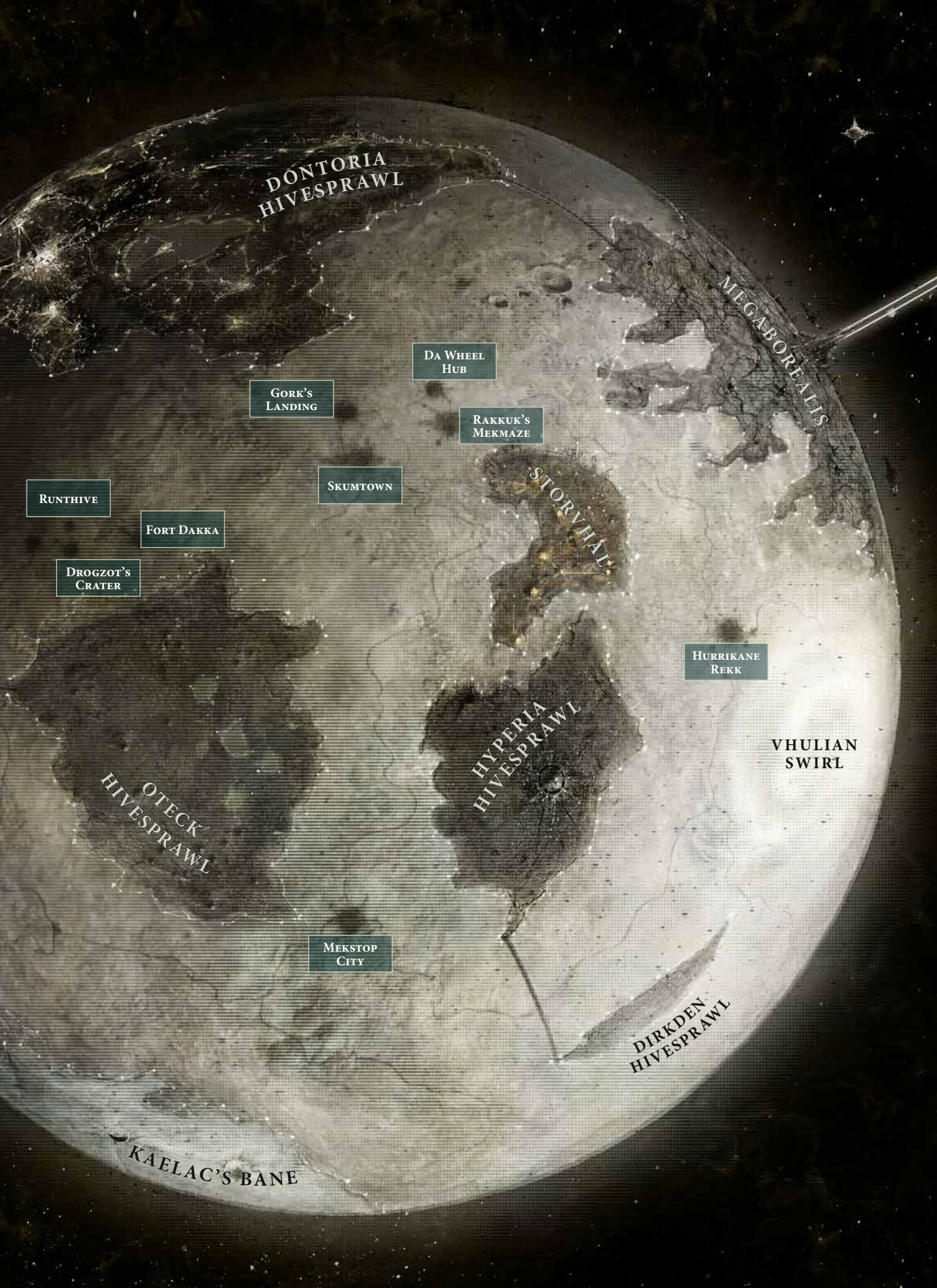
When the Great Rift grew to split the galaxy entire and the Noctis Aeterna dawned, the baleful emanations of the rift's warp storms washed across Vigilus. The eddies of psychic disruption caused a plague of nightmares to intensify in the populace, but worse still, collapsed all of the psy-tech force fields that kept the Orks from Vigilus' cities.

If the Orks had been a rational, right-thinking race, it may have taken them days to capitalise upon the lack of force fields. But with their Speed Freek outriders constantly daring one another to run through the perilous energies – or at least get as close as possible – it was less than an hour before word spread that the defences were down. When the Orks got wise to this they wasted no time, and poured into the outskirts of each city in tremendous numbers. The Adeptus Mechanicus, Astra Militarum and Adepta Sororitas that defended the hivesprawl borders found themselves engaged on all fronts, and within days they were fighting desperately to slow the Orks' momentum. Even the bio-dome sprawl of Mortwald, protected by a network of traditional trenches and bunkers as well as force fields, suffered invasion – as the Ork attack intensified, Mortwald's succulent forests and rejuvenat complexes were ransacked in several districts.



MORTWALD

TANKA SPILL



DONTORIA  
HIVESPRAWL

MEGABOREALIS

DA WHEEL  
HUB

GORK'S  
LANDING

RAKKUK'S  
MEKMAZE

SKUMTOWN

STORVHAL

RUNTHIVE

FORT DAKKA

DROGZOT'S  
CRATER

HURRIKANE  
REKK

VHULIAN  
SWIRL

HYPERIA  
HIVESPRAWL

OTECK  
HIVESPRAWL

MEKSTOP  
CITY

DIRKDEN  
HIVESPRAWL

KAELAC'S BANE





# HIDDEN AGENDAS, SELFISH SOULS

The Aquilarian Council had watched pict-thief relays of the Orks being hurled back by their psy-tech force fields with a sense of confident superiority. Now they received reports of a new force rising. To their consternation, the messages told of a threat coming from within, rather than without.

The scattered missives detailing subterranean uprisings were at first attributed to malcontents, criminals and opportunists. The prevailing opinion was that the perpetrators would soon be put down by the local Adeptus Arbites or, failing that, the companies of Astra Militarum despatched to destroy such rebellions before they could gain too much ground. These forces of law and righteous oppression were sent to deal with uprisings and demagoguery wherever they were reported. Then the Hyperian leaders and their ilk went back to focusing on how best to capitalise on the industry of war.

The after-action reports that made it back from those violent suppressions revealed signs of

something far worse than mere civilian unrest. Strange sigils had been spotted on many walls and archways, depicting a curled and spined creature that some called a 'wurm-form'. There were rumours of sinister four-armed creatures scuttling in the darkness, and the word 'xenos' was being whispered more and more amongst the common folk.

It was enough to cause those who held power to shore up their defences – it was their instinct to look to their own safety above all other concerns. The Ministorum ensured those armed forces over whom they held the most sway – the resident orders of the Adepta Sororitas and the ever-faithful Vigilant Guard – stayed close at

hand within Saint's Haven, even though the nearest xenos sighting was some hundreds of miles away. The Adeptus Mechanicus withdrew many of its glacier claimants and aqua-prospectors from Kaelac's Bane, though a skeleton crew remained to quarry for water.

As the industry of Vigilus broke down, the frequency of the convoys that were crossing the wastelands on export missions or trade delegations slowed to a crawl. To make matters worse, the Speed Freeks that used those desolate reaches as their hunting grounds were merciless. The leadership of Vigilus launched tentative counter-attacks, but prioritised their own safety, putting aside alliances and pacts in favour of self-preservation.





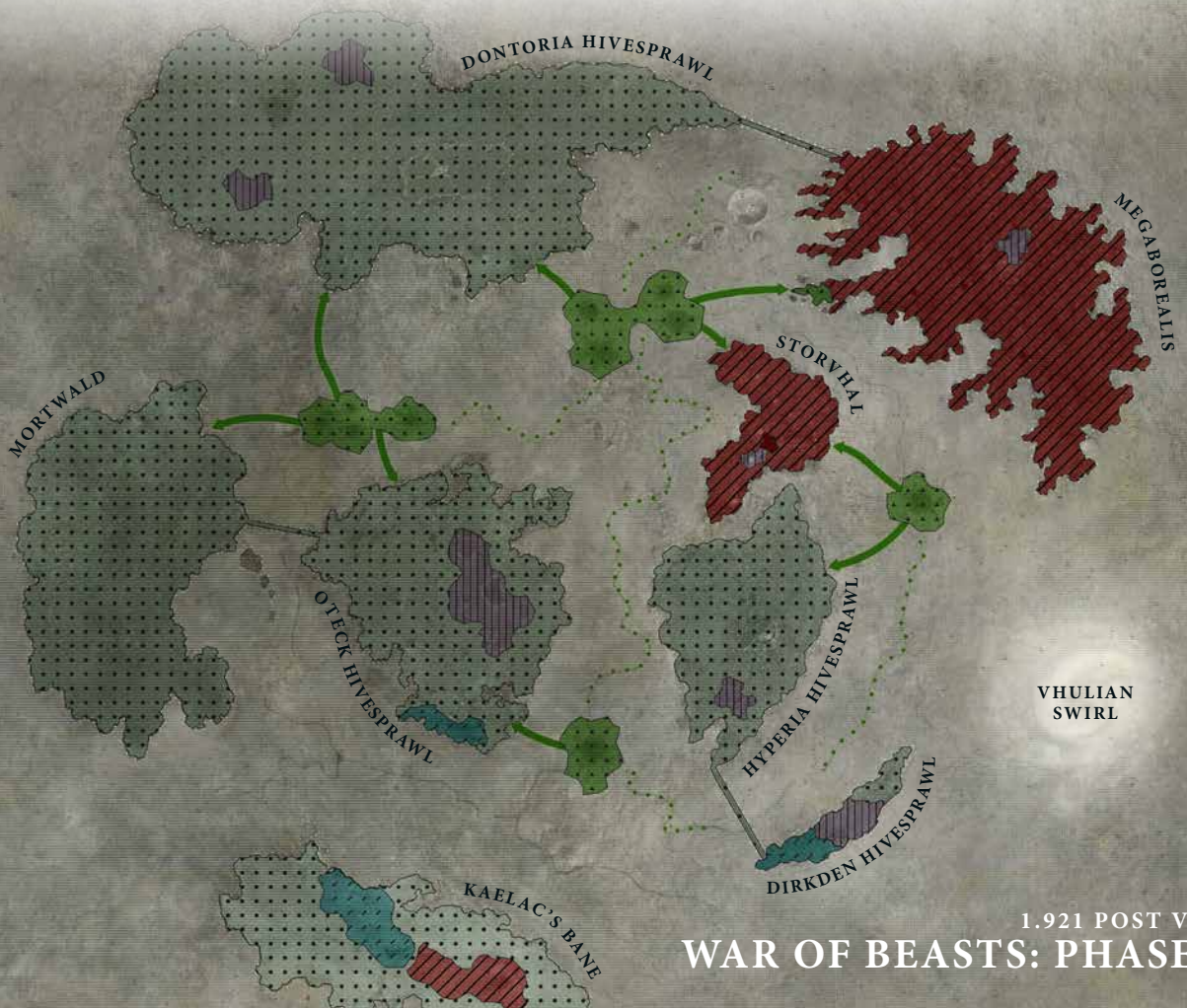
## THE SCAR IN THE NIGHT SKY

Though the worlds of the Vigilus System had not been entirely cut off from the rest of the Imperium, it became ever more obvious that a new and darker phase of existence had dawned. The Great Rift was visible only as a purple blur during the daylight, but at night the immensity of the Cicatrix Maledictum glowered across the sky, its curling extremities and swollen central mass seeming to form screaming mouths and deformed faces when glanced at out of the corner of the eye. It stole sleep and distorted rational thought, even affecting the chronoslates and data-webs of the Adeptus Mechanicus with its anarchic emanations.

On Vigilus, the Great Rift became particularly prominent at night, and hence curfews were put in place across all of Vigilus' conurbations. In every hivespawl it was forbidden to be outside after sunset, lest the Cicatrix Maledictum take that person's attention for so long they become infected by its strangeness and rendered susceptible to psychic phenomena. Even with these precautions, the shape of the Great Rift – a serpentine mass with the channel of the Gauntlet across it – began to appear in the daubings of madmen and the idle

scrawlings of those who thought themselves to be concentrating on something else. More disturbing still, it appeared in natural phenomena as well. After-images of the rift manifested behind the eyes of those who had looked upon it too long, but unlike those caused by strong natural light, they did not fade. Parents looked in horror as they found birthmarks on infants born directly under the night sky when the rift glowered bright, each red weal broken by a thin white line of unblemished skin. Mildew growths and water stains on the walls and ceilings of the Hollows water purification plants formed in shapes that were uncannily similar, if not identical, to the rift in the sky above.

The purge-squads of the Ecclesiarchy, operating out of Saint's Haven, tracked down such phenomena with cold efficiency and zealous verve. But soon even they found themselves growing desperate, for as the years went by, these phenomena became more pronounced. Where the planet's earthquakes rent the land, chasms would fall open in shapes that echoed that of the Great Rift, complete with thin land bridges that corresponded to the position of the Nachmund Gauntlet.



# DOOM FROM WITHIN

The first Space Marines to make planetfall on Vigilus were the Iron Hands and their successor Chapter, the Brazen Claws. Their intent was to drive back the Orks assaulting the hivesprawls, but they soon found themselves fighting for their lives against an unexpected foe.

The Iron Hands and their allies in Battlegroup Gauntlet translated into the Vigilus System without interception. They had calculated their approach through the beleaguered star systems of the Imperium Nihilus with great care; it is a testament to their metamathic skill and attention to detail that they arrived on target despite the massive disruption the Great Rift had caused to the star systems nearby.

The vast mechanical cathedrums of the Iron Hands fleet plunged out of the warp-nebulae like red-hot javelins through a veil of cobwebs, bursting into realspace in an eddy cloud of stardust. Within minutes of translation from the empyrean, they had

targeting solutions for each of the Ork vessels that still hung in orbit between them and the planet. Those were few and far between, for the vast majority of xenos had made haste planetside, leaving little behind to guard their rear. The Orks had, in all likelihood, assumed their conquest would be over quickly, but the Bastion-class force fields had frustrated them. Now, they were over-committed and their prey had been able to summon reinforcements. It was an elementary mistake, and the Chapter Master of the Iron Hands, Kardan Stronos, resolved to make the Orks pay dearly for it.

The battle barges and strike cruisers of the Space Marine fleet quickly made orbit above each of the major

hivesprawls, the Adeptus Astartes within filling the Drop Pod launch bays before hurtling through the atmosphere towards the battles below. Many more were to descend to the planet via Thunderhawk or bulk lander. They made for the most war-torn areas, usually around the fringes of each metropolitan zone, where the Orks were attacking in force. But in many of these areas they encountered no Ork presence whatsoever. In Megaborealis, they found themselves beset by a different breed of xenos altogether.

Since the uprising of the Pauper Princes, the planet's defenders had found themselves fighting two wars. The Aquilarian Council had despatched what resources it could spare from Hyperia, hoping



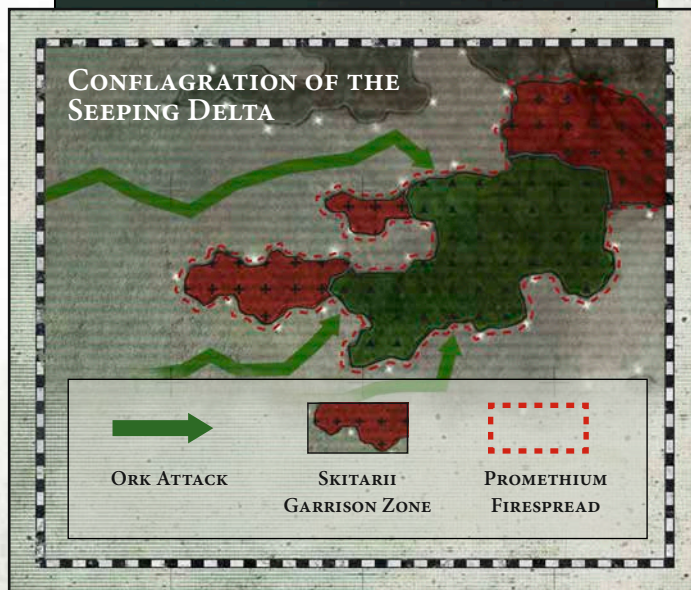
to swiftly restore order within Megaborealis – where a hive spire had been toppled by long-range fire and fallen across the force field border, making a bridge into the hive’s interior for opportunist Ork attacks. Meanwhile, Adeptus Arbites and Adepta Sororitas patrols that ventured into territory claimed by the Genestealer Cult were swiftly ambushed. Those in transports were stranded amongst a maze of tank traps and barbed wire choked with the corpses of those who had gone before. On three separate occasions Astra Militarum armoured columns, bullying their way through the rubble of the streets with dozer blades and spade-shovels, took alternative routes when the going got too tough. They toppled into sink-holes and hidden subterranean chasms as the ground gave way beneath their cumulative weight. Those that managed to survive the fall were hunted by the horrible, half-glimpsed mutants that haunted the lower levels.

Refugee convoys made for zones as yet untouched by the Ork assault, thinking themselves safe. Much of Vigilus’ air support was focusing on the movements of the greenskin tribes, and confining them where necessary with punitive strafing runs. The Ork Speed Freek formations were easily discerned, for they left long trails of dust in the wastelands – many were heading straight for the landing sites of the Space Marine drop forces, where the fighting was fiercest. By avoiding these tell-tale trails, Imperial strike forces were able to evacuate high-level personnel from those areas of the city where law and order still reigned. However, the Genestealer presence was much harder to identify, and attempting to perform relief and evacuation operations in regions infested by the xenos insurgents was akin to diving head first into a nest of vipers. In the space of a few days, the dual threat of Ork and Genestealer Cult had torn apart the Vigilus command structure.

## BATTLE FOR THE SEEPING DELTA

The mid-western fringe of the continent Megaborealis came under siege within hours of the force fields going down. Its westernmost point, known as the Seeping Delta due to the rivers of industrial runoff that had burned across its reaches, became a killing ground. There were few built-up areas here, for the ground itself had been poisoned. Though the hyper-acidic soil was of little consequence to the metal-legged Skitarii and tough-skinned Orks that fought over it, the quagmires and sudden subsidence meant that vehicles could swiftly get bogged down or vanish without trace. The death toll spiralled into the millions as both forces poured ever more infantry into the fight.

With the pragmatism of one who has long forgotten notions such as honour, Fabricator Vosch of Megaborealis ordered the Seeping Delta set alight. Just as the Orks mustered an overwhelming force against the city’s defenders, six hundred flamer-armed Kataphron Breachers trundled into place and set the entire Delta aflame. The Fabricator had ordered refined promethium to be funnelled into the area, so the entire landmass was consumed in liquid flame as if a match had been dropped into a petrochemical spill. The Orks were consumed by the fire, turning into flailing, living torches in their tens of thousands. The Skitarii burned with them – all save the Ruststalkers equipped with anti-incendiary ablative armour for the subsequent clean-up operation. These specialised, stilt-legged killers were tasked with running down any Orks that survived and preventing their leaders from escaping into the city. It was a victory, but it was won at an insanely high cost.



## CHRONOLOGICA POST CICATRIX

After the opening of the Great Rift, near every active Imperial war zone had to devise and reinforce its own chronological system. Even had the Imperium of Man not been split in half, the sheer interstellar distances it covered prohibited any accurate reflection of time and space. Despite the flexibility of the 'check number' system of old, where the first digit of each timestamp indicated its veracity, it became easy for dates and times to lose all meaning between star systems.

*It was Guilliman, Lord Commander of the Imperium, who made steps to resolve this after a long conference with his Historitors and the mysterious organisation of the Ordo Chronos. He decreed that a single logic could no longer be applied to time and space within the Imperium.*

*Through the High Lords of Terra he made his theory and resultant process into law. There could be no unified calendar with so much temporal distortion occurring. Even though the rift's warping effects might not have reached the furthest spinward planets at the galaxy's fringes, its psychic echoes – and the lack of the Astronomican that resulted – were still felt profoundly on those worlds.*

*Therefore, each sub-section of the Imperium would have to look to its own chronology, and use the coming of the Great Rift in that sector as its reference point. The Cicatrix Maledictum became the defining point of the new era.*

# DEFENCE OF MEGABOREALIS

**The continent of Megaborealis was unlike any other on Vigilus. Punctured, wounded, torn up and left as a landscape of chasms, pits and sink-holes, its tumbled cities provided a million places to hide.**

Though the entire continent of Megaborealis felt the sting of war at times, during the early stages of the conflict the fighting was thickest around Bore-hive Scelerus. Situated to the south of that ravaged sprawl, the hive provided over half of the energy that kept Megaborealis' countless manufacturums running, for it had been built atop a massive thermal stack that yielded endless geothermic power. In many ways it was the key to power in the sprawl.

When the Orks first attacked the planet Vigilus the lord of Hive Scelerus, the Tech-Priest Dominus Ipluvius XIV, spent over eighty nights with his internal cogitators running hot as he attempted to categorise the war in the wastelands. During this time he also gazed in awe at the giant cosmic aberration that was appearing in the night sky, doing his level best to rationalise what was happening to his planet. Content that his holdings were well-defended by the force field network on the ground, Ipluvius XIV coordinated a flak net of Onager Duncrawlers to destroy the Ork aircraft that sought to hurtle over the defences. Though the fringes of the false continent were being bombarded – and in places, demolished – by the artillery of the Ork strongholds in the wastes, he contented himself that Megaborealis' key installations were safe. He went back to his studies of the rift.

When the backlash of the warp cataclysm bathed Vigilus in its strange energies, the disruption to the Bastion-class force field networks was quickly discovered

by the roving Ork Kommandos probing the frontier for weak points. A terrible storm of dust and pollution was raised by the esoteric forces roiling across Megaborealis, and the Orks were quick to capitalise. The Speed Freeks in the wastes scrambled from their camps and hurtled towards Megaborealis without a second thought, their headlong charge obscured by the tempest of pollution and dust that rolled across its borders.



With speed and recklessness as their prime weapons, the Orks made exceptional progress through the hivesprawl, for the continent's defenders could not bring their big guns to bear in time. Bursting through the outskirts came smoke-belching swarms of Ork vehicles, so ramshackle and careless in their construction it sickened the faithful of the Machine God just to look upon them. Across the refineries of Kraxxon, the slag fields and the south reaches of Grisport, they proved nigh impossible to stop.

Upon realising the full extent of their predicament, Ipluvius XIV froze, caught in a mental feedback loop that robbed his Skitarii and Cult Mechanicus troops of any

directions other than squad-level leadership. Perhaps his cogitator mechanisms had been damaged by the Great Rift, perhaps he had been a victim of some midnight hypnosis at the hands of an agent of the Pauper Princes, perhaps he was simply paralyzed by fear. Whatever the reason, his forces found themselves without orders and unsupported by the Imperial Knights that stood ready to defend the hive, and the God-Machines of the Legion Ferroxus that languished dormant in Scelerus' war hangars.

The continent's defenders fought the sudden Ork assault as best they could, but in a hundred places and more they were overwhelmed. When the Genestealer Cultists of Megaborealis rose up, their day of ascension triggered prematurely by the Ork invasion, Hive Scelerus' defences swiftly came apart. All the perfectly calculated kill zones and flak solutions put in place against invasion from without were rendered obsolete by the attack from within.

The gene-sect of the Writhing Wyrms – a sub-faction of the Pauper Princes under Slygaxx the Prophet – aimed to immediately orchestrate the most devastating assault they could. They had captured a vortex missile at great cost in lives, and now took that terrible payload deep into the hivespawl's heart, using stolen access

codes and the torn-out eyeballs and severed fingers of slain authority figures to confound each hangar's biomantic checkpoints. The vortex missile was detonated beneath the slumbering Warlord Titan *Dominus Rex*. The megatonnage of its explosion was so potent it set off a string of detonations that destroyed not only the *Rex* but also triggered a chain reaction that spread to all the Titans alongside it. At a stroke, the most powerful assets in the entire continent were destroyed.

Only when Archmagos Nesium Caldrike seized the malfunctioning Ipluvius XIV, had him placed in cryostorage and took his place, did the Adeptus Mechanicus manage to put together something approaching a coordinated war effort. Caldrike proved a canny and decisive war leader. Uniting his efforts with Clan Company Kaargul of the Iron Hands, recently despatched by Kardan Stronos to reinforce Megaborealis, he stopped the insurgencies of the Genestealer Cultists from attaining critical momentum, forcing the war into a grinding stalemate where every city district and manufactorum was the site of bitter fighting.

**'Get yer engines revvin'!  
This is wot we been waitin'  
for, ladz. The Meks say  
all that zoggin' force field  
gubbins ain't working no  
more. Get inta that dust  
storm, boyz, and keep goin',  
fast as you can. You'll hit da  
humies on the other side.  
Now what you waitin' for,  
eh? Last one ta get his blade  
red is a runty little git!'**

*- Rukfang, Ork war leader*





# THE COUNTER-ATTACKS BEGIN

Many Imperial Commanders of Vigilus saw the Ork junk forts blighting the horizon as a call to arms. They mustered their mechanised regiments and artillery, sending them out into the wastes with the express intention of hammering the Orks into the sand before they could consolidate their positions.

After the Orks made planetfall, Astra Militarum armoured columns rolled out of city gates across the planet to the blare of fanfare klaxons and the cheers of the citizenry. Into the wastes they went, so numerous that the dust kicked up by their passage could be seen from low orbit. Valkyries and Vendetta Gunships hurtled overhead, their holds packed with veteran soldiers and elite Militarum Tempestus Scions eager to take the fight to the foe.

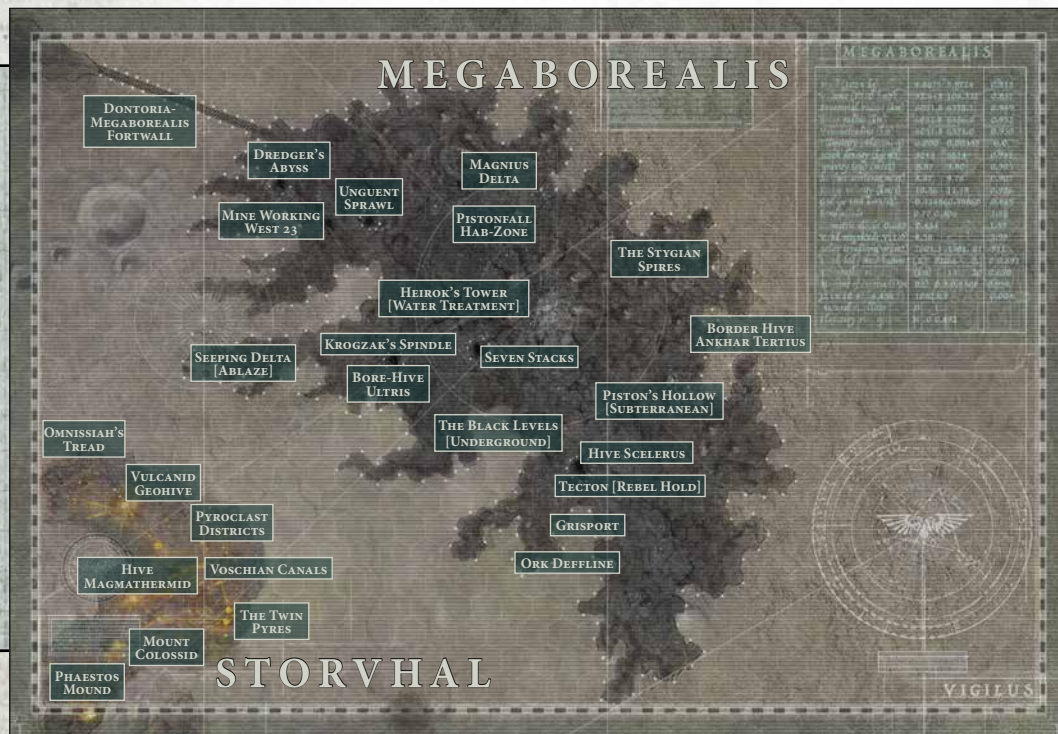
Some of the armoured convoys, sent on missions of reconnoitre or resupply, made it to their destination with minimal damage. The Padrillus Pan'te fuel column allowed Storvhäl to reinforce Fort Kaphinus with vital war materiel mere hours before it was assailed by Ork Kommandos. The Valkyrie squadron known as the Winged Grail carried several demolition squads through a network of Ork flakka-dakka wagons, braving intense fire to land near the Kan Factory of Runthive – and before dawn that site was reduced to smoking scrap. The Aquario Column reached Dontoria Hivesprawl virtually intact, its water tankers holed by Ork bullets but plugged up once more with the fingers of the

many conscripts sent to guard it, until the steel of each cylinder could hardly be seen for human bodies. A great many of their fellow convoys, however, did not return.

Already the Ork speedsters were scouring the wastes, driving pell-mell in search of things to kill. Here and there an ambull colony or sandrat nest was riddled with bullets for target practice, but the nascent Waaagh! was yet to get truly stuck in. Red eyes scanned the horizon for signs of life, barked commands directed outriders ever further, and pointed ears pricked up for the tell-tale crump and boom of distant battle.

At the sight of the blocky silhouettes of Chimeras and Leman Russ battle tanks on the horizon, a great whooping shout went up from each Speed mob, and the Orks closed in from all sides. The resultant desert warfare was typified by the shriek of heavy lasfire, the ping of bullets ricocheting from reinforced armour, and the thunder of detonating battle cannon shells.

Huge losses mounted on both sides. At first the convoys of the Imperial Guard reaped a heavy toll, blasting



dozens of Ork contraptions into scrap with each passing minute, for in long-range engagements their artillery and ordnance gave them a definite edge over the ramshackle vehicles of the Orks.



But the Imperial forces could not kill them all, and in announcing their presence in so spectacular a fashion, they had sealed their fate. Attracted by the signs of battle from miles around, the Ork Speed Freeks swarmed ever thicker. At first a few isolated warbikers and buggies got through the cordon of gunfire with cunning and reckless abandon, only to be cut down by volleys of lasfire and sheets of flame. But every time a squadron was occupied in killing one target, another got closer, and at breakneck pace. Before too long the Orks had reached close quarters, where their heedless fury could truly make its mark – and once that tipping point had been reached, there was no coming back.

## BATTLE OF MOURNING GORGE

On the southern outskirts of Megaborealis, the 121st Goliath Armoured Battle Group was destroyed by the actions of a single maniacal Ork. Fragbad Squigbiter intended to watch the Speedwaaagh! race through the miles-deep Mourning Gorge from a commanding vantage point. He and his mob scaled the cliff edge ahead of time, only to see an Astra Militarum blockade move to the end of the canyon and a Vigilite artillery company take position on the precipice.

As the Speedwaaagh! drove headlong into the trap, Squigbiter hurled so many stikkbombs at the nearest artillery piece – a Deathstrike Missile Launcher – that the cliff itself gave way, toppling the giant warhead into the valley below. The resultant explosion annihilated the blockade and much of the Speedwaaagh! warband before the rest bullied its way through the flames, completing the encirclement of nearby Storvhal and cutting off a vital supply route for the Imperium.

➡ SPEEDWAAAGH! RACE ROUTE

➡ ORK FLANK ATTACK

206<sup>TH</sup> VIGILANT ARTILLERY  
'GUNS OF FAITH'

121<sup>ST</sup> GOLIATH ARMoured  
BATTLE GROUP

DEATHSTRIKE  
BLAST

*Some Orks of the Speedwaaagh! were so involved with the breakneck races and lethal rivalries of the Kults of Speed that they sought to penetrate the defences of each city not to loot and pillage, but to find exciting new race routes that would present fresh challenges – often under heavy fire. If the new route was held by Imperial forces, so much the better, for to the mindset of a Speed Freek, a raging battle spices up a race no end.*



BATTLE OF MOURNING GORGE



# A SICKNESS IN DONTORIA

Dontoria Hivesprawl was the largest of all the planet Vigilus' inhabited regions. It was noted for one thing above all else – its overpopulation. As a result, when one of Mankind's darkest and most ancient enemies decided to make Dontoria its playground, the consequences were devastating.

The bustle and mayhem of Dontoria's streets was bewildering, even before the coming of the Cicatrix Maledictum. The black market barons and czars in control of that hivesprawl knew well enough that building tall was a waste of resources. Unlike many of their peers, who were too hidebound, unimaginative or afraid of bucking the rules to stop building upward, they had instead opted to spread as wide as possible – even if that meant narrowing the streets to the point that entire regions became one vast contiguous hab-block.

As a result of this land grab, the buildings were packed in close together, every available space

capitalised upon so much so that people had to rub shoulders and share humid air if they wished to proceed above ground. To enter the subterranean levels brought its own risks. Down there, power cuts were common, and those stranded in the darkness did not always come back out.

Such a rich, teeming source of life attracted predators and other baleful influences, just as shoals of vexenkrill attract the leviathans of the ocean deeps. The Drukhari of Kaelac's Bane had raided the hivesprawl more than once, taking a rich haul of slaves back to their base. The Cult of the Pauper Princes, seeing in the sprawl a great

many converts-to-be, spread from Megaborealis to infest its lower levels and began the slow, insidious life cycle of their Patriarch all over again. But the false continent's doom was to come from another source entirely.

In the year 2.230 post, Dontoria's principal spaceport – Litmus Dock – received reports of an unknown vessel inbound. It was a pattern of vessel that even the Tech-Adepts seconded from Megaborealis considered ancient, encrusted with the filth of millennia and some manner of strange caulk that made its shape seem as much organic as mechanical. A rain of filth drizzled from its hatchways

## THE GELLERPOX INFECTION

Sickness and disease in Dontoria was commonplace, a natural by-product of having such a high population density. By and large the hivesprawl had become inured to it; even when hundreds of thousands of lives were claimed by affluenza, dry lung or red smog fever. However, rumours of a strange supernatural plague were emanating from the districts around Litmus Dock, a disease that melded flesh with metal to form hideous blends of man, machine and daemonic anatomy.

With each day the reports became more prevalent until the entire area was on the verge of panic. Only the Rogue Trader Delarique du Languille, operating out of Litmus' highest spire on her quest to chart the Nachmund Gauntlet, recognised the disease for what it was – the Gellerpox. It was a sickness contracted on long warp journeys where the ship's Geller field had glitched long enough for baleful empyric energies to enter the vessel, and it mingled the paranormal maladies of the Plaguefather Nurgle with the flesh and metal hybridisation so common to the ranks of the Imperium – especially those of the Adeptus Mechanicus.

Du Languille theorised that the disease had been deliberately carried to the hivesprawl by the Death Guard, who then released it amongst the population before going to ground. It spread like wildfire. Already the citizenry were up in arms, burning the infected wherever they were uncovered – but in doing so, driving the rest into hiding. In the slums and shanty towns of the Pravdus and Grodholev Subsprawls, the creatures known as Twisted Lords rose to prominence, each the monarch of his own ever-growing band of mutants and nightmarish, hulking terrors. The streets thronged with giant vermin, twisted beyond biological limits into monstrosities, gutters were thick with sludge-grubs, and eyestinger swarms flitted through the skies in search of fresh prey. The blessings of Father Nurgle were well and truly upon Dontoria, and it would take a herculean effort to banish them.

Using her own ship and high status to travel from Litmus Dock to Saint's Haven, du Languille requested extensive quarantine measures of the Aquilarian Council – though privately, she feared her revelation was already too late.



and airlocks as it came down, its crew ignoring the increasingly insistent calls for its animus codes. When the dock's garrison opened fire upon the vessel with their Icarus autocannon emplacements, some manner of shield repelled the shots. Even lascannons proved unable to pierce the unaccountably strong barrier. The ship docked, by now surrounded by Arbitrators and garrison troops. Its hatches clunked open, and stumbling out came a crowd of distended, bloated mutants – the ambulatory corpses known as Gellerpox Infected. Their assault on the garrison was easily put down by disciplined lasfire, but that which followed was all but impervious – a detachment of Death Guard. Their bulbous and horned silhouettes identified them as the same Heretic Astartes that had assailed Ultramar not long before. A fierce close-range firefight broke out, but the Death Guard shrugged off all but the most dire injuries. They used the Infected as fleshy shields, quickly going to ground via the underway dry docks of Litmus' lower levels.

With coordination at an all-time low due to the Noctis Aeterna and the myriad other threats upon Vigilus, the hunt for the invaders was not reinforced. No armed force was keen on rooting out entrenched Heretic Astartes, but many of the elite Guardsmen and those Arbitrators with a keen sense of duty braced themselves and went into the depths. Most found nothing. Others found painful death. When Tempestor Naiod ordered the lower levels fire-bombed within a two-mile radius, the Imperial forces considered the matter closed. Naiod withdrew the 98th Lamdic Oxen from the operation, and the hunt slowly ground to a halt. Only when a strange plague started to manifest across the district did it become clear that the scions of Nurgle had been diligent indeed.



