

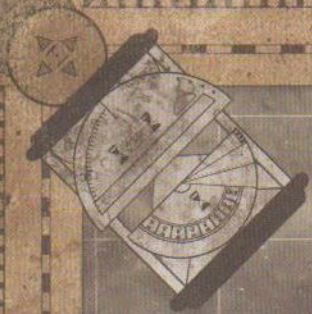
ROGUE TRADER™

EDGE OF THE ABYSS™



DREAD MYSTERIES
BEYOND THE MAW

WARHAMMER™
40,000
ROLEPLAY



RIFTS OF HECATON

PHAINEAL ECHOES

Here be Daemons

UNBEHOLDEN REACHES

ACCURSED DEMESNE

ALENIC DEPTHS

THE KORONUS
EXPANSE
OF THE
HALO STARS

Deferas Nox

Vaporatus

Ruakorn
Feral

Naduesh

Anguish
Dead

Seven Dooms

Methane

Unired-Undred
Tad

Antagonist
Death

Corpse Stars

Hick

Frozen Stars

Concarnid

Chasmed World

Beware the Siren Stars

Corpse Stars

Om

Processional of the Damned





Warp Shoals

Borsarian

Zeph War

Valerian's Salvation

Egarian Dominion

Burnscour Death

WINTERSCALE'S REALM

Bostion

Lucifer's Breath Emperor

SCREAMING VORTEX

RAGGED WORLDS

The Temple

FORT WANE Oracle

FOOTBALL Oracle

Ward of the World

Hermitage

THE KORONUS PASSAGE

THE CAULDRON

DeLorian

Ren

Grace

FOUNDLINGS WORLDS

VOID DANCER'S ROIL

EMPEROR'S SCOURGE

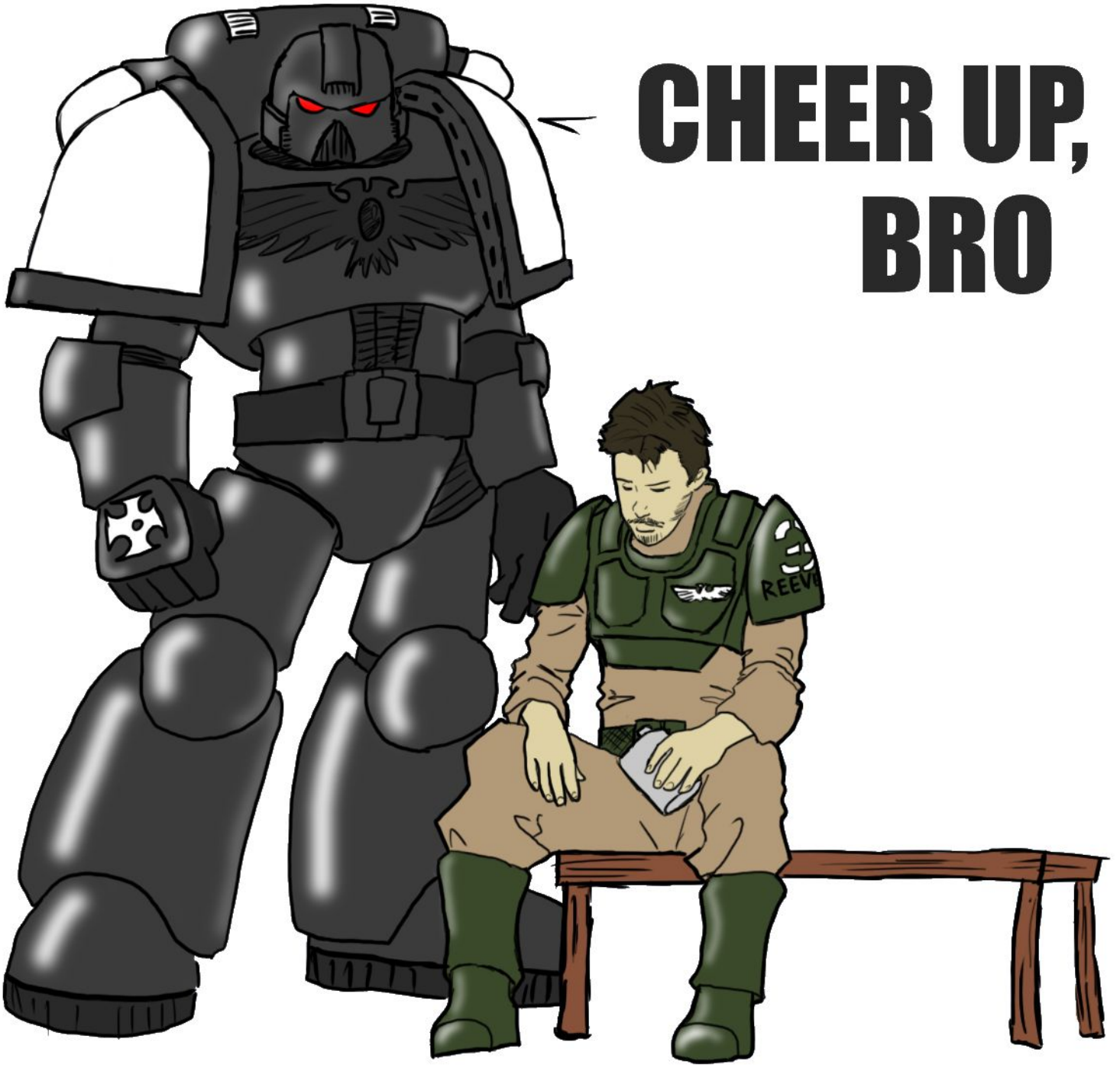
Iniquity

Septragonic Void



Continued

**CHEER UP,
BRO**



ROGUE TRADER

EDGE OF THE ABYSS



ROLEPLAYING IN THE GRIM
DARKNESS OF THE 4TH MILLENNIUM

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INTRODUCTION

"All that you know is left at the entrance to the Maw."

—Darius Xerxes, Master Helmsman

The edge of the map, the places that haven't been filled in by the scholars of the Adeptus Terra, is where hundreds, if not thousands, of Rogue Traders flock like carrion flies upon a bloated and rotting carcass. This is the Koronus Expanse; the end of space, and the proverbial edge of the abyss.

For the past seven hundred years, this area of space has been open to exploration—and exploitation—by the High Lords of Terra, and is the subject of much speculation and rumour. It is a place of unexplored and unmitigated danger, and treacherous intrigues. This region of uncharted space within the Halo Stars is home to deadly xenos races, mysterious worlds untouched by humanity, and, perhaps, the doom or salvation of the vast Imperium of Man. Within the Koronus Expanse lies untapped wealth, adventure, danger, and slumbering beasts.

This is the place marked 'Here Be Monsters.' It is a realm of secrets man was not meant to know, but is sure to find—one way or another.

THE EDGE OF THE ABYSS

EDGE OF THE ABYSS is a sourcebook designed for the **ROGUE TRADER** Roleplaying Game, and is intended as resource for both players and GMs to the area of space known as the Koronus Expanse. It expands upon the material already presented in the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook, and gives new perspective to this unexplored, dangerous, and exciting area of space.

Within the pages of this sourcebook, readers will find background on the various legends, myths, and lies that have been passed amongst Rogue Traders and their crews since this area was first heard of during the Angevin Crusades. It also contains information on several worlds the Explorers can encounter in their adventures through the region. **EDGE OF THE ABYSS** also presents new material on the various xenos races that dwell within the Expanse,

including the Eldar, the Orks of the Undred-Undred Teef, the Stryxis, and the savage Rak'Gol. In addition, there's background information on the various famous (or infamous) Rogue Traders that operate in and around the region, including names such as Aoife Armengarde, Calligos Winterscale, Aspyce Chorda, and more. Finally, **EDGE OF THE ABYSS** rounds out and concludes with an adventure for the Explorers to test their mettle against the myriad dangers of the Koronus Expanse.

The Expanse lies just beyond the edge of the Imperium, beckoning seductively to explorers and adventurers. Those who beware the dangers and brave the unknown will either find vast wealth or immense misfortune.

WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK?

EDGE OF THE ABYSS is divided into five chapters. **Chapter I** provides information on the various tales and voidfarer legends surrounding the Koronus Expanse, in the form of adventure seeds, first-hand accounts, and handouts.

Chapter II presents a detailed description of some of the worlds within the Koronus Expanse. This section contains information such as planetary descriptions, principle organisations operating on these worlds, as well as opportunities for profit and endeavours regarding each of these detailed worlds.

Chapter III provides useful insight and information on the various xenos races that exist within the Koronus Expanse, and the myriad organisations operating within and vying for control of the region. Background information and adventure seeds are provided on these xenos races to help Game Masters integrate this material into their own games and campaigns.

There are hundreds of Rogue Traders operating within the Expanse, but only a few have gained the notoriety and infamy necessary to be counted amongst the great. **Chapter IV** explains and expands upon these famous (and sometimes infamous) Rogue Traders along with their ships and areas of operation. These famous Rogue Traders are provided as allies or rivals for a crew of Explorers: to serve as friends, role models or bitter foes.

Chapter V presents *Vaults of the Forgotten*, an adventure of survival and horror set amongst the Egarian Dominion.

—From the Journals of Mallachai Stern, 095.799.M41

My name is Mallachai Stern, confessor and missionary in the God-Emperor's name, and these are my recordings of what I have seen in my many travels of the Koronus Expanse.

This is the tenth foray I have made as Confessor aboard this mighty vessel, the Holy Word, under the flag of de Kane. She is sure and fit for the journey, but I have less faith in the crew my captain has brought on during our resupply at Porr Wänder. Are they ready for that which awaits a man inside the Koronus Expanse? We'll know soon enough, however. I pray to the Emperor that the proper supplications to our mighty vessel have been heard, and that she will bear us home again. Faith, amid these dark days, is in short supply.

I look to the stars that hang in the void as we near the transition point that will carry us from the space of our port to the vast storms guarding the entrance to the Koronus Expanse—the aptly-named "Maw." May the Emperor protect us on our journey through the Immaterium as we approach the gates. Who know what wonders—or horrors—we may find once we cross into the abyss?



MYTHS,
LEGENDS,
AND LIES



THINGS THAT
MAN SHOULD
NOT KNOW

•
SHADOWS OF
EVENTS

CHAPTER I: LEGENDS, MYTHS, AND LIES

"That which I do not possess, I crave. That which I cannot claim, I despise. That which I should not know, I am compelled to learn. That which I own, I tire of. And that which I once called mine, I mourn. Is it the nature of man to desire that which we lack; a sense of untamed curiosity and unrestrained greed that drives us to have more than we need and need more than we have? Is it a curse, that we seek the unknown against all better judgement and heedless of cost? Or is it merely the darker part of ambition, the cost of our aspirations to become greater? I know not... for curiosity is something I possess in abundance, and thus I care not to look upon it when I can look to newer things."

—Excerpt from the Journal of Parsimus Dewain

There are no absolute truths for those exploring the Expanse, merely the whispers and misconceptions of men, the legends and fragmented histories of things that should, by all rights, be impossible, or at the very least, highly improbable. That is, at the core of it, the nature of the Koronus Expanse—a place of impossible things, some wondrous and others terrible, a graveyard of dead gods and the resting place of slumbering horrors amidst unimaginable treasures and limitless opportunities for glory. Great men and women have given their lives to see what the Expanse holds, while others have found their sanity shattered or once-noble intentions twisted by what they find. The lucky and daring few who have come back more or less intact bring with them tales that do nothing but inspire the next generation of daring explorers. And so the cycle continues, and will continue, as long as people exist who see danger as merely the cost of opportunity.

A great many things are afoot within the Expanse, from the politics of Port Wander and Footfall, to the fates of distant colonies that shudder beneath the light of tainted stars and dread storms, to the things that lingered in the darkness before Mankind ever ventured beyond the Maw, and the other forces that have come to exploit the wonders and horrors that lay in wait. Presented here is a small selection of those things, legends ranging from the epic and world-shattering, to the tall tales of voidsmen told in dank taverns over cups of dubious liquor, and the footnotes of ancient historians whose works gather dust for generations.

THINGS THAT MAN SHOULD NOT KNOW

There are many plots, perils and mysteries present within the Koronus Expanse, some obvious, some less obvious. Within this chapter, and within this book as a whole, are hints and suggestions of what those things may be, many of which are intended to remain just that—hints.

The Koronus Expanse is huge and the worlds thus far explored are only the start of what might be out there. Similarly, what is revealed about the worlds and factions present within the Expanse represent only part of their nature. In all cases, plenty of room has been left for people to do as they will within an entire sector of largely-uncharted space.

This book is a guide to get GMs started, to spark your own ideas and provide inspiration for endeavours and campaigns for a long time to come.





++ The prow is armoured because the stern never faces the enemy ++

///Document Desc.: Ship's Log Excerpt
from the Glorious Aegis///

+++CLASSIFIED+++

*Ask Laomyr to follow up on
this -
R. W.*

Datemark: 9403528.M41

Local Chronology: 147th day of year 528. Alpha shift.

Alpha Shift: 4 hours, 45 minutes - Auto-Log. Translation Complete. Estimated Duration of Transit: 123 days. Navigatorium Powered Down. Void Shields Active.

Alpha Shift: 4 hours, 50 minutes - Lord-Captain Gideon Herain. "My Navigator informs me that there is ample reason for our emerging from the Warp two weeks ahead of schedule. He proceeded to elaborate in great and needless detail about 'unexpected Aethyric crossbleed' or some such nonsense. When I finally got some sense out of him, his explanation was simple enough: the Warp here is disturbed, and we must cross this sector in real space before re-entering the Warp in order to proceed safely... adding perhaps as much as a month and a half to our journey. What has caused this disturbance, however, remains unknown."

