



WARHAMMER

# WARHAMMER UNDERWORLDS

# SHADESPIRE




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 As such, outdated game scenarios and unit rules have been removed from this publication.

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SHADESPIRE WAS ONCE A CITY OF WONDER AND MAGIC, A MERCANTILE METROPOLIS RISING FROM THE UNFORGIVING EARTH OF THE REALM OF DEATH. COUNTLESS RACES DWELT WITHIN ITS WALLS, TOGETHER CREATING ARTEFACTS OF ASTONISHING BEAUTY AND POWER. THE CITY'S MOST TREASURED SECRET WAS THE PROCESS OF REFINING SHADEGLASS, A MIRACULOUS SUBSTANCE THAT COULD STORE THE SPIRITUAL ESSENCE OF THE DEAD FOR ETERNITY. IN THIS WAY, THE RULING KATOPHRANES OF SHADESPIRE LIVED ON AFTER DEATH, THEIR WISDOM STORED WITHIN THE DEPTHS OF ORNATE MIRRORS, FLOWING GLASS FOUNTAINS, CRYSTAL LOOKING-STONES AND OTHER MARVELS. THIS DEFIANCE ENRAGED NAGASH, LORD OF UNDEATH, WHO SOUGHT TO PUNISH THE OCCUPANTS OF THE CITY FOR DENYING HIM HIS RIGHTFUL TITLE OF SOULS.

YET TO SIMPLY DESTROY THE CITY AND DRAG ITS INHABITANTS TO THE UNDERWORLDS SEEMED TO NAGASH AN INSUFFICIENT PUNISHMENT. INSTEAD, THE GREAT NECROMANCER WOVE A RITUAL THAT DREW UPON THE MYSTERIOUS POWERS OF THE CITY'S SHADEGLASS CONSTRUCTIONS, SIPHONING AWAY THE LIGHT AND GLORY OF SHADESPIRE AND CREATING A TWISTED REFLECTION OF ITS FORMER SPLENDOUR. SHADESPIRE WAS TRAPPED HALFWAY BETWEEN ULGU – REALM OF SHADOWS – AND HYSH – REALM OF LIGHT. BOUND WITHIN THIS DARK REFLECTION, REFRACTED BETWEEN THESE TWO DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED REALMS, THE SOULS OF THE FALLEN COULD NEVER ESCAPE THE MIRRORED CITY AND MAKE THE JOURNEY TO THE UNDERWORLDS. NONE WITHIN ITS WALLS WOULD BE GRANTED THE RELEASE OF DEATH. NAGASH WOULD FOREVER DENY THEM THAT GIFT.

THE MIRRORED CITY OF SHADESPIRE IS A NIGHTMARE PLANE OF ILLUSIONS AND MADNESS, AN EVER-CHANGING LABYRINTH OF ENDLESS STAIRS, CRAMPED STREETS AND SOARING ARCHWAYS. THE ORIGINAL CITY IS DRAINED OF ALL COLOUR AND LIFE, AND FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS IT HAS RESTED AS A FOREBODING RUIN. THOSE UNFORTUNATE, BRAVE, OR FOOLHARDY ADVENTURERS THAT SET FOOT WITHIN ITS WALLS ARE DRAWN THROUGH THE VEIL BETWEEN REALMS AND TRAPPED WITHIN THE MIRRORED CITY. FOR SUCH WAYWARD SOULS, ALL HOPE SEEMS LOST. YET THERE ARE THOSE WHO WILL NOT ACCEPT THEIR FATE WITHOUT A FIGHT.





## THE MIRRORED CITY

The Katophranes, lord-wizards and master inventors of Shadespire, were the first to discover that souls of the deceased could be captured within shadeglass. They swiftly put this knowledge to work, creating a network of soul-mirrors around the city to store their living essence in the event of their own deaths. In this way they could continue to provide their expertise to the next generation of thinkers, and this advantage allowed the city to grow greatly over a relatively short length of time, from a humble desert outpost to a sprawling metropolis filled with innovative wonders.