*'The magnitude of this infection cannot be underestimated. This is no natural plague, no malady that the human body can fight and overcome. This is the Gellerpox. It is fully capable of causing flesh to run like wax, to swell and burst, even to blend with augmetics, wargear and those machineries close at hand whilst the sufferer sleeps. The resultant hybrids are as tough as Ogryns and singularly focused on bringing their blight to as many uninfected as they can find. In the name of the Astra Cartographica, I implore you – quarantine Dontoria, effective immediately, or lose your planet to an enemy you cannot fight.'*

*- Delarique du Languille*

## THE PATH TO VICTORY

Hyperia Hivespawl, long defended by the Vigilant Guard and the Adepta Sororitas of Our Martyred Lady, had succeeded in holding the Orks at bay for over a year by the time the Brazen Claws arrived. Using the vast structures of each building as ready-made keeps and conceding the ground floors to the Ork menace when necessary, the allied forces used stairwells, alleyways and crypt entrances as choke points to hold back the green tide. Yet their orders from the Aquilarian Council were explicit, and oft repeated – they were to defend, to hold their position in case of any surprise assault or assassination attempt that might threaten their masters.

Because of this, they were robbed of the ability to counter-attack – to land a killing blow upon the reeling foe. As it was, even when beaten soundly, the greenskins regrouped and always came back for more within a matter of days. It was only when the striking red-and-blue heraldry of the Brazen Claws appeared in the streets that Orks were trapped, caught between the hammer of the Space Marine armoured assault on the outskirts and the anvil of the Imperial troops in the city proper. From that point on, the south of Hyperia Hivespawl remained under Imperial control.

# TO SUMMON THE ANGELS OF DEATH

**With the Noctis Aeterna stealing away the guiding light of the Astronomican, most Space Marine forces had arrived piecemeal, or not at all. Those that made planetfall hit home with punitive force.**

The elements of the Adeptus Astartes that reached Vigilus first had already been en route from the Stygius System when the Great Rift appeared. They had therefore made it to the system with but a single warp transition. This had been fraught and violent, but in comparison to the suffering of the other Space Marine Chapters that headed for Vigilus, it was a relatively short ordeal to endure, like swimming across a fast river full of sharp rocks. The true odyssey was undertaken by those Chapters that would come later.

The first Space Marines to make landfall were far from numerous – small but potent strike forces that were less than Chapter strength even when counted as one single military unit. They were engaged in battle within seconds of setting foot upon the planet, for it is in the nature of Space Marines to attack from above with speed and surety. In Hyperia, the Brazen Claws set about slaughtering the Ork menace in as efficient and merciless a fashion as possible, hoping to stem the tide of greenskins that encroached upon the richest of the false continents – and its seat of governance. The Iron Hands took the fight to Megaborealis, recognising the macro-structures of their Adeptus Mechanicus allies. The Space Wolves concentrated their attacks upon Oteck Hivespawl, for they had received word of a xenos infestation there that would test their hunting skills.

The strike forces hit hard, but so disparate were their attacks they failed to make any global impact

– indeed, the Space Wolves hardly communicated at all with Kardan Stronos of the Iron Hands, and did not coordinate their assault in any real way. After briefly communicating their intent to the Planetary Governor's council, a process that in itself proved frustrating and counter-intuitive, none of the Space Marine Chapters sent representatives to the war councils of Saint's Haven. They were made to fight, and to kill, and spending hours in debate with bureaucrats was not their way. Instead they focused their efforts on communicating with their Chapter brothers, no matter how distant they might be.



As they made their way from the Vigilus System's Mandeville point to orbit the planet itself, the ships of the Space Wolves, Iron Hands and Brazen Claws had passed several worlds that appeared to be under heavy Chaos attack. The Librarians of the respective strike forces sent psychic missives as best they could to their Chapter Masters, hoping more reinforcements would be sent in time.

No mental communion could be attempted without risking dire consequences now that the Great

Rift split the Imperium, rendering even the most stable astropathic duct volatile. Even a planet-to-planet communiqué could cause a sender's mind to be rent apart. Nonetheless, all knew that the situation was dire, and the notion of duty was so thoroughly ingrained in the Adeptus Astartes that not one Librarian shirked from the task of communicating with their Chapter to call for reinforcements. From the relative sanctity of the Terran side of the rift, word spread of Vigilus' plight and newfound importance, and fleets were mustered from a dozen Chapter home worlds to head out for the mouth of the Nachmund Gauntlet.

In the dead of night, whilst en route to Vanantis IX, Marneus Calgar of the Ultramarines had been visited by a vision of his old friend Tigurius. He was glad to see that ghostly apparition, at first, for he knew that this was not simply some insubstantial dream – the Chief Librarian was reaching out

to him in his astral form, and evidently he had a message of great import to convey. Tigurius pressed his spectral index fingers against Calgar's temples. In that moment the terrible knowledge gleaned by the Chief Librarian was imparted, a collage of mental images and powerful symbolism that seared itself into Calgar's mind.

That link might have driven a lesser man to madness, but despite the recent ordeal of his surgical enhancement to Primaris status, Calgar withstood the mental blitz, parsing and compartmentalising the flood of images almost as fast as they entered his mind. The high council of Macragge had need of him as their sword and shield in the Imperium Nihilus; the Primarch himself had ordered that Vigilus could not be allowed to fall. Then the image of Tigurius faded, tears of blood streaking his cheeks, and was gone. But the deed was done, and soon a new host of angels took flight.

Master Magus,

*The council has of late received three traditional Adeptus Astartes hails, two of which I obfuscated as best I could, sending contradictory information in return without straying into lies that might expose my position. The third somehow reached Lucienne herself without passing through the correct channels. I have faith that the self-serving witch will attempt to harness the Space Marines to her own private concerns, and hence alienate them entirely when they see the gambit for what it is. Nonetheless, I urge you and Grandfather to keep Oteck Hivesprawl in your thoughts; a force of the infamous Fenrisians is abroad there.*

Yours in eternity,  
Brother Theronvid



# CALGAR'S JOURNEY

Though the Ultramarines had a long and harrowing journey to reach Vigilus, Lord Calgar arrived to lead a full four companies into battle. He aimed to command the fight on every level, from the calculations of the strategic long game to the brutal onslaught of adrenalin-pounding melee.

After recovering from Tigurius' strange visitation, Marneus Calgar hastened to gather a relief force of every Adeptus Astartes asset he could requisition, convince or command to his side. Though all forces were already engaged in the active protection of the Imperium and the destruction of its foes, Calgar's sharp analytical mind allowed him to pare off resources from stable fronts wherever possible, repurpose war fleets that had become stranded or misplaced, and enlist several new Primaris Chapters from the Indomitus Crusade. He had ordered his captains and fellow Chapter Masters to brief their Navigators as to what was at stake, and made haste for the Vigilus System.

To make the necessary warp jumps in time to reach the planet before it fell would have been next to impossible were it not for the astropathic link Tigurius had forged with Lord Calgar. Surrounded by his finest Librarian disciples in the depths of the Fortress of Hera, the Chief Librarian mentally guided the Ultramarines fleet – and by extension their allies – through the madness of the Imperium Nihilus.

Doing so had a terrible cost. Several Epistolaries died clawing out their own eyes, slowly consumed from the inside by the empyric ritual, just as the psykers that fuel the Astronomican are consumed by the Emperor's psychic might. Others were executed point blank by their

attendant Chaplains when the tell-tale signs of daemonic corruption appeared upon their bodies. Tigurius himself withered and burned under the strain, but did not falter. He collapsed, at the end, his mortal form aged by decades – but only after Calgar's relief fleet had made translation into realspace and established an orbit around Vigilus.

The Ultramarines armada had not reached Vigilus without suffering heavy casualties. Several battle barges and strike cruisers, each with a storied history of its own, had fallen in battle en route or been swallowed by the roiling tides of a warp vortex. The admirals, commodores and captains of the remaining ships gritted their teeth,



squared their jaws and kept going. When the armada finally neared the Vigilus System, Calgar despatched Vanguard strike forces to the system's other besieged planets, while his main force pressed on through the remnants of the Ork flotilla to Vigilus itself.

Calgar issued communiqués to the Space Marines already on the planet below, though he did not inform the Planetary Governor of his approach – there was no time for formality, and he did not wish to become embroiled in protocol and politicking. He had but one thing on his mind: swiftly and efficiently restoring order to Vigilus.



The skies blazed as the Space Marines launched their planetstrike, tight formations of Drop Pods hurtling down to the critical locations Calgar had outlined. In every false continent the Adeptus Astartes united their efforts with the local forces, restoring hope with their sheer presence and beginning the long work of stitching the tattered patchwork of Vigilus' defences into a coherent whole.

The Lord Macragge himself made straight for the tallest and grandest building of Saint's Haven, for he knew the Planetary Governor would be there in state. Whilst his battle-brothers fortified the palace, at times having to pacify its defenders, Calgar made haste to the chambers of the Aquilarian Council.

When Calgar flung open the doors to the sumptuous, richly appointed debating hall of the Council of Cogs and demanded an explanation for the war effort thus far, he found evidence not of glory, but of rot and corruption. Ostensibly, the council was a collection of Vigilus' finest, the great and the good – but all Calgar saw was a room full of feckless incompetents. As soon as the initial shock of such an Imperial luminary arriving in the flesh wore off, the council devolved into back-biting, sniping and blame-slinging.

Pointing a finger of accusation at the members of the council he believed to be traitors to the war effort, Calgar bade his shield-brothers round up and remove those he found wanting. One of these malcontents, roughly seized, was exposed to have purplish, knobbled skin under his collar, well-concealed by greasepaint but stark when revealed. Another cultist was uncovered soon after, coming to the aid of his fellow with a knife drawn from the flesh of his forearm.

It was then that the council hall erupted into a cacophony. The resultant explosion of violence was swift, terminal and definite. Bolters boomed, Space Marine blades flashed red, cultists were executed, council members were bound in chains and exiled, and within the hour a new form of governance was declared.

At the head of this new order was Calgar himself, grim but purposeful. He had suspected that the Genestealer Cult uprising might have reached the highest echelons of society, and he had no intention of allowing such a thing to ever happen again. His fellow Adeptus Astartes commanders took their places with a collection of hand-picked advisors from what remained of the Aquilarian Council. The corruption of Saint's Haven had finally been excised, and a new body of governance – the Vigilus Senate – installed in its place.

## THE INSIGHT OF A MASTERMIND

Marneus Calgar was well known as a strategic genius, a true successor to the Primarch Roboute Guilliman. Guided by the advice of his mentor, Ortan Cassius, the Chapter Master defended the empire of Ultramar from countless foes. It was Calgar's strategic acumen that broke Hive Fleet Behemoth as it ventured hungrily across the Eastern Fringe, defended the Imperium against Heretic Astartes, and devastated the Necrons of Damnos. Much of this he achieved in close collaboration with his old friend, Varro Tigurius.

In recent years, Calgar had found his Chief Librarian to be distant, haunted even, prone to staring into nothingness for minutes at a time unless spoken to directly. Some said he had glimpsed the true vastness of the void beyond the known limits of the galaxy. Others maintained that in psychically duelling the synapse creatures of the Tyranid race, and even prying into the minds of their fallen, he had touched something that had left an indelible mark on his soul.

Perhaps it was that latter connection that had alerted Tigurius to the swarming dangers of the Genestealer Cult boiling up from beneath Vigilus' crust; perhaps it was his greater perspective of the shape of the galaxy, and its fate should he fail, that gave him the insight he imparted to his Chapter Master. The Chief Librarian did not say, and never would.

# THE TENDRILS RUN DEEP

**The Cult of the Pauper Princes, having spread their influence throughout Vigilus for generations, had inveigled themselves into the water processing industry of Oteck Hivespawl. So well hidden were they, so deeply embedded, that only the Space Wolves had senses sharp enough to hunt them down.**

The Space Wolves, under the Primaris Battle Leader Haldor Icepelt, were amongst the first wave of Adeptus Astartes to answer Vigilus' distress calls, making planetfall only a few months after the Iron Hands and their successors. Upon reaching the planet, the Fenrisians swiftly observed that the scarcity of water made it a critical resource, and that any who wished to conquer the planet would attempt to gain a monopoly upon it. They sent word to the Aquilarian Council that the Blackmanes were inbound, and then made haste to the great reservoirs of Oteck Hivespawl, known as the Hollows. There they set about rooting out the insidious foes beneath the streets, determined not to let the planet's water supply fall into enemy hands.

During the fierce early battles against the uprisings in the streets – waged alongside the 14th Vigilant 'Mourning Stars' artillery regiment – the Space Wolves believed they had found their true quarry lurking beneath the cityscape around Greigan Hollow. The Mourning Stars shelled the whole region, which had been deemed infested beyond recovery, before the Space Wolves charged in. In return, the cult triggered demolitions charges that toppled buildings on their foes and then sent out waves of hulking, mutated assailants. Close behind came skittering Genestealers to tear apart those who dared trespass on the cult's domain. The Space Wolves were trapped, and many of their number were slain, but they were not yet defeated.

Fighting their way through the alien hordes with blade, tooth and fist, Haldor Icepelt's hunters ventured

deep underneath Greigan Hollow even as the city above seethed in open war. Expert trackers, their senses were so preternaturally sharp they could detect the scent of the xenos leaders amongst the subterranean reek of mould, wet rock, stale urine, hyperchlorin and rotten animal carcasses. The oddly mingled scent implied a riot of out-of-control biologies – they were tracking the Claw of the Thirsting Wyrms, a splinter faction that boasted some of the most disturbing lifeforms on the planet.



Using Fenrisian fieldcraft, the Space Wolves tracked the hybrids through a dank labyrinth of pipes and passageways that would have confounded even other Space Marines. They had to negotiate many traps and false trails in the under-tunnels of Greigan Hollow, and fight their way past countless broods and Neophyte assailants. Their ferocity and firepower saw them through even when the bullets were flying thick. In the depths of the infestation's heartland, they were attacked by the gene-sect's icon bearer, Gilgas Vendella, and his swollen Abominant war leader, Bregg, but even they could not stop the Space Wolves' headlong assault.

The Genestealer Cult excelled at ambush, and they knew every inch of their home territory; they had spread far beneath the hivespawl using subterfuge and disguise, working out of sight and out of mind to ensure their lairs were as defensible as possible. As Haldor and his kinband progressed, they found themselves hard pressed once more, gradually worn down by traps, deadfalls and ambushes.

A long, gruelling hunt with a fierce battle at its conclusion is a way of life upon Fenris, and the Thirsting Wyrms soon found to their cost that the sons of Russ do not tire easily. As he fought through the main purification plant of Greigan Hollow, Haldor detoured to unite with a towering Redeptor Dreadnought – Asger the Frozen. The war machine's piston-driven strength let him smash a path through rockcrete walls and wrench foot-thick pipes aside whenever the strike force's path was barred.

Learning of a vast amount of rigged explosives planted in caches throughout the city above, Haldor resolved to turn this would-be booby trap to his advantage. He sent word over the company vox to his Blackmane brothers in the wider war zone, telling them to sniff out any caches of explosives they could find and prime them to detonate at a set time. His plan was to trigger a simultaneous detonation above the main macro-duct and collapse a vast chunk of the city into the substrata below. He calculated that this would stop the flow of polluted water through the underground pipes to the other hivespawls. Even if Oteck could not be saved, there was some hope for the other metropolises' survival.

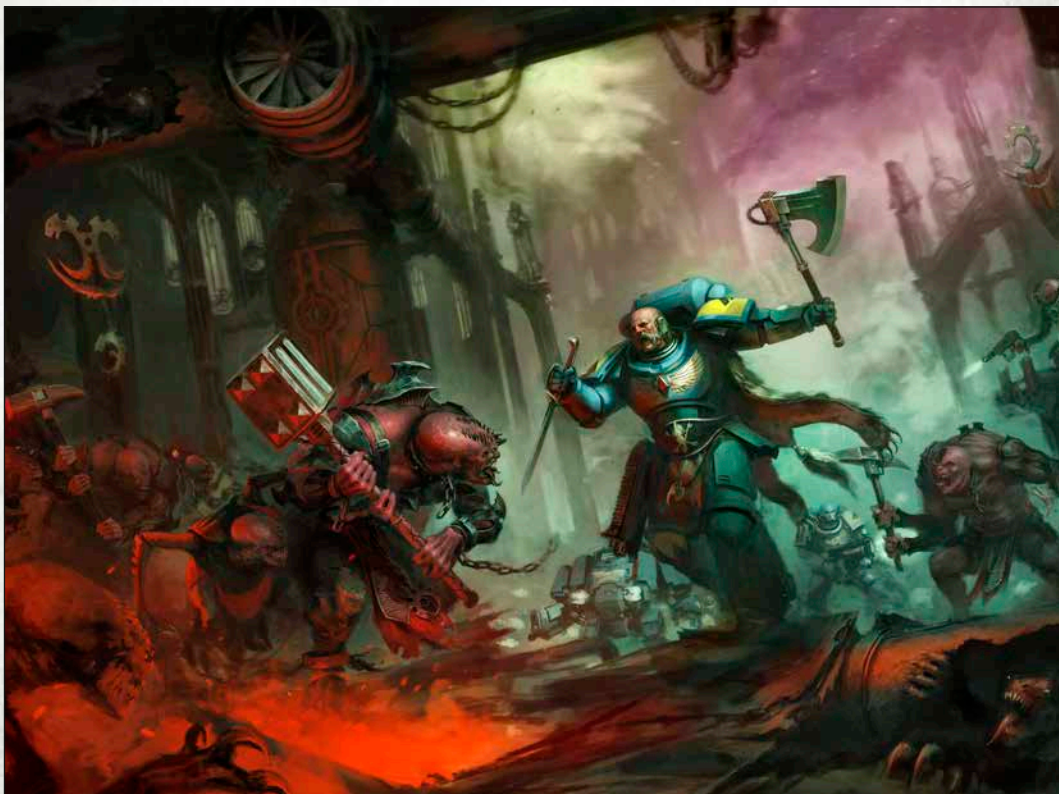
## A NEW POLLUTION

The cultists of the Thirsting Wyrms had spread throughout the Oteck reservoirs' infrastructure, and had been spiking the waters with chemicals and foul elixirs. Some of these were brewed from their own blood – solutions that rendered the populace more susceptible to the hypnosis and mental suggestion of their masters – whilst others were corrupted by the corpses of those who had died in the cult's service. Successive generations polluted the water still further until it had a faint purplish hue at times, or a wan yellow at others. Then, at the beginning of the uprising in 1.823 post, hundreds of pipe-worker teams and filtration crews had revealed themselves as mutant cultists. Those traitors had swiftly seized the artillery emplacements and flak batteries around each reservoir, killing those still loyal to the Emperor before taking over the water purification plants one by one. For all their cunning, however, they met their match in the Space Wolves of Ragnar Blackmane's Great Company.

The cult boiled from the shadows in ever greater numbers, and still the Space Wolves refused to give up. In the ensuing battles the cult troops were cut apart by power axe, piston-driven claw and

hypersteel knife, or else blasted to steaming cadavers by tight volleys of mass-reactive shells. Under the direction of Gilgas Vendella, the Thirsting Wyrms fell back in a series of deliberate retreats to lure the Space Wolves into a killing field where the long-hidden explosives could be brought to bear – but in doing so, they conceded the ground that Haldor sought to demolish. It was Haldor himself that set off the last in a circular chain of demolition caches that ringed the city in fire, shaking that district of the metropolis to its core. A half-mile wide section of Greigan Hollow collapsed into the under-levels below – and in doing so blocked off the macro-duct. The remnants of the district were reclaimed by Imperial troops soon afterwards.

That saga-worthy deed was not in vain, for it stopped much of the corruption in Vigilus' veins from flowing any further. A subsequent cleanse-and-purge operation launched by the Deathwatch deemed the water too polluted to recover. Two of the five Hollows – Greigan and Agamemnus – were pronounced Condemnatus, and the others were put under vigil extremis. The planet's resources were in dire peril.



# BLOOD VENDETTA

The Aeldari of Craftworld Saim-Hann had divined that Vigilus was of paramount importance in the battle against the Great Enemy. During the first phase of the War of Beasts, they sent some of their fiercest clan warriors to tip the scales of fate against the Chaos uprising that was gathering pace on the planet.

The Seer Council of Saim-Hann, at the insistence of Farseer Anvirr Keltoc, petitioned the clan chieftains to head through the webway towards Vigilus. The Aeldari were hard-pressed defending their own territory from Chaos incursion, but nonetheless sent a small force into the labyrinth dimension, for they knew the Farseer would not send them on such an errand unless it would further the craftworld's own agenda. At the head of the webway force was the Autarch Rhyloor of Clan Moirec. Alongside him was his close relative, the Spiritseer Qelanaris.

Farseer Keltoc had determined that the critical point of Vigilus' fate could be shifted by the assassination

of a single individual – Vannadan the Firebrand. Originally of Storvhall stock, this demagogue had roused the populace of that volcanic region, converting them to the worship of a fiery god that he alone knew as Tzeentch, the Changer of the Ways. With the seeds of rebellion sown in the fertile ground of Storvhall, he had moved on the poorer districts of Hyperia, seeking to convert the people there to his chaotic creed. Should he be allowed to succeed, Keltoc had foreseen that an industrial magma eruption would be triggered in Storvhall, causing a chain reaction that would stretch to the Martyr's Pyre district of Saint's Haven. This would kill many of the continent's leaders, and destroy the planet's war council.

The Aeldari force emerged from the webway gate in the west of Kaelac's Bane, the spirit divinations of Qelanaris enabling them to avoid the Drukhari that raided from the blizzards. Making haste upon sleek jetbikes or riding within Wave Serpent transports, the Aeldari sped through the clouds towards their target. They found Vannadan preaching his rhetoric exactly where Keltoc had said he would be. Eschewing coordination with Imperial forces, their killing strike was swift – after a brief and bloody battle, Vannadan's lacerated body was pitched into the street.

The flashing blurs of Saim-Hann's jetbikes had not gone unnoticed, and the Aeldari's sudden



appearance in Hyperia had been reported to the Aquilarian Council. The planet's rulers, upon hearing that a force of Aeldari was engaged in the slaughter of citizens, assumed them to be the same breed as the Drukhari that had been reported raiding Oteck and Dirksen Hivespawls. The council sent orders for a retributive strike, and within minutes an airborne team of Militarum Tempestus descended from the skies. Dropping into the fray on grav-chutes, the 47th Antrell Lions surrounded the Aeldari even as the xenos killed the last of Vannadan's tainted rebels. Qelanaris attempted a parley, explaining that they had excised a canker at the heart of the realm.

His words were met with a barrage of firepower. Autarch Rhyloor was gunned down, and most of the Windriders of his kinband were slain alongside him in that first bloody act. Qelanaris and the survivors withdrew, vowing a bloody revenge.

Qelanaris made haste for the webway gate, taking the spirit stones of his slain comrades with him. Upon returning to Saim-Hann he used all his arts as a Spiritseer to install the souls of his kindred in wraithbone shells. He sought not the sanction of the Seer Council, and did not heed the warnings of the other clans. He and his kindred would have their vengeance, even if it meant raising the dead to do so.

Years later, when Qelanaris returned to Vigilus in the third phase of the war, he sought revenge not only against the thuggish infantry that had gunned his people down, but the commanders that had orchestrated the strike. He did not know that by this point the Aquilarian Council had been replaced. Moving fast, the strike force of the living and the dead brought their vendetta against the seat of governance itself – the Aquilarian Palace. There he was to meet his match against the Ultramarines of Marneus Calgar.

## A TRAGIC MISTAKE

Lieutenant Eothrus of the Ultramarines 2nd Company had been entrusted with the defence of the Aquilarian Palace. When he and his Extremis Guard moved to intercept the Aeldari that had slaughtered the Antrell Lions at the eastern gates, he became embroiled in a battle of distractions, feints and false flights. Whilst the bulk of his force took on the jetbikers that moved like lightning through the plazas and gatehouses of the palace, he moved to cut off any thrust aimed for the palace's most vital chambers. It was an insightful move, and sure enough, Eothrus found Qelanaris making for the Senate Hall.

Eothrus approached with the intention of forming a truce, perhaps even an alliance. He had heard from Haldor Icepelt, who had fought alongside the red-armoured Aeldari in the Stygius war zone, that the warrior codes of Saim-Hann were honourable. That day, however, Qelanaris' code was one of revenge. A bitter struggle broke out, Aeldari slain by plasma and bolt even as the Primaris Marines were torn apart by wraithcannon fire. The Saim-Hann warband pushed through the Ultramarines cordon, pinning them with a storm of shuriken and blasting at the doors of the Senate Hall. They were within striking distance of their goal when the doors opened of their own accord – and a quartet of Chapter Masters stormed out, their honour guard close behind. Qelanaris was forced to flee for his life, robbed of his final revenge.

## THE VIGILUS SENATE

One of Calgar's first acts as the new ruler of Vigilus was to reorder its command structure. This decision was not taken lightly, but with undeniable evidence of the Genestealer Cult that infested the planet having reached its highest echelons, the act was clearly necessary. The doors of the Senate Hall were locked, and those dignitaries Calgar had allowed to remain were ordered to tell all they knew of the war effort upon Vigilus thus far. With a united front established, the first step on the road to eventual victory was knowledge and communication. The members of the Vigilus Senate found it easy to speak openly in the presence of the Lord Macragge, and progress was swiftly made.

The reorganisation of the Imperial war machine was by no means confined to its commanders. In order to keep the new Senate focused on the wider war, Calgar gathered an elite band of Ultramarines chosen from across the battle companies at his disposal, their duty to bar the path of any who would try for a decapitating strike upon Imperial High Command. This force Calgar called the Extremis Guard, led by Lieutenant Eothrus – a rising hero who had proven himself in the long and baleful wars against Mortarion's Death Guard.

Eothrus was one of the finest minds in the 2nd Company, and had a statesman's wisdom that echoed that of the Primarch himself. The appointment proved wise; within days of the Extremis Guard's formation, they engaged, stalled and ultimately saw off an Aeldari attack that could have crippled the entire Vigilus command structure.

## LEGACY OF PLAGUE

Calgar demanded the matter of Dontoria be addressed as a higher priority than the Ork assaults and Genestealer Cult uprisings. The Ultramarines had been critical in the war against Mortarion and his Death Guard, and he knew well that to allow the faithful of Nurgle a foothold was to see unnatural disease spread rapidly soon after. Ultimately, the barrier between reality and the warp would thin to the point that the spawn of Chaos could manifest in realspace. That nightmare could not be allowed to be made real.

# DONTORIA FIREWALL

**When it became known that two entire subsprawls and a city-sized spaceport had been lost to the Gellerpox Infected, the Space Marines quickly established a quarantine zone and a military cordon.**

The Aquilarian Council had been slow to respond to du Languille's missive; to them Dontoria was of secondary importance. The Vigilus Senate instead summoned the Rogue Trader to hear what she had to say. Within scant minutes of her testimony, the lords of the senate arrived at a consensus. Chapter Master Raquilon Zandtus would lead his Primaris Chapter, the Necropolis Hawks, against the Gellerpox Infected, for his companies were expert in the arts of city-fighting. Meanwhile, the Crimson Fists of Brother-Captain

Jhermandes would work with the calculating minds of the Iron Hands to effect the most rigorous cordon imaginable to contain the spread of the plague.

What the Necropolis Hawks found in the decommissioned Litmus Dock was horrific. Peg-legged mutants with skulls distended and melded with steel lurched from alleyways and choke points, vermin leapt from windows to stab at armour joints with proboscis and forelimb, and lumbering flesh-hulks belched flame from their mouths. At close confines, the powerful claws and improvised weapons of these monsters made them lethal opponents, and many a Necropolis Hawk was lain low in ambush. But the warriors of that Chapter were used to employing their guns to full effect even when their targets were but a hand's breadth away. Their Intercessors blasted their foes back in overlapping fields of bolt fire, whilst Hellblasters incinerated the larger mutants. With fury, discipline and self-sacrifice, they corralled the milling Gellerpox mutants, hunting down their leaders as the Crimson Fists drew the cordon tight.

By mustering the Land Raider Redeemers of the Crimson Fists with the Hellhounds of the Vigilant Guard, and setting fire to selected sections of the hivesprawl's promethium pipelines, a literal firewall was established around the infected zone. Calgar and his Senate could see no other choice. Though it meant consigning hundreds of thousands of healthy civilians to a hideous death, the quarantine was established and the area brought largely under control. Yet that too was not to last. For the scions of Nurgle are tenacious foes...



## RACE FOR THE MANDEVILLE POINT

Upon her return to Dontoria Hivesprawl, Delarique du Languille met with her contacts in the Vigilant Guard. Her psyker adjutant, the talented Morghalian, had experienced harrowing nightmares of a doom spilling out from Dontoria towards Terra itself. It came in the form of a flesh-plague that turned men into cyborg Daemons.

Du Languille knew better than to dismiss this notion as mere imagination or paranoia, for she took her psyker's advice very seriously. Convincing her Tech-Priest Engineer contacts of the urgency of her request, the Rogue Trader communicated with the scribes of Neo-vellum via a tight-beam noospheric data tether. She requested the shipping manifests for Litmus Dock with high clearance, and in response received a message tube back. Her worst fears were confirmed. The quarantine had been breached.

The export of goods from the hivesprawl had ceased as soon as the Space Marines had put their quarantine into practice. Few, if any, civilian refugees had managed to flee the area by circumventing the Adeptus Arbites' control of the planet's egress routes. Unfortunately, the blanket prohibition on space travel from the docks had been too late to stop the bulk freighter *Illustrious Cargo* from leaving. It had left the planet three days hence, after the Gellerpox had been detected but before the quarantine had been put in place. If it carried Infected, it was a biological time bomb. Already, it was bound for the planet's Mandeville Point, that zone where a craft could slide into the warp without the gravity of either the planet or its star influencing its navigation calculations.

Should the *Cargo* safely translate into the empyrean, it would be out of their reach forever. With interstellar communication all but impossible, the craft would likely make haste for the Dharrovar System unhindered. From there, it could make the journey all the way across the Nachmund Gauntlet and into the Imperium Sanctus. If there were infected mutants inside, and they carried their hideous warp affliction towards Terra, it could consign an entire swathe of space to damnation.



This was a fate that du Languille could not allow. When she consulted with the war council of Saint's Haven, it became clear that their warships, built for raw might instead of speed, could not catch the freighter before it made warp translation. The only ship fast enough to catch the *Cargo* was in her personal fleet, a sleek corvette she had named simply the *Messenger*. Unfortunately, the craft was for pleasure only, and had next to nothing in the way of guns – certainly nothing that could trouble a bulk freighter.

The Rogue Trader did not shirk. Within the hour, the *Messenger* was streaking through space towards the coordinates supplied by the Neo-vellum augurators.

Within sixty hours the green-grey dot of the *Illustrious Cargo* grew larger on the ship's bridge triptych until its lumpen, ungainly form filled the screens. With grim efficiency, du Languille mustered her team, taking a handful of her finest agents with her in the craft's single transition pod, and boarded the suspect vessel.

What the team found in that hellish interior will remain the burden of du Languille and the Lord Macragge alone. Only she made it back to the surface of Vigilus, and she did not speak a word about it after her quarantine and subsequent debrief with Calgar. What is known is that the *Illustrious Cargo* was destroyed just before it could translate into the warp, the energy signature of the explosion indicating that its engine decks had been sabotaged from the inside.

Only at the conclusion of Calgar's debrief did Dontoria reveal its last, awful secret. The scribes of Neo-vellum had despatched a second message tube, handed over in cordial ceremony to du Languille and the Lord Macragge. It spoke of three other bulk freighters that had left the same Dontorian dock, a day earlier than the *Illustrious Cargo*, but with the same shipping idents and the same destination.

Du Languille had likely saved an entire system from becoming a plague site by destroying the *Cargo*. Yet for all her efforts, for all the sacrifice of those that had fought their way to the heart of the infected craft, the Gellerpox Infection was crossing the stars towards Terra.

# HOPE YET

Though the Orks were running wild across much of the planet, there was one false continent where order and efficiency had managed to overcome the anarchy of the xenos threat. Mortwald would not fall – and when reinforcements arrived, the region was able to turn its defence footing to one of aggression.

Since the fall of the Oteck Hollows, water was becoming ever scarcer upon Vigilus, and the convoys for its transference less and less common. With Grodholev Subsprawl falling to the Gellerpox, Dontoria was in danger of losing its own main source of water – Lake Dontor, which was now under daily vigil in case of disease. The Vigilus Senate had still not located the Death Guard forces that had brought the Gellerpox to the planet, and suspected that if the traitors found a way through the firewall they would move against the lake with yet more contaminants.

Water was not the only resource that was hard to come by. The false continent of Mortwald was the producer of most of the planet's

food and medicine, but with the Ork menace threatening its outskirts, and the Cult of the Pauper Princes rising within its southern reaches, production was drying up, and the common people were paying the price.

Some of the original members of the Aquilarian Council implied that Mortwald's rulers, the planetary governor's militant brother Deinos Agamemnus amongst them, would be content to see to their own defence at the exclusion of all else. The question hung in the air – even should Vigilus' defenders throw back the xenos, would they starve to death in the process?

Mortwald did not lack for experienced soldiery, for over the

centuries since Deinos had taken rulership of that prefecture it had been reinforced by regiments from the Indigan Praefects, Loquhar Prime Sandsmen, Ventrillian Nobles, Vostroyan Firstborn, and lately even dispossessed Cadian Shock Troops. They would gladly fight actions against the Orks, whether the force fields were active or not. Many of them had been engaged at the Cadian Gate. A land war where they defended heavily entrenched positions against a foe that would fight in a brutal but traditional fashion seemed far more straightforward than the nightmare of fighting the forces of Chaos.

When the planet's Bastion force fields went down en masse, the Orks of Tanka Spill made a





headlong assault against the Deinos Trench Network to the north of Mortwald. The Astra Militarum held fast, gunning down the Orks with heavy bolters, autocannons and lasguns as the greenskins raced across the killing grounds. Where the Orks came on in armoured hosts too numerous to stop, the Astra Militarum would fall back, conceding a line or two, forcing the xenos vehicles to flounder in the deep trenches. Slowed to a crawl, they were easy prey for the lascannon beams and krak missiles of the weapon teams in the bunkers behind. Once the push was blunted, Ogryn work teams would be sent in to clear the wreckage and shore up the defences, using anything from slabs of metal to corpses.

For weeks, the Orks made one push after another, even attacking through the forests of barbed wire that typified the Tzeller Line to the south. Still the Astra Militarum held fast, not only against the greenskins, but also the cult uprisings of the Ejecta Districts,

Biosanctic Fleshplants and worker habs. Lord Deinos Agamemnus preached a mantra, compulsorily reinforced via the command echelons and repeated among the troops thousands of times a day – Mortwald would not fall.

When the bulk landers and gunships of the Imperial reinforcements made it through the Ork blockades to New Vitae Docks, the stubborn resolve of the Mortwald defenders turned to outright zeal. The sight of hundreds of Imperial Fists striding to the front line in bright heraldic yellow, unafraid of any enemy weapon, put fire into the souls of all that witnessed them. Within days Captain Fane, the laconic and battle-scarred leader of the Imperial Fists 5th Company, had assessed the plans of the Deinos Trench Network and the Tzeller Line. He put into place an overlapping defence pattern of impressive efficiency, moving his warriors to any site where the Orks attacked with heavy assets. When

it came to enemy infantry and even vehicle squadrons, the captain systematically destroyed anything that dared his gunsights. Only the titanic scrap-walkers that strode over the trenches towards Electros Hive had might enough to break the eastern cordon; so large and numerous were the Stompas that the Imperial forces had no choice but to concede the entire district and retreat to higher ground to muster a counter-attack.

When the vast, fat-bellied hangar ships that transported Imperial Knights lowered through the clouds at New Vitae Docks, Captain Fane was amongst the delegation that greeted the occupants. The ground shook as the massive war engines strode out of their hangars to defend Mortwald. Amongst the adamantium lances bearing the heraldry of the Knightly households came Freeblades from Dharrovar, crusading from the rift corridor to ensure its gatehouse did not fall. On that day, Captain Fane muttered praise to the Emperor.

# A CHARGE INTO LEGEND

Many of the Imperial Knights that had landed at Mortwald were keen to sally forth against the monstrous Ork walkers emerging from the Scrap Cities. Some put this down to youthful bravado – though as the weeks of battle slid by, Captain Fane of the Imperial Fists began to think there was something else at play.