Alpha Shift: 5 hours, 25 minutes - Auto-Log. Passive Augurs Have Discerned Object. Distance is 4.0E+5 Kilometres in Port-side/Ventral Augury arc. High Levels of Ionising Radiation Detected. High Levels of Warp Energy Detected.

Alpha Shift: 5 hours, 33 minutes - Lord-Captain Gideon Herain. "My Engineeer-Prime confirms the findings of the Augury systems; his electromantic rituals suggest something intriguing. All the omens point to a vessel, a rare and advanced one. The prospect of valuable salvage brightens my mood considerably."

Alpha Shift: 5 hours, 35 minutes - Engineeer-Prime Arviland Maegallask. "The omens are clear, yet the conclusions confusing. The vessel's emissions are not indicative of an Imperial vessel, nor of any known xenos species' technology. My initial hypothesis was that the vessel belonged to an unknown xenos species, but the vessel does seem to demonstrate qualities similar to certain Standard Template Construct designs I have encountered. I would hesitate to define my present emotive state as one of eagerness, but there is a certain anticipation that muddles the flesh-remnants of my brain."

Unfortunately, the Augury logs were not recoverable from the message, so we cannot analyse the findings. The ship's log became partially unrecoverable at this point.

Alpha Shift: 8 hours, 13 minutes - Flight Lieutenant Kristof Tobar, remote log from Shuttle via Vox-Link. "Boarding team departing from Glorious Aegis, estimated time to arrival: 24 minutes."



++ The prow is armoured because the stern never faces the enemy ++

///Document Desc.: Ship's Log
Excerpt from the Glorious Aegis
(continued)///

+++CLASSIFIED+++

Alpha Shift: 8 hours, 34 minutes - Engineeer-Prime Arviland Maegallask, remote log from Shuttle via Vox-Link. "Upon closer inspection, my earlier theories appear to have been correct; there are definite STC qualities present in this vessel. As presiding Priest of the Machine-God, I am compelled by tradition to provide the vessel with a designation: Praecursor. The Lieutenant has just identified what registers as a docking bay, albeit a small one. We approach."

Alpha Shift: 8 hours, 46 minutes - Auto-Log. Alpha Shift Concluding. Commencing Beta Shift.

Beta Shift: 0 hours, 17 minutes - Flight Lieutenant Kristof Tobar, remote log from Shuttle via Vox-Link. "It's taken us longer than expected to dock. The shuttle's machine spirit didn't seem to want to commune with the Praecursor. I've not seen anything like it. I had to hand control over to the Engineeer so he could soothe the shuttle and convince it to proceed. Something's gotten it rattled."

Beta Shift: 0 hours, 19 minutes - Engineeer-Prime Arviland Maegallask, remote log from Praecursor, via Vox-Link. "Ommissiah forgive my weakness, but this vessel is a marvel. I have not seen such sophistication, even upon..." +Recording Lost+

Beta Shift: 0 hours, 27 minutes - +Data Corrupted+

Beta Shift: 0 hours, 58 minutes - Petty Officer Solom Kaneer, remote log from Praecursor, via Vox-Link. +Recording Indecipherable+ "... shot the Lieutenant! I didn't realise the Engineeer was even armed! I can hear him approaching now..." +Recording Lost+

Beta Shift: 2 hours, 22 minutes - Lord-Captain Gideon Herain. "The last report I received from the boarding team was over an hour ago, and I could make little sense of that. The Engineeer-Prime appears to have gone insane, though what caused this, I do not know. I have summoned an Astropath to send the ship's logs to you, Inquisitor."

Beta Shift: 2 hours, 26 minutes - Engineeer-Prime Arviland Maegallask, location unknown. ERROR. "Such things I have seen-felt-known. Such things the Praecursor has shown me. It wants to go home. It wants to share its secrets."

Beta Shift: 2 hours, 37 minutes - Lord-Captain Gideon Herain. "The Praecursor is moving. It flares with light and power and something which makes my skin crawl, even at this distance. It slowly approaches us. I have ordered the ship to re-enter the Immaterium. The Navigator assures me that the preparations shall take only another five minutes."

Beta Shift: 2 hours, 38 minutes - Auto-Log. Macrobatteries Discharge.

Beta Shift: 2 hours, 40 minutes - Lord-Captain Gideon Herain. "No effect. I've just unloaded a full broadside to no effect, against an unshielded, derelict ship barely the size of a frigate... what is that accursed vessel? My Astropath will send as soon as this log is complete. I-" +Bolt Pistol Discharge Detected+

End Log Excerpt.

Nothing more was ever heard of the Glorious Aegis. We are unaware if the vessel ever managed to translate into the Warp or not. Certainly, it never arrived anywhere that we have been able to determine. We have not had any other confirmed reports of this "Praecursor" either, though there have been many unsubstantiated rumours.

PORT WANDER ADMINISTRATUM: OFFICIO NAVIS

Date: 4003816.M41

Compiler: Adept Second Class Hobarn Sennic

For The Attention Of: Commander Larius Sans

My Lord Commander,

Per your instructions, I have compiled a list of vessels reported missing within the last year which are known to have passed through Anomaly 616/Theta, known colloquially as "The Barathrum." We have been unable to ascertain the precise location of this anomaly, as of yet, and cannot justify an expedition into a region where vessels are known to vanish without a trace, so to speak. Our current intelligence suggests that the Barathrum is located somewhere between the worlds of Valcetti's Salvation, Solace Encarmine, Zayth and Naduesh, but reports are obviously inconsistent.

Date Lost, Approximate	Vessel Name	Vessel Classification
9.012.815.M41	<i>Nasay's Pride</i>	Frigate
9.067.815.M41	<i>Cypra Fulminare</i>	Light Cruiser
9.212.815.M41	<i>In Spite of Itself</i>	Raider
9.214.815.M41	<i>Truth and Fortune</i>	Transport
9.392.815.M41	<i>Silent Oblivion</i>	Frigate
9.434.815.M41	<i>Drusus' Blade</i>	Cruiser
9.550.815.M41	<i>Timely Retaliation</i>	Light Cruiser
9.634.815.M41	<i>Elsabeth</i>	Transport
9.688.815.M41	<i>Inescapable</i>	Raider
9.775.815.M41	<i>Ex Celeritas, Proficiens</i>	Transport
9.788.815.M41	<i>Scientia Potestas Est</i>	Explorator
9.852.815.M41	<i>Archduke Modar</i>	Cruiser
9.883.815.M41	<i>Child of Wrath</i>	Frigate
9.956.815.M41	<i>Price of Ambition</i>	Raider
9.962.815.M41	<i>Armoured in Faith</i>	Frigate



NAVY DEEP VOID RECONNAISSANCE MISSION 2-11-OMEGA:

Compiled into Battlefleet Calixis Records: 798.M41

Logs of the *Aquila's Gaze*, Vigilant Class Reconnaissance Frigate, assigned to surveillance operations against the Ork menace of Undred-Undred Teef.

4,029 Hours out of Port Wander: Successful translation from the warp at the outer edges of System Designate 702-0X0-2H. Beat to quarters. Ship rigged for silent running, passive augury for potential planetary bodies commencing.

4,031 Hours out of Port Wander: Preliminary auguries complete. One stellar body and three planetary bodies detected. Stellar body classified as UMBER-III (corpse-star). Planetary Body Primus, telluric planet .5 AU from primary, 5,000 km diameter, no observed satellites. Planetary Body Secundus, jovian planet 1.2 AU from primary, 45,000 km diameter, 8 observed satellites. Planetary Body Tertius, telluric planet 14.9 AU from primary, 9,500 km diameter, 1 possible observed satellite. Preliminary reports negative for hostile presence. Beginning secondary augury sweep.

4,034 Hours out of Port Wander: Secondary auguries complete. Primus atmosphere non-existent. Secundus atmosphere helium-argon mix. Tertius atmosphere carbon-dioxide nitrogen reducing atmosphere. Auguries negative for life-signs or hostile presence within system. Entering system at one-third forward, commencing tertiary (active) augury sweep.

4,068 Hours out of Port Wander: Tertiary auguries complete. No additional relevant information to report. Standing down from general quarters.

4,097 Hours out of Port Wander: Signal detected from Planetary Body Tertius. Signal weak and intermittent, unable to resolve. May be Imperial in origin. Beginning quartary (active-focused) augury sweep of Planetary Body Tertius.

4,100 Hours out of Port Wander: Potential satellite orbiting Tertius reclassified possible starship. Course change, approaching Tertius full forward. Hailing possible starship.

4,102 Hours out of Port Wander: No response from hails. Beat to quarters.

4,108 Hours out of Port Wander: Approaching to maximum weapon range. Signal decrypted as distress beacon from starship *Gaunt Triumph* out of Footfall.

4,109 Hours out of Port Wander: Beginning final approach. Target remains unresponsive. Boarding parties to shuttles.

4,110.5 Hours out of Port Wander: Boarding parties away.

4,111 Hours out of Port Wander: Boarding parties transmit preliminary reports. Ship exterior sustained minor damage. Ship interior sustained moderate to severe damage. Damage appears to be inflicted from small arms and explosive devices. Crew status: missing.

4,112 Hours out of Port Wander: Boarding parties located 11 surviving crew members. Whereabouts of remaining approximate 100,000 crew unknown. Interrogation of survivors inconclusive.

4,112.25 Hours out of Port Wander: Boarding party Delta does not respond to hails. Dispatching party Beta to bridge to investigate.

4,112.5 Hours out of Port Wander: Boarding party Beta and Gamma do not respond to hails. Regrouping boarding parties. Dispatching reinforcements.

4,110.6 Hours out of Port Wander: Boarding party Alpha receives vox-fragment, potentially transmission from party Beta. Alpha reports three rescued survivors missing.

4,110.65 Hours out of Port Wander: Remaining boarding parties report rescued survivors wildly attacking armymen. Boarding party Zeta does not respond to hails.

4,110.7 Hours out of Port Wander: Boarding parties withdrawn from *Gaunt Triumph*. Two survivors retrieved by boarding party Alpha. Marker buoy deployed.

4,112 Hours out of Port Wander: All reports from boarding parties and auguries of target sealed under authority of the captain. Survivors placed in stasis. Departing orbit of Tertius at two-thirds full, setting course for Koronus Passage.

The Aquilla's Gaze was ordered to proceed directly to the Tricorn on Scintilla, under Inquisitorial Mandate, and was subsequently reassigned to operations in the Margin Crusade. Ship lost with all hands in the Jericho Reach, 804.M41.

*But who gave the orders for re-assignment?
R. W.*

+++Sealed under Security Level Vermillion+++

+++Tricorn Inquisitorial Archives, Scintilla+++

+++Vox and Pict Fragment received during boarding of target *Gaunt Triumph*, System Designate 702-0X0-2H+++

[Image shows grainy footage of corridor illuminated by several stab-lights. Image appears to be taken from helmet pict-corder.]

[Voice Designated: Subject 1]...this is boarding team Beta, approaching the starboard companion-ways on Deck 31. If I'm right, this should take us into the enginarium...

[Image focuses on bulkheads. Weapon scarring apparent, consistent with las-strikes and impacts from shotcannon]

[Subject 1] This area is really shot up. Las, shot-pattern, scorching from boarding flammers...

[Voice Designated: Subject 2] Someone was putting up one damned strong fight.

[Voice Designated: Subject 3] But Chief, if that's what happened, where's the bodies? Haven't seen one yet.

[Subject 2] Yeah...that's what scares me.

[Subject 1] Stow the commentary, boys...

[Pause, image loses focus, refocuses on bulkhead door. Individual in void suit consistent with Naval armsman moves towards door.]

[Voice Designated: Subject 4] Appears like someone welded her shut, sir.

[Subject 1] Probably for a reason...let's figure out why. Chief, get it open.

[Second suited figure moves to door. Glare, intermittent flashes consistent with thermal lance.]

[Image lost for 349 seconds. Resumes, new corridor. Bulkhead walls appear warped, as if subjected to intense heat.]

[Subject 3: registering heightened stress levels] Don't like this at all...

[Subject 2] Stow it! Did you hear that?

[Recording does not indicate any sound.]

[Subject 4] Sounds like someone...crying?

[Subject 1] Through there. Let's check it...carefully now, boys...

[Vid image lost. Sound continues intermittently.]

[Subject 1]...we're not going to hurt you, mamselle...just come out from there...

[Subject 2: registering disgust] Look at her fingers. The tips, they're down to the bone. What was she *doing*?

[Subject 3]...what she saying...can't make it out...

[Sound interference begins to gradually increase]

[Subject 2]...wait, 'the echoes singing'? What the Emperor does she mean by that?

[Subject 4: registering extreme stress levels] Oh, Celestine's blessed bones. Look at her eyes-

[High pitched scream cuts off comments. Indistinct shouting registering panic and high stress, punctuated by rapid shotcannon fire.]

[Subject 1: shouting] Kill it! Kill it! Kill-

[Recording ends]

It was vast, so vast it blotted out the stars. Drowned them out with its glow. It came up upon us, we didn't even see it. The augurs all went dead at once, the servitors going mad in their stations. Had to put them down. Blind, our ship was, but we could all see it with our eyes...pale carcass like some leviathan picked clean by sharp-fanged creatures, so only the bones are left.

The captain, damn his soul, was just calling for boarding parties when the power to the bridge went out. All at once, the only light was that sickly glow, coming through the viewports. I felt cold, could see my breath on the air. I could see frost travelling up the bulkhead walls, as I watched!

Then, out of the corner of my eye, I saw Captain Downen. He didn't say a word, he just pulled out his boot knife and slit the helmsman's throat. The man didn't shout or scream, just slumped to the deck, blood pumping from the wound. I just watched as Downen wiped his blade clean and calmly stepped over to First Officer Tirga, and slit her throat as well.