Over the centuries, the Katophranes began to further unlock the secrets of the shadeglass, even inventing artefacts that would allow the living to enter the Faneway mirror – the gleaming nexus that linked every fragment of shadeglass in the city – and interact with their ancestors. Further remarkable inventions followed. The city's outer walls were suffused with the spirits of elite warriors who had fallen in battle – an eternal watch against the manifold threats of the surrounding Desert of Bones. Treasures were produced that were magically linked to the Faneway, so that a grieving relative might converse with their lost loved one via an enchanted amulet or brooch. Shadeglass golems were created, given motion by the soul essence of loyal retainers who continued to serve their masters even in death.

When the city was swept into shadow by the magic of Nagash, many of these objects of power were destroyed, or warped by the power of the Lord of Undeath's magic. The Faneway itself was shattered into a thousand fragments, each shard scattered about the Mirrored City – with the nexus of the soul relay broken, no soul could leave the nightmarish prison that held them captive. For thousands of years the Katophranes sought to undo the curse of Shadespire. They hypothesised that recovering artefacts of pure shadeglass, and utilising them to restore the great Faneway mirror, might break Nagash's spell, but trapped as they were within their soul-storing prisons, they could not carry out this task themselves.

At first they attempted to utilize their subjects, the citizens of Shadespire, but madness and paranoia swiftly overcame these unfortunate souls. It seemed as though the city itself was warping and shifting with every passing hour, hiding its secrets away behind illusory walls and impossibly dimensioned chambers. No sooner was a precious shadeglass treasure recovered than another was

lost, as the city's streets shattered and reformed, or a great stairway shifted, sending doomed souls tumbling away into darkness. Minds destroyed by this maddening existence, souls trapped within their decaying bodies, the people of Shadespire shuffled and groaned in the dark corners of the city. They cursed the torture of their eternal existence, as both their hope and their flesh slowly withered and rotted away.

Worse still, regions of the city were slowly morphing under the will of Nagash. The image of the Great Necromancer would appear half-glimpsed in a reflection, or slowly form in the architecture of a great tower, his pitiless gaze further tormenting those who had defied his will. Many were driven to terrified insanity, blinding themselves with shards of glass so that they could not look upon his dread visage. Others turned to worshipping Nagash, and claimed great sections of Shadespire as their own, guarding their territory with a ruthless zeal. Believing that only by petitioning the God of Death for forgiveness could they absolve themselves of their prideful sins, they raised monuments and shrines in his honour. They claimed all shadeglass relics as the property of Nagash, and sequestered those they recovered within great sepulchres of bone and wasting flesh, built from the still-conscious bodies of heathens and intruders.

As years passed by, many of the Katophranes followed their citizens into despair, driven mad by the futility of their task. Those former masters of the city who retain some semblance of sanity have taken to employing the unfortunate adventurers and warriors who have been transported to the Mirrored City, offering them the secrets of escaping Shadespire and ending the Lord of Death's curse. The Katophranes are unconcerned by the nature or honour of those they ally with, requiring only that they help them escape their hellish existence. In recent seasons, as the realms are stricken by war once more, the number of unfortunates stumbling through shadowy portals into the Mirrored City has increased tenfold.

Some of those now trapped in Shadespire are noble souls, determined to end the curse and deny their fate. Others are savage brutes, for whom an endless cycle of violence is its own reward. There are avaricious looters, frenzied barbarians and sages whose desire for knowledge has led them down dark paths. These disparate souls will clash together as each attempts to escape damnation, and the haunted streets of Shadespire will run red with blood.