The Knights of House Terryn made haste to attack the Stompas that had invaded Mortwald, engaging them at range and methodically taking them out, one by one. In contrast, the Imperial Knights that had arrived from Dharrovar petitioned to drive their adamantium lances deep into enemy territory. They maintained that fighting the footsoldiers of the xenos races amongst the trenches would win them little glory, for to the nobles who piloted the giant heraldic walkers, mere infantry posed little threat. But there was something in the Knights' insistence that they form the vanguard that raised eyebrows amongst their allies in the Imperial Fists, Fane in particular.

Even for headstrong young nobles, these Freeblades seemed too eager for a frontal assault. There was a shadow behind the eyes of these young warriors – and especially their leader, the red-bearded young noble Joren Vanaklimptas – that Fane recognised. Speaking to his trusted aides in low tones, Fane revealed that he saw something of himself in that look. Since his company of Imperial Fists had concluded their war against the Mindclaw Coven of Tzeentch, he had been haunted by waking dreams of such potency he sometimes wished for death just to put an end to them. Could it be that these Freeblades had faced a similar ordeal, but did not have the

mental conditioning of the Adeptus Astartes to cope with it? Could their insistence upon recklessness be connected to the fact they had obscured their traditional heraldic insignia and taken new identities?

To Deinos Agamemnus it was irrelevant. He saw the Knights as powerful tools that would help him win his private war. Naturally, he was glad of their coming, but to him they were but cavalier pieces in a game of Regicide. He issued an edict forbidding them from heading out past the trench lines and the Bastion shield network and into the wastes beyond. As a powerful source of artillery that could out-range nearly all the war assets the



Orks could send against them, they were too valuable to risk. Besides which, they had an obligation to the thrones of their elders and betters. For a time, the Freeblade Knights grudgingly agreed to abide by the laws. The princeps of the Reaver Titan *Heresium's Bane*, a long-time ally of Deinos and his traditionalist cronies, reminded the Knights of the duty they had to the people of Mortwald. He pointed out that despite the fact that his Warhound maniple, the Hyperian Hounds, wished for nothing more than to be on the hunt, they too held fast.

Chastened, the Knights deployed alongside Captain Fane in a series of staggered defences that saw several Ork attacks blunted and scattered to the winds. For long days, however, the Freeblades and their towering Titan allies stood motionless and silent, awaiting a foe that was slow to come.

Every few days the Orks attacked Mortwald, and each time their forces were ground to a halt before

being driven back in disarray. Yet the heavy assets being sent against Captain Fane and his allies were growing larger and more formidable with every passing week. The Ork war machines, far more numerous than the Imperial equivalents, were at first the size of Dreadnoughts – but then swelled into fat-bellied monstrosities the size of Knights, then Warhounds.

When lumbering machines that rivalled *Heresium's Bane* in size appeared on the horizon, Fane made his final decision. The Ork factories had to be shut down. He issued a series of curt orders to Vanaklimptas and his fellow Knights over a closed channel, citing his authority as that of the First Founding and a true son of Rogal Dorn. Within the hour they were striding across the Deinos Trench Line and out into the wastelands, accompanied by the Hyperian Hounds.

It was time to let slip the dogs of war.

## BATTLE OF TANKA SPILL

The Freeblade Knights that assaulted the Ork Scrap City to the east of Mortwald, Tanka Spill, approached from the Deinos Trench Network under cover of the dust storm kicked up by an Ork attack wave.

Waiting until the greenskins were upwind, they smashed their way eastward through the horde at full charge. Expertly plying their ion shields to deflect fire, the Knights were through the foe's lines and out the other side before the xenos realised what had hit them. The Ork horde was confounded, with half their number wishing to go back, and the others not knowing why the sudden delay had occurred. Milling in disarray, they were easy prey for the Warhound maniple and the Reaver *Heresium's Bane*. As twilight turned to darkness, on charged the Freeblade Knights, their attack upon the now-poorly defended Tanka Spill a devastating lance to the guts of a dormant beast of war. Explosions lit the night as the Freeblades cut apart Ork factories with their melta weapons and blasted half-built Stompas to scrap with their rapid fire battle cannons. Fane, sending a vox over a closed channel, ordered the triumphant Knights to head back to Mortwald to resupply, for he could see the factory city was aflame even from the sprawl's trenches. But the Freeblades pressed on, taking their fight to the next Scrap City. There they charged headlong into the massed battleguns and gunned-up walkers that had mustered for the next assault, killing thousands of Orks before they were surrounded.

***'This High Castellan talks of valour, of honour, of the right thing to do for Vigilus and beyond. Does he live by those words? Does he take up lance and shield, ready to defend kith and kin?***

***He does not! He sips amasec in his high tower, sending those he sees as lesser men to war in his stead. Little does he realise that those brave souls, by going to battle against forces they barely comprehend, are a dozen times more worthy than he could ever be. Will we let such a soul decide our fate, noble brothers? Will we sit by whilst the greenskin grows ever more powerful in his own castle? We will not. No indeed! We will wash away the stain of our fathers' shame in the hot blood of the enemy! We will burn the memories of cursed Dharrovar in the fires of chivalrous battle! To war, I say! To war!'***

*- Baron Joren Vanaklimptas*



# AQUA METEORIS

The sudden xenos conquests of Megaborealis had seen much of the city erupt in fire. Resources were growing ever more precious – and none more so than the water harnessed from orbit by the Adeptus Mechanicus. The leaders of the Pauper Princes knew of this weak point, and exploited it mercilessly.

The ongoing war for Megaborealis had seen the ordered mind of Archmagos Nesium Caldrike joined with the merciless pragmatism of Fabricator Vosch and the clinical, cold-hearted logic of the Iron Hands. It had proven a potent combination. Megaborealis was largely coming back under Imperial control, district by district. The Space Marines would break the back of each major incursion, and when the culprits went to ground, the Skitarii and their Tech-Priest masters would exterminate that which was left over.

With the auspicators and omnispexes of the Imperial defenders keyed to xenos bio-signatures, each grid-pattern hunt was methodical and effective. The Cult of the Pauper Princes, having secured brief dominance over a third of the Megaborealis sprawl, had been forced to fall back in a score of different war zones. A month after the arrival of the Iron Hands, the cultists were fighting a guerrilla war once more against the resurgent Skitarii macroclades.

There was one exception, however, and it was a critical one. In the district surrounding the Stygian Spires and the Greater Omnisian Hoist, the icons of the Genestealer Cult were still raised high. A foremost Primus of the cult, Dethru Noan, had designated that region one of paramount importance. Not only was the vast, megalithic hive of the Spires the nexus of all Megaborealis' command structures, it was also the site where water was processed from the meteors caught in orbit and conveyed to the planet's surface via Vosch's towering, counterweighted winch mechanism, the Omnisian Hoist.

Primus Noan was a rationalist more than a fanatic. He knew that without this source of water, and with convoys transporting emergency rations cut off by the Orks all over the planet, the Adeptus Mechanicus could be starved of the vital fluid they needed. He intended to besiege the greater hivespawl from its own central keep.



To put his plans into motion, Noan entered the vast brood cathedrum in the lower levels of Megaborealis, passing through corpse-strung colonnades and banners propped tall against piles of captured wargear. Waiting for him in the crypt, half-submerged in the semi-liquefied remains of his deceased followers, was Grandsire Wurm. Strange bony growths had risen to form a weird throne of chitin around the hulking Purestrain, and familiars bubbled up from the flesh slurry to stare at Noan with alien intensity. The Grandsire's eyes glittered malevolently as it flexed its claws, for the creature did not relish being disturbed in its bio-psychic communions with the wider cult.

Fortunately for him, Noan had enlisted the aid of the Magus known as Slynte. The psyker made a mind-link with the Grandsire and put across the battle plan on Noan's behalf. A long, tense minute stretched by before the Grandsire shifted from its pool, standing up to its full terrifying height and barging past the petitioners. The Magus announced grandly that the assault upon the Stygian Spires would be led by the Patriarch itself, then hurried from the tomb after his master.

Within a single day of scuttling activity, the undersump of the Stygian Spires was filled with Purestrain Genestealers. They came from all across the continent and beyond, answering the psychic call of their Patriarch without hesitation. There were no hunting howls echoing through the night, no call-and-response or chanting of prayers. The oncoming demise of Megaborealis was silent, but moved with a singular purpose.

The takeover of the Stygian Spires was bloody in the extreme. First came the event that would be known in history books as the Vertical Massacre. Like many Imperial hives, the Spires had under-levels so deep, dank and labyrinthine that none truly knew their full extent. With the war against the Orks taking up so many resources in the city above, the Skitarii patrols that were operating down in the substrata had been drained to almost nothing. It was not only the Purestrains that converged upon the Stygian Spires, summoned by the Patriarch's call, but every cult member in the continent. Long-sealed hatches were broken open, crawlspaces

unblocked, and new tunnels dug with rockgrinder and macro-drill. As industrious and focused as termites, the cultists burrowed their way into the lower strata of the Stygian Spires, their kill teams taking down all enemy resistance at a slow but methodical pace. When the warning klaxons sounded, a full fifth of the Spires' tunnels were already under cult control.

The corridors of the Stygian Spires resounded with the metallic crump of thousands of Skitarii feet as the garrison scrambled to intercept the invaders below. A sprawling multi-level battle erupted, with the Skitarii quickly gaining the upper hand. They fought with the determination of zealous men defending their temple, and their Tech-Priest Dominus masters had put into place contingencies and battle plans for every conceivable form of invasion. With the alert protocols triggering these long-honed battle plans, the response was quick, and the corridors were soon littered with the corpses of xenos hybrids. The

one flaw in the Tech-Priests' plans was that they did not factor in the precious water pipelines.

As the vanguard organisms of the Tyranid race, a quirk of Genestealer anatomy allows them to fold their gangling bodies into tight crawlspaces, holes and tubes, the better to exploit vectors of passage from one infection site to another. After Grandsire Wurm's sickle-like claws ripped gaping holes in the water pipes that carried the aqua meteoris, the Purestrains of the cult squeezed inside each pipe, one after another. Tireless, they wriggled and crawled against the high pressure flow for a full day – a feat no man, or even Ork, could have accomplished – until they reached the water farms at the top levels of the spires. Lightly defended, with the bulk of the Skitarii engaged far below, the farms soon looked like abattoirs, strewn with torn flesh and bionic limbs. With their enemies attacking from above and below, the Skitarii were trapped – and after three days of fighting, overcome.

## A STRANGE STAMPEDE

Vigilus' premium water supply industry was slowed to a trickle when the Beastmasters of the Drukhari Wych Cults learned how to control the snow-white ice mantises that hunted through the blizzards of Kaelac's Bane. By modulating their agoniser whips and splinter ammunition to drive the giant insects into a skittering frenzy, they herded hundreds of the creatures across the glaciers and swathes of permafrost – and straight into the canyons of the Kaelac macroquarries. The Drukhari took a great deal of sadistic sustenance from watching the stallion-sized ice mantises scything apart Skitarii and quarrymen in a bloodbath that saw rivulets of gory slush stain the snow of each crater bright red.



# ASSAULT ON THE SCRAP CITIES

The Space Marines on Vigilus had brought fiery death to the xenos invaders in dozens of hivescrawl districts, and now their leaders were looking further afield. If the Imperial alliance was to win this war, they would have to take on the beast in its own lair.

The charge of the Dharrovar Freeblades, though ultimately doomed to failure, had opened up an unprecedented opportunity for the Space Marine coalition. Perhaps Captain Fane had foreseen this as a consequence of his covert orders to the young Imperial Knights; perhaps the Adeptus Astartes were simply capitalising on the changing face of war. But for a time, in the Ork territory to the east of Mortwald known as the Green Diamond, all eyes were upon the spearhead of Imperial Knights moving in for the kill.

Within seconds of Fane informing his fellow Space Marine Captains of the Knight charge, several strike

forces had been despatched via Thunderhawk and Stormtalon Gunship. The bike-mounted assault companies of the White Scars, led by Olujin Khan, and the Ravenwing, led by the taciturn Meneraeus, were not far behind. Seen from the Aeronautica Imperialis bombers that flew in support, the Space Marine assaults were small but lethal, closing upon their Scrap City targets like torpedoes streaking through the void to scuttle a group of bulk cruisers.

The capabilities of the Ork heavy artillery – bristling from the sides of their vessels, and built for ship-to-ship combat in the depths of space – had been felt keenly by

the Imperial Guard columns that had strayed within their reach. A single shell could blast apart a tank squadron, and wreak utter havoc on any that approached the Scrap Cities from the wrong angle. Those who attacked the Orks in broad daylight would soon enough be treated to a broadside so powerful that it left a ridge-like chain of craters across the landscape. Olujin Khan, known to some as the Skyhawk for his knack of ensuring air superiority, had mounted enough aerial reconnaissance to spy out where the super-cannons of the Orks were situated, and the areas that they would target. Many of the Ork broadside guns had been dismantled and rebuilt on

## ORK SCRAP CITIES [WESTERN CLUSTER]

RUNTHIVE

FORT DAKKA

TANKA SPILL

DROGZOT'S  
CRATER

SILTID RIVER

THE GIANTS

mobile carriages, the better to cover every angle of approach. Olujin's squadrons of Stormtalons had reported back that those guns were now targeted on the Knights and Titans that had made their forlorn charges against Runthive, Drogzot's Crater and Fort Dakka. Accessing combat data from previous mechanised assaults, the Khan mapped out routes of approach that capitalised on the blind spots of the Ork guns – a technique he had learned from the harsh lessons of the Damocles war zone. He drove his strike force like a spear into the belly of the xenos settlements.

The initial attack runs saw the biker packs reach the enemy with only a few casualties, for the last of the Freeblade Knights was still holding doggedly on, covering their approach. Every greenskin eye watched hungrily as that proud Knight was finally pulled limb from limb. Thousands of Orks died in that first assault, torn apart by massed bolter fire as the White Scars and Ravenwing swept in. They

jinked through alleys and scrap shanties, attack bikes' heavy weapon firepower thundering into the revving war-wagons and flatbeds that sought to mobilise and join the fight. Wherever the Orks gathered a cogent defence, the Space Marine bikers would peel away, coming back around in a screeching circle to attack from another direction.



Perhaps, if they had made but one strike and then retreated, giving themselves a chance to regroup and return another day, the Space Marines could have worn the Orks down with their shock assaults. But time was running out. They pressed their attack, driving ever further in to engage the Kan Factories at each Scrap City's heart.

Orks do not scare easily from battle, especially not when they have

numbers on their side; if anything, the din of war makes them even more bellicose and aggressive. As such, the greenskins swarmed to meet their Space Marine foes, and with not one but two forces fighting hard against them, the increasing heat of war inflamed their lust for conflict to critical levels.

It was at that point that the entirety of the Ravenwing army broke off from the engagement and made straight for the Vhulian Swirl. They did not communicate their intent to the White Scars they had been fighting alongside – indeed, it seemed to Olujin Khan an act of cowardice, though he was loathe to believe it. With half their strike force gone in a matter of seconds, the White Scars found themselves fighting a growing horde of battle-hungry Orks – including no small number of warbikes that were every bit as fast as their own steeds. Olujin Khan had no option but to order a fighting retreat, hurtling into a dust storm with vows of revenge upon his lips.





# A NEW DOOM

The fate of Vigilus was swinging from salvation to damnation with each day the war ground on. For every district reclaimed, another was lost. Citizens prayed for a miracle to tip the balance in their favour – but quite the opposite was to occur.

With the Vigilus Senate making uncompromising strategic decisions and the Space Marines attacking high priority targets in a ceaseless crusade of destruction, the Imperial citizenry had begun to hope they could win back their planet. Then a new threat loomed. Strange vox ghosts and unsettling omens had intensified of late, unsettling all who heard them. The bleeding skies around the Great Rift appeared to blacken at its edges, like the exterior of a gangrenous wound. From those glowering skies came a brief spear of light. Augur rites and hyper-auspex readings were focused upon it, but the source of the anomaly could not be ascertained – and,

amongst the carnage, it was soon forgotten. Only the agents of Tzeentch on Storvhal recognised it for what it truly was – the first sign of a Chaos invasion aimed straight for the Vigilus System's heart.

More unsettling phenomena blossomed, their instances plotted on maps by the Vigilus Senate like spots of mould on a damp wall. Lucienne Agamemnus' psyker-prophets claimed that their readings of the Emperor's Tarot were turning up the same cards over and over again – that of the Daemonblade, crossed with the Herald of Darkness and the Knight of the Abyss. Reports circulated of strange,

bat-winged figures that haunted the tallest spires of the hivespawls, high above the clouds of industry. Dark rumours of abductions amongst the upper echelons of society spread throughout the populace.

Other tales circulated that the gun nests of the upper hives were strangely empty, and the wildest of the stories spoke of evil-looking dragons circling the tips of the aristocratic citadels. Those of the Astra Militarum that were sent to investigate the anomalies did not return – though reports came back from each hive's spire-seekers that blackened bodies and mangled

## DIRKDEN ABANDONED

Recognising that he could not win on every front at once, Marneus Calgar reluctantly withdrew his forces from Dirkden Hivespawl. That small false continent had been overwhelmed by cultists and surrounded by Krooldakka's Orks. It had to be allowed to fall if the others were to stand, for it was so rotten with xenos corruption that to contest it would have been a waste of manpower that Calgar could ill afford to sacrifice.

Though some on the Vigilus Senate called it callous, and even defeatist, his decision was proven to be a wise one. The evacuation of civilians along the Hyperia-Dirkden Fortwall was stopped altogether, and the guards manning the checkpoints largely withdrawn. Only the military forces leaving Dirkden were granted permission to cross into the capital city. These were able to bolster the Adepta Sororitas defenders of Hyperia; working from the Aftermath Zone into the Triadine Plateaus, these redeployed forces vented their fury at being forced to concede Dirkden. One by one, the xenos in southern Hyperia were burned out of their lairs and put to flight, and the Ork-held territory cleansed with fire by vengeful Sisters of Battle.

With the sudden removal of Imperial foes from Dirkden, the Orks that had been attacking from Mekstop City swiftly turned on the Genestealer Cultists of that region instead. A new spate of battles rippled across the hivespawl as the two rising xenos empires clashed in open war. Within a week of the Imperial withdrawal, over a quarter of the buildings above ground were on fire; seen from Hyperia, the horizon was blackened with smoke.

The true cost of this decision, of course, was to the civilians. With one curt order, Calgar abandoned tens of millions, damning them from Glaive Point to the Rescalid Underworks. Refugees fled in great crowds, seeking to be let along the Fortwall to Hyperia. They were held back by the Crimson Fists assigned to that region, for hiding amongst the unsullied citizens and even the Astra Militarum were Neophytes and brood brothers in thrall to the Pauper Princes. When rocks were thrown by protesters, the Space Marines opened fire. The resultant carnage was to form an indelible blemish on the honour of that Chapter, especially given that they were later forced to concede the Fortwall to the cultists. Still, Calgar was convinced their actions had been necessary.

corpses littered the steeples and rooftops.

Marneus Calgar and the Vigilus Senate took a stern and intense interest in the anomalies haunting the highest spires – for they occurred not in a single hivespawl, but across every one of the planet's continent-sized cities.

To Calgar's mind, there was no way the blame for these high altitude occurrences could be laid at the door of their principal xenos foes. Preferring their wars loud, up-close and violent, the Orks had concentrated their air war on strafing runs, low altitude dogfights and dive-bombing. The cult uprising had shown no evidence of having air support to speak of. As a result, the Imperial Navy had, until now, confined their efforts to the skies below the cloud cover, only affecting the loosest patrols and transit engagements above the pollution line.

With the curfew forcing the populace inside at night and the prohibition against looking up at the Great Rift mercilessly enforced, few ever raised their eyes to the skies, and the entire planet was to pay the price. The Vigilus Senate discovered too late that whilst they had been focused on the ground war against the Orks, and the below-ground war against the Genestealer Cult, another war front had opened up high in the spires. That covert operation had been rendered all but invisible to those below by the thick pall of pollution that choked the Vigilus skies. The irony of the planet's populace being known as Vigilants became painfully clear to the Senate – for they had allowed an enemy force to claim a power base right over their heads.

The plague of nightmares that had assailed Vigilus ever since the breaking of the Noctis Aeterna grew more and more intense. The worst affected gabbled and muttered in

their sleep, using the same phrase over and over again. They spoke not in Low Gothic, nor its High equivalent, but in a language that none amongst the planet's adepts could decipher.

It was the investigating Inquisitor Frenza of the Ordo Malleus that eventually codified the language – behind closed doors – as the Dark Tongue of Chaos. At first the babble was indecipherable even to her, but as time progressed the syllables hardened into distinct words. When several of the afflicted were gathered in the same place at the same time, it immediately became clear that they were all chanting the same thing, in unison: 'The Dark King is coming.'

The Vigilus Senate's investigation into the events taking place in the city spires soon bore ghastly fruit. Every hive spire's defenders had been slain, and the tips of each citadel claimed by an airborne host. The blasphemous text scrawled in blood on the spire-tips confirmed that this was nothing to do with the Orks, nor was it down to the actions of the Genestealer Cult or the Drukhari raiders. It was the work of the Heretic Astartes – airborne Raptors, Warp Talons and Heldrakes, apparently led by a murderous demagogue known as Haarken Worldclaimer, the Herald of the Apocalypse.

When Worldclaimer's voice echoed across the planet it proved terrifying in itself, but it was the woe promised by his speeches, the picture it painted of hells to come, that turned men's guts to water. His message rang out across the planet from countless hijacked vox-units tainted with scrapcode. It was bawled, crackling and distorted, from the gargoyle vox-sets of a thousand Raptors and Warp Talons. Its meaning was undeniably clear, and its message stark – the planet belonged to Abaddon the Despoiler, and he would soon be there to claim it in person.

## **14.010 POST – THE INFECTION SPREADS**

As promethium fires blazed around Dontoria, the Iron Hands enforcing the quarantine allowed frustration and repugnance to overwhelm their nobler natures. Ruthless efficiency became sheer brutality, and desperation turned to terror amongst the trapped populace. Preferring to brave fire and pox than face the merciless Iron Hands, bands of resourceful Dontorians broke out of the restricted area and fled. Efficient as strategic cogitators, the Iron Hands deployed kill teams to contain these breakouts. However, their forces came under sudden heavy attack from the Death Guard still lurking in the city. Reports circulated of daemonic entities manifesting alongside Mortarion's sons.

## **14.641 POST – THE HERALD OF THE DESPOILER**

Across every hivespawl and slum on Vigilus, a darkly charismatic voice rang out. It was that of Haarken Worldclaimer, called by some the Herald of the Apocalypse. He broadcast his message to Human, Ork and Genestealer Cultist alike, and through arcane means ensured it reached every ear able to hear it. By spirit-linking his Daemon-tainted vox array to those of his widespread Raptor acolytes, his Heldrake fear squadrons and even the laud hailers of the hive spires he had already captured, he made sure that his ominous message was spread to every corner of the world:

*'This planet is claimed in the name of Abaddon, Despoiler of Worlds. Know that you will kneel before him, or you will burn.'*

# THE RISE OF CHAOS

With the Imperium's armies fixed on the combined threats of Orks, Aeldari and Genestealer Cultists, the forces of Haarken Worldclaimer and the Black Legion had already inveigled themselves into the planet's upper spires. They were preparing the way for something much worse.

When the Vigilus Senate gathered in an emergency war conclave to discuss the new enemy that had revealed itself, there came a terrible rumbling crash from high above. The vaulted roof of the council room caved in as the giant golden colossus that once perched atop the Saint's Haven palace – a graven image of Lucienne Agamemnus IX – came smashing down through the stained glass.

The statue was so large and heavy that it crushed a dozen attendants and smashed the antique debating table to splinters, bowling over Calgar and his two Victrix Guard aides in the process. A great gout of daemonfire washed through the council hall in its wake, killing a handful of Primaris guards with its intensity as a Heldrake Daemon Engine roared a wordless challenge into the chambers below.

Marneus and the Victrix Guard fired upwards in response, shielding their eyes against the glowering Great Rift high above them, but the beast had already fled. Calgar thought fast, despatching a Thunderhawk and an escort of Stormtalons straight up into the clouds. An aerial clash ensued between the scrambled force and the Heldrakes that circled the broken tip of the hive. After a gruelling battle, the Adeptus Astartes prevailed – though none on the senate were foolish enough to think the matter at an end. Chaos was corrupting the planet in a dozen different ways.

In the far south, Kaelac's Bane had become ever more vital, for the planet's sources of water had dried up one by one. Seven Imperial armoured companies fought their way across the Ork-infested wastes

from Solor, the Sentinel Hive in Oteck Hivespawl, towards the Tundric Perimeter of Kaelac's Bane. They passed through the Bastion force field network during a shut-down engineered by their accompanying Tech-Priest Engineers, and united with the tattered remnants of the continent's garrison. Their respite was brief. The snows were haunted not only by Drukhari raiders, but also covens of automaton-like Thousand Sons. The Rubricae, clad in black as well as the cyan and gold of the Planet of Sorcerers, lit the snow with volley after volley of inferno bolts. The Lord Commissar providing the armoured company's spiritual backbone, one Barthold Dorst, ordered his tanks to effect a headlong charge, crushing several of the automatons in the process. Nonetheless, even the Leman Russ tanks were eventually melted under



the sorcerous warfire sent their way, and only a handful made it to the glacier mines beyond.

The rulers of Mortwald, thrown into a state of high anxiety by the rumours of a Gellerpox outbreak on the northern borders of their coveted landmass, shut themselves in their strongholds – but not before issuing the order that all sterilised food and water available be seized and locked in there with them. Over the course of the next few months they bled the workers of Mortwald white, claiming far more sustenance than they could ever consume even if each of their number lived to be a thousand years old. Word of this reprehensible behaviour reached the demagogues and preachers of the worker populace, and within the week, an insurrection seethed on the continent's outskirts that had nothing to do with xenos cults or Chaos demagoguery.

The vox-waves and comms networks of the Imperial war effort, already rendered static-laced and inconstant by the baleful influence of the Great Rift, were haunted by whispers that detailed a thousand

atrocities to come. At times, the susurrus of voices grew to be a hideous, deafening shriek that shredded the nerves of those who heard it. Over time, the auditory barrage took an ever greater toll on Vigilus' Astra Militarum defenders – eventually, many regiments stopped using their long-range vox altogether. With the breakdown of communication lines further hindering the cohesion of the war effort on the planet, the Vigilus Senate was forced to spread its assets thinner and thinner. The battered world had been brought to breaking point.

And the worst was yet to come.



## 14.782 POST – THE RAPTORIAL HOST DESCENDS

On wings of fire, the Raptor warbands that followed the Herald of the Apocalypse came down from vast Chaos ships on the dark side of the planet. They concealed themselves in the clouds, and from there attacked the upper echelons of the Vigilus hivespawls. They came by the thousand, their jump-pack contrails scarring the skies until the night air appeared like a writhing nest of worms. Entire aristocratic dynasties were eradicated overnight as the Raptors fell upon the leaders and would-be rulers of each continent, aiming to destabilise the planet to the point of no recovery before their true master – Abaddon the Despoiler – arrived to claim it as his own.

## 14.912 POST – WAR AMONGST THE SPIRES

In the highest levels of those hive-spires still standing over Vigilus' troubled cities, the close assault specialists of the Necropolis Hawks, the Ravenwing, and the Ultramarines united to take war to the Chaos invaders plaguing the upper spires. Every hour, ceramite-clad corpses plummeted from the skies to crash into the dwellings and war fronts of the earthbound mortals beneath. With the Ork invaders forging through the cities' outskirts, the Genestealer Cultists boiling up from below, and the Chaos Raptors attacking from above, one thing became clear overall: nowhere was safe.



# WAR ZONES

**Vigilus was to feel the spiralling death toll of outright war, its defenders reeling in horror and confusion as the true nature of the Imperium Nihilus became clear.**

The initial invasions of Vigilus, a planet that had long seen itself as a bastion of sanity and order in a tempestuous universe, were to reveal a terrifying truth. The world's facade of order was easily fractured, its structural integrity already critically damaged by the over-reaching ambitions of the Aquilarian Council and the delvings of the Adeptus Mechanicus.

The enemy that had grown unseen beneath the planet's surface had reached epidemic proportions, and the Orks had rampaged largely unchecked across the planet's wastelands. Meanwhile, that which came from the void to conquer the planet from the spire-tips down – the scourge of Chaos – was arguably more dangerous than the alien hordes. Even the Space Marines that came to safeguard Vigilus found themselves hard-pressed – not to secure victory, but to survive.

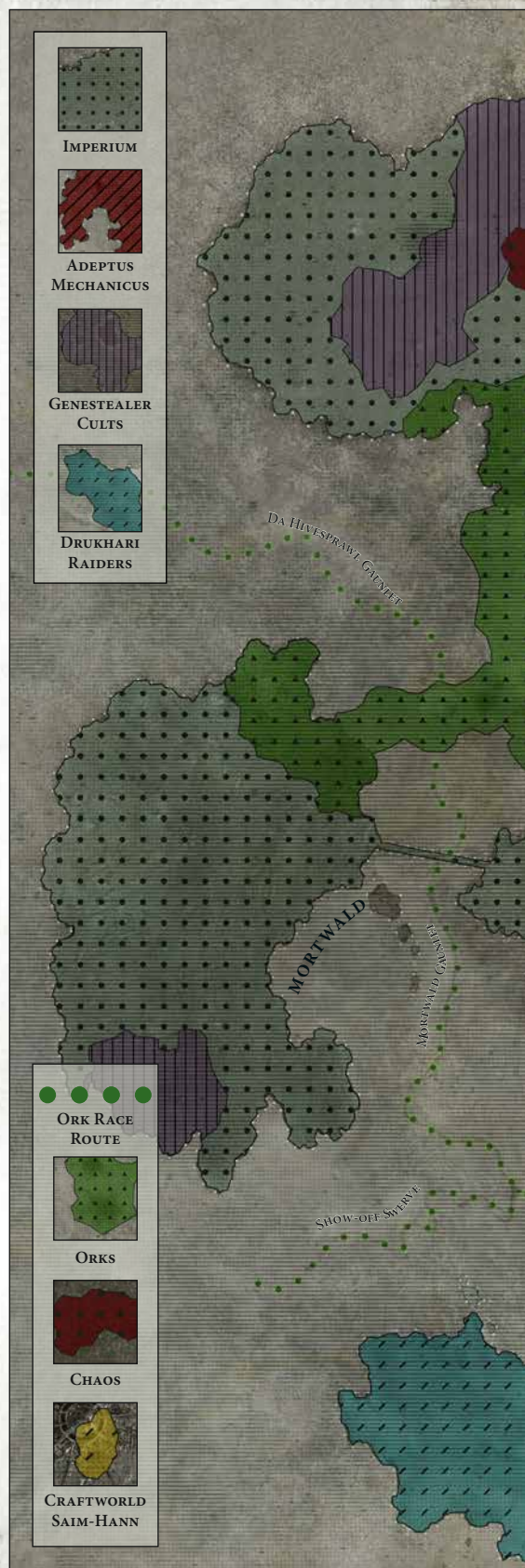
The interconnected nature of Vigilus' constituent continents meant that the system was inherently fragile. Rather than the sprawling regions being autonomous, each relied on at least one of the others for a commodity without which it could not function.

The majority of the planet's manpower, used to repopulate areas struck by seismic disaster, or to fill the ranks of such regiments as the Vigilant Guard, came from Dontoria Hivespawl. Governance, strategic coordination and matters of the faith were set in motion from Saint's Haven in Hyperia. Megaborealis supplied and maintained the Bastion-class force fields that – in theory, at least – kept the other continents

safe. Storvhall was the planet's energy breadbasket, dotted as it was with vast geothermic generators. Mortwald grew and exported the bulk of the planet's food, whereas Kaelac's Bane and Oteck Hivespawl supplied the vast majority of the water. Even the moon Neo-vellum played a vital role, coordinating the flow of information from the planet to the rest of the Imperium. Only Dirkden Hivespawl failed to make an invaluable contribution, perhaps leading to its lack of development and status as the smallest and poorest of the planet's metropolises.

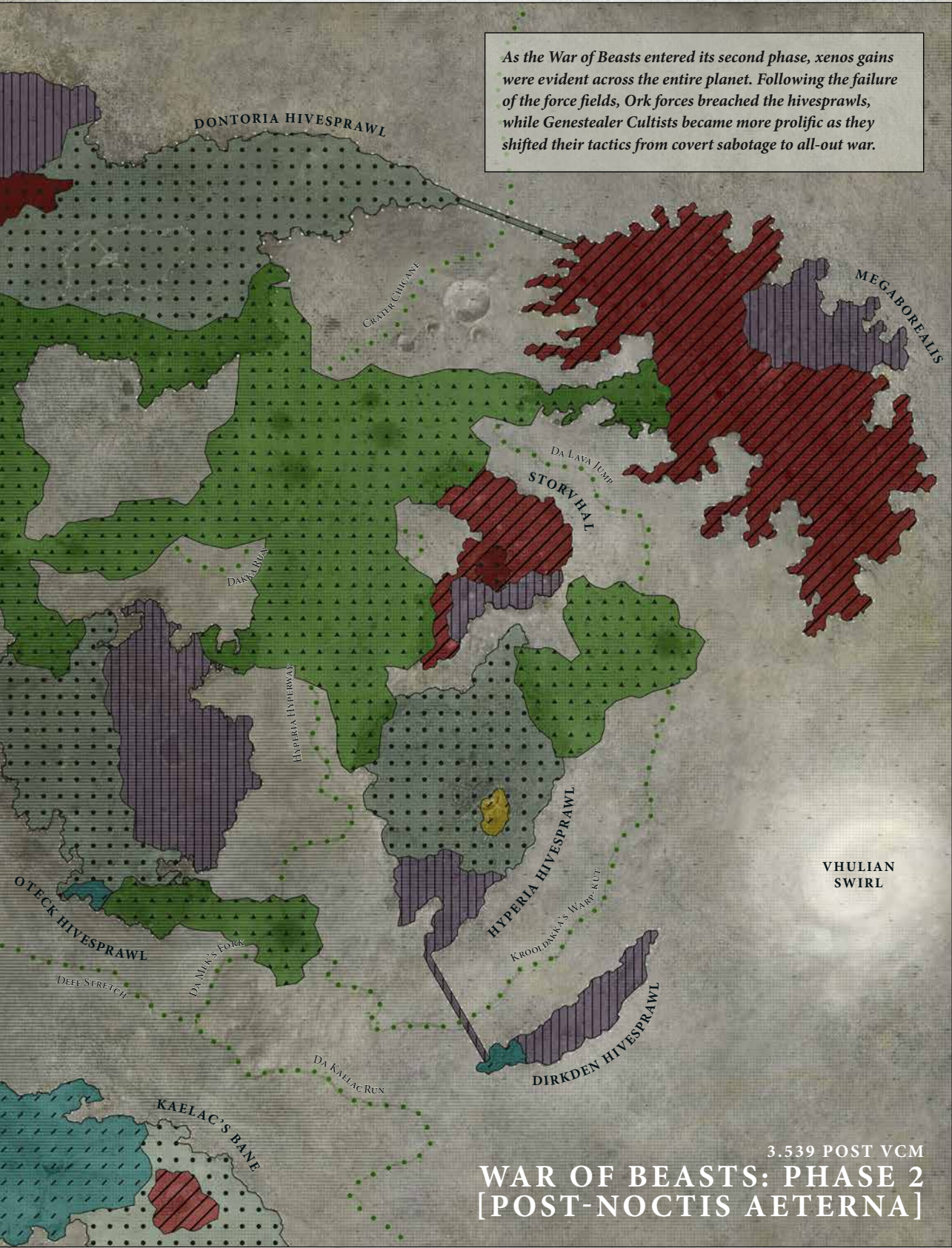
As long as the supply lines existed – be they networks of pipelines that tracked the wilderness, armoured convoys that moved freight the hard way, or aerial squadrons of bulk landers and rotorships that redeployed assets at speed – the needs of the continents could be met. But wherever hostile invaders disrupted, cut off or captured such routes, the planetary infrastructure – upon which many defensive assets relied in order to keep operating at full efficacy – was swiftly and severely impacted.

The situation on Vigilus was in many ways a microcosm of that which was occurring across the Imperium on a far grander scale. Out in the blackness, shorn of supplies, communication and the light of faith provided by the Astronomican, the worlds of the Imperium Nihilus were falling one by one. Roboute Guilliman had vowed that Vigilus would not be amongst them, and it was his trusted Chapter Master, Lord Calgar of the Ultramarines, that was sent to do everything in his power to ensure that oath was not broken.