I remember pulling out my pistol...telling the captain to stop, pointing it at the back of his head. Everyone turned to look at me, I heard them whispering to me, scratching at the back of my head with their voices. The captain turned around...I saw his eyes...I remember shooting, shooting, shooting!

Running through the ship...voices wailing in my ears, in my mind. Hanger deck...assault boat. Climbing aboard, the pilot is already inside. Only it's not him anymore. Have to shoot him. Don't touch the body...don't touch it.

Space, empty space. Except it's not empty. All around the glow, fills space, fills the cockpit...fills me. It's ahead, that thing in space.

Somehow...I docked. Somehow, I got aboard. I remember shouting, my echo singing back, I remember...trees? Silver trees? But why do trees weep blood?

+++Transcript Entrusted Aboard Dues Ex Ommissiah, Departing Altar-Templum-Calixis-Est-17 for Altar-Templum-Calixis-Est-3. Sent 34.786.M41+++

From: Magos Koro-Om 89

To: Magos Iranis Trosk

Unable to dispatch reading set 28.2338423.687B due to failure of astropathic communications. All astropaths on station lost due to Scholastica Psykana conditioned self-suicide within 1 hour period of 01.786.M41. Unable to obtain replacements from other Mechanicus ships in Furibundus system, as Deus Ex Ommissiah and Templum Praetor's astropaths lost in same manner. Operatives on Footfall report rumours of "disturbances" in area of station known colloquially as "Pit of Voices," known astropath congregation site. Dispatch additional astropaths at once to resume transmission of reading sets.

Message Ends





TRICORN INQUISITORIAL ARCHIVE: SCINTILLA

Name: Commander Archimedes Vost, Imperial Navy (disputed)

Known Aliases: Unknown

Thought for the Day: "Only the guilty fear tomorrow."

Details: Vost appeared above Footfall, and then upon Port Wander, in 4077816.M41, aboard the Firestorm-class frigate *Brutal Interdiction*, a vessel with a Segmentum Obscuras registry that was not known to the dock controllers at Port Wander. Retroaugury determined that the vessel originated in the vicinity of Anomaly 616/Theta, the only known vessel to have emerged from the anomaly. The appearance of an unidentified vessel required that the ship be subject to quarantine and held until its identity could be ascertained. This would, normally, have been unremarkable save for the fact that the *Brutal Interdiction* was at the time still in the shipyards at Cypra Mundi, undergoing final consecration, and not due to be launched for another four years.

After discovering this, a more thorough search of the vessel, and a detailed questioning of its crew, began. An oddity quickly became apparent—every cogitator and chronometer aboard the *Brutal Interdiction*, and the recollections of the crew, all claimed that the year was 998.M41, and that the vessel was en-route to Cadia as part of Battlefleet Obscuras, reinforcing the Cadian Gate. Further, identity checking of Commander Archimedes Vost revealed that no such officer existed within Battlefleet Obscuras, though a man Commander Vost identified as his grandfather—Commodore Sirranon Vost, though Commander Vost claimed that his grandfather was an Admiral—was located.

Judgement: Archimedes Vost was condemned for attempting to impersonate an officer of the Imperial Navy, and remanded into Inquisitorial custody pending in-depth interrogation. His crew were summarily executed by void-exposure on 4068816.M41, with the exclusion of Navigator Antalek Nostromo, and the Adeptus Mechanicus congregation, who were remanded to the custody of the Navis Nobilite and the Adeptus Mechanicus, respectively. *Brutal Interdiction* was relocated to Cypra Mundi, where it will undergo reconsecration and be renamed.

FROM THE DESK OF ALESSAUNDER VIER-MENKEN

*Entrusted aboard the sprint trader Echo of Piety, en-route to Vaxanide via Port Wander, 6908811.M41
To my friend and backer, Tomas Schott-Machenko—a missive.*

I am glad to report great success. As I write this letter my Navigator, Rurinaeus Althadé, prepares to chart a course deep within the so-called Accursed Demesne. He claims, and I believe him, for he has never steered me wrong in all his years of service, to have found a wondrous place that shall lead us to ever greater fortunes.

In the moments when I understand the subject of his speech, he chatters about it incessantly, claiming that it will make his house wealthy and powerful like no other, that this discovery shall mark their grand ascendance. I think instead of all the treasures it shall lead to.

But I get ahead of myself. My Navigator speaks of a place, a frozen rogue planet in the middle of the Koronus Expanse, which sits so close to the warp that one can see into the depths and far reaches of the Immaterium from its surface. He likes to call it "Althadé's Vista," a place where one can see through the Warp for hundreds of lightyears in every direction with immense clarity, allowing it to be charted with unparalleled precision. Think of all that could be done with that knowledge—a plethora of lost and hidden worlds laid bare so that I alone might claim their riches—less your cut, of course.

Only Althadé knows the details of where this place is located; he has shared his charts with no other, and studies them intently with every waking moment. I would fear for his sanity were I not so confident of his success.

*I shall send another missive soon, my friend.
Alessaunder Vier-Menken*

Journal Entry, 5354733.M41

I heard tell of this most fanciful tale earlier, as I dined in the wardroom. It was the kind of myth that bubbles up from amongst the enlisted men and the junior officers, old voidsmen's tales that are too bizarre to be true. Nonetheless, it amused me to listen and ponder its absurdity, and to now record it for the sake of a little nostalgia in later days.

One of the lieutenants spoke of the bazaar that gathers behind the loading cranes on the starboard gun deck every twenty-fourth shift. I'd heard of it before—the cargo crews put a few containers aside every now and again, and it gets distributed out to the crew that way. The captain gets his cut of the profits, and it keeps morale up, so as long as it doesn't get out of hand, nobody much cares. Anyway, the lieutenant mentioned the quartermaster, Mister Garvel—an old enlisted man who keeps things in line during bazaar shifts—and his stories, wild and fanciful things, as I've mentioned.

The last bazaar shift gone, maybe four days ago now, the lieutenant had gone below to pick up a few items and trade a few of the spoils of war from a recent boarding action. He stopped to listen to one of the old quartermaster's tales, who sat near a thermal exchange talking to some of the newer ratings who were off-duty at the time. Mister Garvus told this tale of a trader, millennia ago, before the Maw was ever open, that somehow managed to cross into the Expanse by accident from somewhere else in the galaxy. They ended up in orbit around this world, inhabited by primitive xenos who had barely developed civilisation. Damaged and stranded, the ship needed time to be repaired, and was lacking in supplies, so the captain decided to send down landing parties to replenish their supply vaults.

So primitive were these xenos that they literally cast themselves to the ground in worship of the landing parties, seeing the men—so strange to their eyes—descend from the skies in lighters, and the men soon returned to orbit, the holds of their lighters full to bursting with tribute from these worshipful xenos.

Hearing of this, the captain struck upon an idea, and set about the exploitation of this world—he sent men to every corner of it to gather tribute, and his most learned men would be charged with teaching the creatures Gothic so as to ease communication. It seemed that these creatures actually believed that the ship's crew were gods from beyond the sky. A common enough notion, really—there are many primitive human worlds who believe that of the Imperium, after all.

After four years, using these xenos to resupply their vaults and fill their holds with treasure, and to mine the metals needed to repair the ship, the captain prepared to depart. His vessel entered the Immaterium, and was never seen again.

Reportedly, this tale comes from a single, solitary lifeboat that emerged from the warp, centuries later, above an Imperial world. The Inquisition heard of the survivors' claims, apparently, and they too were never seen again. In the ages since mankind first found these creatures, the quartermaster told, they have continued to worship the men from beyond the sky and their distant lord, and over time had even managed to salvage parts from the ship where it had been destroyed, building their civilisation up from the remains of human technology. It is apparently said that these... oh, what was the word he used... "Anthropolatrists"—apparently it means "those who worship men as gods"—would by now be taking their first steps into the galaxy, upon ships of human design, speaking a human tongue and worshipping the God-Emperor of all things, waiting for the day when they will encounter the species they believe to be divine.

Utter nonsense if you ask me, but the men seem to like that sort of thing.



ISLANDS IN THE VOID

- LUCIN'S BREATH
-
- THE DOMINION OF MAZES
-
- THE STATIONS OF PASSAGE
-
- NADUESH
-
- THE BREAKING YARDS OF SR-561
-
- THE RAGGED WORLDS
-
- THE SIREN STAR
-
- SOMNIUM VIII
-
- ILLISK
-
- THE SERPENT'S CRADLE

CHAPTER II: ISLANDS IN THE VOID

LUCIN'S BREATH

"I will have worlds named for me, one day!"

—Lucin Rufinius, former Commander of Port Wander

"The void is like a vast ocean. Those worlds you live on are naught but islands, around which circle the predators of the deep."

—Caeluthin Baharrudor, the Stormchaser

There are a countless worlds in the Koronus Expanse. Some have felt the tread of humans for millennia, while others wait in the dark of space to be discovered. Though the Koronus Expanse has been open to the Imperium for a millennia, and known humanity for countless millennia before, it is still ill-explored and largely-undiscovered. Even the worlds charted by explorers still hold many secrets closely.

This chapter describes some of the myriad worlds of the Expanse. Some are famous, such as the conflict-torn and resource-rich world of Lucin's Breath. Others, such as the Serpent's Cradle, are unknown to all but the most accomplished Rogue Traders. All, however, have opportunities for enterprising Explorers, and dangers waiting to spring upon the unwary.

Deep within the area of the Koronus Expanse called Winterscale's Realm is a frozen world which, were it not for the resources found upon its surface, no one would pay any heed. Lucin's Breath is a planet covered in methite-rich snow and other types of crystallized gas. However, there is one resource on this dirty ball of ice that can be found here in great abundance, and it has Rogue Traders not only willing to kill for it, but to wage wars. This resource, pure nephium, is sought out by the tech-priests of the Adeptus Mechanicus for its unique properties. It is something that they value highly, and they are willing to reward those who deliver it handsomely.

Discovered by Sebastian Winterscale in 258.M41, Lucin's Breath was named to mock Commander Lucin Rufinius of Port Wander—an incompetent wretch who was posted there to ensure he would never wield any real power. Nevertheless, Rufinius boasted he would become so famous that his name would adorn worlds across the Expanse. So disgusted by Rufinius was Sebastian that he felt the name was appropriate for one so cold and out of touch with the rest of the Imperium.

The world of Lucin's Breath was once home to a xenos race who fashioned cities from the rock and frozen gasses using sophisticated and unknown technology. They were able to bore



SURVIVING LUCIN'S BREATH

Lucin's Breath is an extremely hostile world to human existence. The planet's atmosphere is thin to the point of uselessness—although if someone attempted to breathe it their lungs might well freeze before they suffocated. The following heavy-duty environmental gear is a must if one wishes to walk on the planet's surface:

- Some form of rebreather with air canister.
- Survival suit, sealed and heated carapace armour, power armour, or a void suit.

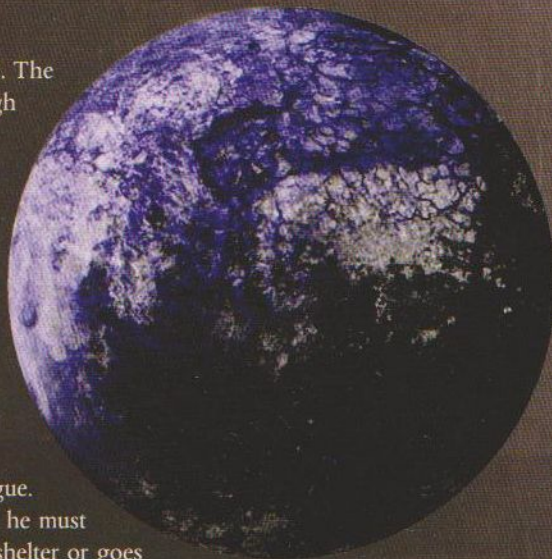
If an individual does not have the rebreather, he suffers suffocation (see *Rogue Trader*, page 261). If an individual does not have the proper clothing (but still has warm clothing such as a cloak or coat), he can survive on the surface for a number of minutes equal his Toughness Bonus, at which point he must make a **Difficult (-10) Toughness Test** or suffer one level of Fatigue.

After another amount of minutes equal to his Toughness Bonus, he must repeat this test—this continues until the individual either finds shelter or goes unconscious, at which point he dies in 1d10 minutes. If the individual does not have any sort of warm clothing, the time becomes a number of Rounds equal to his Toughness Bonus, rather than minutes.

GEAR AND SUPPLIES

The extreme cold also has an effect on weapons, sapping energy and causing components to warp, degrade, and deform. Unless specially adapted for cold operations with wire heaters and the like, weapons can suffer these effects from prolonged cold exposure (at least a day or more). Las weapons reduce their clip size to half normal as the cold drains their charge packs. Flame weapons jam on a damage roll of 7 or higher, rather than a 9, as feed tubes freeze over. Finally, any weapon that fires projectiles gains the Unreliable Trait. Plasma and melta weapons are unaffected by the cold.

Melee weapons are also effected by the extreme cold. Chain, Shock, and Power weapons reduce the damage they deal by 1, as charge packs falter and gears freeze up.



into the surface of the world and create warrens and tunnels that now stand empty, dark and cold as the void itself.

Why the aliens chose to build their cities around the bubbling and oozing pits of slushy tar-like nephium is a mystery. There's no obvious technology left behind, although the severe cold eventually makes all metals brittle, and any material not specifically designed to operate within the deep voids eventually crumbles and becomes totally useless. If this is what happened to the remains the xenos left behind, none can say.