## WHISPERS IN SHADOW

For more than a thousand years the shadow-cloaked ruins of Shadespire lay dormant, a malevolent scar in the centre of the vast Desert of Bones. During much of that time there were few fresh victims of the city's terrible curse. Travellers seldom ventured across the deadly, parching wastes to reach the city, as often warded away by the lethal storms that wracked its bone-dust dunes as by the dark stories that had sprung up around the place. Yet some were brave or foolish enough to stray within the borders of the cursed city, and those fortunate few who returned brought back priceless treasures and forbidden knowledge, as well as rumours of haunted mirrors, nightmarish illusions and other strange tales.

Soon, avaricious eyes were drawn to Shadespire, for the curse of Nagash had passed into myth, and the realms are filled with desperate souls who would gladly risk damnation in search of power. Worshippers of foul gods and bands of savage, war-loving orruks fought bloody skirmishes at the city gates, and rat-like skaven skittered through the shadows, scrabbling for relics and treasures to take back to their filth-strewn lairs.

Not all who risked their eternal souls in such a manner were looters or scavengers. Every hundred years the stout Fyreslayers of the Vostarg lodge – mercenary warriors who had once sworn to protect Shadespire, and had ultimately failed in that oath – sent a band of determined warriors into the depths of the shattered ruins, seeking to end the curse of the Mirrored City and restore their lost honour.

The ruins of Shadespire became a subject of particular interest to the mighty God-King, Sigmar, whose elite champions, the Stormcast Eternals, were deployed in a great crusade against the forces of the Chaos Gods – primordial entities who sought to despoil the Mortal Realms. His champions had suffered greatly during the long war, and though each was effectively immortal, the mysterious process of Reforging that the fallen went through upon death had taken a worrying toll. Every time a warrior was remade they lost a part of themselves, gradually shedding the vestiges of their humanity, becoming emotionless and uncompromising. The changes wrought by the Reforging process manifested themselves in myriad unsettling ways, and those Stormhosts who had seen constant battle were particularly afflicted.

Long had the God-King known of the rumours surrounding lost Shadespire, where once the souls of

the dead had been preserved in time. If shade-glass could perform such miracles, might it not also be of use in his quest to salve the trauma that ran rife through his armies? Seeking to learn more regarding the properties of this mysterious substance and the truth of the lost city, the God-King sent forth a force of Stormcast Eternals from the noble Hammers of Sigmar, with orders to investigate the time-weathered skeleton of Shadespire.

Several detachments from this first and most honoured Stormhost, including formations of shield-bearing Liberators and bands of elite Vanguard-Hunters, made camp at the edge of the ruins. From there they launched patrols into the depths of the narrow, gloomy streets. Within, the warriors had to contend not only with packs of skaven and orruk looters who fell upon intruders with vicious glee, but also frenzied worshippers of Khorne, god of slaughter, who had tracked the Stormcast Eternals to the border of the cursed city and now sought once more to wet the earth with the blood of their hated enemies.

These initial engagements were brutal, but after much blood was spilled, the Hammers of Sigmar began to push their enemies back, scattering them to the shadows. It was then that something strange began to occur. Having secured key areas of control within the city's borders, Stormcast patrols began to report that isolated members of their number had seemingly disappeared into thin air, with no bodies or bloodstains left behind to suggest a struggle, and no bursts of celestial lightning to indicate that the soul of a fallen Stormcast Eternal was making the long journey back to Azyrheim – seat of Sigmar's empire – for Reforging.

Whispers began to fill the warriors' ears, promises of great glory and threats of damnation, echoes of laughter and tormented screams. Some glimpsed half-formed images in the shards of glass that littered the ground: pleading faces wracked with anguish, lost comrades beset by hordes of the living dead, and looming above it all a skeletal visage, eyes blazing with hateful balefire.

When all attempts to find the absent warriors failed, the Hammers of Sigmar reluctantly fell back to their defensive positions on the edge of Shadespire. Word was sent back to Azyrheim of the evil they had unearthed. Something had taken their battle-kin. Something ancient and filled with malice. Whatever had happened to their missing comrades, for now they were on their own.