*As the War of Beasts entered its second phase, xenos gains were evident across the entire planet. Following the failure of the force fields, Ork forces breached the hivespawls, while Genestealer Cultists became more prolific as they shifted their tactics from covert sabotage to all-out war.*



VHULIAN SWIRL

3.539 POST VCM  
**WAR OF BEASTS: PHASE 2**  
**[POST-NOCTIS AETERNA]**



## THE TRINITY HIVES

At the start of the war, the Ministorum held de facto power over a trinity of massive hives, known as Sanctifi-Ultima, Hivespire Magentine and Martyr's Pyre. From these strongholds, the agents of the Ministorum and the Adepta Sororitas sallied out to punish any whose faith they feared might waver, and to spread inspiration and courage amongst those that remained true. A legion of Crusaders and Adepta Sororitas, acting under Canoness Superior Temperance Blaise and based at the Abbey Septimus of the Order of Our Martyred Lady, kept the citizenry under strict control, rooting out traitors and heretics, and stopping undesirable elements from disturbing their betters in Saint's Haven.

The Ecclesiarchy's head representative was the Pontifex Slyné Galluck, a man so obese he had to be conveyed about by a hover-bier. He maintained that it was the unceasing prayers of the Ministorum that had kept Vigilus safe for so long, and that as long as the Trinity Hives remained standing, the planet would endure.

The Ministorum controlled the water drunk by the people of Hyperia Hivespawl, aqua sanctus, which was chemically treated as well as being blessed with holy writ. Their monopoly of this precious resource saw them gain even more power. Furthermore, any members of the Agamemnus Dynasty who stood against the Ministorum soon found their fortunes take a sharp downturn.



## HYPERIA HIVESPAWL

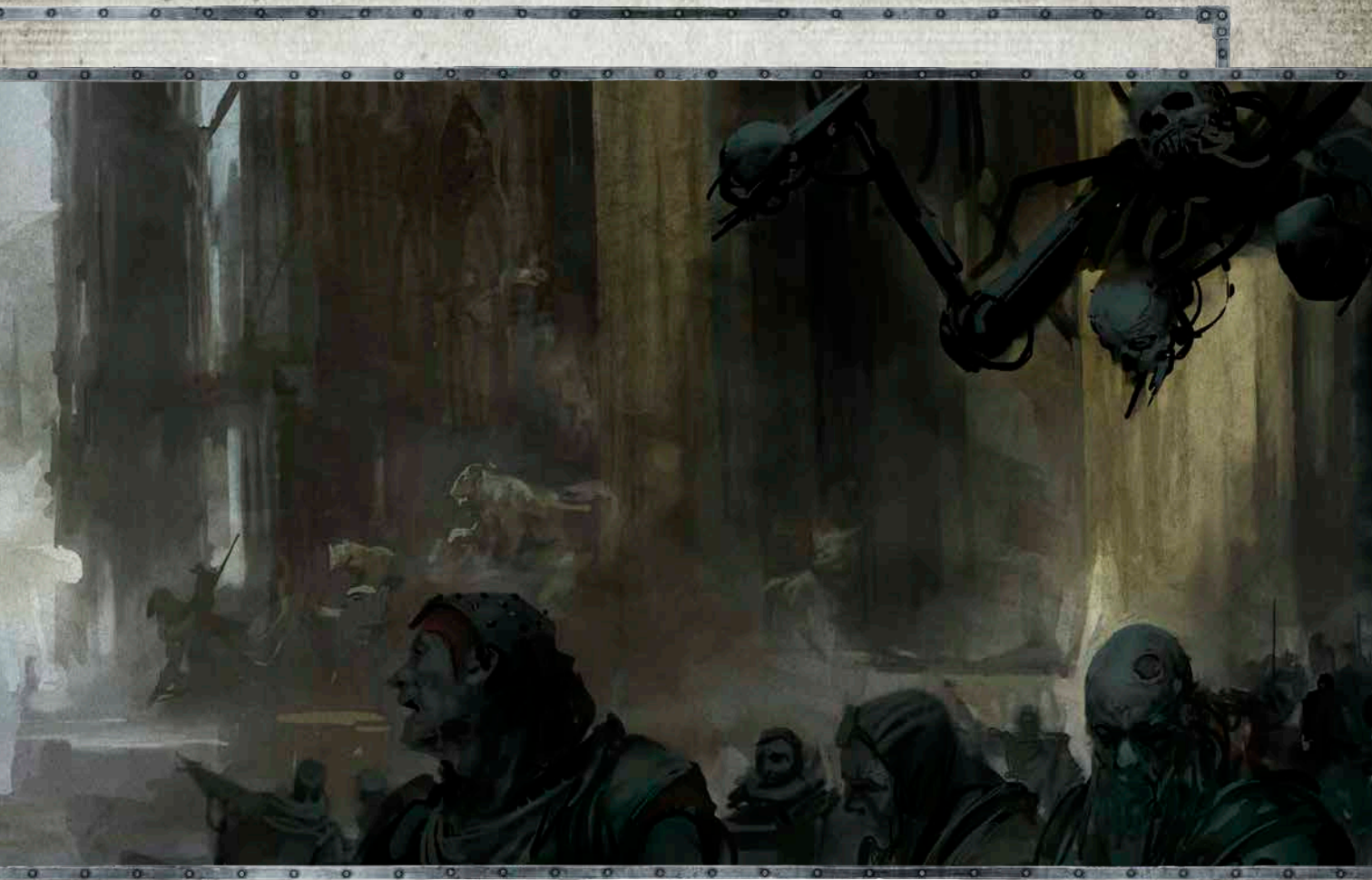
**At the onset of the xenos invasion, Hyperia was the capital hivespawl of the planet Vigilus, home of the Planetary Governor's palace and the Ministorum stronghold that surrounded it.**

Together, the strongholds of the Agamemnus Dynasty and the Ministorum formed the city-state of Saint's Haven, high-walled, gun-studded and surrounded by a vast, moat-like chasm known as the Ring of Nothingness. It is said that this abyss was bottomless, though some who looked down from the bridges that crossed it at its eight cardinal points reported seeing lights in the deep darkness below.

Over time, the Ministorum presence in Hyperia went from being a loose confederation of advisors and chaplains to a vast military force with a controlling interest in the region. The

Ministorum were considered by most to be the power behind the throne, and none could deny them – they were doing the Emperor's will, and his was the ultimate authority.

To the west of this city-within-a-city were the Industrial Enclaves, an endless maze of manufacturums from which a large portion of the planet's war materiel came. The Negation District, also in the west, was once a well-maintained gothic quarter, used as neutral ground for the continent's factions to debate the planet's destiny. By the time the Great Rift split the sky, however, this region had become a slum district



populated only by itinerants and refugees of the faith. To the north were the Twin Chasms, mined exhaustively for amethyst since they yawned wide after the Greater Hyperian Quake of 882.292 *previo*. Nearby was Sanctifi-Ultima – a giant spiral-tipped hive with huge concentric rings of amaranthec manufacturums around its base. These liquor-sludge distilleries spewed out baleful magenta-hued emissions that were carried across the northern limits of the continent, known as the Magentine Veils. The citizens there were said to lead short and dirty lives.

The Macro-yard district to the north-east of Saint's Haven reclaimed spaceships consigned to disuse, and enjoyed a thriving black market as a result. Governor Agamemnus assigned troops to defend it in the early stages of the war, and it was put under the purview of the ramrod-

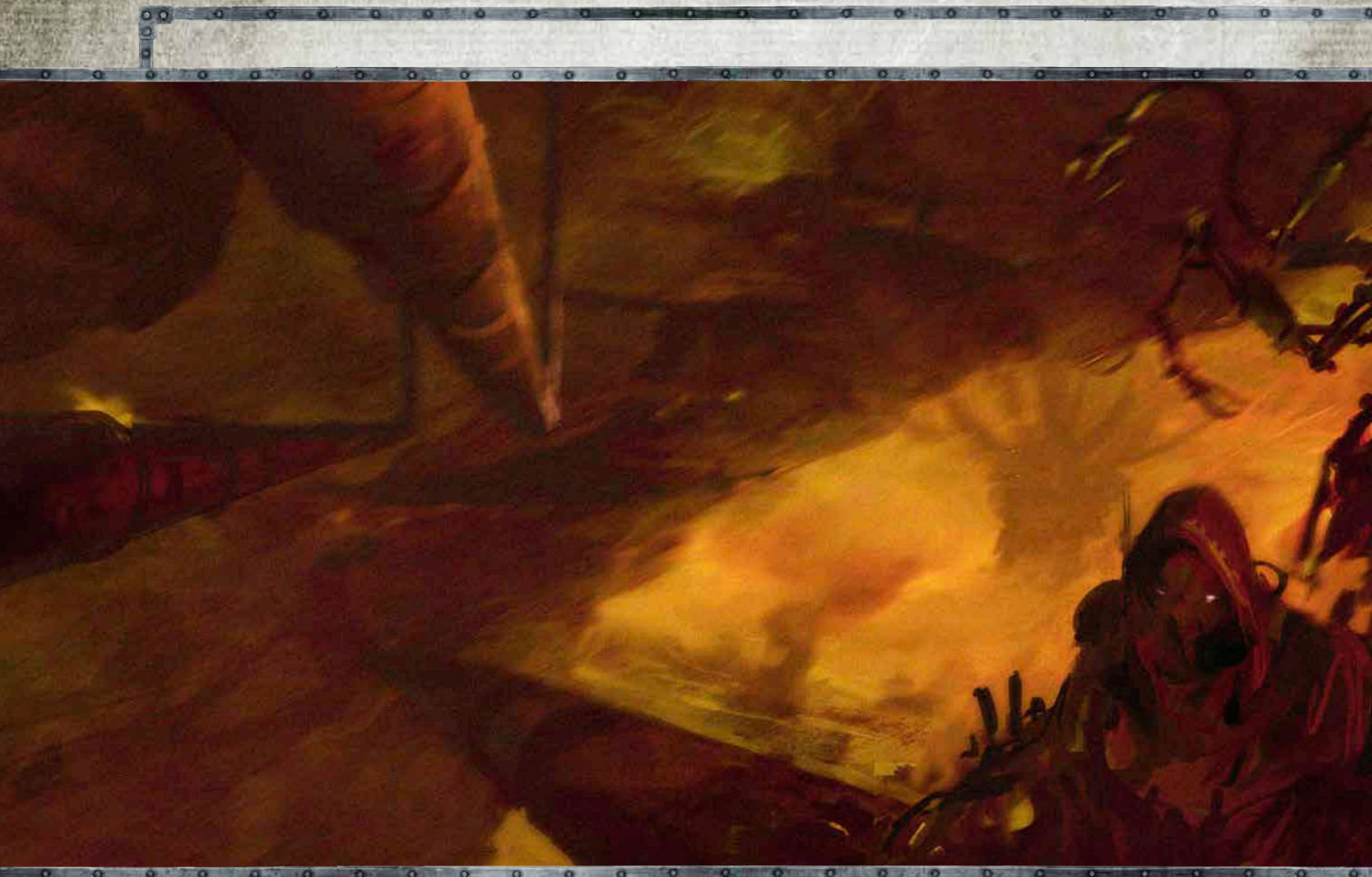
straight Proctor Venedar of the Astra Militarum Vigilant Guard. Venedar held the line against the Ork incursions from Hurrikane Rekk, despite constant Deathskull raids and headlong assaults led by war leader Stormboss Stampskul. Unfortunately, though the Macro-yards remained inviolate, they relied upon the adjoining Eastgate Bastion Nexus to ferry munitions, and this site was overrun by the Orks of Mob Kommander Grokker. Amidst allegations that the disaster had been the result of a diplomatic feud between Venedar and Lord Commissar Asdan, Tempestus Scions of the 23rd Betic Centaurs and 12th Kappic Eagles launched pitiless counter-incursion strikes to retake the nexus.

The south-east of the hivesprawl, including the hive of Martyr's Pyre, the Hubridon Sub-sprawl and the Triadine Plateaus, held fast against Ork incursion throughout

the war. By keeping the Van Gollick Macrohighway open and hence allowing Astra Militarum and Adepta Sororitas vehicles to redeploy at speed, the major Ork incursions were stymied and eventually forced to retreat. Meanwhile, the tireless efforts of Temperance Blaise's Adepta Sororitas kill teams saw each uprising of xenos insurgents swiftly exterminated before they could gain a foothold.

The southernmost point of Hyperia, known as the Cape of Lost Causes, became a stronghold for incursion elements that bled into the city via the Hyperia-Dirkden Fortwall. Though the Brazen Claws practiced a scorch-and-scramble program of incendiary war across the widest point of the Cape, its tip was still in enemy hands at the time of the Ultramarines' arrival and the skirmish with the Aeldari that came to define the strife in Saint's Haven.





# MEGABOREALIS

The continent of Megaborealis was ceded to the Adeptus Mechanicus in an ancient treaty, and from that time to the dawn of the war, they strip-mined almost all of its resources. The rapacious industry of the Tech-Priests proved to be the perfect cover for the clandestine deeds that were occurring below ground.

Even before the war began, Megaborealis was one of Vigilus' most dangerous continents. This was thanks, in part, to its tectonic instability and the proliferation of volcanic mountain ranges that criss-crossed it. Yet it was the touch of the Machine God that truly cursed Megaborealis.

Over a thousand years before the War of Beasts broke out, the Magi of Stygies VIII forged a pact with Vigilus' then Planetary Governor, Donsor Agamemnus, giving them absolute ownership of Megaborealis. In return, it was agreed that the Tech-Priests would contribute the might of the Adeptus

Mechanicus and its aligned Knight Houses to the planet's defence. That agreement, known as the Pact of Fire and Steel, was swiftly ratified. The Adeptus Mechanicus began their excavations at once.

Though Megaborealis' bore-hives looked huge from above, their sprawl was greater still below. Where their immense excavator engines and macro-drills laboured ceaselessly, tunnels, mine workings, underhabs and manufactorums radiated out like tree roots. The majority of these excavations brought up streams of ores and minerals, gems and crude fuels that were funnelled into the upkeep of

the bore-hives themselves, and the war efforts of Vigilus' many armies.

In the underdeeps, below even the sacred bore-points and sump-pits of Dredger's Abyss and Unguent Sprawl, lay the Black Levels.

Worked by neuro-wiped servitors overseen by secretive Magi, these were the mines from which the blackstone veins within Vigilus' crust were painstakingly extracted. Gathered in sanctified haulage-reliquaries, the substance was stockpiled deep within each bore-hive, for the Tech-Priests would no more relinquish their grasp upon that precious substance than they would give up their own lives.



Underground, billions of labourers lived and died in service to the Machine God. Countless mining clans dwelt in subterranean cities, never knowing the warmth of any light save that of petrochemical lanterns, never seeing any future but one of endless toil amidst the mainways and bore-shafts. It was amongst these clans that an offshoot of the Genestealer Cult of the Pauper Princes spread, bringing corruption disguised as hope.

Deep beneath Hive Ankhart Tertius, the infestation first took root when a single, slinking Genestealer escaped from a harvested asteroid. Hidden away in the half-collapsed subterranean district of Piston's Hollow was the tainted brood cathedrum where the Genestealer Patriarch, Grandsire Wurm, often made his nest. The Patriarch was a terrifying figure even to the cultists that worshipped him, yet he was the spider at the centre of

the infestation's web, and his will bonded millions.

Under this alien despot's influence, much of Ankhart Tertius' miner militia fell to the cult's sway. Over twenty miner clans based around the rebel hold of Tecton followed suit, concealing their corruption from their Tech-Priest masters by dint of diligent labour and ever-increasing yields.

This gene-sect was far from the only one lurking beneath Vigilus' crust. Only Grandsire Wurm himself knew the true extent to which his progeny had spread, undetected, through the infrastructure of the bore-hives and beyond. For long years they built their stockpiles of munitions and materiel, suborned positions of authority, stole codes, and laid plans for their day of ascension. This diligence lent them a critical advantage when the first stages of the war erupted on Vigilus.

## THE BORE-HIVES

The bore-hives began their existence as drill engines, each one several miles in length. They were so enormous that they had to be transported to Vigilus within dedicated space-faring barges. Painstakingly manoeuvred into precise low orbit trajectories, the drill engines were launched into the crust of Megaborealis like enormous harpoons, each churning its way down through the bedrock to anchor itself deep within Vigilus' planetary crust. The tectonic upheaval of this monumental act was so great that the planet's landscape was changed forever. Volcanic eruptions caused the lands to convulse for years to come. Earthquakes of phenomenal violence opened chasms that could have swallowed cities, while a pall of ash and smoke rose above the continent that blotted out the skies. The destruction was judged worthwhile, for deep beneath the planet's surface lay resources that the Xenarites of Stygies VIII believed to be incredibly valuable.

After that day – known as the Day of the Ommissiah's Claw – the drill engines were built up until they transformed into sprawling bore-hives. Thousands of levels and districts rose above ground, comprising laboratories, foundries, shrines, data-stacks, manufacturums, biologist dissection chapels, generatorums, weapon batteries, cogitator networks and countless other arcane facilities. So high did the bore-hives stretch that their uppermost levels pierced the atmosphere, meshing with space docks where lumbering ore barges and manufacturum ships were moored.



## THE AGELESS ELITE

*The fabulous wealth of Mortwald's ruling aristocracy was largely due to its rejuvenat clinics and the system-famed adepts that worked within them. The bio-regressive procedures and neo-nascent surgeries conducted there were so advanced that so-called 'immortality pilgrimages' were once common practice.*

*The privileged inhabitants of the worlds under Astravigal's light would make the long journey to Vigilus, and though it cost them years to do so, they would leave looking decades or even centuries younger. There were rejuvenat clinics that dared to claim that they could lift the soul as well as the body, and in doing so honour an age-old tradition set down by the Master of Mankind himself. They maintained that the planet had the Emperor's blessing, and that evidence of his miraculous beneficence could be found in the tranquillity of the bio-domes. This same serenity could be conferred upon a visitor's soul – for the right fee, of course.*

*The coming of the Great Rift quickly put an end to safe space travel, all but eradicating this lucrative industry.*

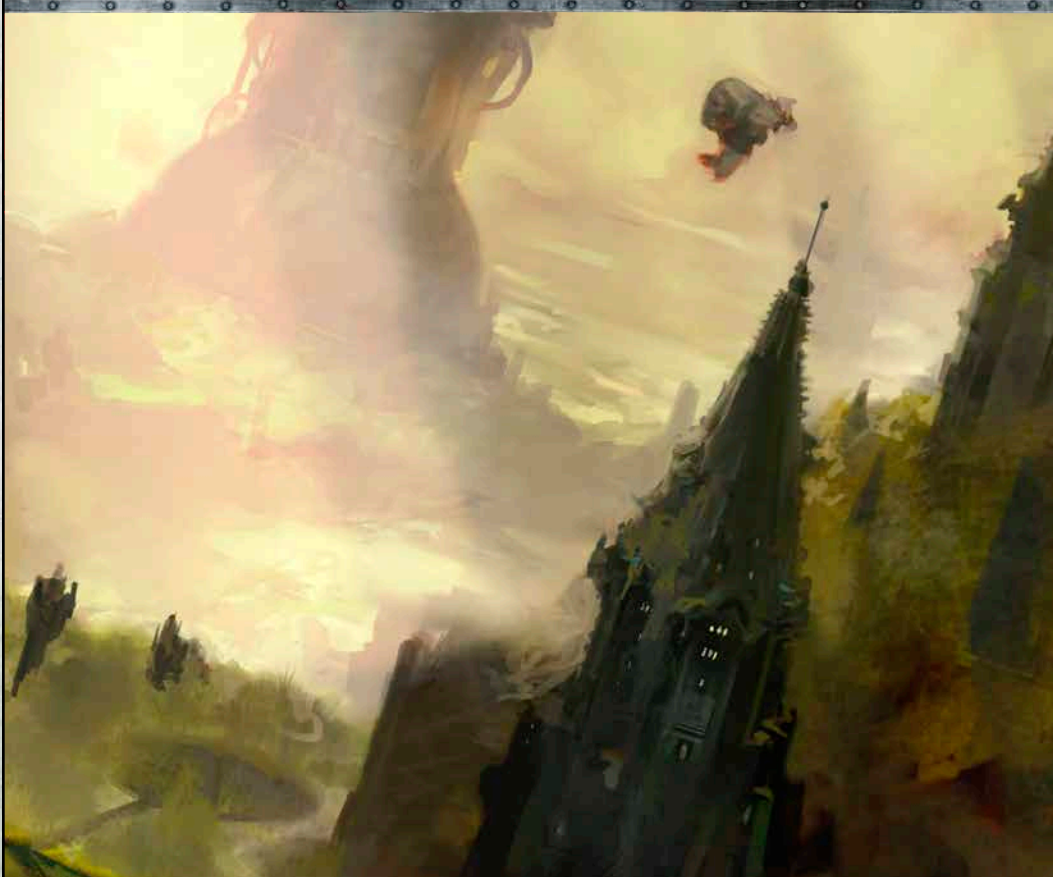
# MORTWALD

**Mortwald was the primary source of food growth and harvest on the planet Vigilus, as well as a centre for rejuvenat processing – but for all the life it gave, its guns promised death to those who approached unauthorised.**

The majority of Mortwald's land was given over to the cultivation of hyperflora – massive swathes of cactus and other succulents that formed oxygen-generating forests. These were force-grown on an industrial scale to counteract the huge amounts of gaseous by-product that Vigilus' industry churned into the planet's air. The oxygenating effects of the Eastern Cactus Forests, the Ageless Weald, the Viridian Forests and the Emerald Strain did initially give the planet enough clean air for its ever-expanding population to survive. Unfortunately, the atmosphere-scrubbing effects of Mortwald's forests were soon surpassed by the rampant pollution produced by the hivespawls; not only did

the other metropolises grow larger, but the northern third of Mortwald itself was taken over by a sprawling cityscape much in the manner of its neighbours.

The rich and influential inhabitants of Mortwald lived in secluded enclaves far from the northern capital of Djodrolev Hivestar and its smaller but no less overcrowded sibling, Electros Hive. The domain of the rich and the indolent, these enclaves consisted of specially commissioned bio-domes, their interiors verdant oases of sanctity filled with trickling waterfalls, glittering lakes and sculptures of dynastic aristocrats past and present. They were called a paradise, and rightly so.



The domes appeared quite different from the outside, dotted with brutal-looking gun-nests and sentry crenellations constantly manned against aerial attack. No expense was spared to keep the biodomers safe, for these complexes were ruled over by Grand Castellan Deinos Agamemnus, brother of Governor Lucienne, and he had grown accustomed to a life of unalloyed luxury. The Castellan was a famed Imperial history enthusiast who collected devastating archeotech weapons like they were trinkets, and spoke at length on the subject whenever possible. It is said that his personal collection boasted no fewer than six Deathstrike missiles.

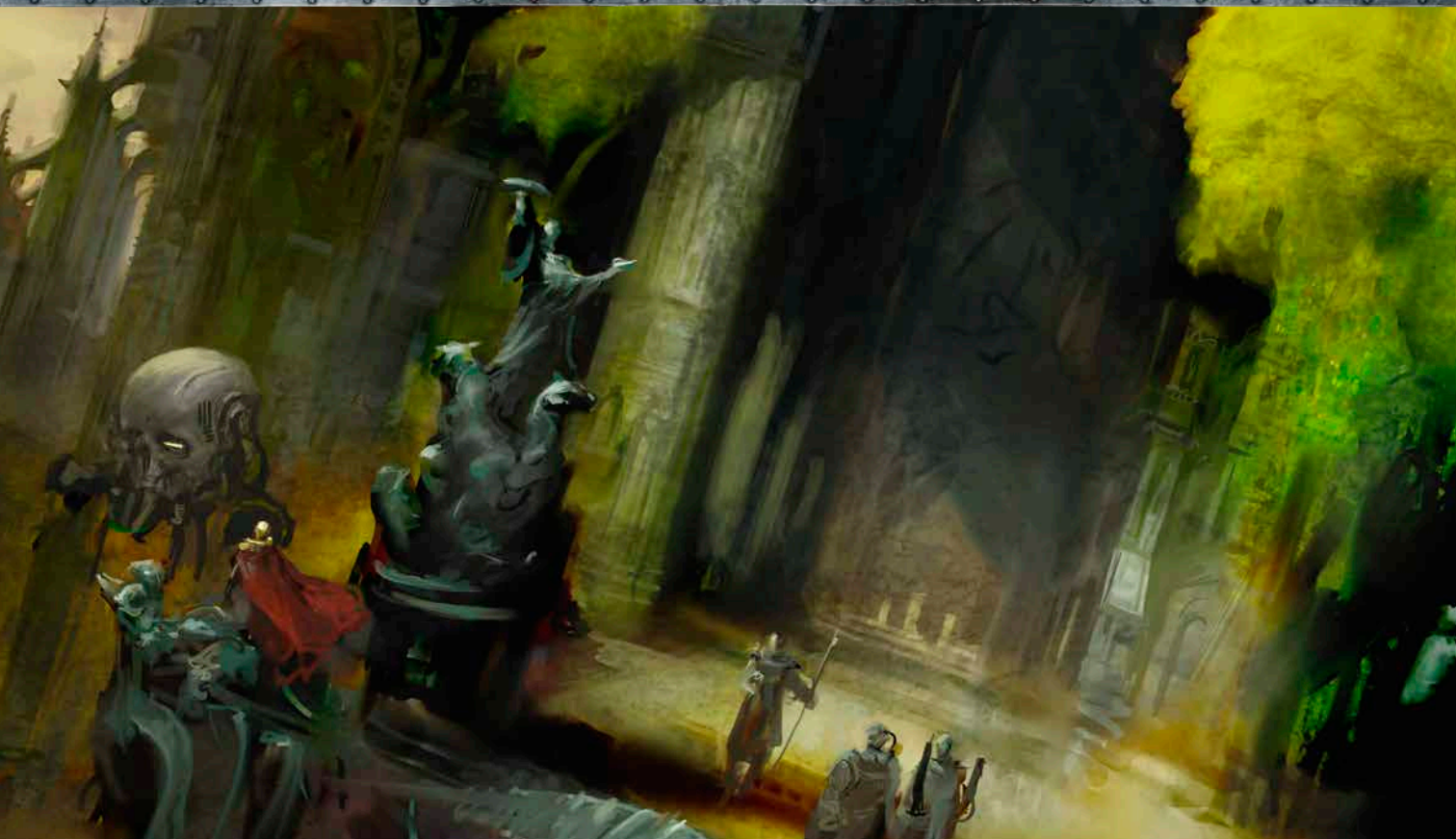
Due in part to the suspicion that Deinos Agamemnus held for the Adeptus Mechanicus, Mortwald's perimeter was protected not only by force fields, but by a network of squat bastions, trenches and aegis lines. The Deinos Trench Network in the continent's north-eastern reaches was a superlative example, an overlapping

labyrinth of raised revetments, gun emplacements and rockcrete roads lined with sentry towers some hundreds of feet tall. Over time, that trench network was expanded to cover the vast majority of the eastern border of Mortwald, joining with the Tzeller Line in the south to protect the region's most valued holdings: New Vitae Docks, through which the continent's wealthy visitors came and went; the Paradisiac Domesprawl, where the most high-end treatments took place; and Rejuvenus Strongport, where lesser nobility enjoyed having a few years stripped from them by more affordable treatments.

Those whose bodies were beyond recovery, should they receive permission from Deinos himself, were allowed to visit the Biosanctic Fleshplants. It was said that extreme methods of rejuvenation, such as the suturing of old heads to fresh young bodies, were not beyond the abilities of the complex's biomagi and elite anatomagisters.

**'COME TO MORTWALD,  
UPON THE PLANET  
VIGILUS, AND KNOW  
PARADISE! FLY IN YOUR  
PERSONAL CRAFT ACROSS  
ACRES OF LUSH CACTUS  
FOREST BEFORE MAKING  
PLANETFALL IN THE NEW  
VITAE DOCKS. THEN,  
ONCE YOU ARRIVE AT  
ONE OF OUR SYSTEM-  
FAMOUS BIO-DOMES,  
LET THE MUSIC OF THE  
SPHERES SOOTHE YOU  
INTO UNCONSCIOUSNESS.  
WHEN YOU AWAKE,  
YOU WILL FEEL AS IF  
THE YEARS HAVE BEEN  
FORCIBLY STRIPPED AWAY  
FROM YOU. A NEW LEASE  
OF LIFE AWAITS!'**

*- Promotional pict-slate text  
found on the wreckage of the  
shuttle Echo of Grandeur*





## OTECK HIVESPAWL

The source of water for billions of Vigilus' citizens, Oteck Hivespawl was best known for its five vast reservoirs, which were to become hotly contested during the war. An insidious Genestealer Cult uprising from beneath and five Ork Scrap Cities in proximity saw Oteck assailed from without as well as within.

Like the other hivespawls on Vigilus, Oteck was made up of hab-blocks and manufactorums that rose only a few dozen storeys above ground level, but spread out over enormous distances. Limiting the height of buildings helped them to avoid suffering catastrophic collapse when the inevitable tectonic upheaval caused by the mining operations in Megaborealis hit the continent. Though there was a significant military presence in Oteck, the vast macro-districts were run by the Adeptus Arbitres, who kept the labouring classes in check.

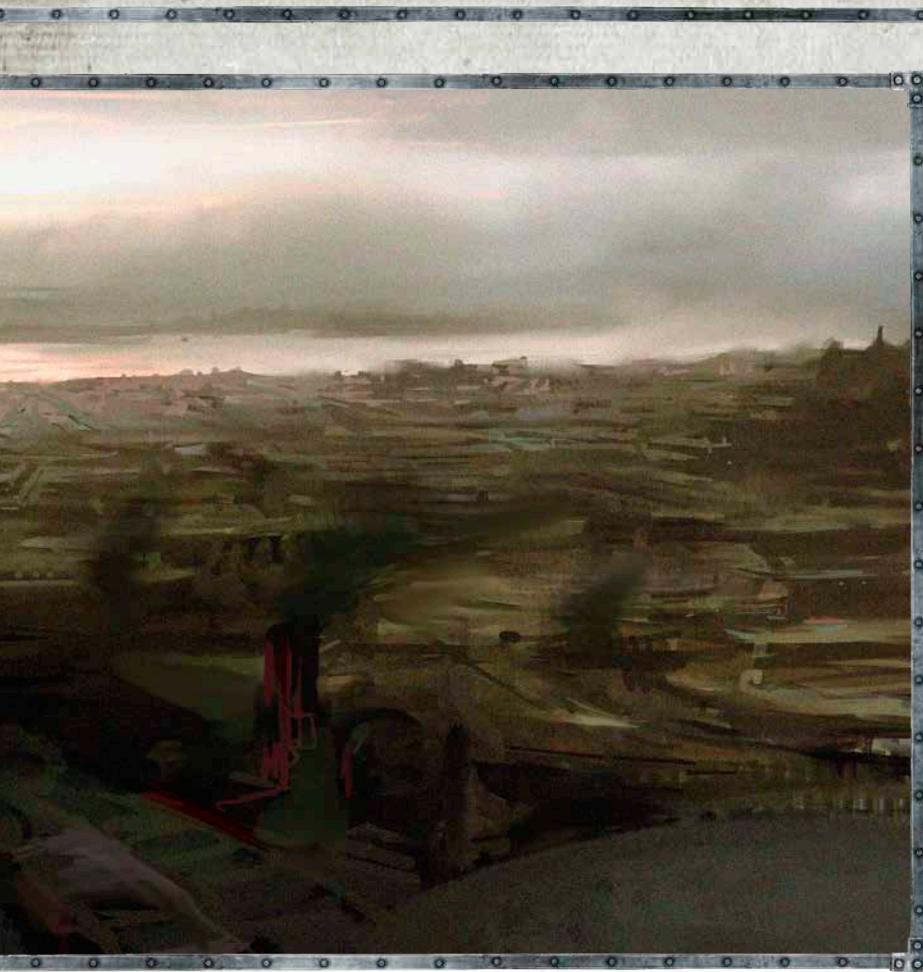
Water supply in Oteck was regulated through the Hollows –

five enormous reservoirs, more like inland seas than conventional containment sites. These gathered water from deep under the planet's crust via an elaborate system of pumps, capillary banks and pipe-ways, and were topped up with regular infusions from the island-like precipitation sites of Tzardonica, Luthvren Isle and the Lenkotz Chain.

Networks of macro-ducts pumped Oteck's water to the furthest extents of the continent, and even beyond. In return they brought back polluted water, industrial run-off and reclaimed biomass to be recycled into potable fluids. Much

of the purer water Oteck conveyed to its prime clients was transported via convoy under armed guard – it was not unheard of for Astra Militarum Hellhounds and Devil Dogs to carry two tanks of pure water alongside those filled with volatile fuel in their rear quarters. As well as ensuring safe delivery, this tacitly meant that the crew of the armoured convoy would not die of dehydration on the long journey from one continent to another.

The five reservoirs of Oteck were known as the Greigan, Mysandren, Trevig, Ostaveer and Agamemnus Hollows. This last was named for the Planetary Governor's dynasty,



and was maintained as a back-up water source in case Hyperia's own store should be compromised. The Hollows were linked by the Aquadine III Processor Districts, and overseen by Hive Dagda in the south. Dagda shared a fierce rivalry with Hive Pneumos, which generated the immense pressure needed to force the water supplies across the planet.

To the south-west of the Hollows was the Ellerophosus Hivebelt, a cluster of medium-sized hives that were classed as one vast conurbation. To the far south was Solor, the Sentinel Hive, which kept watch over the waste-grounds and shanties at the point closest to the freezing wilderness of Kaelac's Bane. Hive Zontanus and the Sumpshall Districts were also overtaken by Oteck's sprawl, which reached all the way to the Siltid River in the north.

Perhaps the most coveted sites in all of Oteck – aside from the reservoirs – were the Turingsbane Datahives, whose foundations pre-dated Imperial settlement upon the planet. It was said that buried in their lower levels were rich troves of data so dense and meaningful they would make a Tech-Magos weep.

The Agamemnus Dynasty knew well how much the Adeptus Mechanicus coveted the ancient data contained in the catacombs of Turingsbane, and the Planetary Governor used access to these data vaults as a bargaining chip with which to manipulate her Adeptus Mechanicus rivals on the Council of Cogs. Part of the Pact of Fire and Steel stated that the priests of Megaborealis could never access the archives unaccompanied, though evidence suggests that the Magi eventually found a way to remotely access the data without permission.

My fellow Hivelords,

Our beloved planet is under attack from vectors so numerous I fear to count them. The insidious encroachment of off-worlders into our lands, be they refugees from unfortunate planets that could not defend themselves or unpleasant military types enlisted to die on our behalf, has been surpassed by threats even more thuggish and unpalatable. Most obvious amongst them is the ignoble Ork. We need not fear this beast, for though he has made sustained assaults on the fringes of our domain, there is no way he can reach us in our spires.

Similarly, these rumours of scuttling spider-beasts from the sewers and sub-levels need not concern us overly. It is my belief that, if needs be, we should forsake the common herd entirely and marshal the military assets upon which we can rely. With unlimited access to the planet's supply of water, we are in a strong position to continue living in the manner to which we have become accustomed.

I am sure we will have to endure the bleating of the other hivespawls until the inevitably victorious conclusion of this war, yet I am equally sure we can endure it – and perhaps even profit from it if we apportion the water in such a fashion that our rivals find themselves lacking in extremis.

Yours in eternal service,

Danst T. Malaghust,  
Lord Aquarian

*- Missive parchment from the Spireheights of Hive Dagda, fished from the mouth of its author's corpse*

## PORTAL TO BEYOND

Though only the highest-placed adepts and leaders on Vigilus had an inkling of its existence, there was an ancient Aeldari webway gate situated in the west of Kaelac's Bane. It had existed there for tens of thousands of years. Shrouded by permanent blizzards that were whipped up by the empyric energies howling from within, it divulged its secrets only to those who could survive the barrier of intense cold that surrounded it like a moat. Leading to the labyrinth dimension, it was an ingress point that the Drukhari used to attack Kaelac's Bane, Oteck and Dirkden on swift and deadly raids.

When the Deathwatch made a foray across the Dearthland Permafrost, they declared a region of some eighteen hundred square miles *Quarantine Cryoferus* – centred on the arcing structures of the xenos portal. No Imperial presence strayed within that cordon, with the exception of the black-armoured Space Marines themselves, and they reported their findings to none save the Chapter Masters of the Vigilus Senate. Even the Deathwatch, however, did not realise that an entirely different breed of enemy would emerge from that webway gate within the year.

# KAELAC'S BANE

**Kaelac's Bane was a frozen wasteland of permafrost, icebergs and glaciers. It was home only to ice-miners, arctic beasts, and secrets hidden deep in the snow.**

Kaelac's Bane was one of the last areas of naturally occurring water on Vigilus, but by the time the Great Rift opened, it had shrunk considerably, the Tundric Perimeter that marked its outer edge moving inward with every passing year.