XENOS STRUCTURES

No one knows for certain what happened to the lost xenos race that dwelled upon this world. Yet, if the destruction wrought upon the walls of their cities is any indication, they may have been on the losing side of a great war. What their fate was afterwards can only be guessed at.

Scattered across the surface of this frozen world are numerous clusters of xenos-made structures as what can only be called cities, formed from the very gas-impregnated ice and snow that covers this world and anchored deeply into the bedrock. Somehow, the xenos race that existed long before the coming of man were able to fashion the ice and snow into a transparent material that is far stronger than ceramite or any other material found within the Imperium. No one knows how they were able to achieve this, yet the cities are (or rather were) breathtaking in their beauty and design. Beneath these icy cities are warrens of frozen tunnels cut by mysterious drills into the rock.

Each city is clustered around a sinkhole where the bubbling pools of nephium can be found. The wind-smoothed edges of the cities' shattered walls are the only hint of what became of the lost xenos civilisation that once thrived here. It is whispered by those who are indentured to toil and sweat within these dead buildings that the structures should be shunned and feared; on certain nights when the planet's single pale moon shines down on these places and beneath the light of certain stars, strange and thin shapes can be seen within the pearlescent walls—writhing shadows trapped within for all eternity.

SHADOWS IN THE NIGHT

For the better part of a century, stories have filtered back to the seedy taverns, bars, and underworld of the Calixis Sector that Lucin's Breath is a cursed world. Workers who manage to complete their contracts with their patron Rogue Traders and cartels (and those who spend any appreciable amount of time on the world) speak about the strange writhing shadows that can be seen moving within the glassy walls of the crumbling xenos ruins. The stories say that the shadows appear as wraiths that undulate and flow with a humanoid appearance. Others state that the shadows sometimes appear in the form of other, far stranger shapes that have no human attributes at all. None of the shadows appear consistently, and only seem to appear when the planet's single moon passes overhead—reflecting the pale white light from the system's star.

What these shadows are or why they constantly appear is totally unknown; most do not investigate the matter as long as the precious nephium shipments continue uninterrupted. While they seem to be nothing more than moving patterns in the icy material of the walls (which some attest to either the light of the moon or the influence of various mind-altering chemicals employed by the mining prods), they can be quite unsettling. Recently, however, rumours have emerged from Aspyce Chorda's camp that workers have been going missing. No one knows what happens to them, and there are no signs left behind of their passing. Even the various gang-bosses are at a loss to explain how able-bodied workers simply vanish from sealed camps without a trace.

NEPHIUM—FROZEN TREASURE

Nephium is a highly flammable substance that has a number of useful and unusual properties. While its most common use is as an additive greatly enhancing promethium, nephium has other properties that are little understood by the techno-magi of the Adeptus Mechanicus. For one thing, nephium reacts violently to organic tissues—to touch unrefined nephium with bare skin usually results in eventual, painful death.

On Lucin's Breath, the greenish-black, tar-like nephium is staggeringly pure. The entire planet is dotted with sinkholes where the goo seeps to the surface. These sinkholes lead into the depths of the planet and are thought to be a product of the world's unstable mantle. Why nephium is so prevalent on this world is anyone's guess, and if there's any correlation between the abundance of the semi-solid material and the shattered cities of the missing xenos civilisation, no one has yet found it.

These days, the nephium is available for the taking by any who are prepared to risk the lethal cold, toxic environment, tremors, bandits, and Rogue Traders who have already staked claims on the world. However, only those with the resources to protect their claims can truly hold on to them. Sinkholes are mostly found within the city ruins. Most of them are now lost beneath tracts of vast Imperial machinery, thermally shielded habconstructs, and gargantuan storage tanks. These sites are often surrounded by a miasma of sickly smog, pollution fumes and wastes produced by the mining and extraction processes of the cold-wracked machine plants. The equatorial regions of Lucin's Breath are scattered with the frozen ruins of miscellaneous construction machines and storage tanks that were either abandoned or destroyed during the Claimant Wars of 785.M41.

The most productive of the nephium mining operations are those sinkholes that have been capped with the prefabricated standard template extraction vaults, which are heated by oversized plasma generators, and have been dropped into place from orbit by the Rogue Trader Aspyce Chorda. The various systems and extractors are worked mainly by captured pirates, renegades, and servants of rival claimants to the wealth of this world.



PLACES OF INTEREST

Scattered across the surface, and beneath the crust itself, are numerous sites of interest to intrepid Explorers. The very environment of Lucin's Breath is inimical to human life. The temperatures are so low that an unprotected human will freeze solid in moments, and the very air condenses and falls as snow. Amid this frozen hell, small squads of House Troops fight near-constant shadow wars for the rich sinkholes and nephium pits, in clear violation of the Nephium Compact.

THE MINES

Mining heads are scattered across the surface of Lucin's Breath, from pole to pole. The mines are controlled by a number of different interests, though the majority are under the authority of Calligos Winterscale or Aspyce Chorda. Each mine head is different, depending on the resources available to construct it. However, they all follow the same general pattern. The capping head itself is usually a vast steel or adamantium dome that encases the sinkhole and allows the workers to operate machinery at something approaching a habitable environment. Vast filtration pumps within the cap slowly siphon the viscous ooze, draw off impurities, and store the raw nephium in outer stowage tanks.

Partially buried airtight walkways connect the caps to miner habs, workshops, and genatoria facilities. The mines also have landing pads for tanker shuttles, and—inevitably due to the Claimant Wars—weapon emplacements and airtight

bunkers. The average mine head may have as few as thirty crew members, or as many as several hundred, depending on the size of the sinkhole and the strength of the defences.

Beyond these similarities, however, every mine head is different. The mines controlled by Calligos Winterscale are ancient, sprawling complexes, some centuries old. Over the years the miners built additional ramshackle constructions and expansions, until the original mine buildings are all but indistinguishable from the later construction. Some have even turned into small communities of rough miners and their families.

By contrast, Chorda's mines are STC extraction vaults, dropped from orbit onto promising sinkholes, and are a model of grim efficiency. However, a visitor will notice they have no sealed hanger bays, just landing pads for tanker shuttles. Chorda is in the habit of putting her captured prisoners and slaves to work at the mine-heads, and they are dropped from orbit with the vaults. There is no way to leave one of her mines—new “recruits” and supplies are thrown from the tanker shuttles, where their only hope is to reach one of the vault's airlocks before they freeze. If a mine crew doesn't produce, Chorda can shut off the vault's plasma generator, condemning them to a slow and very cold death.

VICTORY STATION

Victory Station is an orbital refinery-station/military depot constructed several centuries ago by the Winterscale dynasty, and now controlled by Calligos Winterscale. It is an old station, heavily armoured and battle-scarred from countless conflicts, in geosynchronous orbit over the nephium fields controlled by Calligos.

Victory station is a heavily modified Chasm class void-station, a ring construction roughly as large as a cruiser. It has a small population for its size—only 20,000 souls. These unfortunates maintain the leaky and deteriorating structure, harvest foodstuffs from the starch-vats and protein pits, and supply it to Winterscale's mines on the planet's surface. In turn, they receive a steady stream of raw nephium from those mines, which is refined and stored, waiting for dynasty transports.

Victory is a cheerless place, its population ground down by the unending work and the constant threat that a leak or refinery malfunction could ignite the pure nephium and incinerate the entire station. However, the station does have several ship-berths capable of void-ship repairs, and the station also sells supplies at inflated prices. This is enough to entice some ships to visit, though they must deal with Winterscale or his intermediaries to obtain a safe-route through the thick minefield that protects the station. Once aboard, any dealings go through Dom Daruos, Victory Station's tight-fisted and overworked chief foreman.

THE SKULL PIT

The “Skull Pit” (so dubbed by the local miners, indentured workers and visiting Rogue Traders of Lucin's Breath) is all that remains of a once successful nephium extraction operation run by Aspyce Chorda. The facility itself was once home to over three hundred indentured slaves, convicts, and captured raiders who were put to work under the guns of the infamous Rogue Trader.

Roughly two years ago, in 814.M41, all contact with the site ceased. It was thought that the severe cold was playing havoc with the comm arrays, but when the tech-crew dispatched to investigate arrived, they found the entire facility empty of workers save for one man, Valsetto Haine, a former raider commander who was captured and put to work in exchange for his life. The entire hab was littered with clothing, tools and other evidence of a routine workday. There were no signs of a struggle; they had simply vanished. Half-eaten food cooled on tables; bunks looked recently slept-in. The only thing they could get from Valsetto, who was completely mad, were the words “touch the pool...touch the pool...” over and over again.

When investigators checked the nephium sinkhole and its pool of ooze, they found a horrific scene: polished white skulls arranged around the perimeter of the sinkhole, all turned away from the pool with their empty eye sockets staring back at those who approached. Valsetto was charged with the deaths of all the occupants of the site and executed for his crimes. What really happened to the other miners is anyone's guess, but no one has tried to reclaim the cursed sinkhole, nor have they made any attempts to remove the skulls that ring the nephium pool—skulls that match the exact number of missing workers assigned to the facility...minus one.

THE WRECKS

When the most recent Claimant War began, both Chorda and Winterscale brought massive military assets to bear against one another. The site of one of the largest clashes in that war is now the largest junkyard on the planet. Simply called “the Wrecks,” this area near the lower equatorial region is home to hundreds of wrecked and ruined mining vehicles, troop transports, aircraft, and more. All of them are covered in centimetres of methane ice and snow, scavenged over and over in the years that following the great battle.

A small group of nomadic scavengers, called Shrivs by the locals, crawl over the frozen metal beasts like parasites, removing anything of value from them and then selling them back to the respective Rogue Traders or their agents.

The Shrivs and the Wrecks can prove a valuable resource for a Rogue Trader and his crew, although getting in touch with them can prove problematic. Neither of the factions that controls Lucin's Breath appreciate a third faction living off their losses, and both occasionally send purge-teams into the Wrecks to hunt down the nomads. In turn, the Shrivs have begun relying on representatives who live in Victory Station or amongst Chorda's mining encampments. These representatives remain anonymous, but approach those looking for supplies or items with an offer to meet their demands. If interested, they are supplied with a vox-frequency to arrange a meeting with the Shrivs. Though the items they can provide are not particularly rare or exotic, the Shrivs know their bargaining position is weak and do not ask much in return.

The Shrivs can provide items with a rarity of Average or lower, and all Acquisition Tests made to obtain items through them gain a +5 bonus due to the Shriv's discount. If the GM wishes, he can have the Shrivs provide rarer items, though in those cases, the Shrivs might ask more in return.



ADVENTURING ON LUCIN'S BREATH

Lucin's Breath is an avaricious Rogue Trader's dream come true. If he handles it correctly, he and his crew have the opportunity to deal in one of the richest commodities in the Koronus Expanse. In addition, there are numerous mysteries waiting to be discovered on (and beneath) the planet. Below are several Endeavours that the Game Master can use to entice intrepid Explorers:

- **Establish Nephium Trade Route (Grand):** The two major Rogue Traders who control Lucin's Breath are always in need of capable ships to transport the unrefined nephium to other worlds where it will be refined and shipped abroad. In addition to protecting this precious (and volatile) commodity from theft, they must secure a compact with either side and haul the nephium to ports elsewhere in the Expanse. The routes that other ships take are secret, and the Explorers may well have to chart their own, as well as dealing with pirates and rogues who want to prey on them.
- **Establish Nephium Station (Greater):** Even though House Winterscale and Aspyce Chorda have the power to maintain control of Lucin's Breath jointly, they cannot be everywhere. The GM can devise an endeavour for the Explorers to establish their own shadow operation—mining their own nephium to sell on the black market.
- **Aid in Claimant War (Lesser):** Both controllers of Lucin's Breath are always in need of good warriors to lead raids and counterattacks on their rivals. The Explorers can negotiate terms in exchange for fighting on one side or the other. Alternately, this endeavour could be a prelude to establishing a trade route for the nephium.
- **Piercing the Veil (Greater):** Is there some relationship between the ruined cities of this world and the sinkholes of nephium? The GM should establish what really happened to the original inhabitants, and why they decided to build their cities around the various pools of ooze. Additionally, he should also determine if there really is a relationship between the nephium, the empty cities, and the workers that go missing on occasion. Should the Explorers manage to discover the correlation (if it does exist) what do they do with the information?

THE CLAIMANT WARS

"It's a cold, icy, dirty little world, and once I rid myself of that troublesome wench Chorda, I'll wipe it clean of the vermin infesting it and put House Winterscale back in control... where it belongs!"

—Calligos Winterscale, on Lucin's Breath

Not only is pure nephium a valuable resource, it's also the key to gaining the favour of many forge worlds within the nearby Calixis Sector and elsewhere. The tech-priests of the Adeptus Mechanicus value nephium not only for its efficacy as a fuel additive, but also for the other properties it exhibits. From the time the world was claimed by Sebastian Winterscale, his Dynasty enjoyed unrivalled control of this world and the prestigious and lucrative trade that went with it. For centuries, House Winterscale had been able to hold their claim to Lucin's Breath because of the power they possess. Recently, however, Aspyce Chorda challenged House Winterscale's claim to this world by simply invading it. Because Lady Chorda possessed the resources and power to hold on to the territory she claimed, there was little House Winterscale could legally do. Thus, the result of Chorda's invasion was a series of Claimant Wars fought for total possession of this world. These wars have been highly lucrative to Rogue Traders outside of this conflict, as they have been able to negotiate contracts transporting and guarding the precious nephium shipments for both sides of the war.

The most recent of these bloody and vicious battles was fought between the forces of Calligos Winterscale, the current head of House Winterscale, and the Rogue Trader Aspyce Chorda in 785.M41. This was thought to be the bloodiest Claimant War fought to date, with countless dead on

both sides and tonnes of machines lost; scattered across the great equatorial region of the planet.