# WARRIORS OF SHADESPIRE

Many heroes, brutes and savages walk the twisting paths of the Mirrored City. Some seek an escape from their maddening prison. Others relish the endless violence, or seek to remake ill-fated Shadespire in the image of their merciless gods. All are damned to an eternity of suffering, unless they can break the curse that binds them.

## Steelheart's Champions and the Farstriders

Clad in gleaming sigmarite and armed with heaven-forged weaponry, the Stormcast Eternals are champions and heroes all, defenders of civilisation and sworn enemies of Chaos. They were once mortal heroes hailing from across the realms – now gathered together by the God-King Sigmar and remade into the physical embodiment of the celestial storm, they are living legends who wage the eternal war against the Dark Gods. The greatest secret of the

Stormcast Eternals is the process of Reforging, by which the soul-stuff of fallen warriors is borne back to Sigmar's realm of Azyrheim upon bolts of lightning, and there transmuted into flesh and metal. This process renders each Stormcast immortal, though such a powerful gift comes with a heavy toll – with each death, a Stormcast Eternal loses a part of their humanity, becoming cold and distant, and losing grip upon the fragmented memories of their past life. The warriors under the command of Liberator-Prime

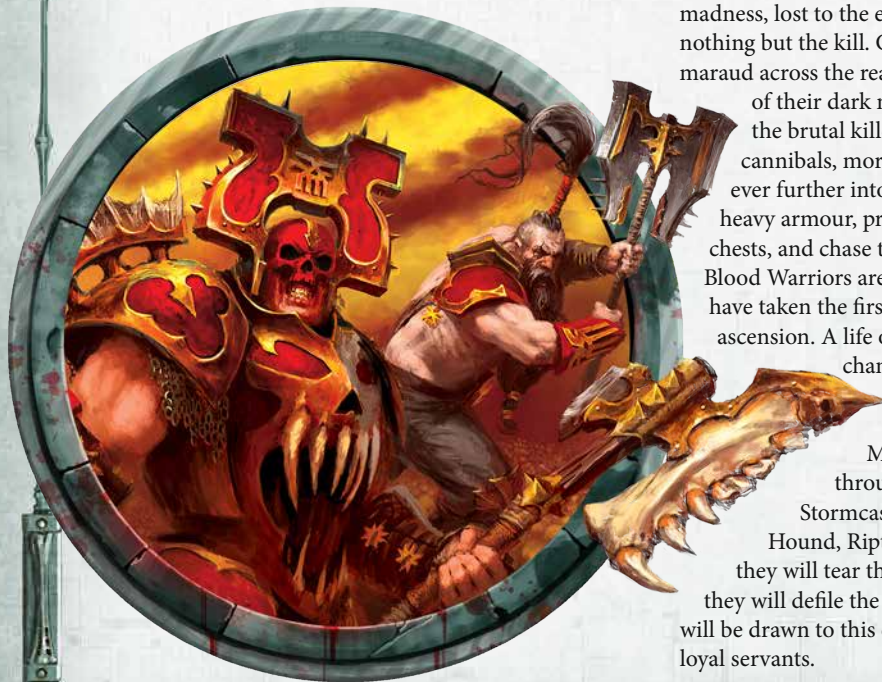
Severin Steelheart and the grizzled hunters led by Hunter-Prime Sanson Farstrider were part of a detachment sent to Shadespire to investigate potential cures for this ailment. Now they find themselves trapped, separated from their kin and from each other, with only the whispers of the dead to guide them home.

## Garrek's Reavers and Magore's Fiends

The Bloodbound are mortal warriors who have sworn themselves to Khorne, god of carnage and slaughter. Blinded by battle-madness, lost to the exultant sensations of combat, they care for nothing but the kill. Gathering together in vast Warhordes, they maraud across the realms, butchering and despoiling in the name of their dark master. Bloodreavers, such as the band led by the brutal killer known as Garrek Gorebeard, are frenzied cannibals, mortals whose dark excesses have drawn them ever further into the thrall of the Blood God. They eschew heavy armour, preferring to feel the blood spatter across their chests, and chase their prey as tirelessly as hunting wolves.