Kaelac's Bane was of little use as a dwelling place – the last testimony of the famed Vigilant pioneer Jonst Kaelac is proof enough of that. It was, however, invaluable as a source of the pure water known as aqua glaciis, and the continent's glaciers were mined extensively by Adeptus Mechanicus clades optimised to endure subzero temperatures.

In the vast, continent-spanning mining operations that covered the sunward side of Kaelac's Bane, huge las-cutter engines sliced off perfect cuboids of ice from glacier fronts and the edges of the continent's craters. The Venstran and Heliostrike Impact Craters yielded the most bounty, harbouring the Glacia Betus and Glacia Omicroid macro-quarries respectively.

Each day, mining servitors, quarrymen and hook-handed ice-crawler drones crossed each glacial face of these enormous impact craters. As they did so, they hammered in pins and prepared



las-nets that, although low powered, were able to melt their way through even icy rock in time. Each cyborg worker was nospherically linked to his fellows, and they operated in complete synchronicity, as if in some choreographed dance perfected by endless repetition. From these sites, giant slabs and monoliths of ice were cargo freighted to Mortwald, Hyperia and other areas that could afford them.

It was not only water that was harvested from Kaelac's Bane, for in places the permafrost hid strata of valuable minerals and ores. Here too the Adeptus Mechanicus delved deep. The icy and featureless tracts of land protected by the force field web known as the Quixotine Loop were said to be rich in esoteric stone, and were mined extensively. Over time, the islands devolved to little more than landscapes of deadly ice crevasses.

These mining operations were risky indeed. As well as the logistical challenges of the punishing cold, the great white apex predators that prowled the region were as stealthy as they were violent. The truck-sized ice-stalker mantis was particularly fierce, frequently dragging ice-workers away to be devoured in their lairs, and the near-invisible whiteworm was a horrible threat that swarmed toward sources of heat and burrowed into the flesh of those too slow or preoccupied to evade it.

Even then there were worse predators snatching people from the snowstorms. Though no official Imperial sources existed to define their nature, rumours abounded, and the fact that so many glacier miners went missing was enough to cause grave productivity concerns in the upper echelons of the mining clades.

***'The precise nature of the Quixotine Tracts to the north of Kaelac's Bane remains anomalous, as does the vast imbalance of resources sent to guard these seemingly featureless areas and the high proportion of Bastion-class force fields that defend them. All my attempts to categorise or analyse them have been rebuffed, glitched or scrambled. By this measure I can only conclude they are of great value to someone in a senior position in Kaelac's Bane, or perhaps even Megaborealis itself.'***

*- Excerpt from the journal of  
Meta-Geologue  
Xanthran Tarendos*



## FROM SHIPS TO FORTRESSES

The vector of the Ork invasion was straightforward enough – most of their spacecraft simply bullied their way through the stratosphere, pulling up over the last few miles and angling their landing so they did not dash themselves to pieces on the wasteland dunes. It was a haphazard invasion tactic, that much was sure, but it worked.

Some ships came apart in fiery arcs of destruction, spinning end-over-end as they flung burning scrap metal in all directions. The shock waves from these crashes rolled out across the deserts, battering far-flung monitoring stations and hammering refinery pipelines with each landing. Huge dust clouds were kicked up into the skies like atomic blasts, turning the air hazy for days.

The survivors were numerous enough to shrug off their early losses and repurpose virtually all of the scrap metal provided by their unfortunate comrades, using it to build immense, if ramshackle, fortresses.

Some ships, protected by powerful energy shields, made the landing all but intact. Their force-field generators were intact too – projecting a kind of matterphobic dome known as a bubble field. Adapted to protect the scrap fortresses, they remained functional throughout the War of Beasts, repelling many of the Imperial sorties sent against them. These shields, like the fortifications they guarded, were testament to the strange, innate genius of the Ork Mekaniaks that built them.



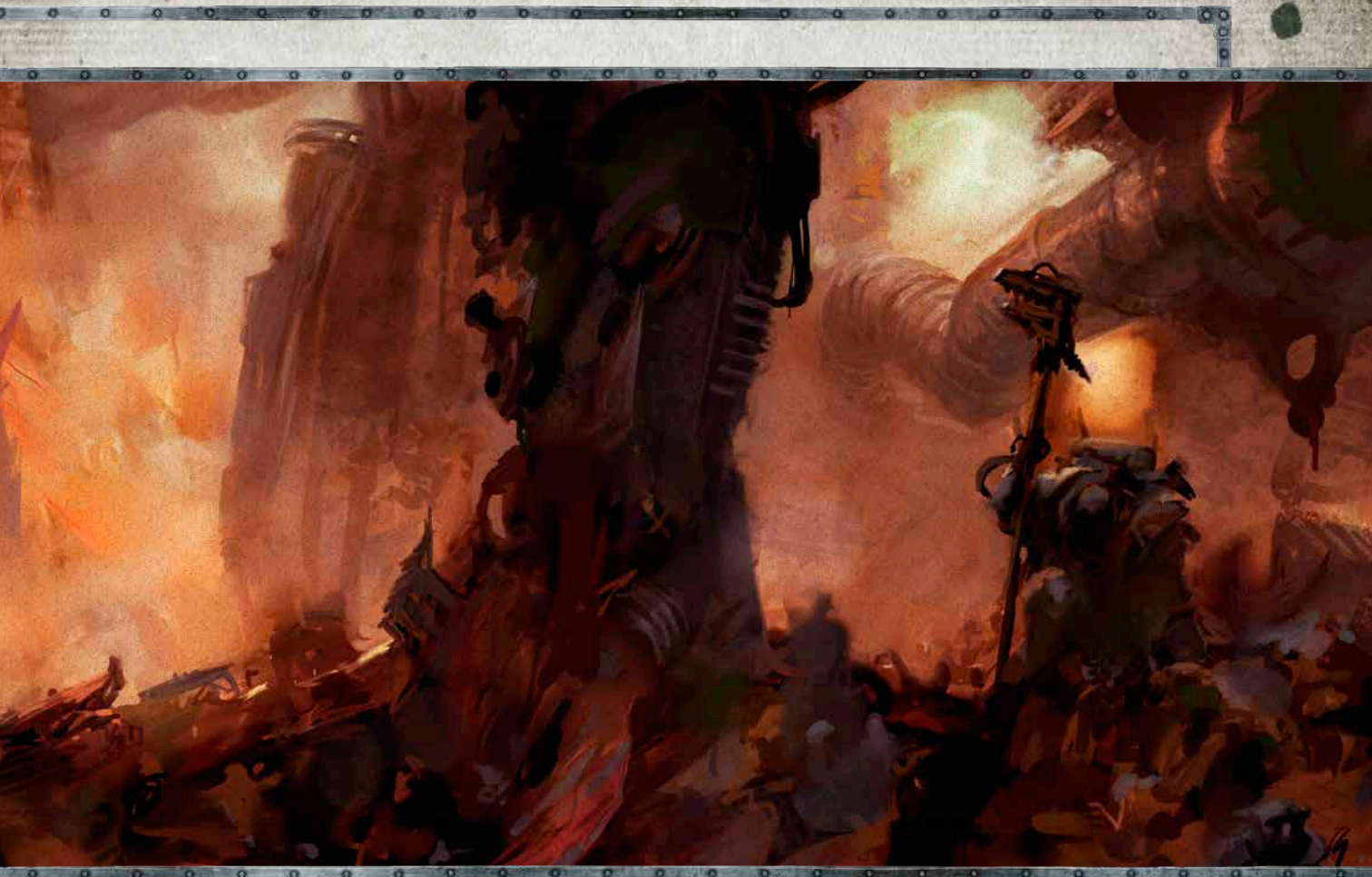
## SCRAP CITIES

**The Ork settlements and junkyards that sprang up in the planet's wilderness were known to all as Scrap Cities. From these came tides of barbaric xenos and an endless parade of war engines.**

In the year 1.192 post, a vast agglomeration of Ork spaceships – each of which had uncharacteristically massive and powerful engines – ploughed through the hastily assembled Imperial cordon sent to blockade it and made straight for the surface of Vigilus. Most of the spaceships aimed not for the metropolises of the hivespawls, but for the regions of wilderness between them that would act as ideal staging posts for the invasion.

Speedlord Krooldakka and his warlords were savvy enough to realise that to attack the cityscapes head-on would invite a vast amount

of flak and defence laser fire – and that even if they somehow made a safe landing amongst the dizzying spires, arches and statues of the cityscapes, they would almost certainly be surrounded and picked apart before they could muster a cogent invasion force. Some of the Ork war leaders simply intuited that to invade via the wastelands would lend them a better chance of victory. Others wanted a chance to race their favourite wagons around their new home for a while before getting really stuck in – after years of being cooped up in the confines of a spacecraft, the scouring winds and open terrain of the desert were a welcome prospect.



The first wave of invaders, upon finding they could not get past the force field networks, built shanty-style encampments around their crash-landed spaceships. They set to work conquering the landscapes around them, attacking Imperial convoys wherever they tried to cross the wastes. As these running battles gathered pace, the resultant flotilla of Ork vehicles became known as the Speedwaaagh!

The most part of the original armada came down in the same region of Vigilus' wastelands, to the north of Oteck Hivesprawl. This area came to be known as the Western Scrap City Cluster. With capital craft at the centre of each collection of Ork vehicles, they formed four Scrap Cities, the largest of which was Krooldakka's own stronghold, Fort Dakka. The other three were the domains of powerful Ork leaders whose mutual rivalry saw their power bases flourish

quickly. These became the hub of a primitive yet profitable economy of scrap metal, fuel and engine parts.

The westernmost was Tanka Spill. Characterised by vast slicks of black petrochemical fluids that spread out from ruptured fuel-haulers and cargo hulks, this city was the province of the Mekboss known as Big Tanka. To the north was Runthive, a township of squig-infested wrecks and grot scrap merchants under the purview of the noted Snakebite Warboss Ogrokk Bitespider. To the south was Drogzot's Crater, where the Deathskull hoardboss Drogzot and his Bad Moon customers piled salvage ever higher in an attempt to fill the vast impact crater to the lip with scrap metal. Fort Dakka was the easternmost city, a vast scrap metropolis that bristled with every gun and artillery piece Krooldakka and his Meks could get their oil-stained hands on.

Out in the Aquaphobian Wastes was the Goff base of Skumtown, a clattering mass of bone-dry structures that rattled against one another in the hot wasteland winds. To the north of Storvhal was Da Wheel Hub, which famously offered a drive-by upgrade service to those Speed Freeks patient enough to stop there. Nearby was Rakkuk's Mekmaze, into which many an aspiring racer drove his wagon, only to find himself walking back out with little more than a steering column, a small money-bag of teef and a confused expression. To the far south of Oteck Hivesprawl was Mekstop City, the premiere site for vehicle customisation. Its gargant construction fields were home to the legendary Drokk and his Rivet Krew. To the east of Hyperia lay Hurrikane Rekk, an early settlement that was all but abandoned when the storm of the Vhulian Swirl expanded to ravage its rusted buildings and shanties.



# NEO-VELLUM

Vigilus' only moon, Neo-vellum, was an orb of white rock and swirling green gas storms. It was a stronghold of the Administratum – that branch of the Imperium dealing with the coordination, analysis, assessment and deployment of information.

Neo-vellum was a nerve centre of data for the Vigilus System, theoretically independent of the disparate factions on the planet, whose own agendas and bias might lead them to restrict or manipulate communications from the wider Imperium for their own purposes.

Amongst the moon's acid swamps and emerald gas storms were built massive, hermetically sealed scriptorums that churned out logistical analyses at a slow but steady rate. Each was a message-centre and an informational way-station, their legions of bent-backed autoquill scribes and lexicographers

literally chained to their desks, allowed to slumber for a few scant hours per cycle beneath their wooden workstations before getting back to their tasks. Together, these stain-fingered troglodytes processed hundreds of thousands of dataslates, parchscrolls and data cylinders with every new day. Only a tiny proportion of these reached their intended recipients, but this was of little consequence to the senior scribes – provided the ink flowed, they cared not how or why.

The normal protocol for despatching the message-scrolls produced by Neo-vellum's

scriptorums was to encase them in ablative packets fitted with grav-chutes before firing them at the planet via hyper-pneumatic tubes. Each metal-cased scroll was launched on a route devised by the complex, cog-driven machine known as the Datasaint, a wonder of ancient technology that calculated the trajectory of the missive against the rotation and orbits of the moon and planet in order to target the recipient's exact position at the optimal time.

Despite its fastidious computations, the Datasaint was so antiquated that its systems were corroded



by millennia of entropy. As such, many of the messages sent out from Neo-vellum were wildly off-course and never reached their targets. Grav-chutes also frequently failed to deploy. More than one accident was caused by a stray message tube falling from the sky at great speed. In one famous case, the message was so on target and travelling at such a velocity that it killed the intended recipient instantly. The message tube itself was also destroyed on impact, and all record of its existence was swiftly eradicated by the Administratum – but the tale lives on nonetheless.

Neo-vellum also had a well-maintained astropathic presence for those times when a message was of such high priority that psychic communion had to be attempted. The Lunar Choir, as it was known, was a body of powerful Astropaths with many centuries of experience

between them; before the coming of the Great Rift it was said they were able to send visions of startling clarity across the stars.

After the Cicatrix Maledictum ripped open, the sending and receiving of psychic missives became more fraught with peril than ever before. The operatives of the Choralium, the torus-shaped building from which the moon's talented psykers sent their missives into the void, suffered dozens of seizures, fits and episodes of insanity in the months following the rift's appearance. Worse still, the complex was plagued by terrible manifestations of supernatural phenomena. This saw the Choralium all but shut down, and astropathic communiques attempted only in extremis – the psykers knew well the dangers of opening their minds to the warp in such tumultuous times.

## A BROTHERHOOD INFILTRATED

Neo-vellum was left alone entirely by the Ork invasion. Perhaps this was because the invaders sought richer pickings on the planet below, perhaps because the moon was simply on the other side of the planet at the time the Ork Waaagh! hit home. Yet the satellite was not untouched by the scourge of the xenos. Hidden amongst the data-stacks and grimoire nests of the Administratum's holdings, a secret cult thrived – and in the attics of the monastic hab-blocks, strange creatures skittered from pools of darkness to slash apart those who dared to venture into their lair.

The Cult of the Pauper Princes made it a priority to settle an infestation upon Neo-vellum shortly after establishing itself within Megaborealis. Ensrod Ghaul, the Primus of the brood sent to conquer the Scriptorum moon, stowed away with a pair of dormant Purestrain Genestealers in the capacitor hold of the electro-freighter *Zealous Blurt* before the ship left for Neo-vellum on a routine resupply mission. Using a combination of forgery, charisma and murderous determination, he smuggled one container into the Scriptorum Primus district of Neo-vellum, and the other into the Stormwrack Citadel. As a result, two minor gene-sects propagated through the downtrodden ranks of Neo-vellum's workers. After the narrow escape of the quillslave Ghorrod from a xenos attack, and an anonymous message sent to the Inquisition, the Purestrain Genestealers themselves were hunted down and burned out by an Ordo Xenos purge, but their dark legacy remained.



**'The native species of the wastes attack the unworthy. They can smell the hubris upon them. Not so the brothers of the faith. We of the Pauper Princes may travel over the hungriest warren and yet remain unscathed, given the respect we deserve by the creatures of the land. What better way for Great Vigilus to show us we are the true inheritors of its majesty?'**

*- Insiardin Gohar, Magus of the First Brood*

# THE WASTES

**The wastes of Vigilus were vast, an endless desert punctuated by the hivespawls that slowly encroached upon it. They were arid and dusty, broken up by gullies and chasms, and populated only by hardy survivors.**

The wastes of Vigilus were anathema to life. They were not poisonous, nor acidic – they were simply empty of all but the remains of those who foolishly tried to conquer them. The landscape was almost entirely devoid of greenery, for the water table was so low that the ground was infertile and dusty, incapable of producing anything but the hardiest vegetation. There was little liquid to be found, other than the occasional river of lava vomited from some new seismic upheaval, and the odd stagnant mud hole. With nothing to bind the earth together, the landscape was a gigantic dustbowl, its substrate whipped up into the air with each passing landstorm to create great cyclones of grit that raged uncontrollably across the wilderness.

Despite the hostility of the region, there were areas where life found a way to eke out an existence. Some of the impact craters that scarred the planet's surface acted as bluffs, gathering a little moisture in their shadowed lees and allowing a rudimentary ecosystem to gain some purchase. In the same way a coral reef gives undersea fauna a chance to cling on to an otherwise featureless sea bed, these features allowed the hardiest of species to stubbornly hang on to life.

The mounds and chasms around Storvhal became home to a colony of ambulls; these claw-armed, subterranean giants preyed on isolated groups of travellers, hunting with their sonic and thermal senses. They learned to avoid the trundling tracks of weapon servitors and the lock-step thump of the metal-legged Skitarii, instead tunnelling up from below to scissor apart fleshier creatures that were usually meatier and less dangerous. Some amongst the Adeptus Mechanicus propagated the belief that the ambulls were a manifestation of the universe's displeasure at those that relied on flesh rather than metal.

The terrestrial molerats that infested the northern reaches of the planet could grow to the size of locomotive carriages on a diet of giant sandroaches – the only other species that could thrive in the irradiated wastes to the west of Dredger's Abyss. Existing in great hives of several hundred individuals, these hideous, hairless moles honeycombed the giant ridged impact sites known as the Kenser Crater Network between Dontoria and Megaborealis. They occasionally ambushed those forced to go on foot across the wastes – for them, human flesh was a delicacy – though it is worth noting that they did not trouble any of the convoys that happened to carry individuals bearing the mutated DNA of the Pauper Princes.



# THE VHULIAN SWIRL

The Vhulian Swirl was perhaps the most dangerous of all Vigilus' geographic features. A vast storm of dust and sharp, shredding particles, it birthed cyclones and hurricanes that continually ravaged the wastelands beyond.

To the east of Hyperia, there was a dust storm so immense that when seen from space it dominated a full quarter of the planet's surface. Near its centre it was so violent that the tiny stones, dust and sedimentary particulate could strip the skin from a man's body. Over time, the storm would abrade layers of subcutaneous fat, muscle, tendon and, eventually, bone. Ultimately, there would be nothing left of the unfortunate victim. The citizens of Vigilus, and their shadowy counterparts the Pauper Princes, knew well to fear the Swirl, and so avoided it at all costs, never straying past the Perimeter Extremis as defined millennia ago by the Astra Cartographica that founded the planet. Even the Ork invaders gave it a wide berth, for at times the Swirl raged so hard it could tip over their gunwagons and lift their light buggies clean into the air, only to dash them to pieces on the hard earth when its fury abated once more.

Smaller storms emanated from the Vhulian Swirl, cyclones and tornadoes bursting into the wastes along their own seemingly random trajectories. Carried by the hot winds that gusted from fault lines, they were flung eastwards by the pyroclastic blasts of Storvhal. These errant storms primarily scoured the unpopulated side of the planet, and were largely responsible for that part of Vigilus never being settled. Freak weather patterns would cause them to occasionally veer towards the hivespawls, but the Bastion force fields, while active, dissipated them before they could do serious harm. Travellers who strayed outside the force fields risked having one of these gritty, choking hurricanes bear down on them out of nowhere. Even if it should not strip them bare, such a storm could foul an engine or cause an anti-grav vehicle to crash in a matter of minutes.

The barren side of Vigilus, known as the Dismal Waste, was commonly thought to include little of worth, and its dust storms were even more deadly than those thrown up over the deserts between the hivespawls. However, the slow expansion of Megaborealis pushed fingers of industrial sprawl into the Dismal Waste as the Adeptus Mechanicus continued to quest for the bounty beneath the planet's surface. Dontoria likewise expanded, being vastly overpopulated, though those who lived on the barren side were often beset by toxic cyclones.

***'There's something in there, you can mark my words on that. No storm without an eye, and that storm isn't dissipating, just as its Emperor-forsaken eye isn't moving anywhere but where it sits. I'll wager there's something in there, right in the middle, riling it up. But I'm not gonna be the one that goes in there to find out what.'***

*- Elder Ghara Jhaine, the day before her disappearance*

# DIRKDEN HIVESPAWL

Dirkden Hivespawl, characterised by its rudimentary cityscape, was a troubled metropolis indeed. It was abandoned by Vigilus' elite, and was home to as many subterranean, half-feral outcasts as it was productive civilians.

Dirkden long ago reached a threshold in its expansion, after which it was all but abandoned by the Agamemnus Dynasty. Unbeknownst to all but the Cult of the Pauper Princes, however, this discarded cityscape did indeed supply something to its fellows – the mutating genetic pattern known as the Genestealer's Kiss.

Dirkden's tallest and proudest conurbation was Ashenid Non-Hive, a half-finished skeleton of a hive city that, although teeming with life, was open to the stars. Its construction was never finished, for the architects that built it – now lost in the annals of history – changed tack halfway through, and began to build downwards into the naturally occurring cave networks beneath. From Glaive Point in the north to the Rescalid Underworks at the southernmost tip, the hivespawl was shot through with subterranean levels. These had become so liberally infested with Genestealer Cultists by the end of the War of Beasts that if a census had somehow been taken, it would have revealed far more in thrall to Grandsire Wurm than to the Emperor of Mankind.

## THE FORTWALLS OF VIGILUS

Dirkden was joined to the southernmost reaches of its parent hivespawl by the massive Hyperia-Dirkden Fortwall, a vast double row of crenellated defences with a rockcrete macrohighway running between them. Mortwald was similarly linked to its neighbour by the Mortwald-Oteck Fortwall, and the Dontoria-Megaborealis Line connected the two northernmost continents to facilitate trade and transit. The original plans for these links between the hivespawls were put into place by Deinos Agamemnus shortly before his fourth rejuvenation. Growing ever more irate at the toll the native hazards of Vigilus were taking upon his endeavours, and determining that his losses in export convoys were unsustainable, he leant on the Aquilarian Council to provide a more stable means of transit.

It was hoped that by allowing the faithful of Hyperia to flood along the highway to Dirkden they would raise the hivespawl to new heights of productivity – and one day, should all go well, build outwards to merge the two into a single hivespawl that would empower Hyperia all the more. Instead, the macrohighway seemed only to drain the capital of Vigilus of its manpower and resources – and in return, infect the Cape of Lost Causes in Hyperia with the gene-tainted xenos cult that plagued the subterranean levels of so many of Dirkden's districts.

Still, the Fortwall itself stood strong throughout the War of Beasts, even with the rampaging Orks that marauded around the wastelands occasionally mounting raids against it.

# DONTORIA HIVESPRAWL

Dontoria was critically overpopulated, even amongst its fellow hivespraws. So densely packed were its districts that it had access to incredible manpower – though when infection broke out in the populace, it could not be stopped.

Dontoria passed the standard metropolitan population density recommended by the Administratum in 943 previo. Over a thousand years later, it continued to pack more citizens into its earthquake-ravaged slums. The endless manufacturums and fabrication shanties that surrounded its numerous hives were so steeped in pollution their outer walls were blackened and flaking, and their insides were a sickly yellow reminiscent of a lifelong lho-stick addict's fingers. Hacking coughs and expectorant splutters were common there; the lands of Mesha's Delta, Smog Field and the Great Choke were swathed in a dense blanket of vile pollution that damaged the lungs of those without respirator augmetics.

This false continent's sole source of water, the inland sea known as Lake Dontor, was polluted to the point that no life could exist within it and it sickened any who dared drink from it. That did not stop floating shanty towns being built upon it. So desperate was the population to find living space that much of the lake was covered in walkways, rowing boats, decommissioned barges, flora batteries and sump haulers, all bound together in a latticework teeming with shouting merchants, hustling traders, merciless opportunists, tattooed thugs and smogwater urchins.

The scrap-built shanties of Tzimitria, Stump and Vostoyev Subspraws were far from wealthy in the conventional sense, but as with many desperate populations, they were rich in faith. The Ministorum found it easy to sway the swathes of smoke-stained workers, so desperate for hope as the Great Rift glowered above, to the fervent worship of the Emperor at the exclusion of all else. Their daily task was to make the autosanctioned relics and holy weaponry with which the Ecclesiarchy waged its wars, and the strongest of their holy

gangers often went on to lead new lives in the Vigilant Guard. Grodholev, Pravdus, Hallordwight and Vostoyev were older; these subspraws were considered to be the original foundation of Dontoria and hence were more heavily tithed. The extreme north of the continent, optimistically named New Horizon, was slowly encroaching on the wilderness in order to provide more living space. Similarly, Missionary Point to the south was extending towards Mortwald. Lord Tharenst, the Hive Marshal of Mesha's Delta, wished to link his province with the northernmost point of Mortwald, but his entreaties and proposals were met only with contempt, until the outbreak of war on Vigilus relegated them to the status of a distant dream.

*'They're packed in like skinrats in an Ogryn's ration tin up there. It's a pressure cooker, no doubt. Just listen to the tales of violence and crime – they make even Dirkden seem civilised by comparison. Breeds tough fighters, though, does Dontoria. I swear half the Vigilant Guard comes from up that way. I pity anyone that takes on the Big Fug; they'll find its sons up in arms by the billion.'*

*- Sergeant Goagan of the 342nd Immersite Skydrakes*



‘LOOK TO THE KISS  
OF THE VOLCANO NOT  
AS A CURSE, BUT A  
BLESSING! TIGHTEN  
THY SKIN UNDER  
ITS HEAT, DRINK  
IN THE SCENT OF  
INCINERATION AS THE  
HAIR IS BURNED FROM  
THY LIMBS, REJOICE  
IN THE CRACKLE OF  
FLESH CARESSED  
BY ALL-CHANGING  
FLAME. TO US IS  
GIVEN A SINGULAR  
JOY; TO BECOME ONE  
WITH THE LAVA,  
THOSE ELEMENTAL  
FORCES THAT ARE  
NEVER TRULY TAMED!  
IN FIRE THERE IS  
FREEDOM! IN FIRE  
THERE IS TRUTH!’

- Pamphlet recovered  
from the Workers’  
Symposium of Vulcanid

# STORVHAL

Situated near the equator, Storvhal generated an incredible amount of energy from its volcano chains and geothermal chasms. It was home to countless worshippers of the Machine God, but still darker cults operated in the shadows.

The volcanic land of Storvhal was relatively small, but of exceptional value to the planet’s infrastructure. Deliberately sited on a convergence of fault lines, it was originally founded as an annex by the Adeptus Mechanicus after the Pact of Fire and Steel was signed. It produced the planet’s main source of power, its volcanic farms and generator arrays harnessing the energy created by the continent’s frequently erupting volcanoes. Fabricator Vosch claimed to have adapted, overseen and optimised the technology used in the farms himself – basing his works upon the holy foundation of a Standard Template Construct, of course.

Rather than suffering from the seismic upheaval caused by the drilling in

Megaborealis to the north, Storvhal reaped the benefits of each tectonic shift and volcanic eruption in great measure. Though hundreds of its workers, magma-servitors and Skitarii patrolmen died with each geo-spasm, its energy yield spiked massively as the volcanoes from the Phaestos Mound in the south to the Ommissiah’s Tread in the north erupted. Fabricator Vosch considered the exchange more than worth it.

If the storage levels of Vulcanid Geohive, Hive Magmathermid and Phaestos Mound filled their enormous capacitors and generatorum caches to excess, the overflow of energy was sent along the Voschian Canals, and from there into a subterranean network of cables and macrofibres to Megaborealis. If that continent’s needs were already met, the excess instead went to the hivespawls that bid the highest to receive it.

Being a place of fire and fury, Storvhal inspired a lot of religious subcultures. Some of the cults burgeoning in the Pyroclast Districts believed the volcanic eruptions of their homeland to be the Emperor’s work, and that their sacrifice was necessary to appease the volcanoes. Others saw the abuse of their Adeptus Mechanicus overlords for what it was, and sought recompense. The resultant unrest and civil ire was capitalised on by rogue elements working against the Imperium. Because of the inhuman toll on life, the agents that worked in secret in Storvhal found it easy to seed fire-cults, rebel sects and pyromaniacs throughout the slave populace. Some preached the notion that the fires of the volcanoes could be altered to transform the faithful into divine beings, a phoenix-like apotheosis from ashes to glory. Worse still, the underground demagogue known as Vannadan the Firebrand was able to garner power – not in the name of emancipation, but Chaos.





# THE OMNISSIAN HOIST

The Greater Omniessian Hoist was a true marvel of the Adeptus Mechanicus' genius. Via this immense pulley, the Tech-Priests captured and processed ice-clad asteroids for their elemental bounty.

Reaching up from the Stygian Spires – the tallest hive in Megaborealis by some margin – was a vast construction known as the Greater Omniessian Hoist. This edifice was testament to the incredible willpower and vision of the Magi of the Adeptus Mechanicus, and was famed across the sector for putting into practice a hypothesis that had intrigued Tech-Priests for millennia.

The Hoist and its supporting structures rose so high that the tip was invisible to the naked eye. They linked the Stygian Spires with the wheel-shaped space station of Sacrus Tora Hawking in geosynchronous orbit high above. It did this via a complex system of microfibre carbon chains and duraplas capillaries. Partially telescopic and modular, these were created on an industrial scale by the workshops of Megaborealis' primary hive and hauled into the stratosphere by a succession of low orbit tugs.

Across the span of an entire century, the carbon chains were extended and reinforced until they not only reached Sacrus Tora Hawking, but passed through its specially constructed engine mills and back down to the planet's surface again. These chains were counterweighted with sections of the original space station in order to pull up replacement components from the hive below, the interstitial point of the Median Sacrus Way-station ensuring that each winchnode passed on in safety.

That was the first freight transaction made between the hivespawl and the space station above it, but it opened the door for the tens of thousands of other exchanges that happened after. For its part, Megaborealis sent up manpower, food, repair parts and other necessities. In return, Sacrus Tora Hawking shipped down asteroids clad in thick layers of ice, a vital source of water for the planet.



The asteroids harvested by Sacrus Tora Hawking were native to a great band of space debris known as the Octiline Belt. Early auguries determined that the rocks drifting in that band were clad in ice water, and almost immediately a plan for the capture and exploitation of this resource was put into place – the thirsting citizens of Megaborealis cared little where their water came from. The plan to harness the Octiline Belt's seemingly endless bounty was so ambitious, and of such immense scale, that only one with the processing power of an Arch-Magos could dare to attempt

it. But, with the help of his most trusted colleagues, Fabricator Vosch oversaw the Hoist program from beginning to end, adapting and installing banks of tractor beam cannons that could lock onto the asteroids within reach and slowly draw them into the space station's armature talons. From that day, the transit of ice from orbit to the processing factories of the Stygian Spires – where the meltwater was 'refined' with the addition of sacred oils and blessed lubricants – became a miracle so commonplace it was rarely considered worthy of mention.



# FORGES OF WAR



'This entire planet is cursed. I am sure of it. It can be the only explanation for the sheer scale of destruction meted out upon it.'

- High Castellan Deinos  
Agamemnus





# FORCES OF THE IMPERIUM

In the early phases of the war, the forces stationed upon the planet formed a cross-section of the Imperium's defenders. Most numerous amongst them were the soldiers of the Astra Militarum – though the presence of the Adepta Sororitas and arrival of the Adeptus Astartes made a vital impact.

Collectively, the unaugmented human soldiery defending Vigilus were known as the Imperium Vigilant. With so many military forces having made the star-spanning journey to the strategically vital planet, this brotherhood included everything from raw recruits and conscripts to the hard-bitten Adepta Sororitas.

In general, the military assets of each continent journeyed to other conurbations only to distribute vital supplies. The rulers of each hivesprawl jealously guarded the battalions and regiments seconded to their defence, though they did so out of a sense of pride rather than prudence. With the Bastion force fields protecting their assets, the amount of military force assigned to each area of Vigilus was seen purely as an indication of status rather than a pragmatic solution to theoretical invasions.

This over-confidence was present most of all in Lucienne Agamemnus and Pontifex Galluck, who were so embroiled in their own power struggles they had little time to devote to protecting the planet against some hypothetical danger from off world – nor even from the downtrodden masses, who they had come to see more as sheep and cattle than as living citizens whose allegiance could not always be counted upon.

The aristocracy's failure to treat the ever-present threats of the alien, the heretic and the mutant as very real dangers antagonised many of the Astra Militarum commanders assigned to the defence of each hivesprawl, but short of actually leaving the planet, there was little they could do about it. Instead, they looked to the defences of each hivesprawl as best they could, ensuring their men were familiar

with the planet's geography and learning to deal with the frequent earthquakes that could throw all their preparations into disarray in a matter of minutes. A loose confederation of sharp military minds began to take shape across Vigilus, the lord commander of each military body in correspondence with several of his peers so that the Astra Militarum would have a safety net should the political rulers of the planet act in a fashion that threatened the war effort.

The coming of the Noctis Aeterna shattered that long-range web of cooperation and coordination beyond recovery. With communications disrupted everywhere and the populace under attack from within and without, the truth of the situation soon became clear – it was every continent for itself.



*Marneus Augustus Calgar of the Ultramarines restored a semblance of order to Vigilus' war effort in the war's latter phases, but for many areas it was already too late.*



*Fabricator Vosch of the Adeptus Mechanicus addressed war as an exercise in logistics. His callous approach added fuel to the fires of many a slow-burning rebellion.*

# IMPERIUM VIGILANT

Because Vigilus was so strategically situated, the Astra Militarum stationed there were very disparate, hailing from a dozen war zones. Though in the years previous to the opening of the Great Rift the many regiments' different agendas had sometimes caused conflict to arise between them, they united in a common cause upon the initial invasion of the Orks, and remained in the Imperium's service from that point on.

## HYPERIA GUARD AGAMEMNUS

Sonasthi Royal Guard	8 regiments
Vigilant Guard	32 regiments
Vigilant Creedsmen	19 regiments
Dragoons Demonstratus	6 echelons
Vyacine Adepts	2 regiments
Adamant Rifles	4 regiments
Dagmar Guard	8 regiments
Nord Lothan Vanguard	1 regiment
Expadar Vengers	2 regiments
Golohastus XIIth 'Decapitators'	1 regiment
Black Torus Scout Companies	3 companies

## ADEPTA SORORITAS

Order of Our Martyred Lady	11 preceptories
Order of the Bloody Rose	7 preceptories
Order of the Ebon Chalice	3 preceptories
Order of the Argent Shroud	5 preceptories

## VIGILUS ARMoured ELEMENTS

Sondoran Gearheads	4 armoured regiments
Cadian Heavy Armoured	6 armoured regiments
Ustenoran Gundogs	9 armoured regiments
Kharbys Iron Cavalry	4 armoured regiments
Vostokh 44th 'Crushers'	1 armoured regiment

## OTECK DEFENCE GROUP

Vigilant Guard	12 regiments
Vigilant Creedsmen	7 regiments
Utica Pikemen River Guard	2 regiments
Palladion Rifles	6 regiments
Tallarn Raiders	4 cavalier regiments
Miasman Redcows	7 regiments
Hydroplant Water Hounds	5 castellanries
Vastadt I Expedrines	3 sabot groups
Gharti Volunteers	7 regiments
Tekarn Iron Men	11 regiments
Vresh Grenadiers	2 iron phalanxes
Anark Zeta Bullgryn Auxilla	2 brute regiments

## ADEPTA SORORITAS

Order of the Last Prioress	7 preceptories
Order of the Martyr's Shroud	3 preceptories

## DIRKDEN RECLAMATION GROUP

Vigilant Underhivers	13 regiments
Dharan Bloodfists	5 regiments
Anark Zeta Abhuman Auxilia	2 detachments
Kanak Skull-takers	1 regiment
Cthonol Nineguards	7 regiments
Miasman Redcows	3 regiments

## DONTORIA SPRAWL GUARD

Vigilant Guard	8 regiments
Vigilant Creedsmen	3 regiments
Mordian Iron Guard	2 regiments
Gantor Rough Riders	3 cavalier regiments
Indigan Praefects	5 regiments
Ezelti Lancers (8th)	7 echelons
Ocanan Rad Waste Troopers	9 regiments

## MORTWALD RESERVE

Cadian Shock Troops	12 regiments
Catachan Jungle Fighters	4 regiments
Vigilant Guard	34 regiments
Vigilant Creedsmen	32 regiments
Ventrillian Nobles	14 regiments
Sonasthi Royal Guard	15 regiments

## KAELAC'S BANE TASK FORCE

Truskan Snowhounds	19 regiments
Catachan Jungle Fighters	2 regiments
Valhallan Ice Warriors	4 regiments

## OFFICIO ASSASSINORUM

Imperial Assassins	CLASSIFIED
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### ++CONTINUED IN FILE IMP.VIG/PGS2/1-12

Participants in second and third stages of Vigilus conflict codified 'War of Beasts' codified in auxiliary dataslate Imp.Vig/PGs3/113-119.