NEPHIUM COMPACT

As the Claimant War continued and lives and resources were expended in the process, the flow of nephium was brought to a virtual stand-still. Eventually, after reaching a stalemate in the conflict, both sides entered into an unprecedented settlement: the Nephium Compact.

According to the terms of the Nephium Compact, the world of Lucin's Breath is equally divided between the Houses of Winterscale and Chorda until such time as "honourable writ and claim can be established" over ownership of the world. The signing of the compact was so wildly out of character for both the mercurial Calligos Winterscale and the merciless Aspyce Chorda that wild rumours circulate on occasion about how some other force or organisation may have been behind its signing. If this is true, there are those willing to pay to find out just who this might be, in the effort to undermine both claims on Lucin's Breath.

Despite the compact, Lucin's Breath has not seen peace since the Claimant War began. Routine raids, sabotage, and defection of troops from one side to the other are very commonplace. Servitors are deemed to be too costly to risk destruction in the cold production habs; instead the workers, who are slaves in all but name, are hustled into various squads and suicide-auxiliaries. They are issued armoured heat suits and whenever one of the planet's ubiquitous methite blizzards arises they clash with their rivals from the other side. It's not uncommon to find remnants of pitched battles, corpses frozen solid in the ice and snow, bearing unexploded nephium-laced explosives, mining charges, and other improvised detritus and weapons of war.

From the Journals of Mallachai Stern: A Visit to Lucin's Breath, 235.801.M41

Lucin's Breath is a world that, if it be the Emperor's will, I would rather forget. We were to meet up with another Rogue Trader ship in the vicinity of that world before descending to observe the nephium extraction operations. According to the Captain, we were going to help support a shadow operation that was operating right under ol' Calligos' nose—a suicidal venture if you ask me, but I'm not the Captain; and he wanted to make sure the operation was a sound investment before making any decisions on the matter.

After setting down during the planet's night cycle, it fell to me to lead the shore party. Once outfitted with heated survival suits and rebreathers, we set out for the pre-formed habitation dome near our shuttle's landing. Almost as soon as we were inside the hab's airlock, I was struck by the sheer immensity of this single operation. The enterprise set up to extract the frozen, semi-solid nephium from the sinkhole was massive in scope. Desperate men and women scurried all around the various pipes, pumps, storage tanks, and other detritus of mining operations as they sought to suck out every last millilitre of precious nephium.

My attention was drawn to a side-room, built off the main operations dome. There I found ranks of beds, each with a sweat-stained, pain-wracked worker. They were in a sorry state, twisted limbs, visibly rotting teeth, and oozing lesions. Some leaked black bile from their ears and fingertips, and their veins stood out from their pallid skin like some infernal black calligraphy. Celestine's bones, I could smell the corruption on them from the door.

One of the workers told me these men had touched pure nephium, and it polluted their systems. Now they waited to die—there was no cure. None of the other miners would approach them. When I heard this, I flew into a rage, demanding the mine foremen stop work and attend me. Once they arrived, I forced them into the chamber, where I gave the God-Emperor's benediction to the doomed miners before me. Once finished, I took a foreman's autopistol, and commended their souls to the Emperor. I only hope the foremen will follow my example in the future.

THE DOMINION OF MAZES

"There is a great darkness that exists, slumbering beneath these cursed worlds! You don't need an Astropath to figure that out. You can feel it out there...waiting for the right moment. It killed those damned xenos who defiled this place with their presence, and it will destroy us too."

—Commander Miles Everheart, commenting on translations of Egarian glyphs

The dry, desert worlds that comprise the systems of the Egarian Dominion were once a populous xenos domain spanning a handful of stars within Winterscale's Realm. Millennia ago, long before the coming of mankind to the Koronus Expanse, some unknown catastrophe befell this race and left behind only empty, desolate worlds covered in crumbling ruins that form vast mazes of complex intricacy. It's these ruined buildings that draw the interest of the majority of Rogue Traders and those who have an interest in the Cold Trade—the buying and selling of proscribed xenos artefacts. Yet, rumours abound that some dark and dangerous force lays waiting, lurking, and slumbering somewhere amongst these cursed worlds; and woe betide any who would dare disturb its dark and alien dreams.

Sebastian Winterscale discovered this collection of several stars during the exploration of the area of space ceded to him when issued his Warrant of Trade. The habitable worlds of each

of these systems are covered with numerous hive-like structures and ruins.

Everywhere he looked, Sebastian found evidence that some nameless and terrible apocalypse had consumed the xenos population living on these worlds. So complete was the destruction of their civilisation that almost nothing remained of their works or culture, aside from their dormant dwellings. Who or what this faceless doom was remains a mystery to this day. In fact, Sebastian Winterscale only ever discovered a partial translation of the ancient xenos pictographs left behind, from which he learned the name of these worlds: The Egarian Dominion.

The ruins on these worlds are all generally composed of the same material, and none of it appears to be native to any planet within the Dominion. The material is a luminous pale stone, cool and smooth to the touch no matter what the outside temperature. Somehow, this material is also able to channel light from outside; even the deepest regions of these places are lit by the soft white shifting glow. During the daylight hours, the walls appear to glisten with a rainbow hue to them, much like oil slicked on water.

Four primary star systems have been identified as being part of the Egarian Dominion: Egaria Alpha sits in the centre of this cluster of systems, and has only one habitable world. The other three systems, Egaria Gamma, Egaria Epsilon, and Egaria Omega surround Alpha. Each of these systems has at least one semi-habitable world circling its ancient and bloated star. All of these worlds share similar characteristics: they are dry and cool deserts comprised mostly of endless dunes and rocky outcroppings, and are dotted by sparse, shallow bodies of brackish water.



THE XENOS MAZES

Explorers and traders who have visited the Egarian Dominion have noted that the extinct xenos species built massive cities formed of intricate, elaborate, and maddening mazes that were left behind when their builders mysteriously vanished. These massive, cyclopean edifices dominate most of the Egarian landscape; many are large enough to rival even the massive hives of Imperial worlds such as Necromunda and others. They rise high above the desert dunes and desiccated scrub, vast walls and towers covered in strange protrusions and riddled with countless passages and corridors.

The mazes seem to be organised without any logical reason behind them, but that has not stopped explorers and xenosarcheologists from making the attempt. In a somewhat futile attempt to comprehend the maze-cities, a few scholars have attempted to quantify and analyse their structure. Any attempts to map the cities have universally failed—no matter how detailed the augur arrays or how exacting the surveys, the maps generated inevitably do not match the maze city structure when used. However, the studies have managed to categorise certain types of locations within the cities.

Curtain walls: The exterior walls of the maze cities stretch as high as 500 metres, covered with boxy protrusions, beams, and any number of other strange constructions that gives the curtain walls a half-finished appearance. The

curtain walls are constructed of the same pale stone as the rest of the maze-cities, though they are almost universally scored and pitted by blowing sand. Despite their unfinished appearance, the curtain walls are incredibly dense, making cutting through them impossible without massive military breaching drills or ship-grade plasma cutters.

Ward-gates: There are surprisingly few entrances to the maze cities. Access seems to be reserved for massive portals at least 30 metres tall, randomly scattered along the curtain walls. Each ward-gate has gigantic doors up to a metre thick, with no obvious mechanism for opening or shutting them. If a ward-gate is sealed, xenosarcheologists have no way to open it. However, many were left partially or completely open, granting explorers access to the interior.

Galleries: The main passages of the maze-cities—the “galleries”—are towering vaulted passageways. The galleries are usually level. If they rise or descend, they do so with gentle slopes, and are often as wide as 50 metres and up to three times as high. They split and turn at sharp, abrupt angles, dividing into new galleries, or merging into single passageways. Although they are enclosed, they are consistently illuminated by the strange luminescence from the walls, a light that seems to vary with the planets’ sun. All along the gallery walls, at all heights, are countless two metre high openings, leading to the cramped and claustrophobic corridors within. Many of these openings are high up on the walls, far out of reach of even the most adept climbers. Imperial xenosarcheologists do not know how the Egarians accessed them.

Inner Corridors: Splitting from the main galleries, the corridors are their opposite—cramped, claustrophobic passageways usually no more than two metres wide by two metres high. The corridors turn abruptly in every direction, sometimes even going completely vertical. There are never any curved passageways; all turns are made at abrupt angles. Sometimes the corridors lead to rooms buried deep in the maze cities, or open abruptly into new galleries.

It is possible many of the rooms were used by the xenos in their daily existence, and if the inner corridors are anything to go by, the Egarians were much shorter than the average human. When walking through the claustrophobic halls and passageways, explorers often have to stoop in order to make their way through the crumbling structures.

Explorers who have ventured deep into the cities report finding more items of interest the further down one goes. Certain “rooms” have massive geode pillars that seem to grow out of the floor or hang from the ceiling, while some galleries are lined by shards of diamantine glass geode the size of a Mechanicus titan. Sometimes these geodes glow with a flickering inner luminescence, a light that fades if the geodes are cut and brought out of the city. Other rooms have items of uncertain use in alcoves on the walls or set on pillars. The infamous “geode grenades” are one such example, although xenosarcheologists are still unsure whether the items were even intended to be weapons.

Many of the inner corridors (and sometimes the main galleries) are constructed in three dimensions, with twisting passages not only set across the surface, but also rising upwards as well (and in some cases, descending deep into the earth). Due to the complex nature and design of the mazes themselves, some explorers see their minds tortured and even fractured

EGARIAN CRYSTAL WEAPONS AND TOOLS

Enterprising and tech-savvy individuals have come up with all manner of creative uses for the Egarian crystal that makes up the various walls and structures of the ruins found all across the Egarian Dominion. Many of these items are one-time use (such as the geode grenades found on page 125 of **ROGUE TRADER**), or only exist as a unique item—never to be duplicated for one reason or another.

Game Masters are encouraged to allow Explorers to come up with unique ways to use this material. Listed below are some examples of items that can be created with either the Trade (Armourer) skill or some other suitable skill that the Game Master allows.

EGARIAN CRYSTAL BLADE

Made from the blended shards of crystal harvested from the blocks used to build the supports of the larger structures of the maze-cities or cut from the diamantine glass-geodes, these blades are razor sharp. However, they are also fragile and even the slightest twist in the wrong direction can cause the weapon to shatter in the user's hands. When making a Weapon Skill Test to use the weapon to attack or Parry, any roll of 96–00 causes the weapon to shatter; sending splinters of crystal slicing through the air.

Class	Damage	Pen	Special	Weight	Availability
Melee	1d10 R	5	—	1 kg	Extremely Rare

EGARIAN GEODE MESH

By taking shards of Egarian crystal and subjecting them to specialised chemicals and treatments, the fragments can become pliable; allowing them to flex in a way similar to rope or netting. Because the crystal is able to channel light and energy, once fashioned into a flexible mesh, it can then be used to supplement armour. Once bonded to the standard armour shell, the suit has energy-channelling properties that allow it to bleed off heat and other forms of energy. Geode Mesh is an armour upgrade that can be applied to Flak, Mesh, and Carapace Armour. It provides an additional +2 AP versus energy attacks that hit the area protected by it, but adds +3 kg to the armour's weight. It has an availability of Very Rare.

in attempts to understand the maze-design. Psykers seem especially susceptible to this phenomenon, with the notable exception of Astropaths, and those who lack the ability to see.

Most xenosarcheologists believe that the maze-cities are the Egarian equivalent of Imperial hives, living space for an ancient race whose thought processes worked entirely differently from mankind. Some suspect that they were built as a result of the growing madness that gripped the Egarians as a symptom of the blight they released—a catastrophe that was their eventual undoing. Others speculate that the mazes were perhaps built as a testimony to their race's engineering, or as homage to the dark gods they may have worshipped. Whatever the truth is, the mazes themselves are maddening to navigate, and incautious explorers can find themselves hopelessly lost within them.

With the exception of carved pictographs located within what appears to be main gathering places and strange and often incomprehensible artefacts tucked away in corners of the cities, almost nothing of the Egarians remains—it's as if whatever blight befell them attempted to erase their existence from the very fabric of the universe.

WHAT ARE THE MAZES FOR?

For the past several centuries Rogue Traders and Explorers from the Disciples of Thule have catalogued and documented many of the major city-mazes and associated structures. As of yet, they have not been able to divine a single reason why these mazes were constructed or what purpose (aside from defence) they serve. Some of the more popular theories posit that the mazes were built for the purposes of channelling some manner of energy, in much the same way that the material they are

made of channels light. Others claim that they are simply a by-product of the xenos' dark and alien intellect.

A few learned adepts whisper that the mazes bear some similarity to constructs of the Yu'vath that have been encountered across the Koronus Expanse. Though no other evidence of Yu'vath presence has been discovered, many explorers and scholars from the Ordo Xenos and the Adeptus Mechanicus speculate that perhaps the Egarian Dominion was infiltrated and corrupted by the Yu'vath, or that its inhabitants, in their hubris, attempted to study and unlock the secrets of artefacts left by that warp-touched race. Perhaps the secrets of the Yu'vath proved to be the Egarians' undoing, and their society was consumed by the horrors they unleashed. Perhaps the maddening maze cities were crafted under dark influences?

THE EGARIAN COLD TRADE

On the outpost of Footfall there is a shadowy organisation who calls itself the Kasballica Mission. They are a shadow-conclave of crime barons from the Drusus Marches subsector of the nearby Calixis Sector. From Footfall, these shady individuals organise a great share of the Koronus Expanse's Cold Trade.