Blood Warriors are towering, plate-armoured killers, who have taken the first steps down the path towards daemonic ascension. A life of constant war has forged them into mighty champions of ruin, whose unquenchable lust for slaughter drives them ever onwards in search of the next battle. The fiend

Magore Redhand leads his Blood Warriors through the Mirrored City, tracking the hated Stormcast Eternals with the aid of his loyal Flesh Hound, Riptooth. Should they fall upon their quarry, they will tear them apart, and with the blood of the fallen they will defile the Mirrored City so utterly that Khorne's eye will be drawn to this damned place, and to the gory tributes of his loyal servants.



## Ironskull's Boyz

Orruks are savage, muscle-bound creatures who live for the crash and crunch of battle. Ironjawz are the mightiest of their number, clad in thick plates of rusted metal and wielding huge jagged weapons forged from the same. They are a constant threat across the Mortal Realms, sweeping across the earth in great hordes and smashing everything in their path. Gurzag Ironskull and his lads were trapped in the Mirrored City decades ago, after an ill-fated looting spree amidst the ruins of Shadespire. Ironskull was initially furious, but in the years since he's grown rather fond of the place; after all, what self-respecting orruk would decline an endless cycle of violence and bloodshed?



## The Chosen Axes

The duardin known as Fyreslayers are fearless and intractable mercenary warriors.

They will fight for anyone in exchange for ur-gold, the magical resource which fuels their great strength, and which they believe is the spiritual essence of their warrior-god, Grimnir. To a Fyreslayer, honour is paramount. Once an oath is given, it must be fulfilled, and to abandon one's word would be seen as an act of unthinkable disgrace. It is for this reason that the Fyreslayers of the Vostarg lodge still bear the shame of their failure to protect Shadespire. Hundreds of warriors have fallen or been lost in the attempt to banish the curse that haunts the city, yet no Fyreslayer would ever suggest that the venture be abandoned. The legendary Runefather Fjul-Grimnir ventured into the ruins of Shadespire many years ago, and still walks the shadowed streets of the city's dark reflection with his loyal companions. Though he has made little progress during the decades he has spent in the Mirrored City, the redoubtable old fighter has not yet lost hope of restoring his peoples' treasured honour.



## Sepulchral Guard

The Deathrattle of Shadespire are quite unlike the typical charnel slaves raised by minor necromancers and practitioners of fell magic. Their soul animus remains trapped within their decayed forms as a result of the curse of Nagash, and thus they retain a fragmented memory of their past lives long after their flesh has rotted away. Over time, many of these unfortunates have sworn themselves to the God of Death's service, praying that by petitioning Nagash for forgiveness they may be freed from the agony of their existence. Greatest amongst the faithful is the Sepulchral Warden, the former Lord Marshal of Shadespire. Such is his devotion to Nagash that this enigmatic creature has been gifted with the power to inspire frenzied devotion in his subjects, and he directs them against all who would challenge the Great Necromancer's will.



## Spiteclaw's Swarm

Skaven are a race of malicious and devious ratmen in thrall to Chaos. Seemingly infinite in number, the swarms of the great skaven clans blight every corner of the realms, scampering forth from hidden lairs to enslave and prey upon the other mortal races. It is fortunate indeed that the ratfolk are naturally treacherous creatures, constantly backstabbing and betraying one another in search of personal power, for if they were to unite in one cause the clans would be all but unstoppable. Warlord Skritch Spiteclaw leads a particularly murderous and spiteful band through the Mirrored City, searching for artefacts and trinkets to loot, and an escape route by which he can claw his way to freedom.