*Temperance Blaise of the Order of Our Martyred Lady was considered humourless and dark-tempered – though those who saw her fight treated her with great respect.*



*The unyielding Proctor Commander Venedar of the Vigilant Guard was the leader of the Astra Militarum battle group Hyperia Guard Agamemnus.*



BRAZEN CLAWS  
DROP ZONE



BRAZEN CLAWS MULTI-PRONGED  
ARMOURED ASSAULT



BLOOD AXE HORDE  
TANKBOSS DEEZULFIST



SISTERS OF BATTLE  
ORDER OF OUR MARTYRED LADY



CADIAN 8<sup>TH</sup>  
'CREED'S LEGACY'



CADIAN 122<sup>ND</sup>  
'BAYONET BARONS'



CULT-HELD ANNEX  
[CF. HYPERIA-DIRKDEN FORTWALL]



BAD MOONS  
WARHORDE



## HAMMER AND ANVIL

*Gauntlet Master Sharrack's Brazen Claws hit the xenos of southern Hyperia in two trident-shaped attacks, breaking their inhuman foes against the bulwark of the Imperial Guard.*

## HEROES ON HIGH

Though the decisive battles of the War of Beasts were won on the ground, crucial victories would have proven impossible were it not for the stalwart efforts of the Aeronautica Imperialis. As the Orks established their Scrap Cities and rapidly increased their production of war materiel, scores of Dakkajets, Blitzza-bombers and other greenskin aircraft rolled off their ramshackle assembly lines. Droning waves of deadly xenos attack craft filled the skies over Vigilus' hivespawls and screamed down to strafe transport columns and hammer manufactorums with barrel-like incendiary bombs.

In response, Imperial commanders threw every air asset at their disposal into interdiction missions and combat air patrols. Flights of Thunderbolt and Lightning fighters spiralled madly through the Ork air-armadas, their cannon-fire lashing out to punch one greenskin pilot

after another from the skies. Heavy wings of Marauder Bombers lumbered out over the wastes to rain explosive death upon the Ork airfields; despite heavy casualties amongst the air crews, their efforts stripped away the xenos' aerial capabilities bit by bit, and prevented a desperate battle from becoming an untenable slaughter.

The heart of the greenskin aerial efforts on Vigilus was Rakkuk's Mekmaze, a warren of scrap-metal shanty towns behind whose defences a quartet of airfields sheltered. Rakkuk led a loose assemblage of airborne tribes that outnumbered any other Ork airforce on Vigilus several times over, and staged repeated raids upon Megaborealis.

The silhouettes of Blitzza-bombers became a thing of dread to the Imperial forces guarding the Megaborealis supply convoys. Yet for all the terror the Ork Flyboyz caused, it could not outweigh the furious

elation of the Imperial ground forces as they witnessed the intervention of the Aeronautica Imperialis pilots. As macro-tankers and speeding Tauroxes raced across the Vigilus wastes, outnumbered bands of heroic pilots fought ferocious duels against swarming greenskin craft to ensure the convoys made it to their destinations in safety.

The Imperial propaganda machine was quick to seize upon the seemingly glamorous and adventurous exploits of these knights of the air. Pilots such as Flight Lieutenant Brandyn MacElroy, Lucretia 'the Red Marquess' Jenst and Bomber Captain Brokmann Gallister became overnight sensations amongst the common soldiery of Vigilus, and their names were plastered on Commissariat bill posts from Oteck to Hyperia. The fact that barely any of these famed heroes survived the horrors of the Vigilus air war was not so well-publicised.



### HAMMER AND ANVIL

The Astra Militarum is often likened to a sledgehammer, but on Vigilus they played the part of the anvil. Forced by circumstance to keep the bulk of their armies within the boundaries of the hivespawls, they fought with a largely defensive stance in the early stages of the war. Though the call for aid had gone out into the stars – with many astropaths paying the ultimate price in the process – there was little hope it would yield swift results. Though none gave voice to their suspicions too openly, almost all of the commanders of the Imperial war effort harboured a fear that the Bastion force fields would give up before the Orks did. Even should they last, the greenskins that roamed the wastes had effectively mounted a siege that would eventually starve out the defenders of Vigilus and force them to commit to open war. That they had done so seemingly by accident was cold comfort indeed.

Then came the Space Marines. Striking without warning from high above the smog line, Adeptus Astartes cruisers hurled their Drop Pods from launch bays down to the planet with stunning force.



The Brazen Claws struck hard to the south of Hyperia, for even with the Hyperia-Dirkden Fortwall heavily garrisoned it was only a matter of time before Cult infiltrators rose up and Orks from Mekstop City took their war further inland. A Drop Pod invasion into the Ork-held city outskirts would have quickly

been surrounded, so the Brazen Claws launched a multi-pronged, mechanised attack that fell upon the Orks' rearguard and drove them into the guns of the entrenched Imperial Guard. Caught between an irresistible force and an immovable object, the Orks were scattered, hunted down, and destroyed.

Outside Megaborealis, the White Scars and Ravenwing used their mobility as a weapon, blunting each Ork spearhead with well-timed pincer movements that left the Orks nowhere to run. To the north of Kaelac's Bane, the Primaris Marines of the Void Tridents and Castellans of the Rift made similar attacks, their individual companies splitting up to take on the Orks – and in one region, raiding Drukhari – in a series of well-chosen engagements that kept their foes on the back foot and forced them to retreat or be utterly eradicated in a storm of bolt rifle fire. For a time, Vigilus knew hope once more.





# FORCES OF THE ULTRAMARINES

The warriors of Ultramar came to Vigilus in force – though they were amongst the last to arrive, they made such a vital contribution to the war effort that they arguably turned the stricken planet's war footing from a total collapse to a grinding stalemate – and, for a time, brought a chance of victory.

The Ultramarines hail from the Macraggian tradition of leadership, producing great statesmen as well as warriors. On Vigilus it was their skills in the art of diplomacy that saw them restructure the planet's war machine from the inside out.

Few in the Imperium could have matched the strategic mastery displayed by Lord Calgar as he cut out the corruption of the Aquilarian Council and reshaped it in the image of a Macraggian senate. He despatched the failed and the corrupt in a single night, all the while keeping the delicate balance between the Agamemnus Dynasty, the Priesthood of Mars, and the Ecclesiarchy. So reformed, the senate was able to focus on the true enemy rather than their old rivalries and feuds. From the debating tables of the Aquilarian Palace, he organised a new war, abandoning the status quo that saw each continent looking to its own defences and bringing in a complex, overlapping methodology that combined all of Vigilus' disparate forces. His strategic command saw the armies of Vigilus working together, crushing hordes of Orks and seething infestations of Genestealer Cultists beneath the Imperial sledgehammer.

By the end of the war's third phase, Calgar had not committed his own forces far beyond Hyperia – beyond Saint's Haven, come to that. Instead he focused three companies and two demi-companies of Ultramarines on the inner metropolis defence. He had his warriors mount hit-and-run strikes from Saint's Haven as and when a Genestealer Cult uprising, Ork air assault or rebel horde threatened the stability of inner Hyperia,

for maintaining a solid base of operations was of paramount importance. Any strike forces sent out of the capital quickly returned once their task was complete, ensuring that Calgar always had a bulwark of Ultramarines as part of the senate's defence.

The only standing deployment consisted of five squads of the 9th Company, each assigned to one of the bridges that crossed the Ring of Nothingness around the inner territories of Saint's Haven. With any who sought passage across these bridges subject to stringent checks, and any foe attempting to force their way across coming under heavy fire from Devastators and Centurions, this fortified position meant that there was no easy invasion route into the Aquilarian Palace on foot or by wheeled conveyance.

The vengeful Aeldari of Saim-Hann mounted a cogent assault on the senate despite these measures, for their jetbikes and skimming anti-grav transports evaded the 9th Company and darted straight over the Ring of Nothingness with alarming ease. Though they took a heavy toll on the Militarum Tempestus and slew no few Ultramarines, ultimately they were dealt with by the quick thinking of Lieutenant Eothrus.

There were those in the Imperial war effort that accused Calgar of holding back. The Victrix Guard that formed the inner circle of defence for Calgar and the rest of the Vigilus Senate saw action but rarely, and the majority of his Ultramarines had mounted search-and-destroy missions, but little else. Eothrus went on record stating

that he believed Calgar was waiting for something.

Only when the spires of the Vigilus hives were found dotted with mutilated corpses did that menace make itself known, and a new phase of the war for Vigilus begin. The Ultramarines were the first to respond in force, sending their strike teams high into the spires to duel with the Raptors, Warp Talons and Heldrakes that blighted the cityscape above the clouds. Had they been despatched in force to other war fronts, they would never have been able to respond to the Chaos threat with such speed and efficacy.

Only a leader of visionary insight could have looked upon a world assailed on all sides by not one but three xenos races, and realised that an even viler threat might yet cast its shadow over the planet. Each decision Calgar made that was questioned by others proved to be a calculated move, be it consigning entire war zones to damnation in the name of the wider war, or sacrificing valuable holdings to burn out an insidious foe. Calgar's seemingly callous rulings and commands besmirched the reputation of the Ultramarines in the eyes of the planet's aristocracy, but in truth they were necessary. Because of Calgar's wisdom the scourge of Chaos was prevented from turning its early gains into a lethal momentum.

Only those closest to the Lord Macragge suspected there was another, more personal reason for Calgar's reticence to commit in person – he was still recovering from the ordeal of the Rubicon Primaris.

## THE RUBICON PRIMARIS

The induction of the Primaris Marines into the Adeptus Astartes was not an easy process by any means. The Chapters of the Space Marines are arch traditionalists, and some are conservative in the extreme, having upheld the same warrior traditions for thousands of years. Of course, the express command of Roboute Guilliman, Lord Commander of the Imperium, eased the transition into the new era. For the Ultramarines and the vast majority of their successors, the word of the risen Primarch was good enough, and many Chapters welcomed the Primaris battle-brothers gladly. But there were those especially secretive or wilful Chapters who saw the incorporation of the Primaris Marines into their ranks as a dilution of their gene-stock and a betrayal of their long-held culture.

Some amongst the Adeptus Astartes suspected that the Primaris Marines, being stronger, more durable, and closer in blood to the Primarchs themselves, represented the obsolescence of traditional battle-brothers. No amount of reason – of pointing out that what the Primaris offered in raw ability, they lacked in experience and versatility – could salve the spiritual wound dealt by the sight of the newcomers wearing their heraldry. The Primaris Marines of the Ultima Founding had been swiftly inducted into brotherhoods that the incepted aspirants of yesteryear had given everything they had to join. Questions, heavy with the weight of destiny, hung in the air. Would the Primaris Marines ultimately make the traditional Space Marines extinct? Would the identity of each Chapter's home world be diluted, with so many thousands of new recruits sourced from the stasis vaults of Mars? And was it possible for a Space Marine to be transformed into a Primaris, inheriting the benefits of Adeptus Mechanicus arcanoscience whilst retaining his personality and experience?

This last question had been raised in Adeptus Astartes Chapters across the galaxy. It was a query Lord Calgar had asked of Belisarius Cawl himself, and had discussed with those of his fellow Chapter Masters he was able to meet in person.

Debate raged as to whether such an act was even possible without having deadly consequences for the recipient – for data that Archmagos Cawl had already amassed on the subject suggested there would be a 61.6% failure rate until the process could be perfected, which would take time. Then there was the moral concern of whether the process should be attempted at all.

The dilemma was proving divisive indeed. There were those who claimed this was the ultimate destiny of all Adeptus Astartes, while from other quarters came whispers of rejection, even mutiny, at the prospect.



The lords of the Ultramarines came to the conclusion that to ease the transition from centuries of Imperial tradition to a new order, the theoreticals of that raging debate would have to be put into practice. It was Marneus Calgar that stepped forward as the first test subject from the ranks of his storied Chapter. It was a process he did not survive – though like his Primarch before him, he was to rise from the threshold of death once more.

The operation to transform Calgar from a traditional Space Marine into a Primaris Marine was conducted in an auto-sterilised med vault. Thick with the tang of counterseptic and crowded with elaborate medical servitors, the room was dominated by the vast marble slab at its centre, artfully

carved with runnels to collect the copious streams of blood that would result from the procedure. The surgery was to be extensive and agonising, a fact Marneus knew well from Cawl's tediously thorough descriptions of his masterwork process. A Primaris Marine is gifted three new organs in addition to the nineteen grafted, sutured and chemically implanted into an aspirant Space Marine. These are the Magnificat, which is buried deep within the brain to stimulate growth and to intensify other organ functions; the Belisarian Furnace, which releases a burst of hypersteroids and corticostimulants when a mortal blow is dealt so the Primaris may fight on; and the Sinew Coils, cable-like lengths of durasteel that encase every tendon and sinew in a metallic sheath that gives tremendous resilience and strength.

During the implantation of these advanced organs, Marneus Calgar was cut open from crown to heel. His ribcage was cracked apart and – at the climax of the operation – his physiology suppressed to the point that his life slipped away. Choirs of cyber-cherubs sang blissful, overlapping requiems, swaying their aspergillum that sacred incense might guide Calgar's spirit back to his body. The corpse lay in state, its flesh rent and open to the air, for what seemed to those watching like an age. Ten long minutes ticked past, then twenty. Skull-faced surgeons clicked and muttered and stabbed at the tortured flesh. Those around the periphery of the apothecarium theatre held their breath in dread.

Then, with his wounds stitched closed by a thousand jabbing needles and his mighty heart electrified to beat once more, the newly forged Lord Calgar was brought back to life. He broke his bonds with a strangulated, blood-flecked roar, stumbling to life as his Belisarian Furnace brought him to battle readiness. Calgar had clawed his way back from beyond the brink of death, and in doing so, he had shown to his Chapter that the transformation was possible. The Rubicon Primaris had been crossed, and a new path opened for the Adeptus Astartes.



# FORCES OF THE DARK ANGELS

Where the White Scars and Crimson Fists worked closely with the Vigilus Senate, the Dark Angels that responded to Vigilus' plight largely followed their own path. Nonetheless, they fought with sudden and effective fury in many of the planet's war fronts.

## THE UNFORGIVEN



*The Blades of Vengeance, a Primaris successor Chapter, fought independently across the north of Dontoria.*



*The Consecrators arrived in Oteck Hivespawl without warning, striking hard before disappearing once more.*



*The Angels of Redemption were under a writ of investigation for dereliction of duty, but fought as hard as any other.*

The Dark Angels delegate that approached the senate was the young Primaris Lieutenant Kodden – a measure that even Marneus Calgar had not foreseen, as he had expected at the least a senior veteran of the Deathwing. Kodden honoured the war council to the smallest possible degree before leaving; though his protocol and manners were impeccable, his reluctance to divulge the strategies of his brothers said something in its own right. Only Chapter Masters Calgar and Kantor suspected the truth – that Kodden simply did not know the Dark Angels' plans.

Word had spread amongst the delegates of the Vigilus Senate that the Dark Angels typically kept their Primaris contingents separate from the traditional echelons of their legendary brotherhood. Though some Primaris Space Marines occupied veteran positions, the least experienced were rarely deployed alongside the rapid strike forces of the Deathwing or the Ravenwing. Instead they formed the spearhead of frontal assaults, plunging right into the enemy force whilst their brothers went about their own initiatives elsewhere. Through his acquaintance with Kodden, Calgar came to realise that the Dark Angels were using the Primaris officer and his honour guard of Intercessors in much the same way – and shielding the Dark Angels' true purpose.

As to what this was, none could say for certain. In the early months of the third phase of the war, word reached the senate that a Ravenwing strike force was acting strangely. Fighting in support of Olujin Khan's forking White Scars attack on Fort Dakka, the Ravenwing force had struck hard at the Ork fortress city

before veering off east as the battle reached its crescendo. Abandoned by their allies, the White Scars were forced to withdraw before they could destroy the command centre of the Ork war effort. Kodden had little to add after giving this report, maintaining that the Ravenwing were not beholden to one such as he. Only Calgar picked up on the slight hint of bitterness in his words.

Over the course of the third phase, Calgar began to piece together the puzzle presented by the actions of the First. Wherever the Dark Angels fought, they never strayed far from the Vhulian Swirl, that vast dust storm to the east of the planet. He knew, with the fate of Vigilus hanging by a thread, that to delve into the reason why would likely destabilise his war council when cohesion was needed above all else, and so he withheld judgement.

When the revelation came that a Chaos insurgency had struck the planet from the tips of its spires down, the Dark Angels committed to the fight in full force alongside the Ultramarines. Deathwing and Ravenwing alike, so conspicuously absent from the annals of the war effort thus far, blazed into the fray with such spectacular force that the Chaos invaders were blitzed from several spires in the space of a single hour. There were after-action reports of some of the enemy being spirited away in the strange winged sepulchre-craft that Kodden referred to as Dark Talons, but again Calgar did not press the matter. If the current situation was to escalate any further, the Lord Macragge would have need of the Sons of the Lion and their devotion to the cause, no matter what other agendas might be at work.

# ADEPTUS ASTARTES

Though all of the Space Marine Chapters present on Vigilus fought in several theatres of war, redeploying at need and at the behest of the Vigilus Senate, the majority operated within specific areas of Vigilus. With the xenos cult uprising occurring shortly after the Ork invasion, the urgent spectacle of war was never far away, and the Adeptus Astartes united their forces and divided once more at need.

## HYPERIA

### OPERATING OUT OF SAINT'S HAVEN

Ultramarines.....	3 companies, 2 demi-companies
White Consuls.....	5 companies
Black Templars.....	1 company
Praetors of Orpheus.....	2 companies
Silver Skills.....	1 company
Genesis Chapter.....	2 companies
Hawk Lords.....	2 companies
Howling Griffons.....	3 companies
Novamarines.....	1 company

### ++CONTINUED IN FILE IMP.VIG/AAS9/1-5

Participants in second and third stages of Vigilus conflict codified 'War of Beasts' listed in confidential dataslate Imp.Vig/PGs1/1-19.

## OTECK

Space Wolves (Haldor Icepelt).....	1 strike force
Space Wolves (Brand Sabrewulf).....	1 strike force
Mortifactors.....	2 companies

## MORTWALD

Imperial Fists.....	3 companies, 1 demi-company
Mortifactors.....	2 companies
Fire Lords.....	2 companies

## MEGABOREALIS

Iron Hands.....	6 clan companies
Brazen Claws.....	2 companies

## DONTORIA

Iron Hands.....	2 clan companies
Necropolis Hawks.....	7 companies
Silvered Blades.....	4 companies

## DIRKDEN

Crimson Fists.....	5 companies
Sons of Medusa.....	5 companies

## PERIPATETIC FORCES

### SONS OF THE LION

Dark Angels.....	4 companies
• Deathwing elements (unlisted)	
• Ravenwing elements (unlisted)	
Consecrators*.....	1 company
Blades of Vengeance*.....	2 companies
Angels of Redemption*.....	1 company

\*Note these are estimates, no formal number given

### SONS OF THE KHAN

White Scars.....	4 companies
Solar Hawks.....	3 demi-companies
Storm Reapers.....	2 demi-companies
Destroyers.....	1 demi-company

### INDOMITUS CRUSADE FORCES

Sons of the Phoenix.....	6 companies
Void Tridents.....	3 companies, 1 demi-company
Castellans of the Rift.....	2 companies



Rather than sporting their company colours on their pauldrons, the Dark Angels wear them on their left kneepad. This practice harks back to the knightly traditions of ancient Caliban, which was all but destroyed in the tragic aftermath of the Horus Heresy.



The Chapter's Stormseers, fulfilling the role of Librarians in their warrior fraternity, had seen in visions that the sentinel world of Vigilus was soon to be overrun by a tide of anarchy, and at the forefront of that tide was the greenskinned beast. Part of Olujin rejoiced that they were to fight the Orks, and Speed Freaks at that, for mounted warfare was his forte. More than that, the Orks were solid, brutish and predictable in comparison to the mind-bending hosts that he had fought in his last crusade on the Slaaneshi cult world of Vondrel Magnificat. There was honest glory to be had on Vigilus, won with bolt and blade. Some amongst Olujin's veterans – the Ivory Blades – had suggested that maybe, if their captain was instrumental in securing Vigilus for the Imperium once more, he might be considered as the next Great Khan if Jubal was truly lost.

The White Scars first made an impact not in defence of the Imperial cities, but in swift and vengeful assaults. Landing just north of Fort Dakka with the 2nd Company, Olujin Khan led a strafing, running battle along the outskirts of Krooldakka's own territory, a hurricane of bolts and las beams smashing industrial sites and blasting apart half-built effigies of war. The Orks responded quickly, roaring out from their workshops and hangars to engage the White Scars in a high-velocity chase, and several of the Sons of the Khan were shot out of the saddle or even blasted high into the air by the guns of Fort Dakka.

Nonetheless, the blinding speed of the White Scars armoured spearhead, combined with the thick clouds of dust thrown up by the skids and slaloms of their assault, protected them well enough. With the vast majority of Orks already on campaign, they were able to swathe the north of Fort Dakka in fire and smoke, intensifying their attack by blasting their way into the city

with enough Land Raider, Repulsor and Predator fire to destroy the gatehouse ship *Punchin' Fist*.



Almost simultaneously, the White Scars 3rd Company joined the assault from the west after setting their own ring of fire around Runthive. Their thunderous assault was well-timed to coincide with a mounted attack from the Ravenwing in the south of the city, for the Dark Angels had struck at both Fort Dakka and Drogzot's Crater to maximise confusion. The black-armoured bikers, obscured by the great rolling banks of dust and smoke thrown up by the northern attack, gunned down hundreds of Orks with each passing minute. Attacked on all sides, many of the lesser greenskins of Fort Dakka fled the city through the south-west speedway. All was in place for the noose to close, and the Orks, milling in confusion, to be burned alive in their own fortress. Then, without warning, the Ravenwing changed direction and sped off to the east, leaving the Orks to concentrate their forces upon the White Scars alone. Olujin Khan called off the attack soon after, having done considerable damage to Krooldakka's power base. He did not forgive the Ravenwing for abandoning the chance to strike a truly telling blow.

Over the course of the next few months, the White Scars collaborated closely with the Astra Militarum to harness as much

information as possible about the force dispositions across the planet. Olujin Khan attended Marneus Calgar's new senate in Saint's Haven, and there struck a deal with the Imperial Guard supremo Proctor Commander Venedar. The Sentinel Recon Companies of the Vigilant Guard, pacing the wastelands between hivespraws, and even travelling to the featureless ocean of dust on the opposite side of the planet, would share their information about Ork racing routes and dust trails whenever comms contact would allow it. In return, Olujin Khan shared his own findings with Venedar and two other officers – Tank Commander Jaesman of the Vigilant Armoured Spearheads, and the leader of the Tempestus Scions that fought planetside, Tempestor Prime Ghallaghan. This latter would not deign to deal with mere Astra Militarum officers, but always made time for vox contact with the Adeptus Astartes. Through Olujin Khan, the greater war effort found a cohesion it had been sorely lacking, for where the Ultramarines masterminded matters strategic from Hyperia, the White Scars roamed far and wide – and hence came into range for conventional vox contact even when the communications networks were riven by warp storms.

Thanks to Olujin Khan, dozens of the Astra Militarum mechanised regiments that were escorting vital convoys of water tankers and war materiel from one hivesprawl to another fulfilled their missions without incident, despite Ork raids being levelled against them. This accord paid dividends over the latter half of the war, enabling the White Scars to strike quickly and efficiently at the Orks and then withdraw before untenable force was brought against them. In this way Olujin won the glory and respect he sought – not through combat, but through wisdom, diplomacy, and a desire for unity in the name of the Emperor.



# FORCES OF THE IMPERIAL FISTS

The Sons of Dorn are archetypal defenders of the Imperium, and they showed their mettle upon Vigilus time and time again. Ever since their Primarch, Rogal Dorn, was entrusted with defending the Emperor's Palace on Terra they have been expert siegebreakers and tenacious castellans of the Imperium's holdings.

It was Captain Dravastis Fane of the Imperial Fists 5th Company that led his Chapter's war effort upon Vigilus. He was amongst the first to work with Marneus Calgar to restore order to Vigilus, just as his Primarch Dorn had worked with Roboute Guilliman in the dark days after the Heresy to restore sanity to the shattered empire of Mankind.

The majority of Fane's forces were stationed on the eastern trench lines of Mortwald shortly after planetfall. They fought in that false continent's defence for the duration of the war's second and third phases, thereby fulfilling a vital function – shoring up a wall against an Ork invasion that otherwise may have run roughshod over the planet's single

largest source of food – the cactus forests of Mortwald. With the Imperial Fists working alongside not only the fine regiments of Cadia and Catachan, but also the Knights of House Terryn and the Freeblades hailing from cursed Dharrovar, they made the invading Orks pay dearly for every foot of land, throwing them back time and time again.



Many of the Astra Militarum troopers joked of the Thin Yellow Line, for the Imperial Fists were conspicuous indeed amongst the drab earthen camouflage of the Deinos Trench Network, but their ribaldry came from a place of utmost respect.



The Imperial Fists see siege warfare as the ultimate test of martial ability, courage and resolution, and their stubborn, intractable nature makes them ideally suited to trench combat. Where the Dread mobs of the Ork vanguard drove their assault home, they found the Devastators and Centurions of the 5th Company ready to blast them to scrap. Where the Astra Militarum fell back from a rampaging tide of greenskins no human force could hope to stop, the Imperial Fists held the line. Where the Orks broke through the Imperial defences and appeared to gain some ground, they found themselves caught in a pincer movement between the Imperial Fists and their allies on the other side; with their quarry trapped, the Sons of Dorn wasted no time in gunning down the now-stranded invaders with relentless hails of bolter fire. When ammunition ran low, or even ran out entirely, it was the blades of the Imperial Fists that drove the xenos back, repelling wave after wave. For if there is a way to defend a muddy trench against a xenos horde or a looming war machine, the Imperial Fists will be the ones to find it.



*The Company Banner of the Imperial Fists 7th Company, held aloft over the Tzeller Line's Fortress of Redemption in the south of Mortwald.*



*Captain Dravastis Fane changed radically after his first encounter with Chaos. Even during the xenos-hunting phases of the Vigilus counter-invasion, his preoccupation with heretics bordered on paranoia.*



# FORCES OF THE CRIMSON FISTS

The Imperial Fists were not the only Sons of Dorn to defend Vigilus against the alien. With them came their foremost successor Chapter, the Crimson Fists, who had lost so much to the greenskin race upon their home planet of Rynn's World. On Vigilus, that debt would be paid in blood.

The Crimson Fists were amongst the most numerous of the Chapters upon Vigilus. That in itself was a significant achievement, given their tragic past. After the disastrous missile detonation that had destroyed their fortress-monastery and killed the majority of their Chapter in a single blinding instant, the Crimson Fists had numbered less than four-tenths their original strength. But it was not in them to give up. Shorn of their fortress, their vehicle pool, and even their gene-seed, they fought on against the Ork invasion of Rynn's World. United under the unyielding will of their Chapter Master, Pedro Kantor, they consolidated squads and used every acre of their homeland as a weapon until they formed a cogent fighting force once more. Though they took many further casualties, they brought something akin to order back to their home world.

When the Indomitus Crusade reached Rynn's World, it brought a new breed of warrior with it. Guilliman had learned of the stricken Chapter's misfortune, and assigned over five hundred Primaris Space Marines to its reinforcement. This was an event of such destiny-altering magnitude it has been celebrated as the Day of Renewal ever since.

The Crimson Fists were beyond joyous at this turn of fate, for they had all but given up hope of attaining Chapter strength once more. To have their numbers doubled overnight, to have a real chance of redemption afforded to them, was a boon of historic magnitude. They worked hard to bring their new Primaris brethren into the fold, teaching them the rites of battle and training alongside

them night and day until the new warriors fought seamlessly with the old. Each new recruit to the Chapter underwent the trials of the Bloodied Fist, returning with his bare hands stained with the gore of a barb-dragon and the right to wear crimson upon his right hand. There were a few traditionalists of the Chapter who saw the induction of so many off-worlders into their ranks as permanently changing the soul of their brotherhood, but with Guilliman and Kantor united in their new vision for the Imperium, they kept their counsel.



The Crimson Fists too had heard tell of Vigilus' plight. Resolving to harden the bonds of kinship between newcomer and veteran, Kantor led five entire companies – a full half of his Chapter – to battle in the Nachmund Gauntlet. It was a statement, after a fashion, its intent as clear as the clarions that announced their arrival and the stark blue-and-red heraldry of their battle plate. The Crimson Fists were back in force, ready to fight and die not just for their home territory, but for far-flung worlds that the Imperium at large could not do without.

Upon making planetfall at Saint's Haven, the Crimson Fists did not plunge straight into battle, raining from the skies in thunderous drop assaults as did so many of their fellows. Instead they deployed via Thunderhawk Gunship – many of which had yet to earn a single battle scar, for the armorium of the Chapter had been replenished alongside its warriors by the grace of Guilliman's crusade. Pedro Kantor presented himself to the Vigilus Senate, consulting the war leaders of that august assemblage and seeking the wisdom of Marneus Calgar himself. He was there to serve, not to win glory – he would pay back the faith that Primarch Guilliman held in him through solemn duty.

Much to the disappointment and simmering anger of many Crimson Fists, the companies from Rynn's World were not despatched to shatter the Ork forces upon Vigilus. Instead, they were given orders to aid the war effort in Dirkden. Their task was to slow down the Genestealer Cultists that had boiled out of the subterranean levels of Dirkden, rising up in such impossible numbers that many thought that misbegotten continent already lost.

Without a word of protest, Kantor made haste for the Hyperia-Dirkden Fortwall – in doing so coming under attack from elements of the Pauper Princes – and crossed to the war-torn hellscape of the Rescalid Underworks. His forces fought nobly and without pause against the Purestrain Genestealers that scuttled like hideous alien insects through the streets, purging nests of the vile creatures with flame and sustained volleys of bolter

fire. Their aim was not simply to exterminate, for even with their newly bolstered companies, there was no way they could have taken on an entire nation of Genestealer Cultists and survived. Instead they fought a complex, overlapping web of battles designed to buy time for the Imperial citizenry to escape.

The populace of Dirkden, having been plunged into a nightmarish existence where every building, hab-site or bunker could harbour twisted alien mutants, had all but given up hope. With the Crimson Fists working alongside the Cadians to clear as many citizens as possible, tens of thousands of lives were spared, flowing in refugee convoys into the dusty southern reaches of Hyperia, where the Brazen Claws had so recently hurled back the Ork invaders. When the Ministorum decreed that they had overloaded the capacity of Hyperia to harbour more unfortunates, and that agents

of the Pauper Princes were also escaping Dirkden disguised as refugees, Pedro Kantor argued for a stringent checking procedure at the southern gate of the Fortwall. He did so with such passion and eloquence that the Ministorum agreed to a compromise, and put into place the checkpoints requested under the purview of veteran Cadian regiments. In the end, even that was not enough – the Fortwall and Dirkden both ultimately fell to the xenos cultists that had so long prepared the way for their ascension. Yet without the efficiency, conviction and compassion of the Crimson Fists, the false continent would have fallen long before the culmination of the War of Beasts, and doomed millions of innocent souls.



*The Chapter Banner of the Crimson Fists flew high and proud on Vigilus, held aloft by the Chapter Ancient Endigio Gomarex. Those lost in the Rynn's World disaster were remembered on its insets.*

# THE CHAPTERS PRIMARIS

Amongst the Chapters on Vigilus were those of the First Founding and their immediate descendants from the Second – but also several from the Ultima Founding. Though their legends were barely a century in the making, they were soon to earn the respect of their fellow Space Marines through skill at arms.

## CASTELLANS OF THE RIFT

The Castellans of the Rift have a dire duty entrusted to them by Roboute Guilliman himself. Since the Primarch despatched them to the Nachmund Gauntlet, they have been locked in a struggle to drive back the hordes of daemonic war machines and Renegade Knights blighting that channel of space. When war broke out on Vigilus, the greater part of the Chapter was engaged

in warfare against the heretic forces that had revealed themselves on Dharrovar. Still, two companies joined the war on Sangua Terra and a further two travelled to Vigilus. With experience fighting against the machinations of Chaos, in the third stage of the War of Beasts they hunted the dark cults of Storvhal with commendable efficiency and resolve.



*The Chapter symbol of the Castellans includes crossed chains – a symbolic barrier against the evil that these Space Marines fight.*



*Battle-brother*



*Sergeant*



*Veteran Sergeant*



*Lieutenant*



*The Castellans of the Rift use High Gothic alpha-numerals to reflect their Ultramarines heritage. Their squad number is shown on the right pauldron and their company number on the right knee on a field of black.*

# NECROPOLIS HAWKS

Trained extensively in close-quarters warfare and veterans of a dozen city fights, the Necropolis Hawks are stoic and efficient in their warfare. They bear their battlefield role insignia upon their backpacks as well as their pauldrons so their comrades can identify them even in the smoke and dust of urban war.

On Vigilus, the Necropolis Hawks turned the tide against the xenos insurrection and Gellerpox infection that rocked Dontoria to its foundations. Taking control of the city building by building, they established several safe zones that were expertly defended – and pitilessly demolished those that they considered lost causes.



Higher ranks amongst the Necropolis Hawks are often denoted by the wearing of an embellished white Chapter badge.



The sword and halo was a device worn by those in Dontoria Hivespawl who slew a heretic from the infamous Death Guard legion.



The Chapter icon of the Necropolis Hawks symbolises the sharp wits and visual acuity that make them such formidable urban fighters.



Battle-brother



Sergeant



Veteran Sergeant



Lieutenant



The blue-grey and white of the Necropolis Hawks is well chosen, for it enables them to blend into the ruined urban landscapes, cordite-scented smoke and dirt-smog typical of war in a dense cityscape.

# SONS OF THE PHOENIX

Faithful to the Emperor and ritualistic in their battle cant, the Sons of the Phoenix pride themselves on plunging into the flames of battle. Their crusades are so impressive in spectacle they pave the way for the Imperial Creed to spread, and hence are followed by a great many holy men and women. Their presence in Hyperia Hivespawl had a galvanising effect on the

Vigilant Guard and Adepta Sororitas who had long anticipated their coming. Though the Sons of the Phoenix are a relatively new addition to the armies of the Emperor, during the Wars of Antipathy they won a reputation for levelling spectacular firestorms against the foe – and for the fact that they would fight on through those flames without hesitation.



*The pauldrons of the Sons of the Phoenix are often richly embellished, sometimes with sanctus bones and other sainted relics.*



*Sergeants usually wear their squad number on their left pauldron, often framed by the laurels of victory.*



*On the left pauldron is worn the insignia of the battlefield role, and on the right, the Chapter symbol, a haloed helm with aquilan wing.*



*Battle-brother*



*Sergeant*



*Lieutenant*



*The off-white armour of the Sons of the Phoenix symbolises their purity. Rather than using the shoulder trim for company identification, they display their company number and often battlefield role in gold upon the left knee.*

# VOID TRIDENTS

Recruited from the ocean world of Talassar, the Void Tridentes follow the naval traditions of the Ultramar empire. They are fast becoming known for their aptitude in space-faring and void warfare. Under their Chapter Master, Lord Commodore Theodro Vethrus, they were the first Chapter to cross the Nachmund Gauntlet from Sangua Terra to Vigilus. They outran the Daemon fleet

of Warpsmith Tzungdan as they cut a path past Omis-Prion. Had it not been for the distress signals their Librarian picked up regarding Vigilus, they would have likely been able to outmanoeuvre Tzungdan and destroy his base. In the end, they diverted to Vigilus and fought a series of board-and-slay missions against the Ork cordon there instead.



*The shoulder pads of Void Tridentes veterans often show one Aquila per decade of active service.*



*The astral halo, displayed alongside the laurel, is worn by warriors who have fought a boarding action that resulted in a total ship kill.*



*The Void Tridentes show their role and squad markings on the right pauldron, and their tripartite Chapter symbol on the left. The company number is displayed on the left knee.*



*Sergeant*



*Lieutenant*



*The deep blue of the southern Talassarian oceans is echoed in the Void Tridentes' battle plate. They keep an Ultramarian tradition, and on Vigilus relished the opportunity to fight alongside Marneus Calgar himself.*



# FORCES OF THE ADEPTUS MECHANICUS

Several dozen macroclades of the Adeptus Mechanicus were in action upon Vigilus when the War of Beasts began. These were not confined solely to the agents of Stygies VIII – though the Cult Mechanicus troops who wore the colours of that forge world fought the hardest of all to defend their domains.

After the Pact of Fire and Steel ratified what they saw as their divine right to Megaborealis, the Adeptus Mechanicus forces on Vigilus busied themselves with an agenda that none outside their mysterious priesthood truly understood. Their reputation for being inhumanly insular and at times infuriating was not helped by the behaviour of their representatives on the Aquilarian Council. These figures were politicians as much as they were priests, and they deflected, confounded and ignored any who questioned their true motives.