The Kasballica Mission has a special interest in the worlds of the Egarian Dominion, paying a great number of Thrones for even something as innocuous and mundane as pieces from the crumbling walls and ruins. Additionally, they are willing to pay for any xenos artefacts found on these worlds, or fund any expedition that has a reasonable chance of unearthing or locating any lost treasures within the Egarian Dominion.

The majority of the artefacts found come from the central Dominion world of Egaria Alpha, as one can find pieces of walls simply lying about. Additionally, other strange and unique items have been found here; most being found with a minimum amount of effort. One of the most famous items found was a massive sapphire said to be as large as a full-grown man. The tale says that the gem was etched with intricate maze-like patterns that seem to be ubiquitous to Egarian culture.

It should also be no surprise to learn that many of the artefacts and curios acquired by the Kasballica Mission eventually find their way back into the Drusus Marches. This has caused no end of concern for the Holy Ordos, and the Ordo Xenos in particular, as they strive to find ways to cut off the lines of supply. So far, they have been unsuccessful in stopping this, and many within the Conclave Calixis speculate that perhaps someone within the ranks of the Holy Ordos might be working for the Kasballica Mission, funnelling information and resources to them in order to remain one step ahead of the authorities.

In addition to locating and transporting xenos artefacts out of the Dominion, the Kasballica Mission and several enterprising Rogue Traders and renegade hereteks have managed to fashion instruments of destruction from the various pieces of xenos ruins sent to them. Among these items is the well-known Egarian Geode Grenade that sends razor-sharp slivers of crystal in all directions after detonation. Creative weaponsmiths have also been able to fashion a variety of other items made from Egarian crystal, some of which are unique creations and others which have found their uses amongst other Rogue Trader crews.

PLACES OF INTEREST

"I 'eard they took a few of 'em witches into that lone tower. Know what happened, then? All of 'em pulled out their little blades of theirs and each and every one of 'em slit 'der own throats! They all killed 'emselves! Each an' every last one of 'em!"

—Drunken words overheard inside Footfall

Obviously, of main interest to the Imperium and Rogue Traders are the xenos cities and mazes scattered across the many worlds of the Egarian Dominion. However, there are other, more specific locales that Explorers may find of interest, some of which may hold pieces of the mystery of the resident xenos' sudden disappearance.

THE FORSAKEN TOWER

On the solitary world of the Egaria Alpha system, there exists a single tower located far away from the massive city ruins dotting the rest of the world. This tower is constructed from the same material as the rest of the xenos structures and stands some two hundred and twenty metres tall. Within the tower there appears to be no way to reach the top, save flight or a jump-pack, as no stairs or lifts exist within the structure.

Instead, hanging in the centre of the tower, directly beneath the upper floor, is a diamantine crystal of immense size that slowly pulsates with a

faint glow. A faint buzzing noise can also be heard within the massive chamber; a sound that is somewhat louder than the wind that constantly blows across this dry region.

The history and purpose of this tower is a mystery. However, there have been rumours from visiting Rogue Traders, who say that members of their crew reported having strange nightmares and visions shortly after visiting it. These dreams are extremely vivid and prescient, yet none can fully recall what exactly it was they dreamt about. The only image they can clearly recall is that of a cityscape in silhouette, illuminated by a single moon, and the sky filled with black, cloud-like tendrils. Another, more disturbing tale concerning the investigation of the tower, speaks of an expedition sent out by the Adeptus Astra Telepathica. The story changes with the teller, yet they all end the same way: once the psykers entered their trances, they immediately drew their psykana blades and killed themselves—as if compelled by their conditioning to do so.

THE ICE CAVERNS OF EGARIA EPSILON

Situated upon the second world of the Egaria Epsilon system, there is a vast chasm that can be seen from orbit. So deep is this chasm that even the warming rays of the planet's sun cannot reach; thus, the bottom is perpetually coated in frozen ice and permafrost. In 750.M41, a survey team sent by Rogue Trader Aoife Armengarde discovered ancient hieroglyphs carved into the sides of the chasm walls and a set of ancient stone doors covered in a seal.

The team toiled for days attempting to breach the seal and gain entry to what lay beyond. Auspex scanners showed that an immense passageway opened up beyond the doors. After several days of work with beam-cutters, the team was able to burn the seal off and gain entry. The passages led the team further into the living rock, yet the area was so cold that the team leader ordered her members to don their heat suits lest they died of exposure. The servitors they brought with them eventually froze solid—dead in their tracks. The immense passages were slicked with ice and it was obvious that no one had set foot within the halls for millennia. The team pressed on into the unknown darkness ahead.

Seven days after entering the tunnels, a single member of the team stumbled out of the caverns, frantic, haggard, and half-dead from dehydration and exposure. The orbiting starship dispatched a lander, and he was quickly delivered to a horrified medicae crew. The team member remained catatonic until the head surgeon attempted to revive him, where he immediately leapt screaming from the gurney, fingers clawing the surgeon's throat. Medicae vid recorders managed capture some of the man's ravings—shouts of "It's awake! It's awake and it sees us! The cold, the cold!" were heard in the shrill voice of the maddened man. Attendants managed to secure and sedate him, returning him to an isolated medicae cell.

The medicae staff intended to question the man more thoroughly, but would not get the chance. During the night, he somehow slipped his restraints and rammed his head into the wall of his cell until he cracked his skull open. Armengarde chose not to send another team into the caverns, and soon departed the world.

THE STATIONS OF PASSAGE

"Don't be fooled, the Maw is alive! It takes the measure of each man passing through it and decides if you're worthy enough to venture on."

—Garvel Marvollo, Rogue Trader, addressing a group of Imperial Fleet cadets on Cypra Mundi

The Stations of Passage are a number of locations along the Koronus Passage, better known as the Maw. Each was discovered through trial and error as bold and foolhardy Rogue Traders traversed the Maw to reach the Koronus Expanse. Some are extremely familiar to the Rogue Traders who navigate this precarious passage, while others are known only to a few. Thus, nobody knows for certain how many Stations exist. Each Station is different from the others—they are united only in that they are each a safe haven against the predications of the powerful warp storms that surround the Maw.

Those who journey through the Maw consider the secrets of the location of the Stations extremely valuable. Of those known, some are shunned as more dangerous than the storms they supposedly provide protection from. However, there are four main stations that are widely regarded as "safe," and many renowned Rogue Traders claim these places have saved their vessels on more than one occasion.

The various Stations of Passage are also regarded as neutral grounds, at least for most. However, there are those renegades who won't hesitate to lay in ambush at one of the various stations in the hopes of preying upon damaged ships. Such scum are usually found out for what they are, as no "honourable" trader who traverses the Passage will

stand for such behaviour. In addition, within the last century the Battlefleet patrols of Passage Watch 27 have made piracy slightly more hazardous.

The Stations of Passage were discovered gradually, as those traversing the Maw explored its secrets. As the Maw swelled and sealed with the strengthening and weakening of nearby storms, ships noticed certain locations of calm that remained untouched. What began as a few locations became an ever-changing network as Navigators and captains made discoveries. As time went on, many of the Stations fell out of use, with some being used as clandestine meeting points for Rogue Traders to broker deals away from the prying eyes of Imperial authorities. Other stations were cordoned off as they led to nowhere, or even put ships into mortal jeopardy.

Some of the Stations of Passage are installations or artefacts, while others are nothing more than dead systems with shattered worlds of rock and spent cinders for stars. There are even a few that are simply clear void, or streams of energised plasma.

THE TEMPLE

"Aah...the Temple...very auspicious, yes? Signifies that the God-Emperor Himself watches over you...that your mission is blessed by the Master of Mankind..."

—Astropath Kinneth Reed, casting the Emperor's Tarot

At the very outskirts of the Great Warp Storms, closest to Port Wander, the station called the 'Temple' resides. The most unusual feature of the Temple are the multitudes of perfectly spherical rocks—several hundred metres in diameter—spin in many complex orbits around the star. The star itself is simply a dead cinder, a feebly glowing husk of dense matter. Nothing else exists in this oddly serene system: no

-From the Journals of Mallachai Stern, 200.803M41

Captain deKane has returned to the Egerian Dominion at the request of some members of the Adeptus Mechanicus, who were studying a site they had recently uncovered. We have been to these worlds several times to take on supplies of the ubiquitous crystal and samples of ore and other mundane sundries. I asked to accompany the Captain to the surface and keep watch for the men's spirits on this benighted world.

Upon arrival, I was immediately struck by the sheer size of the monstrous tower that dominated the site. Certainly, not like the massive spires of the cathedrals on Hydraphur, but an incredible feat of engineering nonetheless. Within, supported without suspensors or beams, was a flawless crystal that appeared to glow with an inner flame. It seemed to pulse to a soothing rhythm and I soon found myself lulled into a state of calm. Shaking off the torpor and chastising myself for succumbing to the works of the wretched xenos, I spoke with the Mechanicus emissary, Orn, a decent enough fellow if rather humourless.

Orn told me of how his team had been diligently searching for the mystery of how the crystal was being suspended, as there were no obvious power sources and no supports to show how it could simply float in the air. He said that they have made many supplications to the Omnissiah for clarity, but so far, the mystery eluded them.

Naturally, we were collected by the Captain as promised, and put the world behind us. However, I am disturbed that for the past week, each night my dreams have been haunted by that crystal. I must ask the others if they've experienced anything similar.

USING THE TEMPLE

The Temple has nothing of worth within it—its worth is its value as a Station of Passage. It provides an area of calm amongst the warp storms of the Halo Margins. More importantly, it is close enough to those same warp storms that Navigators can plot unusually accurate jumps when passing through the Maw. Any Navigator plotting a warp-trip through the Maw in the Temple gains a +10 bonus to all related tests.

Passing into the inner regions of the Temple can be extremely dangerous, however. Most ships remain at least 1 AU from the star. Any closer, and the ship must pass through the orbits of the spheres. Should a vessel wish to do so, treat this like an asteroid field that requires a **Difficult (-10) Pilot (Space Craft)+Manoeuvrability Test** to navigate, rather than the usual Routine Test.

gasses, no dust, and no planets. Nothing exists aside from the dead star and its family of perfectly round spheres.

SPHERICAL NODES

No one is certain who or what created the nearly perfect rock spheres that orbit the dead cinder of the Temple Station. Some speculate that the warp storms somehow shaped the rocks out of the remains of long lost planets that once inhabited the world. Others claim some elder god placed them here for some unknown reason, though few reasonable individuals put stock in such tales.

Over the millennia, many expeditions have tried to explore these void rocks. Auspex scans reveal these spheroids to be nothing special; just ordinary rock, completely inert and unresponsive to all scans. However, no expedition has ever been able to drill more than a few centimetres into the stones before the mining equipment mysteriously failed. It is said that one Rogue Trader even tried to fracture a rock with lance-fire to no avail. Perhaps as a result, most voidmen claim that to interfere with the spheres brings ill-fortune and an untimely end.

TEMPLE—THE EMPEROR'S TAROT

The Temple's name is associated with the Emperor's Tarot of the Transubstantiates, a derivative of the Emperor's Tarot. The Temple signifies the commencement of a blessed endeavour, and voidfarers often hold up within the Temple station when the Maw begins to grow restless, rather than making the relatively short return trip to Port Wander. Some Rogue Traders even go out of their way to spend a day within the borders of the Temple station, regardless if a storm has swelled or not in the hopes of gaining some sort of blessing for their ventures. A superstitious few even go so far as to have their senior Astropaths (or some other psyker on board) conduct a casting of the Emperor's Tarot just to see if the Temple card appears to them while they are within the boundaries of the Temple. Should this happen, then the captain considers his endeavour to be doubly blessed by the God-Emperor Himself.

THE WITCH-CURSED WORLD

"No sir! Put me in the brig, take away my rations, flog me even! But I will not go out there while we still orbit that cursed world!"

—Philippe George, Gunner's Mate of the raider *Dagger's Tip*

Out among the warp passage of the Maw, there exists a single planet bereft of sun, moon, and celestial brothers. Ejected out from its home solar system, and thought to be destined to forever wander the cosmos, this world was eventually caught within the grip of the Maw. Tossed and cast by the storms of the Halo Margins, this frozen world eventually settled into an area of calm within the Maw. Here it was encountered by the early explorers of the Koronus Expanse.

These explorers and Rogue Traders found a planet whose atmosphere had long frozen and fallen as snow and ice, solid and locked in the eternal cold of the void. There was nothing valuable on the world, no minerals worth mining or resources to harvest. However, the storms would not touch the world, and that made it valuable in its own right.

As time went on, however, rumours and stories began to circulate about the world. Voidfarers claimed that those who tarried too long in its orbit suffered ill-luck and calamity. Navigators and Astropaths began to report a strange phenomena when in orbit, a psychic interference like the buzzing of insects far away. They also claimed that whatever this world is, it can disrupt their individual abilities—especially an Astropath's ability to communicate through the warp.

Eventually, this so-called Station of Passage was named the Witch-Cursed World. Today, it is shunned by all but the most desperate of voidfarers. No captain will order his ship to remain in orbit any longer than he absolutely must, and no crewman dares to go near it.

THE CURSED SHIP

Voidfarers are a superstitious lot. Tales are often told about derelicts and ghost ships making their way through the empyrean, but one tale related to the Witch-Cursed World tends to stand out amongst the crewmen of the ships that ply the warp routes of the Koronus Expanse. Roughly two hundred years ago, a ship belonging to a newly Warranted Rogue Trader took orbit around the Witch-Cursed World while the Great Warp Storms raged stronger than they had for several decades. It was said that after the captain failed to arrive at Port Wander within the designated time to meet with an agent he had arranged for a cargo transfer, that an expedition was sent out to ascertain the location of the missing cruiser.