The Adeptus Mechanicus of Stygies VIII are seen as untrustworthy and peculiar even by their fellow Tech-Priests. The history of their forge world is defined by the events of the Horus Heresy, when their planet was saved by the quixotic Aeldari. Following this, the adepts of Stygies pursued a controversial interest in aliens and alien relics. This willingness to delve into xenos technology has coloured outsiders' perceptions of Stygies VIII's agendas ever after.

Though they never spoke of it to others, the priests of Megaborealis

and Storvhal mined the planet's crust extensively for deposits of the precious substance known as noctilith, or blackstone in the common parlance. This material was of some interest to the wider Cult Mechanicus – especially after the discoveries at Amontep II came to light, and the expeditions of Belisarius Cawl of Mars became the subject of debate as he pursued deposits of this strange material in a dozen locales across the galaxy. But a peculiar quirk of the blackstone deposits upon Vigilus confounded even those who claimed to know its core properties.



GENESTEALER  
CULT AMBUSH



PYROCLAST COHORT  
OF STYGIES VIII



SONS OF VANNADAN  
REBEL WORKERS' UNION

*Mount Colossid, an active volcano that formed a vital power hub for Vigilus, was the focus of a xenos cult attack, and the simultaneous onslaught of the Pyroclast Cult raised by the now-deceased demagogue Vannadan. The Skitarii of Stygies VIII siphoned off enough geovoltaic power to fire their esoteric weapons on maximum power for a full day, repelling invaders and rebels alike. If Vannadan and his Tzeentchian allies had been present, the defence would likely have been a total rout.*

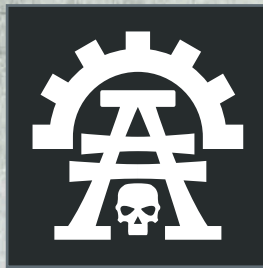
## BATTLE OF MOUNT COLOSSID [STORVHAL]



It was rumoured amongst the Priesthood of Mars that raw deposits of blackstone could not only be shaped and polarised to attract empyric energies, but also to repel them. There were wild theories that extrapolated from this, hypothesising that perhaps the blackstone structures dotted across the galaxy were partially responsible for reinforcing the barrier between material space and the warp. None amongst the Xenarites of Stygies VIII claimed to be able to replicate this, but they studied it with voracious and endless curiosity.

It was this boundless hunger for knowledge that saw the pioneering Tech-Priests of Vigilus delve deep under the planet's crust after their equipment showed strange readings at certain geomantic points. When they discovered the blackstone deposits there, what they found boggled the mind – the linear, spear-like shards of blackstone were held in hollow spheres that had somehow formed in the substrata, themselves filled with a viscous black suspension. As the planet turned upon its axis, the blackstone spears always remained pointing in the same direction – straight towards Sangua Terra in the Imperium Sanctus.

That discovery saw the Xenarites of Stygies reinforce their holdings a dozen times over. Whatever phenomenon of cosmic engineering they had beneath their feet had to be protected at all costs. A full sixteen macroclades – each of four cohorts consisting of three maniples – joined the eight that were already sworn to Vigilus' defence. Several other forge worlds sent macroclades to 'bolster' the forces of Vigilus, though in truth they were mobilised purely to ascertain why Stygies VIII considered the world so vital. The priests of Stygies at first rebuffed these 'reinforcements', but when the War of Beasts drove the planet towards disaster, the various forge worlds combined their efforts without further protest.



*The symbol of Stygies VIII is a mark of utter dedication to the Omnissiah, and it is known on a thousand worlds. Sometimes worn with a 'VIII' numeral emblazoned beneath it, it symbolises knowledge attained at any cost.*



*The Skitarii Rangers of the Culax Black Guard were shipped to Vigilus as penance after their sacred charge, Arc Reactor LCVII, was destroyed by a stray orbital bombardment. They fight hard to clear their name.*



# FORCES OF THE ASTRA MILITARUM

The defenders of Vigilus hailed from a hundred different brigades and regiments, some amongst them the most famed in all the Imperium. The finest of these were seconded to Mortwald, where their excellence in the arts of conventional warfare enabled them to hold the line against dozens of Ork attack waves.

The strategic value of Vigilus saw it reinforced by regiments of Cadian Shock Troopers many times. They proved perfectly suited to the conditions in the hivespawls, and were soon put to work training Vigilus' indigenous warriors in the arts of close-quarters fighting, urban escalation and quadrant pacification. Cadia had been a world where the cities were militarised to such a degree they resembled labyrinthine trench networks as much as they did conurbations – a fact that Deinos Agamemnus had long known, for he had visited Cadia as a youth.

With the Cadians manning the trench networks that protected the northern fringes of Mortwald, Lord Deinos turned his attention to the interior of his prized false continent. When a regiment of Catachans made planetfall he was quick to garrison them in the barracks of Mortwald's succulent cactus forests – though each plant was tangled and thick with foot-long, steel-hard spines, these were little impediment to the Catachan troopers stationed there. When the Ork bomber squadron known as the Dakkanaut Flyboyz made it through the flak-spitting Icarus

networks of the Deinos Trench Network and disgorged hundreds of Stormboyz from their bomb bays, the Catachans were waiting for them. The battle in the cactus forests was short and bloody. Soon Ork heads adorned many of the tallest cacti.

The Vostroyan Firstborn were stationed largely at Dontoria. Noble and selfless, they volunteered to guard the quarantine there. They paid a heavy price. When the lines failed, four out of every ten Firstborn troopers fell to plague, and the rest were incarcerated.

## THE VIGILANT GUARD

The Astra Militarum are recruited from hundreds of thousands of Imperial worlds across the galaxy, and each regiment has its own customs and traditions as a result. The guardsmen recruited from Vigilus were known for one thing above all – their unwavering faith in the Emperor. They were already aligned with the Imperial Creed upon inception, for most of their number hailed from Hyperia, where religion was a way of life. The appointment of a standing body of Ministorum Priests to their ranks saw their ever-burning belief in the God-Emperor fanned to a blazing inferno. Sent to fight alongside the Vigilus-based orders of the Adepta Sororitas on hundreds of occasions, they witnessed so many miracles over the years that they had iron-clad faith in the old Astra Militarum maxim, 'The Emperor Protects' – and, if the logisticians of Hyperia were to be believed, they were quite correct. Many are the stories of true and faithful Vigilants having enemy

kill-shots turned away by their devotional medallions, lights in the sky guiding them to lost comrades, or ruined buildings suddenly collapsing upon ravaging xenos raiders just before they could plunge into the Vigilant lines.

This intense belief manifested in several ways. Firstly, the Vigilant Guard were far more superstitious and reverent than their more pragmatic peers in other regiments. In early M41, when several battalions from the Cadian Gate were shipped to Vigilus and given the ongoing task of training the defenders to a high standard, this dissonance was a cause of conflict between the more military-minded Cadians and the faithful of the Vigilant Guard. The endless rites, services and obeisances that the high command of the Vigilants demanded of their men rankled many of the Cadian officers. Proctor Commander Hallatar of the 23rd Vigilant Guard was

so unbending in his insistence that every tradition and rite be adhered to that some Cadian footsoldiers started to call him the Little Pontifex. For them, this behaviour was a drain on their resources, a drag factor on their teachings – an unnecessary indulgence that would ultimately do more harm than good.

All that changed with the opening of the Great Rift. The Vigilant Guard were not troubled by the nightmares that afflicted the rest of the populace; they awoke fresh and rested after each sleep. Where the Vigilants fought they fought hard, fixing bayonets and charging gene-cursed Aberrants and even Purestrain Genestealers when needed. The Cadians grew to respect their allies, and even attended their services. Though they were strange company and believed every war hymn to be literal truth, something about the Vigilant Guard inspired hope in the time of war.

# FORCES OF THE MILITARUM TEMPESTUS

The war for Vigilus saw several famous Militarum Tempestus regiments fight as elite troops in the prosecution of high-priority targets – and, when members of the aristocracy went missing, were abducted or required safe passage, as search and rescue teams, extraction specialists, and escort details.

The Militarum Tempestus are primarily known for three things – their absolutism, their exceptional degree of training, and the high quality of their wargear. They are not well liked amongst the footsoldiers of the Imperial Guard, and are held in loathing by those who resent their privileged position and wargear. This is a fact the Tempestus Scions care little about, for they are sent into battle when the Astra Militarum are found wanting, and must face some of the worst war zones the galaxy has to offer. On Vigilus they let their deeds speak for themselves.

The Schola Progenium, working hand-in-glove with Vigilant Lord Vaargan of the Aquilarian Council, recognised that the morale of the Imperial forces was of paramount importance. With the Genestealer Cult growing within and the uprisings spreading across the hivespawls, rumours of catastrophe were causing panic in the streets.

Tempestor Prime Liocardus of the Betic Centaurs determined that the greatest impact his Scions could have was in saving the figureheads of the Vigilus world order. By thwarting the assassination attempts

of the Genestealer Cultists and acting as an extraction detail for fleeing dignitaries, the Antrell Lions and Zetic Tygers under Lord Commissar Asdan saved the lives of three members of the Aquilarian Council attacked by the lumbering Aberrant horde of cult leader Hollun Desh. Meanwhile, when Hivespire Magentine was assaulted by Speed Freetks seeking to topple the hive from below, it was the Kappic Eagles that fought them to a standstill and escorted Pontifex Slyne Galluck to safety. Without their figurehead, the Ministorum would have suffered a serious blow.

## EXTRACTION OF PONTIFEX GALLUCK [HYPERIA]

*The Orks that raided Hyperia, seeking to topple Hivespire Magentine and slay Pontifex Galluck, were stymied by a textbook Militarum Tempestus shield extraction.*

-  14<sup>TH</sup> DELTIC LIONS
-  41<sup>ST</sup> KAPPIC EAGLES
-  3<sup>RD</sup> LAMB DAN LIONS
-  43<sup>RD</sup> IOTAN DRAGONS
-  ORDER OF OUR MARTYRED LADY
-  ORK KULT OF SPEED ROUTE OF ATTACK
-  PONTIFEX SLYNE GALLUCK
-  EXTRACTION ROUTE OF LANCEWING SQUADRON





# FORCES OF THE ADEPTA SORORITAS

The Sisters of Battle that fought upon Vigilus were a vital part of its defence. Without their faith, surety and swiftness of purpose, the hivesprawl of Oteck would almost certainly have fallen – and likely Hyperia too. Some amongst the citizens have described the feats of martial prowess they exhibited as miraculous.

The Adepta Sororitas have a proud tradition that saw their founders talk in person with the God-Emperor himself. They are more than a mere military presence, for they embody the Imperial Creed, and back it up with fire and fury. On Vigilus, they kept the hivesprawls safe from countless threats, ranging from mundane rebellion to supernatural manifestation.

The Order of Our Martyred Lady had fought to keep Vigilus unsullied by the scourge of Chaos for nearly four thousand years. They had

garrisoned Saint's Haven ever since it was a simple basilicanum, and patrolled hundreds of miles of alabaster ramparts and tower-dotted boulevards in force. Being urbanised to such a degree, they fought almost exclusively in the built-up areas of the hivesprawls, and the Adepta Sororitas of Hyperia became a largely mechanised force. They had a great many transports at their behest, and were well-versed in citizen control during times of strife – so much so that the sight of their midnight-black vehicles sent the populace of Hyperia scrambling to move out of the way. Each

Canoness and Sister Superior knew the city streets well, having made a study of them for her entire tenure. With the data-harvests of the Order Dialogus predicting likely threat zones and guiding their optimal passage from one hivesprawl district to another, the Sisters of Hyperia were masters of their territory. Should the unbeliever, the heretic or the abomination threaten a city district, the Sisters of Battle were swift to respond. It was this home advantage that saw them hurl back the Ork invaders time and time again in the War of Beasts' opening stages.



ORDER OF OUR MARTYRED LADY  
[DATA RECLAMATION MISSION]



14<sup>TH</sup> VIGILANT  
'MOURNING STARS'



STRONGHOLD OF THE  
PAUPER PRINCES



CLAW OF THE  
THIRSTING WYRM



HALDOR ICEPELT'S  
STRIKE FORCE



OVERGROUND AQUA PIPELINE



UNDERGROUND AQUA PIPELINE



AQUA PROCESSING MACRO-DUCT



FORTIFIED  
RESERVOIR

*Whilst the Space Wolves of Haldor Icepelt brought death to the xenos hybrids poisoning Greigan Hollow, the Adepta Sororitas punished those cult elements that emerged from hiding around Trevig, Agamemnus and Mysandren. The streets were lit with billowing fire as a hundred flamer-armed kill teams turned the vile mutants to ash, in many cases driving them back underground. Though they would resurface elsewhere, three vital sources of water were protected at a critical time.*



Such was the influence of the Ministorum over Vigilus that the Sisters of Battle under their command had priories and abbeys in every hivesprawl. They were initially placed there to further the reach of Saint's Haven – or rather, the Ecclesiarchy's presence there – and for a time, Lucienne Agamemnus resented them. But as the Orks slowly closed on the planet's metropolises and the Genestealer Cult rose up in dizzying numbers from beneath the streets, the true value of the Adepta Sororitas became clear. Where the Sisters of Battle walked, the grace of the Emperor held back unnatural magic and banished nightmares like the morning sun. Where they fought, the populace fought with them.

The Canoness Superior in charge of the Adepta Sororitas upon Vigilus, a fiery and short-tempered individual known as Temperance Blaise, was so roundly feared that she was given free rein by the entire Aquilarian Council to prosecute the Vigilus campaign as she saw fit. Beneath her was a network of trusted Canonesses and Celestian Superiors she had named the Sacred Thorns, each of whom was entrusted with the defence of the Ministorum's interests in a different hivesprawl.

When the Space Marines made planetfall upon Vigilus it was Temperance Blaise that dealt in person with the Chapter Masters. In the first few weeks of the war, Blaise had taken the invasion of her planet hard, and had led many a counter-strike in person, taking out her righteous indignation upon every malcontent and coward she could find, as well as the xenos invaders that threatened her cordons. Only when the war ground into more of a stalemate did she resume her role as war leader, coordinating the defence of Hyperia with lethal efficiency, and leaving the killing to her sisters.

Used to all but ignoring the officers of the Astra Militarum, the Adeptus Astartes conversely worked closely with Blaise, for they saw in her a powerful ally with vital knowledge of each theatre of war in which they fought. Working together, they proved far greater than the sum of their parts. Though the Sisters of Battle kept largely to the hivesprawls, they held the line when even a whole regiment of Imperial Guardsmen would have been found wanting, defending the interior districts with bolter, flamer and melta blast.



*The icon of the Order of Our Martyred Lady was a common sight across Hyperia.*



# THE KNIGHTS OF VIGILUS

Dozens of Imperial Knights fought on Vigilus – some Questor Imperialis, some scions of the Mechanicus, and some Freeblades from the forsaken world of Dharrovar. Some hailed from as far away as Voltoris, the home world of House Terryn; these noble veterans played a large part in taking on the Ork Scrap Cities.

As war erupted in the outskirts of the urban sprawls, the defenders of Vigilus were outclassed by the massive, heavily armoured war engines constructed by the Ork Mekaniaks that oversaw the industry of the Scrap Cities. Only the march of the Imperial Knights turned the tide against these war machines. Yet such was the unremitting violence of the War of Beasts that at its end, only four Imperial Knights were left standing.

The first of the clunky, fat-bodied walkers that assailed the hivespawls were crewed by gretchin and lesser Orks, their war machines dwarfed even by the Armigers that fought in support of

the nobles of the Imperial houses. The Ork vehicles were cut down by the dozen, smashed to pieces by the devastating charges of lance formations, and put to waddling flight on more than one occasion. But the longer the war ground on, the larger the war engines became, until the Ork walkers made even Dominus-class knights seem small.

When the Gargants of the Ork war tribes loomed into view on the horizon, several of the Questor Mechanicus detachments from Megaborealis calculated that they would suffer untenable casualties if they engaged them, and simply fought elsewhere, taking a deadly tally on the Ork Speed Freeks that

ventured into the interior of their home continents. The Freeblades hailing from Dharrovar were eager to fight the largest of the Ork war machines, forsaking the Imperial lines in what many saw as a reckless quest for glory. Their dauntless aggression carried them far, but in the end, they were outmatched and slain to a man.

**'Honour comes from within, not from circumstance. Though it asks not for reward, it forms a shield against corruption more potent than any other.'**

- Taurus of House Terryn

## CHARGE INTO LEGEND [MORTWALD – WESTERN SCRAP CITIES]

The original Freeblade assault on Tanka Spill was daring, impressive, and ultimately doomed. House Terryn moved in support, but when Krooldakka's hordes mobilised, all was lost.





*The Knight Errant known as Honour Intractable is piloted by Taurus, Gatekeeper of House Terryn. He rarely leaves his home system – but when he does, he fights like a born hero.*



*Baron Darius, piloting Intolerant, is House Terryn's Master of Justice and its appointed executioner. He led a spearhead of his own knightly vassals on Vigilus to great effect.*



*Sir Selwyn is a bladesman at heart. He took great pleasure in using his reaper chaincleaver to carve apart any Deff Dreads that he caught in Vigilus' open wastes.*



*Alarbus pilots the Knight Gallant known as Honoured Vigilance. He added another slain Titan-class foe to his tally on Vigilus with the death of the Ork walker Big Stompa.*



*Speedlord Krooldakka's Evil Sun was emblazoned on every vehicle of his Blitz Brigade.*



*Richgit Drukk was of the Bad Moons. He had access to Drogzot's crater of scrap parts.*



*Warhog and his fellow Blood Axes were famed for their many Dakkajets and aerial assets.*



*Everyone was a bit afraid of Mad Goff Murk – apart from his ally Ragzakka.*



*The Snakebites of Vigilus, under Ogrokk Bitespider, owned a nation of runts and squigs.*

## FORCES OF THE ORKS

**Every one of the Ork clans, castes and sub-cultures made it to Vigilus in some form or another – and though they were at first slow to gather pace, they became unstoppable in the later stages of the war.**

The Imperium, using the reprieve bought by its Bastion-class force fields during the first phase of the War of Beasts, did its best to identify and log the various greenskin forces that had battered their way onto the planet. Given that an entire armada of Ork spacecraft descended upon Vigilus at the dawn of the conflict, it is remarkable their forces were categorised at all. Yet the Imperial strategos were able to amass a rough estimation of the major Ork armies present from data amassed by convoys, evacuation craft and low-orbit reconnaissance.

Further down the line, this information was combined with field intelligence gathered from eye-witness accounts, servo-skull pict-captures, and shanty-spies that operated on and around the outskirts of each war zone. Some of these spies were able to broker deals with Blood Axe mercenaries. They did so at the expense of many Imperial lives, but their data proved sound when collated with that collected by interrogators who had acquired information from Ork captives boasting about who would soon come to avenge them. Eventually, the Aquilarian Council – and later the Vigilus Senate – was able to build up a detailed picture of the xenos foe they faced and assign the appropriate defence priorities. It was the first step in the eventual Imperial reconquest of the wastelands.

The forces that invaded the urban sprawls of Vigilus once the force fields went down were billions strong in totality. Through the sheer, shocking violence of their assaults they managed to raze massive swathes of each continent

save Kaelac's Bane and Dirkden. This conquest was known as Da Great Ransakk to the Ork warlords that led the city-wrecking assaults. All the while, high-speed xenos vehicle fleets and motorised war assets circumnavigated the planet in search of battle – and fell upon the outskirts of each urban sprawl when the force fields gave out. These smoke-belching, planet-scarring mechanised hordes were known collectively as the Speedwaaagh!

Many of the so-called Scrap Cities that dotted the wastelands shaped their specialisms about the facilities of their flagship fortress, which was simply the largest spacecraft to make planetfall without disintegrating on impact. If such a flagship fortress contained Mekaniak workshops and hangar complexes where Ork walkers were constructed, the resultant Scrap City became a hub for armies of Deff Dreads, Morkanauts and Stompas. If it was a base for Kults of Speed, it became a pit stop and workshop for the Speedwaaagh!. As the natural order of Ork-kind asserted itself, each Scrap City fell under the domain of a single war leader – though this was as often a Big Mek as a Warboss.

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***'Fer a while there, them force fields kept us out of the humies' cities, an' I thought this planet weren't gonna be no fun. Since then I've driven me wagon all around the planet, won a fire-eatin' race, lost three fingers, and sacked a massive fort fulla them book fings wot burn up real nice. Wot a larf!'***

*- Drok da Stabba, da Black Axes*

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# THE GREENSKIN HORDES

The combination of heavily defended fortress cities, breakneck vehicle flotillas, and earthshaking walker armies, backed up by numberless hordes of Ork infantry proved exceptionally deadly. Only the Bastion-class force fields bought Vigilus' defenders a chance to muster a cogent defence – without them, the planet's urban sprawls would likely have been reduced to cinders within a matter of months.

## FORT DAKKA

### FORCES OF SPEEDLORD KROOLDAKKA

Krooldakka's Blitz Brigade.....	12 Battlewagon mobs
Ozrog's Kult of Speed.....	54 speed mobs
Boss Narka's Speedin' Kult.....	17 speed mobs
Da Oil Guzzlas.....	7 speed mobs
Da Hubdrop Skinflintz.....	2 speed mobs

## TANKA SPILL

### FORCES OF MEKBOSS BIG TANKA

Dread Mob Tanka.....	56 Dread-class walkers
Da Teefspitta Nobz.....	13 Knight-class walkers
Killboss Wrekfist's Stompa Mob ..	56 Stompa-class walkers
Tanka's Bad Gargants.....	5 Gargant-class walkers
Hooladakka's Rig Fleet.....	53 battle tankas
Oddmek's Twin Skullhammerz.....	2 super-heavy tanks
Drokburna's Speedmob.....	14 speed mobs

## DROGZOT'S CRATER

### FORCES OF BIG MEK DROGZOT

Mekaniak Stormboyz.....	22 mob-hordes
Richgit Druk's Speedin' Supastarz.....	17 speed mobs
Drogzot's Grave Raidaz.....	12 mobs
Big Rigg's Tanka Crawlaz.....	53 battle tankas
Duffa's Goff Rokkers.....	1 kill mob

## RUNTHIVE

### FORCES OF OGROKK BITESPIDER

Buglurk's Squig Breedaz.....	2 Runtherd mobs
Olden Runtherd Tribes.....	3 Runtherd mobs
Badgrot Stikkas.....	94 grot mobs
Da Dropz Krew.....	63 grot mobs
Redkap Runt Rebelz.....	3 grot mobs
Deff Gunnaz Big Gunz.....	6 artillery mobs
Da Evun Bigga Gunz.....	2 macro-artillery mobs
Da Snakebite Stampede.....	41 Squiggoths
Da Big Lugz.....	12 Gargantuan Squiggoths

## MEKSTOP CITY

### FORCES OF BIG MEK LUGNATZ

Lugnatz' Blitza Boyz.....	8 Battlewagon mobs
Da Kogtribe Grindaz.....	33 scrapper mobs
Da Skrapyard Dogz.....	12 scrapper mobs
Kommander Grokker's Ladz fer Hire ..	12 mercenary mobs
Grokker's Tankmurkz.....	2 mechanised mobs
Stormboss Stampskull's Skyburna Korps.....	12 mobs
Drokk's Rivet Krew.....	1 speed mob

### ++CONTINUED IN FILE XEN08.1/P1/43

Note: A rudimentary guide to Ork glyph-based linguistics appended to file 44-48, incomplete as of 34.22 post.

## GORK'S LANDING

### FORCES OF BIG MEK ZOGBAG

Zogbag's Killaz.....	34 Mek-led bigmobs
Morkanaut Mekkin' Krew.....	4 Knight-class walkers
Gorkanaut Dekkin' Mob.....	17 Knight-class walkers
Zogbag's Krumpin Mob.....	12 Stompa-class walkers
Mekfist Gargants.....	CLASSIFIED

## DA WHEEL HUB

### FORCES OF BIG MEK TANKSKRAPPA

Tankskrappa's Dread Mob.....	34 super-heavy walkers
Da Wheelboss's Mekmob.....	2 speed mobs
Speedsta Bosskult.....	12 speed mobs
Murk's Squigz-on-da-Move.....	1 speed mob auxilia
Boss Dekkit's Blitz Brigade.....	1 Battlewagon mob
Da Great Gargant Gorkzilla.....	1 Mega-Gargant walker

## RAKKUK'S MEKMAZE

### FORCES OF BIG MEK RAKKUK

Rakkuk's Speed Freek Eleet.....	44 speed mobs
Nakkadakk's Doom Skwadron.....	31 Flyboy sky mobs
Warhog's Dakka-planes.....	12 Flyboy sky mobs
Lockjaw's Blastamob.....	1 speed mob
Boss Shokk's Shokkaboyz.....	1 speed mob
Krogskull's Boyz.....	1 kill mob

## SKUMTOWN

### FORCES OF MAD GOFF MURK

Deffstomp's Goff Krushas.....	41 mobs
Da No-mess Kill Krew.....	11 mobs
Da Black Axes.....	19 mobs
Da Heavy Triggaz.....	8 mobs

## HURRIKANE REKK

### FORCES OF BAD MEK RAGZAKKA

Da Lootin' Pillagers.....	3 Loota hordes
Da Nikkin' Fingaz.....	2 grot hordes
Da Swirlygig Riders.....	2 Loota hordes
Da Bigmob Burnkrew.....	3 Burna hordes
Krogzak's Burnaz.....	1 kill mob
Da Pyro-Mekaniak Speedaz.....	1 speed mob
Da Big Gutz.....	14 super-heavy walkers





# SPEED FREEK RACES

In the opening phases of the war, the Speed Freeks on Vigilus, unable to invade the city sprawls due to the Bastion force field networks, were dying for a proper fight. Purely for the thrill of driving fast, they made circuits around Storvhal, the Vhulian Swirl and even Kaelac's Bane – though for the latter trips they had to take plenty of squig-based firebrew to use as anti-freeze. Vast swathes of wasteland were scarred by the grinding wheels and tracks of the Speedwaaagh!, some trails so large they were visible from space. Yet the Fortwalls that connected the major false continents to one another proved to be troublesome obstacles.



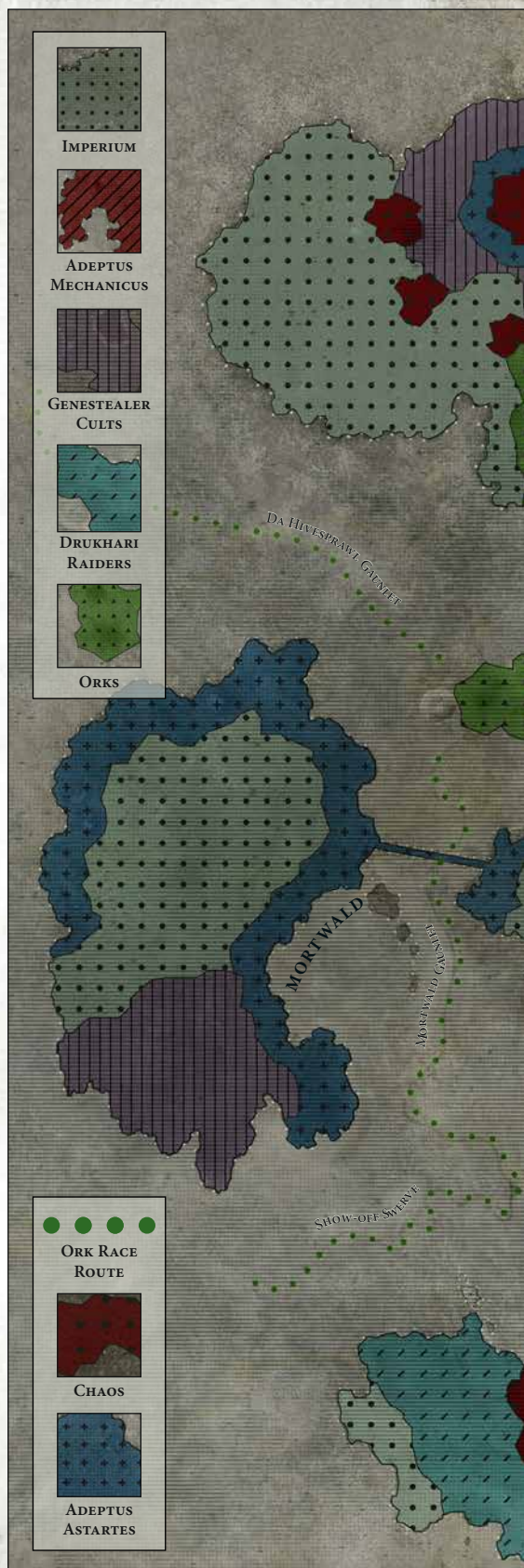
Made of double rows of yards-thick ferrocrete, these Fortwalls could not simply be blasted apart by killcannons and deffguns. Each was defended by a standing garrison of Astra Militarum infantry, and the motorcade macrohighway that ran down the centre made reinforcement – and even rebuilding – a simple task for the Imperials that laboured inside the twin barriers, with supplies coming fairly easily from the hivesprawls.

When it came to racing around the continents of Vigilus, these barriers stood in the way, making a full circumnavigation of Oteck, Dontoria, Megaborealis, Hyperia and Dirksen an impossibility – or so the Speedwaaagh! warbosses believed.

In the first phase of the War of Beasts, Krooldakka cemented his reputation upon Vigilus by pulling off a feat of wagon racing that left his rivals in awe. By brokering a deal with the crazed driver Boss Shokk and his patron, the Mad Mek Gungubbinz, Krooldakka was able to solve the Fortwall problem.

As they approached the massive Fortwall, Krooldakka purposefully allowed Boss Shokk to overtake his Battlewagon – much to the amazement of his fellows – then gave Mek Gungubbinz the signal by firing a flare. A huge bubble field came into being over the vehicles at the race's front, protecting them from the firepower of the Cadians that were lined up on the wall. It was then that Boss Shokk triggered his customised racer's rear-mounted shokk drive. Augmented by Gungubbinz' warp emitters, it made a large hole in reality, a warp tunnel wide enough to fit a Battlewagon through. With a flash, Boss Shokk disappeared – only to reappear safely on the other side of the Fortwall. The glowing portal left behind him was used by the rest of the Speedwaaagh! to bypass the fortification and complete its circuit around the false continent. So was Krooldakka's Warp-kut born, and it was the first of several new race routes opened across Vigilus.

While the force fields remained active around the hivesprawls, the Speed Freeks were able to occupy their time racing circuits instead. They did so to prove the supremacy of their wagons, to show off the latest wares of their Meks, and to gamble for teef – for wagering on something as epic as the Cross-Hyperia Sickle Run was always good for a laugh. More than that, however, they raced for the sheer joy of it, and they did not stop even when the War of Beasts got fully underway.





The arrival of the Adeptus Astartes enabled the Imperial forces on Vigilus to turn the tide against their xenos foes, although the alien invaders were still far from defeated. However, another more terrible threat began to make itself known as the War of Beasts came into its final phase.



14.912 POST VCM  
**WAR OF BEASTS: PHASE 3**





# FORCES OF WARLORD KROOLDAKKA, SPEEDLORD SUPREME

Krooldakka was the warlord in overall command of the Vigilus Speedwaaagh!. The first out of the fortress ships and the first to make a full circuit of the planet – by simple virtue of gunning down anyone who came close – he made himself the undisputed leader of the Kults of Speed that ruled Vigilus' wastes.

## FORT DAKKA

In the overarching Ork creed of might makes right, a boss of Krooldakka's hulking stature riding in the largest Battlewagon teef could buy commanded a great deal of respect. As the Speed Freetks supposedly said – behind his back, no doubt – he may not have been the fastest, but he was the fightiest. Anyone foolish enough to approach Krooldakka's roving Blitz Brigade unbidden was taking his life into his hands. The amount of explosive firepower this fleet of gunned-up Battlewagons could lay down was enough to shatter an Imperial tank squadron at range – and this happened countless times throughout the War of Beasts.

Krooldakka had a long memory when it came to those who wronged him, an itchy trigger finger, and a ten-foot chainaxe always hungry for tough greenskin flesh to chew. Any who raced past his growling monstrosity of a Battlewagon – known as the *Planet Grinda* and driven by Krooldakka himself – to get to the finish line in a race, or the battle line in a war zone, were treated to a withering hail of big shoota bullets or a few shots from the killcannon. If they evaded that onslaught, they were crushed under the *Planet Grinda*'s wheels, or later hunted down at Fort Dakka and given a lethal beating for their trouble. Almost all the Orks of Vigilus learned not to gainsay Krooldakka when he claimed to be first into battle. Those who maintained they were the fastest often found their mates suddenly had other things to do as a hulking shadow lengthened over them.

Some Orks earned Krooldakka's respect by committing truly spectacular acts of violence. He allowed the maniacal Ozgrog and the viciously tempered Boss Narka to compete for the position of second in command, each driving the other to ever-greater stunts and feats of battle in a rivalry that has lasted more than ten years. Da Oil Guzzlas, entirely comprised of Ork Nobs riding into battle on Defftrikes, Warbikes, modified Trukks and even extensively customised aircraft, acted as Krooldakka's proving ground – one who rose through the ranks may even have found himself riding in a Battlewagon at the Speedlord's side (or, technically speaking, just behind him). Almost all of Fort Dakka's speed mobs were filthy rich, either having grown a lot of teef or punched them from the mouths of the less fortunate. The exceptions ganged together into the mobs known as Da Hubdrop Skinflintz; hangers-on who existed purely because Krooldakka hadn't got round to beating them up yet.

## DROGZOT'S CRATER

To the west of Fort Dakka was Drogzot's Crater. This vast crater was filled near to the brim with millions of tons of scrap amassed by the Lootas of Big Mek Drogzot. To better get from one pile of rusting riches to another, most of Drogzot's legion of Meks used rokket packs running on the fuel from their broken flagship, the *Fistful of Spannas*. That same fuel ran in the tanks of Richgit Drukk's mob the Speedin' Supastarz, the Big Mek's pride and joy. Considering the exceptional quality of their rokket

fuel turbo-boostas, and their snazzy paint jobs, if any on Vigilus could be considered the Flash Gitz of the road, it was them. The Speedin' Supastarz were kept running by the twin assets of Big Rigg's Tanka Crawlaz, who provided fuel on the move, and Drogzot's Grave Raidaz, who stole and repurposed gubbins from the vehicle kills the Supastarz left in their wake.



## TANKA SPILL

Drogzot's rival Boss Mek, Big Tanka, prioritised raw brute strength over speed and style, hoping to impress Speedlord Krooldakka with sheer might. His city, Tanka Spill, was devoted to the creation of massive walkers – it was this facility that assailed Mortwald. Hooladakka's Rig Fleet boasted over fifty battle tankas; these massive war wagons had massive oil tanks that allowed them to drive for weeks on end, and refuel their super-heavy allies into the bargain. Amongst these was Oddmek, the proud owner of two looted Baneblade tanks that once bore the colours of the Vigilant Guard.



## RAID ON THE DIRKDEN EXODUS

The rise of the Pauper Princes led to an exodus of the loyalist citizens of Dirkden, who fled north into the wastes for the safety of Hyperia. In the third phase of the war, news had spread that all the citizens fleeing the Rescalid Underworks to the south of Dirkden had been turned back from the Hyperia-Dirkden Fortwall. It was rumoured that the Cadians and Crimson Fists there had opened fire to restore order. There was much truth in these assertions, for when it was revealed that agents of the cult were concealing themselves among the military as well as the citizenry, the Commissariat became merciless in their exterminations. No Dirkdenite would pass across the Fortwall. However, with the heartlands of Dirkden overwhelmed by cult forces and Genestealers running at will through the streets, the situation had already reached boiling point. As a direct result, dozens of mechanised refugee columns and convoys made up of military

vehicles and civilian transports left the northern perimeter of Dirkden and drove off parallel to the now closed Fortwall. The Dirkden Exodus – once a steady trickle – became a series of fast-flowing rivers.

Word reached Krooldakka via his aerial spies in Nakkadakk's Doom Skwadron. His Speedwaaagh! made a fast about-turn from its raids on the north of Hyperia. Roaring down from Hurrikane Rekk toward the northern sprawl of Dirkden, he bullied his way to the front of the Speedwaaagh! once more. If his plan worked, he could give his lads a good fight and a fast race in one go. Krooldakka's timing was sound, and his guttural laugh boomed out across the wastes as he closed in on his prey.

Though the convoy's Vigilant Guard escort reacted swiftly to the far-off trail of smoke thrown up by the encroaching Speedwaaagh!, though they took a

staggered echelon formation in good order, and though many Guardsmen were further motivated by the fact that they were defending close family members, they simply did not have enough in the way of guns to hold back the rampaging Orks.

Many of the leading vehicles of the Speedwaaagh! were blown to smithereens by long-ranged fire, and many thousands of refugees were bought time enough to make a break for Hyperia. Then Krooldakka's spearheads slashed through the militarised refugee columns like a scythe through stalks of wheat. His Blitz Brigade hardly slowed as it smashed through the Chimeras and Tauroxes sent to stop him, and he sped on without pausing for a single trophy. When the Fortwall loomed in the middle distance, he did not hesitate, but instead had his Meks open their shokk attack tunnel. The Speedwaaagh! sped straight through the wall and out the other side.



# FORCES OF MAD GOFF MURK

Mad Goff Murk was the lord of an empire of dust. The fact that the dust was made from the bones of his enemies was enough for Murk, for he existed not to raise statues, to create war effigies or even to make a legend of himself from the war for Vigilus. He existed only to destroy.

The Goffs have always been known for thinking with their fists and head-butting to death anything that gets on their nerves. Yet even amongst the Goffs, Murk was a figure of fear. His red eyes glimmered with such all-consuming hatred that some amongst the Weirdboyz muttered that he had not made it out of the storms of Gork's Grin without bringing something horrible with him.

## SKUMTOWN

Murk was lord of the shambolic Scrap City he insisted on calling Warboss Murk's Strong Boss Fort of Guns and Killing Axes. Everyone else simply called it Skumtown.

Naturally, they did this out of earshot, for those who used the term to Murk's face soon found their own torn off and flapping from his trophy racks.

Skumtown was little more than the bare bones of a hundred wrecked ships, their empty hulls and fuselages strewn about at random like a scrap metal elephant's graveyard, the wind howling through the abandoned shanties and tribal huts. Murk's disdain for any kind of creativity save weapon-smithing made his domain the poorest on Vigilus, save perhaps Runthive. Those who visited Murk – and few did, for he

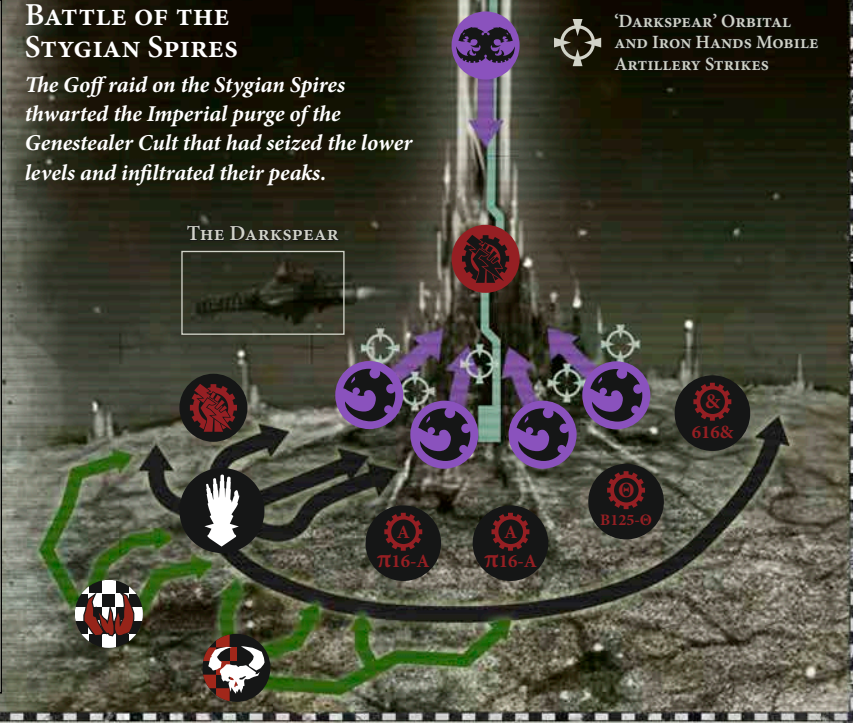
had a habit of alienating his allies – did not comment on the shabby nature of his city, for to do so was an act of suicide; what Murk lacked in imagination he made up for in sheer psychopathic rage.

It was Murk that followed Krogskull's Boyz across the fallen spire of Megaborealis, and his Goff Krushas, No-mess Kill Krew and Black Axes that assailed the Stygian Spires as they were being overrun by Genestealer Cult. His Loota allies, Da Heavy Triggaz, lent Murk the firepower he needed to level any threats his massed green-and-black tides of infantry could not cut down.

## BATTLE OF THE STYGIAN SPIRES

*The Goff raid on the Stygian Spires thwarted the Imperial purge of the Genestealer Cult that had seized the lower levels and infiltrated their peaks.*

THE DARKSPEAR



'DARKSPEAR' ORBITAL AND IRON HANDS MOBILE ARTILLERY STRIKES

-  SKITARII TECH-PRIEST COMMAND
-  SKITARII HIVE-GUARDIANS
-  SKITARII COHORT  $\Pi 16-A$
-  SKITARII COHORT B125- $\Theta$
-  SKITARII COHORT 616&
-  SUBTERRANEAN BROOD CATHEDRUM
-  PURESTRAIN GENESTEALER ASSAULT
-  CULT UPRISING
-  WATER PIPELINE
-  IRON HANDS DROP ZONE
-  MAD GOFF MURK'S BLACK AXES
-  DEFFSTOMP'S GOFF KRUSHAS

## NORTHERN SCRAP CITY CLUSTER



GORK'S  
LANDING

DA WHEEL  
HUB



RAKKUK'S  
MEKMAZE



SKUMTOWN



STORVHAL

*A thriving war economy sprang up across the four northernmost Scrap Cities. Looted wargear and metal was traded, stolen, set on fire and hurled in anger between the clans and tribes. Though Mad Goff Murk claimed independence, in truth all answered to Krooldakka.*

## WESTERN SCRAP CITY CLUSTER



RUNTHIVE

TANKA  
SPILL



DROGZOT'S  
CRATER



FORT  
DAKKA



*Fort Dakka was effectively the capital city of the Ork settlements upon Vigilus, being the base of Krooldakka's Speedwaaagh! and having the largest more-or-less intact spaceship towering high in its midst. It was the target of several Space Marine raids over the course of the war, though Krooldakka's banner still flew from its highest point.*



*Zogbag, a gifted Big Mek, hailed from the Deathskulls clan. He had a knack for big walkers.*



*Big Tanka copied a lot of Zogbag's designs, but used his own glyph to show originality.*



*The Speedsta Bosskult was a band of Nobs that loved nothing more than a running battle.*



*The air corps of the Ork war effort bore the dubious camouflage of the Blood Axes.*



*Da Heavy Triggaz were Goffs, but their skills at looting rivalled those of any Deathskull.*

# FORCES OF BIG MEK ZOGBAG

**Big Mek Zogbag was a vital part of Krooldakka's war machine. It was he that created many of the technological advancements that kept the Speedwaaagh! going even against the Adeptus Astartes.**

## GORK'S LANDING

It was said amongst Krooldakka's supporters that the Mekaniak genius Zogbag, boss of Gork's Landing, was far more interested in making new war machines than he was in using them. Perhaps there was some truth in that, for Zogbag was a gifted Mek – though being a greenskin, he was also more than happy to stomp his enemies into a paste whenever and however he could. It was he that created the first giant war effigies on Vigilus, an act that spawned hundreds of imitations. His designs ultimately led to the creation of the Dread mobs that assailed the hivespawls during the War of Beasts, such as those that smashed through the defences of Dontoria Hivespawl without breaking stride. Though Krooldakka was loath to admit it, this act led to the Big Mek being almost as well-respected as the Supreme Speedlord himself.

## DA WHEEL HUB

Big Mek Tankskrappa, an old apprentice of Zogbag, crashed to Vigilus in the gigantic Ork macrohauler known as *Big Tugga*. An avowed wagon specialist, Tankskrappa built his vehicular constructions with ruggedness and durability in mind, even if none of them were close to being aesthetically pleasing. A fair number of his wheeled creations he built in transit to Vigilus, and it is a testament to his skills that the best of them rode out of the crash site intact and formed the vanguard of the Speedwaaagh! elements that went straight for Megaborealis and Dontoria. The re-purposed warship *Big Tugga* became the focal point of

the Scrap City known as Da Wheel Hub ever after.

Any Speed Freek worth his salt had his vehicle tinkered with and upgraded by Tankskrappa's well-paid Mekaniak work crews. The Big Mek's partners in high-octane crime – the ageing petrol-head known as Da Wheelboss and the steel-armed Mekbreaka Drakk of the Speedsta Bosskult – were the only ones that could rival Tankskrappa's creations.

During his tenure as master of Da Wheel Hub, Tankskrappa turned his talents to the creation of ever-larger walkers – inspired by Zogbag's enormous war effigies, the Mekaniak built a vast Dread mob of his own that incorporated nearly three dozen super-heavy class walkers. During the last years of the War of Beasts, he and his fellow Big Meks worked together to create the largest and shootiest of all tributes to Gork and Mork – the Great Gargant Gorkzilla. They hoped that should that monstrosity ever shake the surface of Vigilus with its tread, even the Titans of Megaborealis would be hard pressed to slay it.

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**'Zogbag's mad as Mad Goff Murk, everyone knows dat. But he got the rest of da ladz workin' as well as racin', and that's no mean feat. He's got vision, has Zogbag. You can see it when you look at the Gargants wot he built. Or you can see it when he's finkin, cos sparks come flyin' outta the side of his bonce.'**

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*- Mogga da Mouth, Runtherd*



### RAID ON MEKSTOP CITY

*Mekstop City was vital to the southern Ork invasion. House Terryn's assault upon it ended in disaster when Big Mek Lugnatz teleported his Stompa Mobs directly into the fray.*

### RAKKUK'S MEKMAZE

Rakkuk's Mekmaze was a labyrinth of Ork shanty towns; though many tried to drive into its inner reaches in the hope of finding the best hauls of loot, very few would-be contenders drove back out again without having had something stolen from them. Right in the heart of the Mekmaze was the true treasure of the Scrap City, and that which lifted it above even Tanka Spill and Gork's Landing in prominence – a quartet of airstrips. These carefully maintained assets Rakkuk kept sacrosanct from the rampant industry that sprouted from the beached-whale-like hulks of his invasion fleet. The airstrips played host to Nakkadakk's Doom Skwadron, Warhog's Dakka-planes and Rakkuk's own Flyboyz, part of his larger Speed Freek Eleet. Though Rakkuk did not realise it, Nakkadakk was in the employ of Krooldakka himself, and would secede in a moment if given the nod.

The three aerial tribes together formed the largest Ork air force upon Vigilus several times over. Though they may have been outmatched by the skill of the Imperial pilots that fought them for aerial supremacy across the planet's smog-churned skies, they were repaired, rebuilt and bolstered with every passing week, whilst the pilots of the fighters and bombers of the Imperial war effort felt the loss of every plane downed.



### HURRIKANE REKK AND THE STYGIAN SPIRES

The pyromaniac Bad Mek Ragzakka crashed his flagship *Bosstoof* dangerously close to the Vhulian Swirl. When the Swirl grew in size over the third phase of the war, its gale-force winds began to tug at the ramshackle fortress-town that had sprung up around Ragzakka's ship. It was a sign that the Weirdboyz interpreted as swiftly encroaching doom.

Only by allying with Mad Goff Murk did Ragzakka escape being relegated to a footnote in the planet's history. By concentrating their attacks on Megaborealis, Ragzakka and his flame-obsessed mobs drove a path across the continent, pushing back Skitarii legions and Genestealer Cultists alike. Only the Iron Hands were able to stop them from sacking the Stygian Spires – and even then the hive fell to a clutch of Genestealer Cultists soon after.



# STOMPA MOBS

The creation of massive walking war effigies is an almost automatic process in Ork society, stemming from their unbridled ambition to conquer all before them in the names of the greenskin gods, Gork and Mork. Those on Vigilus during the War of Beasts were superlative examples of their kind.

Big Mek Zogbag rose to a position of influence early in the war for Vigilus, and in doing so inspired a new kind of Waaagh!. He claimed to be inspired by visions of giant, stumpy effigies being spat onto the planet's surface by the warp storm that the Orks called Gork's Grin, and the Imperium the Cicatrix Maledictum. His imagination electrified by his premonitions of the Ork gods stomping all over the humies' cityscapes, he built giant walkers festooned with destructive weaponry.

These were at first the single-pilot war engines known as Gorkanauts and Morkanauts, and were sold to the highest bidder to pay for the war materiel he needed for the next phase. After building several dozen of these, Zogbag admitted to himself that they simply were not grand enough. It was not long before Zogbag became more

ambitious. He turned his hand to Stompas, and when he had amassed enough Mekks willing to help him fulfil his vision, even larger machines of war. Whilst the greenskins found themselves stymied in the early stages of the war, he had no shortage of helpers.

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***'These xenos walkers aren't simply war engines, gentlemen. These are graven idols, effigies of barbarous gods given life by primitive engines. To destroy them is to destroy the deities of the Ork race! Forwards!'***

*- Last words of Sir Thrund of Terryn*

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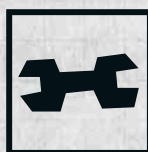
It was Zogbag that built the first Gargants upon the wastelands of Vigilus. Towering, barrel-bellied monstrosities with giant artillery pieces for arms, building-wrecking

fists and gut cannons that could blast enormous chain-linked bolas into the ranks of the enemy, these machines sparked a renaissance of inventiveness across the planet. Known as the Mekfist Gargants, these ramshackle constructions were experimental and in some cases highly rudimentary – though as word about them spread they had a galvanising effect on his fellow Mekks.

Where Zogbag was the trailblazer of the Vigilus war effigy, Mekboss Big Tanka was the one to take his designs and bring them to a pinnacle of destructiveness. In conjunction with the Bad Dok known as Hooladakka, he fashioned a massive Dread mob of over fifty walkers, each with a grot or Ork wired into the hot-seat. In some cases these seats were indeed hot, being situated directly over the engine, which saw the Killa Kanz



Where this glyph rose above a Mek's workshop, a new walker would soon be unleashed.



**Mek**  
Clever,  
technology,  
mechanical



**Blitz**  
Invasion,  
devastate



**Nob**  
Nobility,  
authority,  
high rank



**Gubbinz**  
Engine,  
workings



**Gargant**  
Titan,  
large robot



**Kannon**  
Big gun,  
artillery,  
cannon

Deff Dreads, Killa Kans, Stompas, Gorkanauts, Morkanauts and Gargants bear many of the same glyphs to proclaim their sheer killiness. Like its speakers, the Ork language is robust, but without much vocabulary.

and Deff Dreads march on their target, the Deinos Trench Line, at great speed in search of the relief of boundless killing.

This collaboration was just the start, for with the creation of even larger war effigies, Da Teefspitta Nobz were given the destructive war machines they thought they deserved, a force potent enough to win Big Tanka a permanent alliance with the Speedboss Supreme. Next to be created was a giant Kan Factory specialising in the creation of Stompas, for by this point word had spread that Big Tanka had a gift for mass production. With so many Speed Freaks roaring off to the front lines, every foot-slogging Ork north of Oteck Hivespawl was dying for a Dread or Stompa in which to ride to battle.

The Stompa Mobs that lumbered out from Tanka Spill drove much of the greenskin conquest of western Vigilus in the second phase of the

War of Beasts. When the Big Mek turned his hand to the creation of Gargants inspired by those made by Zogbag, Big Tanka found himself rising to the top of the Mek food chain. Though he took heavy casualties from the Freeblade Knights that surged out of Mortwald to assail his stronghold, his connections with the other three western Scrap Cities left him with might enough to engage and ultimately defeat the combined force of Imperial Knights and Titans sent to destroy his industry.

Meanwhile, Zogbag continued to blaze a trail of rampant construction. Though Big Tanka's creations surpassed his in number, and though Bad Mek Ragzakka of Hurrikane Rekk proved a far more capable and inventive looter of Imperial war machines, Zogbag never gave up on his vision. Working night and day by the light of his welding torch, he did not cease in his labours, and made

up for his disinterest in matters of quality with sheer numbers. It was Zogbag's dream to unleash a massive horde of Ork walkers on his enemies that would conquer not only Vigilus, but Neo-vellum and nearby Omis-Prion into the bargain. Only Gork (and possibly Mork) knew whether this was an impossible dream, for in greenskin society, a strongly held belief can soon become reality.



## THE SQUIGGOTHS OF RUNTHIVE

Where there's Orks there's squigs, as the old Runtherd expression goes, and Vigilus was no exception. Only a few days after making planetfall, the elder Snakebite Warboss known as Ogrokk Bitespider saw a niche in the planet's ecosystem, and began to exploit it. His cyboar outriders had thundered out of their pens to sniff out the major Ork encampments across the planet, and found that the vast majority of Orks were already on the warpath. With most obsessing about the Speedwaaagh! or the war effigies of Da Ransakk, no-one was looking after making a name for himself as runt-master. Though it was held as a relatively lowly role in Ork society, Ogrokk knew the path of the Runtherd could lead to much greater things – and amongst those greater things were the titanic beasts known as Squiggoths.

Ogrokk sent word through his grot mobs, and before long messengers scurried out to the four corners of the planet, stowing

aboard Evil Sunz vehicles and squeezing into the gunnery pods of the Ork air forces to ensure they spread as far and as fast as possible. Soon the word was out – the grots would have a city of their own, and it would be called Runthive. There they would be able to thrive away from the gnarled fists and hobnailed boots of their oppressors – provided they did as Ogrokk told them.

As soon as that message became widespread, tens of thousands of grots snuck off to join Ogrokk and the rest of the Snakebites at Runthive. They helped tend the squigs that Buglurk's Squig Breedaz specialised in raising from the drops, ensuring the biggest and fiercest specimens were constantly well-fed (sometimes literally in person). Together, these runts banded into tribes of their own. The largest of these were the Badgrot Stikkas, Da Dropz Krew, and the Deff Gunnaz – the crews of Ogrokk's rusting but plentiful

artillery. These all formed identities and even sported colours of their own. Some even rebelled against the Olden Runtherds that wielded the whip to ensure they stayed productive – the Redkap Runt Rebelz began their careers as infamous rabble-rousers, but ended them as Squiggoth fodder.

As the lesser classes of snotling, grot and squig thrived in the shanties of Runthive, the Squiggoths became ever larger and more numerous. By the third phase of the war, Ogrokk's pride and joy, a dozen Gargantuan Squiggoths known as Da Big Lugz, had grown so large they could overturn Imperial battle tanks with a flick of their tusks. Famously bad-tempered and devastatingly flatulent, these massive armoured beasts were goaded into a stampeding charge against the southern edge of Dontoria, flattening an entire district and causing immeasurable damage before wandering off to feed.

# FORCES OF THE GENESTEALER CULTS

The Genestealer Cult of Vigilus was well established across the planet, with a presence that numbered in the tens of millions – all tracing their lineage to the same Patriarch, Grandsire Wurm.

A fully mature Genestealer Cult is huge; it can number in the millions or even billions, perhaps more if it covers several worlds. The Cult of the Pauper Princes originated on Chancer's Vale, but took its fervent creed to the stars – it spread to the sentinel world of Vigilus early in its journey, and fifteen other planets besides.

In the nomenclature of the Ordo Xenos, the original occurrence of a system- or sector-spanning cult like the Pauper Princes is known as the genesis infestation.

Later infestations often use the same heraldic colours as the genesis infestation to show their wider allegiance to the cult.

These identifiers may be adapted so that the cultists fit in with the dress conventions and social norms of their home world. The Pauper Princes' later infestations, apart from being less numerous, differed little from the first; with their own Patriarch biologically descended from that of the genesis infestation, the cultists of later infestations all had much the same colouration of chitin and flesh. Any small differences in markings and temperament were incidental, for these minor dynasties were cut from the same cloth as their forebears. On Vigilus, armbands and tattoos were used as a unifying insignia, but usually kept hidden from sight.

All the cultists in a given population centre are known as a gene-sect. Some planets are only populous enough to support one gene-sect, but amongst the teeming throngs of Vigilus, several co-existed. Though each gene-sect may differentiate itself with markings and subtleties of colouration, they all ultimately hail from the original Patriarch of the cult, and usually work together seamlessly, especially in times of war.

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**'We were not ready for this war, not entirely. The last pieces of our glorious uprising had yet to be put in place. But by the glory of the Star Children, we shall win it nonetheless.'**

*- Hisser Verglorian, Nexos of the Flock Beneath.*

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# GENESTEALER CULTS

The life cycle of a Genestealer Cult is erratic, for they adapt as circumstances dictate, lurking in the shadows when necessary and expanding to fill every niche whenever the opportunity arises. On Vigilus they had so many places to hide that nearly every settlement had its own gene-sect or brood cycle, with many infiltrated Astra Militarum regiments in support.

## MEGABOREALIS GENESIS SECT

Clergy of Piston's Hollow.....	1 sub-sect
Guardians of the Brood Cathedrum.....	1 sub-sect
Lurkers in the Oil.....	1 sub-sect
The Sumpswimmers.....	4 claws
Sons of Azmadiah.....	2 claws
The Dynasty Beneath.....	4 brood cycles
Nameless Creepers*.....	2 brood cycles
Lineage of Ghent*.....	1 brood cycle
Heralds of the Bladed Cog*.....	2 brood cycles
Claws of Magnar Tertius.....	2 brood cycles
The Devoted Sons (Yorl Krauss).....	3 brood cycles
The Writhing Wyrms.....	3 brood cycles

\* These cultists did not hail from Vigilus, but were greeted with open arms as a delegation from beyond. Though they held a different Patriarch as their master, they evinced the same attitudes and ultimate goals as those born of Megaborealis stock.

## THE DIRKDEN GENE-SECT

The Grand Throng of Horga Threnst.....	1 sub-sect
The Flock Beneath.....	1 sub-sect
The Halfbrothers.....	1 sub-sect
Guardian Childer of the Non-Hive.....	1 sub-sect
• New Brood Brothers (Undervigilants).....	2 regiments
• The Lost Generation.....	3 regiments
• Achillan Seekers.....	1 regiment
The Untold Grandchilder.....	2 brood cycles
The Doting Daughters.....	2 claws
Rescalid Sewerlings.....	3 claws
The Shadowed Coil.....	3 claws
The Subskain Skitterlings.....	3 claws

## THE BRETHERN DONTORIAN

Dontorian Ur-Dynasty.....	1 sub-sect
• Cultist Astra Militarum*.....	12 regiments
Lake Dontor Underlings.....	1 sub-sect
Children of the Great Choke.....	1 sub-sect
Vostoyev Subsprawlers.....	6 brood cycles
Grodholev Subsprawlers.....	6 brood cycles
Pravdus Truthsayers.....	1 brood cycle
Litmus Dock Worker's Union 282.....	2 claws
Missionary Point Recidivists.....	1 claw
Guardia Periphery Ex-Proctors.....	2 claws
Deltarian Broodsurgers.....	4 claws
Munitorium Delverkin.....	2 claws
Hallordwright Ghouls.....	2 claws

\* So many and varied were the regiments and battalions converted to the Genestealer Cult cause that they are lumped into the same category.

## OTECK GENE-SECT

Greigan Hollow 12th Reserve.....	4 brood cycles
Oteck Vigilid 9th Militarum.....	2 regiments
Agamemnus Hollow 2nd Reserve.....	6 brood cycles
Mysandren Hollow 18th Reserve.....	2 brood cycles
Mogadon Neophyte Cavalcade.....	2 claws
Ostaveer Remainder.....	2 claws
Turingsbane Data Recovery Squadron.....	8 claws
Domastran Juvsect.....	2 claws
Siltid River Patrol.....	9 claws
Symphall District Enigmas.....	9 claws
The Thirsting Wyrms (Greigan).....	1 claw

## MORTWALD GENE-SECT

The Floraquarian Sect.....	1 sub-sect
Electros Undercrawlers.....	1 sub-sect
Childer Ejecta.....	1 sub-sect
Djodrolev Ever-faithful.....	1 sub-sect
Immortalis Spireguard (sommolent cell).....	6 brood cycles
Rejuvenis Youthstealers.....	1 brood cycle
The Ageless Wyrms.....	2 claws
Cactacean Sappers.....	1 claw
Trenchcrawlers.....	10 claws
Biosanctic Aberrants.....	1 claw


## HYPERIA CULT ELEMENTS

Glatchian Grandchilder.....	2 brood cycles
Magentine Stainclaws.....	3 brood cycles
Dubchec Cleanser Corps.....	5 brood cycles
Industrial Enclave 15/BZ.....	1 claw
Van Gollick Tarmacadians.....	12 claws (mechanised)
Fortwall Infiltrators.....	10 claws
Dust-dock Scour Detail.....	2 claws
Macro-yard Worker Detail 742.....	1 claw

## STORVHAL CULT ELEMENTS

Hekatorian Burnskins.....	2 sub-sects
Colossid Caldera-Crawlers.....	2 brood cycles
Phaestos Mountaineers.....	5 brood cycles
Spawn of Mother Magma.....	1 claw

++CONTINUED IN FILE 149F/VIGIL-POST++



The symbol of the Pauper Princes is a variation on the wyrm-form device – its multiple limbs hint at the belief that with sufficient numbers the lowly throng will always triumph over the courts and palaces of the influential.



The infestation upon Vigilus was so well-established it lived through several full brood cycles in a number of areas, the cult expanding with almost exponential growth in the substrata and abandoned zones of the hivespawls and founding new gene-sects in each urban area. Mortwald Hivespawl had a different gene-sect to the geothermic continent of Storvhal, and to the capital Hyperia, and so on.

Each gene-sect has its own war leaders, including a Magus, Primus, and other specialists

if it has reached a fourth and subsequent generation. On Vigilus, the cult's first Magus, Velleron of Megaborealis, was in psychic communication with the Magus of Dontoria Hivespawl, Brothermagus Darrague. So close were they in thought and deed that they and their fellow Maguses occasionally requisitioned transit lifters and banded together to fight in the same place at the same time if they deemed it necessary.

Each Vigilus gene-sect, usually several hundred members strong at least, was further subdivided

into claws. These were the equivalents of strike forces in Imperial nomenclature, and usually numbered between fifty and a hundred warriors. Each Magus and Primus had several claws at his disposal, ranging from the Neophyte gangs of Hyperia that were able to pass for human, to the monstrous groups of Aberrants and Metamorph Hybrids of Oteck Hivespawl that were unmistakably alien, and hence kept out of sight until the time of war was upon them.

Claws usually have at least one leader figure. Upon Vigilus it was the Claw of the Thirsting Wurm that put into motion the poisoning of Greigan Hollow. That claw was led by the Iconward Gilgas Vendella, though the Abominant, Bregg the Anointed, was a totem of leadership in his own right – especially amongst his fellow Aberrants.

Once the original gene-sect of Megaborealis reached the point where it could spare the resources to bud off, it sent out several Purestrain Genestealers – or in the case of those sent to Dirksen, an entire brood – on missions of infiltration. Later generations instead sent out entire armies of xenos monstrosities from the fifth generation, using hidden tunnels, disused aqua pipelines and algae-slicked crawl-ways to operate unseen. These new vectors of infection started new gene-sects at the heart of the largest population centres, spreading the cult's influence ever further.

According to Imperial records, Vigilus had only one Patriarch, but there were those who attributed Grandsire Wurm's ability to seemingly cross the planet in a disturbingly short amount of time to the theory that at least one other Patriarch existed. There was a hypothesis amongst these doom-mongers that should an infestation's outrider organisms find a population centre so rich in life





that it has the equivalent of a small planetary populace unto itself, as is the case in the largest of Imperial hives, the Purestrain Genestealer sent out to colonise it may become a new Patriarch in its own right.

If this is the case, it is extremely unlikely to happen on a small planet made up of contiguous land masses, due to the psychic backlash that could result. But provided the sites are sufficiently removed it could theoretically occur. On a planet as overpopulated as Vigilus, there may indeed have been two Patriarchs, one on either side of the planet and perpetually divided by the vast oceans of wasteland in between each hivesprawl. Others posited the theory that the moon Neo-vellum, where evidence of cult activity was uncovered, had its own Patriarch – and that beast had been deliberately shipped to Vigilus to act as a double for Grandsire Wurm should he be slain in battle.

Despite the first gene-sect of Vigilus rising in Megaborealis, Dirkden Hivesprawl was unquestionably the most thoroughly infested of all the planet's false continents. By the time Marnéus Calgar arrived on the planet, it was beyond redemption, its streets infested with Genestealers and their cultist worshippers to such a degree that only rearguard actions and evacuations had any real affect.

The Tempestus Scions known as Drop Force Praesidion distinguished themselves many times over the course of Dirkden's evacuation, escorting Chimeras that carried high-ranking Imperial nobles to safe zones and fighting with efficiency and unyielding determination to defy the cult wherever it sought to decapitate the Imperial command structure.

After leading the efforts of the Tempestus Scions assigned to Dirkden and ensuring the successful evacuation of dozens of noble families, Tempestor-Prime Vandred was slain towards the end of the third phase of the war. After the Hyperia-Dirkden Fortwall was declared permanently closed mid-mission, Tempestor Prime Vandred engaged a brood of Genestealer Cultists in close quarters combat to buy his charges time to escape, and was torn to pieces by the claws of xenos hybrids as a result. His sacrifice ensured the family his team was escorting reached the new evacuation point, albeit on foot as their transport was disabled. The bloodline of the Ashenid royal family was saved – though given the disastrous history of Ashenid Non-Hive, the value of that accomplishment is still up for debate.

### ASSASSINATION AT LAKE DONTOR [DONTORIA]

-  272<sup>ND</sup> CADIAN 'TRUNCHKIN'
-  605<sup>TH</sup> CADIAN 'EAGLES'
-  811<sup>TH</sup> CATACHAN 'GREENBREEDERS'
-  VALKYRIE SQUADRON 'MAXIM HAMMER'
-  CULT UPRISING AMBUSH SITE
-  MAGUS VELLERON'S COMMAND
-  HI-EX BREACHER DETONATION CHARGE



*The attempted assassination of Magus Velleron met with disaster when cult hybrids swam to intercept.*



*The Cosmic Serpent is synonymous with wisdom and enlightenment, for it exists in both the material dimension and the warp simultaneously.*

# FORCES OF THE ASURYANI

The craftworlds of the Asuryani prolong their existences by the careful manipulation of reality – on Vigilus, what began as a simple assassination spiralled out of control into a dire vendetta.

The first Asuryani presence upon Vigilus during the War of Beasts was a warhost of bright and vibrant warriors of Saim-Hann. After the disastrous events on the outskirts of Saint's Haven, where a small force of Aeldari was gunned down by Militarum Tempestus even as they sought parley, all that changed. They returned as a sombre, vengeful corps of ghost warriors – the spirit stones animating each construct giving the slain Aeldari a chance for revenge.

The strike force of the Spiritseer Qelanaris was the most overt

Asuryani presence upon Vigilus, but there were rumours in Calgar's senate that other elements of Saim-Hann – and even other craftworlds – were active in the war. For the most part, they confined their kills to the hidden cults of Chaos worshippers that operated in secret in several locations on the planet. When Calgar sent his forces to investigate the high spires above the cloud line, he found evidence of hard-fought battles. The corpses of many Chaos worshippers had been slashed apart by razored shuriken – the calling cards of the Aeldari that had turned from enemies to allies.



CRAFTWORLD  
SAIM-HANN FORCES



MAJOR DIVERSIONARY ATTACK



QELANARIS VENGEANCE STRIKE



EXTREMIS GUARD  
[ULTRAMARINES]



4<sup>TH</sup> COMPANY  
ULTRAMARINES



VIGILUS SENATE  
[AQUILARIAN PALACE]



MILITARUM  
TEMPESTUS



47<sup>TH</sup> ANTRELL  
LIONS

*The Spiritseer Qelanaris knew well that the Imperium would defend its most vital war council with a ring of adamantium that no conventional force could breach. In order to break the circle of defence, the Saim-Hann warlord sent several major diversionary forces across the Ring of Nothingness, avoiding the bridges that spanned that great void where the Devastators of the Ultramarines 9th Company were stationed. The Ultramarines and Militarum Tempestus scrambled to compensate – and in doing so allowed Qelanaris' own force to penetrate from the north.*

AELDARI ATTACK  
ON HYPERIA

# FORCES OF THE DRUKHARI

The Drukhari of Commorragh are much-feared murderous raiders that appear from nowhere to snatch away the unwary. On Vigilus they emerged from a hidden webway portal on Kaelac's Bane, the frequency of their raids increasing massively when the Noctis Aeterna fell across the planet.

The Dark Eldar were a constant thorn in the side of the Imperium, and with the coming of the Noctis Aeterna, that thorn proved to be a poisoned one. Their raiding tactics, thriving upon anarchy, fear and confusion, meant they found the worlds of the Imperium Nihilus very much to their taste.

With the communications that linked one Imperial force to another disrupted to the point of falling apart completely, the Drukhari were able to lance deep into Imperial territory and escape back out again before retribution could be brought against them. The Imperial war machine, already cumbersome and sluggish in comparison to the lightning raiders of the Drukhari, were disrupted further by vox-ghosts that confused and obfuscated orders. When the Drukhari raiders used their mastery of technology to lace these already fraught communiques with the screams of those they had abducted, disorder and panic broke out even amongst the veteran regiments of the Astra Militarum.

The opening stages of the War of Beasts saw the warriors of the Drukhari Kabals strike hard and fast at the cryo-geologist miner groups that sought to syphon water from the Glacia Betus and Glacia Omicroid macroquarries. What had started as occasional predation escalated into large scale war, and within a few months of the Great Rift's appearance in the skies of Vigilus half of Kaelac's Bane was denuded of all life save that of the Drukhari.

From there they spread their invasions across the west of Dirksen and deep into the south of

Oteck, their raids growing bolder and more devastating with every passing week. Yet as horrific as these raids were, the true toll the Drukhari would take upon the war effort of Vigilus would only come to light later in the war.

Much of the Dark Aeldari menace in the third stage of the War of Beasts came from the Haemonculus Covens, those connoisseurs of the diabolic that sit at the rotten heart of Dark Eldar society. Ostensibly, their covens invaded the planet's urban sprawls eager to fill their larders and laboratories with fresh specimens. Their real motives were more personal, however.



At the head of the invading force was the Coven of the Altered, who – much like the Aeldari of Saim-Hann – had unfinished business with the Imperial forces of Vigilus. The coven had finally met its match in battle against Roboute Guilliman during the Indomitus Crusade, and though its warriors had recoiled from open conflict, they had regrouped in Commorragh to make a dire plan. They tracked several elements of the Ultramarines from afar, intending to strike at

the Primarch through striking at his sons – and if they were able to harness Primaris gene-tech in the process, so much the better. When they heard the warriors of Ultramar were to reinforce Vigilus, they made haste for the webway portal of Kaelac's Bane and emerged from the arctic wasteland in force.

These strike forces headed straight for the southern regions of Hyperia and Oteck, launching such harrowing and spectacular attacks that they became known and feared as Carnivals of Pain. At times it was the Wracks and Grotesques of the covens that slaughtered the panicked and rioting citizens in the streets, at others it was even stranger creations, amongst them the carthorse-sized ice mantises that had been captured from Kaelac's Bane and remade into iridescent, semi-biological Pain Engines. The horrors the Drukhari unleashed could not go unanswered by the planet's defenders – a fact the Haemonculi flesh-sculptors knew only too well. In truth, the spectacle of their assault was but a lure, and it succeeded in its aim.

The Haemonculi strike was well coordinated, not only with their Kabalite allies, but with the arrow-swift assaults of their Wych Cult allies. Several Wych Cults had been lured to Vigilus with promises of rich reward should they steal away enough Primaris Space Marines not only to showcase in their arenas, but also to feed the alchemical and biomantic experiments of the Haemonculi. Though they avoided open war where possible, the Drukhari lured, engaged and in places stole away entire squads of Ultramarines that would fetch a high price back in the Dark City.



MEGADREALIS



VIGILUS

1. Vigilus	4.000	0.914	0.015
2. Vigilus	4.000	1.000	0.020
3. Vigilus	4.000	1.000	0.020
4. Vigilus	4.000	1.000	0.020
5. Vigilus	4.000	1.000	0.020
6. Vigilus	4.000	1.000	0.020
7. Vigilus	4.000	1.000	0.020
8. Vigilus	4.000	1.000	0.020
9. Vigilus	4.000	1.000	0.020
10. Vigilus	4.000	1.000	0.020
11. Vigilus	4.000	1.000	0.020
12. Vigilus	4.000	1.000	0.020
13. Vigilus	4.000	1.000	0.020
14. Vigilus	4.000	1.000	0.020
15. Vigilus	4.000	1.000	0.020
16. Vigilus	4.000	1.000	0.020
17. Vigilus	4.000	1.000	0.020
18. Vigilus	4.000	1.000	0.020
19. Vigilus	4.000	1.000	0.020
20. Vigilus	4.000	1.000	0.020

MORTWALD

DONTORIA