The salvage crews eventually found her drifting intact around the Witch-Cursed World, but with all power dead. Upon exploring the derelict, they found no sign of the crew—or of any life at all. There were no signs of struggle or mutiny. All the saviour pods were in place. When the team made their way to the bridge, they found what remained of the ship's captain. His corpse looked like it had been dead for hundreds of years, mummified upon his command throne. The logs of

the ship were completely corrupted. One fragment was dated 33.120.M33, another was dated 01.999.M42. The only intact log-entry recovered was from a stern airlock, recording an unauthorised access three days after the ship entered orbit.

The salvage crew fled the ship as fast as they could and set the vessel adrift to be swallowed up by the Storms of the Halo Margins. Other stories such as this have surfaced from time to time around the Witch-Cursed World. Some whisper that it is as if the planet itself exacts some sort of dues from those who take shelter within its dark shadow.

INSTALLATION 2819-RHO

There is one mark of Imperial manufacture on the surface of the Witch-Cursed World. Long ago, when Rogue Traders first mapped the Maw, some unknown individual built an astropathic relay tower on the surface of the newly discovered Station of Passage. Perhaps this unknown individual intended to earn a tidy profit, relaying and boosting astropathic signals through the unreliable maelstrom of the Maw.

No records state exactly what happened to this beacon. However, the archives of the Scholastica Psykana offices in Hive Sibellus on Scintilla refer to an astropathic relay, "Installation 2819-Rho," located within the Maw. The records simply refer to when the station went operational—002.M41—and record that five astropaths and attendant minders were dispatched to the site. For the next five years, the same number of astropaths were dispatched to 2819-Rho, until a final notification notes that the Psykana authorities were immediately ending all dispatches "for undisclosed reasons." The notification also records that the Scholastica Psykana in the Calixis Sector petitioned the Inquisition for a Rogue Trader's arrest and execution—the name of the Rogue Trader was redacted.

Installation 2819-Rho remained, however, a lonely tower on the surface of a deserted world, its plasma generators long dead and facility deserted. However, every 17 minutes



the installation still broadcasts its astropathic beacon-signal, detectable up to several light-years away. Nobody knows how this is possible. In theory, an astropath would need to broadcast the beacon, but the few who have visited the Witch-Cursed World and bothered to augur the tower report that it is cold, dead, and without power.

For the past three centuries, the Calixian Scholastica Psykana has indicated they would pay handsomely were someone to investigate the tower and report their findings. Thus far, nobody has accepted their commission.

THE BATTLEGROUND

"Auspex return sir! We're getting the salvation beacon now...we have confirmation! The beacon matches that of the Emperor's Bounty, sir!"

—Sensorium officer Gibbs of the *Sovereign Venture*

One of the most well-known (and tragic) Stations of Passage, the Battleground is a vast area of becalmed space over 300,000 kilometres in diameter, filled with floating wreckage, junk, and detritus of war in orbit around a young star. According to ancient legend, this area was the site of a great space battle between the Rogue Trader brothers Trame and Ettimus Lathimon, who fought to mutual destruction. However, other tales maintain that this field of ship wreckage was ancient before the brothers' arrival. These theories are supported by the wreckage found in the

USING THE WITCH-CURSED WORLD

The Witch-Cursed World is less of a resource to be used than it is an obstacle that must be overcome. Few captains willingly venture here, but if a ship is forced to use this "safe harbour" the Explorers must calm their nervous crew. At minimum, the captain or someone in authority (a Missionary would be a good choice) should make a **Challenging (+0) Charm or Intimidate Test**. Success means he keeps the crew calm and at their duties, but if he fails the ship should lose one point of Morale per degree of failure. Of course, should the ship linger in orbit, the GM should feel free to be creative with the consequences. Half-glimpsed symbols in the landscape of the planet below, scratching sounds outside the airlocks, ghostly returns on the augur arrays, all could set the proper mood.

Of course, a particularly bold and foolhardy Rogue Trader might decide to take the commission of the Scholastica Psykana to investigate Installation 2819-Rho, and discover what horrors may lie within.

USING THE BATTLEGROUND: SALVAGE ENDEAVOUR*Lesser Endeavour, +1 Profit*

Game Masters can establish an endeavour for the Explorers that are wishing to attempt to salvage the Battleground. This is no small feat as other Rogue Traders may feel that the Explorers are encroaching on their rightful claim to the massive cloud of debris. The Game Master is encouraged to set up the Endeavour as outlined on pages 276–279 of **ROGUE TRADER**. The GM should keep in mind, however, that this should be a more difficult Endeavour than the Profit Factor awards would indicate, and should require long hours sifting through the wreckage to find valuable salvage. In addition, successful Rogue Traders regard salvaging the Battleground with disdain, a sign that one is either newly come into his Warrant or does not know how to use it. If the Rogue Trader's Profit Factor is over a certain amount (roughly 40 or so), the GM could give him the reputation of a rag-picker or scavenger amongst his peers.

Battleground. While the vast majority of it is Imperial, there are wrecked ships deep within the field that are not.

Nearly every crew that passes through these parts has a tale as to what happened here, many of them regarding events that occurred long before Rogue Traders began their exploration of the Koronus Expanse.

THE BROTHERS LATHIMON

Trame and Ettimus were always rivals. From the day they were each given their own ship to expand their family's dynasty, they competed and sought to outdo one another. Eventually, insult mounted upon insult, and they sought to end this tireless rivalry with a duel of ships. Each brother amassed a massive fleet and

chose the Battleground to be their field. Massive munitions were launched, and scores of fighter craft and boarding torpedoes crossed the silent void to collide with massive macro shells and shafts of boiling plasma. Ships exploded and detonated with reactor breeches, and others simply drifted off; holed into lifelessness, the crew killed instantly by explosive decompression.

Eventually, only the two brothers remained; each aboard their command ships, staring out across the debris-filled void at one another. Though their ships had been damaged, they could still fight. The stories continue to say that the two paused for a moment in stand-off, each daring the other to make the first move that would be sure to end in the annihilation of them both. No one can say which brother that was, but all that was found when other ships visited the battleground were drifting clouds of radioactive debris and munitions. It is likely both brothers perished, and their fleets with them.

SALVAGING THE CLOUD

There is some value to be found within the detritus of space debris floating in the region. For centuries, Rogue Traders have taken up cover within the cloud to affect repairs on their ships that were damaged, or to simply wait out the storms so they can continue their journey across the Maw. One wonders then why these great worthies haven't sought to salvage what they could from this massive field of materials.

The truth is that many have tried, and indeed some have found great success in doing so. However, the wealth that can be exploited from the Koronus Expanse makes the paltry debris in the Battleground pale in comparison. It's far more profitable to set up mining operations within the Expanse than it is to simply pick over the dead bones of Rogue Traders past. Yet, this doesn't stop new Rogue Traders from trying—thinking that they can recover more wealth in these parts than they would be able to elsewhere. Usually, they end up becoming part of the cloud themselves, either through carelessness or the predations of other Battleground scavengers.

-From the Journals of Mallachai Stern, 453816.M41

My first visit to the Battlefield was almost my last. We had ventured into the outer rings of the debris field on the Captain's whim, seeking "items of value" amongst the drifting wreckage. Our efforts yielded little of worth, however, and we had just received the order to turn around when our ship suddenly came under fire. The attacker was hidden behind crudely-welded bulkheads and other junk collected around a still-functioning plasma battery. The vox crackled to life with raving threats, accusing us of heresy, theft, and worse crimes.

The Captain attempted to respond, but his words had no effect. Fortunately, the attacker's aim was poor and our damage was light, but it was clear that to remain in the area would be to invite disaster. A focused augur scan of the region revealed that numerous other energy sources had powered up after the first barrage, and the Captain had no wish to fight over scrap when we had important business elsewhere.

To this day I wonder what exactly it was that we had found in the Battlefield. Was it some kind of automated defence array? The vox transmissions sounded human, so it could have been some survivors of a previous battle. Perhaps it was descendents of the followers or retainers of the ancient Lathimon Brothers, still not realising that the battle has been over for decades. I doubt I shall ever know the truth.

USING THE HERMITAGE: SALVAGE ENDEAVOUR

Lesser Endeavour, +1 Profit

Rebuilding and refurbishing the Hermitage into a proper station and trading post could be valuable if one was to attempt it. However, the Explorers would not simply need to repair the station, patching vented sections and installing new generatoria to provide power. They would also have to establish their claim amongst other Rogue Traders accustomed to using the location as a clandestine meeting place, and they may take umbrage at being forced to pay for something they once had free. The Explorers would also need to establish the station as a valuable way-point, and keep it supplied even when the Maw swells and seals. However, doing this would do much to making a Rogue Trader known amongst his peers. The Game Master is encouraged to set up the Endeavour as outlined on pages 276–279 of **ROGUE TRADER**.

THE HERMITAGE

"The Hermitage? A most amiable place, if I may say so, and perfect for indulging in a bit of business."

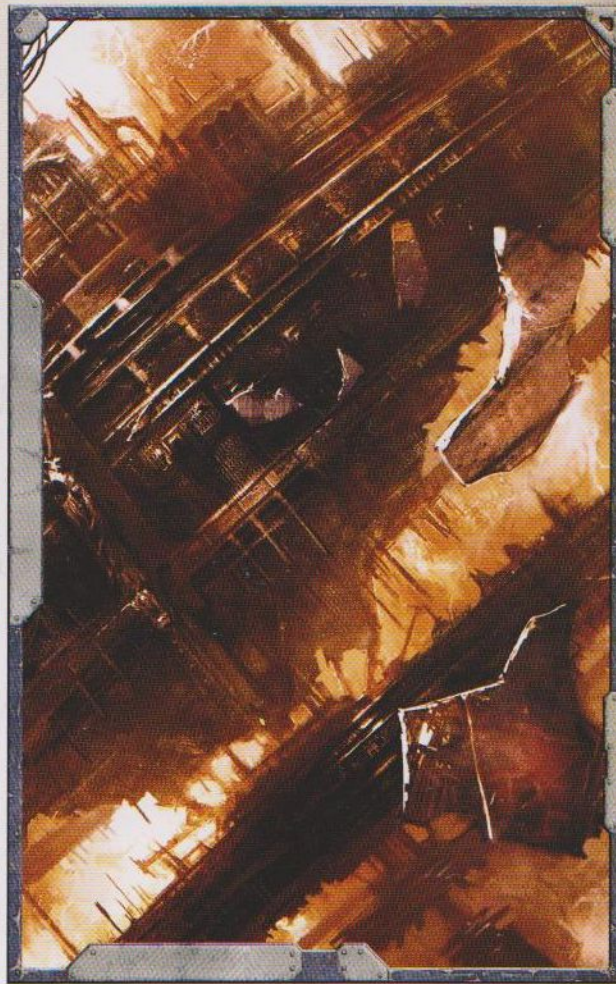
—Captain Dante Balthazar

Long after his ancestor Purity Lathimon opened the Maw, the Rogue Trader Trame Lathimon was paid a princely sum by an obscure sect of the Ministorum to carry their void station and their members out towards the Halo Stars. It is said that Trame, in a fit of petulance, cast forth the hermits and their station from his holds at the Conclave, an even older void station located in the middle of the Maw. Eventually, the two stations were brought together both for mutual protection and to ensure the survival of the occupants within. Trame eventually paid for his misdeed (at least according to the hermits of the station) when he and his brother fought themselves to mutual annihilation.

Founded in generations past, this void station was once considered to be a bastion of the might of the Imperium. After the annihilation of Trame Lathimon, the station became a home for all manner of drifters and hermits. As time went on, the station slowly became a haven for Rogue Traders gathering together to wait out the nearby storms; and eventually, it became even less. Today, parts of the Hermitage have crumbled and are open to space. While it is still home to a few hermits, the station is mostly used as a clandestine meeting place for Rogue Traders to broker deals, discuss trade, and meet on neutral ground.

OPULENT STYLE

Aside from the appeal the station has being away from prying eyes (other than the hermits), the station also appeals to a Rogue Trader's sense of style and opulence. The main transept is richly decorated with murals and banners depicting the many victories of Saint Drusus, and the station's preserved chapel is draped in lavish tapestries set behind a bluestone altar, which itself rests in front of a platinum Aquila of the



Imperium. It is here that negotiating parties typically stand when they broker their deals. In addition to these well-known locations within the station, there are other places that are favoured by visitors and residents alike.

The station houses a scriptorium where all manner of records are kept on the comings and goings of the Rogue Traders who visit, as well as histories and other manuscripts left here by visitors for use by others who would visit the Hermitage. Additionally, a crystal dome has been placed on the upper levels, salvaged from a ruined ship for the purpose of viewing the majesty of the God-Emperor's domain. Few stars can be seen from the Hermitage; most are lost in the raging colours of the Great Warp Storms, but the vista is spectacular nonetheless.

CLANDESTINE MESSAGES

The Hermitage is also well known by Rogue Traders as a place to leave messages for their peers who visit from time to time. These messages are hidden within the walls of the void station, usually in pre-arranged locations throughout the outer reaches of the station's perimeter. In order to avoid interception, messages are written in special ciphers that can only be decoded when the reader uses the key given to him by the sender. Without the key, these cryptic missives appear to consist of nothing but gibberish—an additional insurance against prying eyes.

NADUESH

"Build a planet? A whole planet? That's madness! Not even the God-Emperor, blessed be His name, would attempt something so foolish."

—Rogue Trader Roan Palanthas, on the stories of Naduesh

Naduesh, the lone habitable planet in a small, empty star system, is a feral world in the Heathen Stars region used as a victualling and resupply port for passing voidships. It is an arid world of broad, dusty plains and simmering deserts. The world's topography is curiously uniform, and is dominated not by majestic mountain ranges or vast, rolling seas, but by man-made edifices. The crumbling remains of ancient hive cities thousands of kilometres across span the entire planet, and fully two-thirds of the land lies in the shadow of their shattered domes. The whole planet is a single landmass punctuated here and there by deep, broad, freshwater lakes. The flora and fauna of the planet seem somehow more alive, more vibrant than that on other worlds. Indeed, the entire place has a vague and unsettlingly artificial feel to it, as if the planet wasn't formed from the primordial mass of the universe but built by some unseen hand. Everything seems built to please the senses, an idealised expression of stone or wind or beasts.

Among the ghostly, echoing hives and oddly perfect creatures dwells a debased race of tall, lanky humans who call themselves the Nadueshi. A primitive tribal people, they eke out a living among the bones of their ancestors as nomadic herdsmen. They live a simple life on the plains, possessing no technology more advanced than a spear or harness and driving their placid herbivorous beasts from camp to camp, never staying in one place too long and rarely, if ever, entering the ruined hives. While certainly feral, the Nadueshi are not so debased as to lack language or culture. They frequently trade with the pirates and Rogue Traders who come to the surface for water and victuals, and there are wild and varied reports as to the hospitality and folkways of these curious people. There are a few common threads spun throughout the wild rumours of cannibalism and human sacrifice that surround the Nadueshi, however. They speak a lilting, strangely cadenced language in which some listeners detect High Gothic words and structures. Their oral histories carry no record of their obviously advanced forebears,



and there is a complacency in their ignorance of these ancestors that suggests a distinct lack of interest in the subject.

Those who have explored the abandoned cities report they are covered by massive, powerfully constructed domes towering three kilometres high, built of reinforced plascrete and parchment-thin glass that is harder than diamond. The shattered domes are supported by rusted buttresses a kilometre high mounted in armoured bulwarks forty metres thick. The buildings are square-shouldered, unlovely things more suited to a military base than a soaring metropolis, and indeed they all have a martial, fortress-like air about them. The few who have braved the deadly, crumbling underhives report even greater discoveries—huge arcane arrays of machinery, vast banks of slumbering cogitator arrays, underground caverns a kilometre

—From the Journals of Mallachai Stern, 128.807 M41

I recently received a intriguing communication from a fellow missionary operating on Naduesh. He describes it as a world covered with vast empty ruins—crumbling domed hives many kilometres across—and peopled by a degenerate race of men. During his time, he has wandered among the vast ruined cities. What he claims to have found is quite astonishing.

He writes that the cities themselves are a sort of facade, a massive mock-up like a grand craftsman's model. Some buildings are mere soundly built and thickly reinforced shells, never designed for human habitation. Instead, they house endless collections of huge, slumbering machinery of unknown purpose. Other structures contain either powerful anger arrays or retractable weapon batteries which he states dwarf those on Imperial battleships. During the few days he had, he found that some of the machines were still powered, but how and to what end they were unable to ascertain. They also gained access to a series of underground tunnels and compartments, possibly extending across the entire city, or even further. Sadly, they were unable to fully map the tunnel systems due to their apparent size.

My colleague claimed he felt like Naduesh is not a planet at all, but a construct like the Mechanics would build. He offers no definitive answers as to its purpose, but states that the whole place put him in mind of some kind of defensive emplacement or fortress. While I would usually write such stories off as nonsense or the rambling tales of simple voidmen, the source compels me to believe otherwise. I have known my colleague for years, and know him to be a level-headed, contemplative individual. And yet, the very idea is absurd.

RUMOURS AND LIES

There are as many rumours about Naduesh, its history, and its strange people as there are voidmen to tell them. Here are just a few of the more common tales told in shipyards and public houses throughout the Expanse.

- Members of the Magos Biologis have reported that the beasts and plants of Naduesh possess uncommonly pure genetic codes. They seem to exhibit few of the mutations or genetic dead-ends typically brought about by natural selection.
- In the initial survey of Naduesh after its discovery, the survey team leader reported a strange anomaly in the planet's rotation. It is almost perfectly circular around its star, and its axis of rotation seems very close to completely perpendicular with the plane of its solar system.
- A Rogue Trader named Keiran Haan claims to have possibly caught a glimpse of the planet's history in the Nadueshi capital of Marajur. During a tour of the city, she became separated from her guide and found herself in what she took to be a chapel. Three of the walls were decorated with frescoes of people resembling the Nadueshi performing various tasks. The fourth wall was dominated by huge mural of four humans—one carrying the equipment of a scientist or researcher, another armed and armoured as a warrior, the third bearing tools as if a labourer or engineer, and the last wearing finery evocative of a noble or government functionary. They were standing around a large globe that resembled Naduesh itself. Once reunited with her native guide, he could not, or would not, elaborate on the meaning of the murals.
- Rumours in Footfall's taverns say that every so often, a vessel approaching Naduesh is challenged by vox-hails in an unknown language. If the ship responds, they sometimes hear a brief squeal of code, then nothing but static. This is dismissed as impossible by those who have visited the planet—the natives are too primitive for vox technology.
- The Nadueshi have a legend that speaks of an unnamed horror attacking their ancestors from the stars, only to be swallowed by a god that dwells deep within the planet and speaks through the very stones themselves.
- Some claim that the entire planet was constructed as a trap and laid in the system for some unknown stellar foe. If so, has the trap has been sprung—perhaps its prey is held deep within the planet—or is it still armed and waiting?



long that look for all the world like barracks, armouries, marshalling yards and immense gun emplacements mounted with macrocannons large enough to hull a battleship in high orbit. Some say the underhives go on forever, that they burrow straight to the heart of Naduesh, that every metre is packed with complex machinery, and that Naduesh isn't even a planet at all.

A SAFE HAVEN

For centuries now pirates, renegades, and Rogue Traders alike have been stopping here to resupply while crossing the spinward regions of the Expanse and the Heathen Stars. A number of favourable factors have made Naduesh a premier victualling world. The system is relatively isolated and free of major navigation hazards. The warp surrounding the system is eerily calm, with unusually stable currents and few reported storms or lost ships. This makes the planet easy to get to, and there are numerous sheltered anchorages scattered around the system in which to hide or effect repairs.

While the great ruins of the Nadueshi's ancestors are striking and draw their share of treasure seekers and curious tech-priests, they are not the only thing the planet has to offer. Indeed it possesses quite possibly the most precious of commodities for passing voidships: clean, fresh water. Naduesh's broad, deep lakes provide a near endless supply of uncontaminated water, a fact that has been taken advantage of by generations of voidmen. Along with the water, there is also much in the way of provender to be had. Nearly every fruit, nut, or root that grows on Naduesh

is edible, and vast herds of wild herbivorous beasts a million strong wander the plains and make for excellent eating. Some voidmen have witnessed this bounty and stated that it's almost as if everything about the planet was designed with the comfort and convenience of men in mind.

There is also a brisk trade here among the native Nadueshi and the "Sky Men" as they call the visiting voidmen. Voidships bring slaves, high-tech weapons, ammunition, tools and trinkets to trade for conscripts, women, foodstuffs and ancient Nadueshi artefacts. The Nadueshi also produce and trade ornate metal jewellery, and a small but fervent market for their tribal finery has sprung up among the neighbouring systems. There is great money-making potential here for a keen Rogue Trader. The ancient, abandoned hives are doubtless still full of archeotech artefacts, and most of the labyrinthine underhives remain uncharted and unexploited. The native herbivores are hardy and would make an excellent trade commodity, especially with nearby systems such as Zayth (which has little ability to raise its own foodstuffs). There are also millions of heathen souls on Naduesh who need to be brought into the fold and shown the righteous light and power of the God-Emperor. These are but a few of the opportunities to be found on Naduesh, and it would be an unimaginative Rogue Trader indeed who couldn't make at least a small fortune exploiting the planet and its natural resources.

USING NADUESH

Naduesh provides Explorers with a location to rest and provision during their adventures amongst the Expanse, and the Heathen Stars in particular. The world is habitable and has a native human population, which means a Rogue Trader could use it to reprovision his ship's food stocks, or restore his crew's Morale (see pages 226-227 of **ROGUE TRADER**). In particular, the inhabitants of Naduesh have domesticated a beast similar to the Mukaali of Tallarn that can be used either as a beast of burden or a food source. On occasion, enterprising Rogue Traders have traded these animals across the Heathen Stars.

Naduesh can also be used to replenish Crew Population if the Explorers are willing to recruit from amongst the tribes. Of course, the Nadueshi are a feral people, unused to living amongst the stars and unfamiliar with even the most basic Imperial technologies, so most would only be good as low-decks crew. In general, obtaining crew means an Acquisition Test with a Scarce modifier (see pages 226 of **ROGUE TRADER**), and a successful test will only restore 12 points of Crew Population on vessels smaller than a light cruiser, and 6 on ships of light cruiser size and larger.

In addition, there are several potential endeavours possible on Naduesh, as suggested above. Each of these would likely be lesser Endeavours, except for converting the inhabitants to worship the God-Emperor. This would be a Greater Endeavour, if a Rogue Trader could convince the Ministorum of its value.



THE BREAKING YARDS AT SR-651

"I've been from the Maw to the edge of the Rifts of Hecaton and back and seen all the highs and lows of Mankind, but I've never seen a place as desperate and squalid and truly Emperor forsaken as the Breaking Yards. May the Holy One have mercy on their pitiful souls."

—Trade Admiral Jonquin Saul

Located in the Cinerus Maleficum region, near the centre of the Koronus Expanse, SR-651 is a red giant star standing silent watch over an empty system. Whether the system ever had planets remains unclear, but the entirety of it is littered with dense asteroid fields, the shattered remains of voidships, and the detritus of millennia of passing fleets. SR-651 is also occasionally lashed with terrible warp storms and plagued by strange gravitational anomalies that cause the ever-present debris to shift and flow like currents and pool here and there in clumps hundreds or thousands of kilometres across. Despite the desolation and navigational hazards, SR-651 has two very important redeeming qualities: it's located conveniently near the dead centre of the Expanse, and lies directly off one of the larger trade routes that cross from Winterscale's Realm to the Heathen Stars. These factors, plus the surfeit of cheap labour from the surrounding systems and the constant need for voidship components, gave birth to the Breaking Yards.

HISTORY OF THE YARDS

The Breaking Yards were founded by the Rogue Trader Iridas Holden, the scion of a powerful family from the Calixis Sector that was heavily invested in both shipyards and the salvage trade. On a fact-finding mission through the Expanse, Holden's ship, the *Salvare*, was blown off course by a particularly savage warp storm and deposited, battered and limping, in the SR-651 system. He immediately sought a sheltered anchorage for his wounded ship above one of the intact planets at the far end of the system and put his crew to work. While his crew and Tech-priests were busy with repairs, Holden took the opportunity to survey the heretofore unknown system. He scanned everything within reach of his auspex arrays and sent parties out in the ship's boats to search farther afield. One of these survey parties stumbled across a small station anchored close to the system's centre, housing a small-time salvage operation breaking up wrecked ships amongst the remains of a shattered asteroid. After a tense negotiation, the foreman of the salvage operation, a grizzled and ancient voidman named Haargoth Agamar, agreed to return to the *Salvare* to meet with Captain Holden.

Upon arriving at the ship, Holden and Agamar entered into lengthy discussions about the history of the system and the nature of the salvage operation. Apparently, numerous minor salvaging organisations had been operating in the SR-651 system for centuries. Rogue Traders would deposit teams of workers who would operate for a while until their masters retrieved them or were wiped out by some natural disaster or marauding pirates.

While the system itself was rich in constantly renewing salvage thanks to its location, steady traffic and ever-changing navigation hazards, the region of space was largely deserted, and the few human outposts not wealthy enough to take advantage of the situation. Holden, however, felt he could succeed where his peers failed. After pumping Agamar for all the information the old voidman possessed, Holden immediately pressed him into service, then sent impressment teams to do the same to the remainder of his men. With his repairs completed, Holden returned to Port Wander to muster resources and lay plans.

One year later, Iridas Holden returned to SR-651. He had crafted a plan to make himself incredibly wealthy by building massive breaking yards in the system, recycling derelict ships and selling the components and raw materials. He reasoned that with the constant wrecks that happened throughout the system, and with negotiated contracts with Rogue Traders such as Saul to have broken ships sent to his yards, he could build a lasting ship-breaking empire.

In the Imperium, it is rare that ships are broken and scrapped. Each starship is a valuable prize representing decades of construction and filled with arcane and priceless technology. However, through battle, disaster, or hard use, some ships do become untenable. With a flotilla of ships, tens of thousands of pressed men to work as ship breakers and a handful of lucrative salvage contracts, Holden claimed the whole of the system as his own. Once the headquarters was established on a planet-sized jumble of asteroids and planetary debris held together in one of the systems gravitational sinks, Holden would set to building his empire.

From the beginning however, the entire endeavour was a disaster. Upon arrival at SR-651, many of the flotilla's ships, piloted by captains unfamiliar with the treacherous system, were lost to collisions and asteroid impacts. Once the operation's headquarters were established and the temporary habitats were built, a brutal, month-long warp storm swept through the system, disrupting asteroid orbits and sending shards of rock careening into ships at anchor. Many thousands of crewmen and impressed workers were lost, as well as the permanent habitats and a fair portion of the operation's food and supplies. Supply shortages, hunger rations and deadly working conditions led to riots and work stoppages which were suppressed quickly and violently. Holden attempted desperately to hold his operation together, appealing to investors for more loans and stretching his already thin fortune to breaking. News of the disasters and setbacks at SR-651 began to get out, and Holden was undone. A rival Rogue Trader clan, smelling blood in the water, took the opportunity to declare war on the Holden dynasty. They reduced Holden's once-powerful family to poverty and sold the majority of them into indentured servitude. Finally, in the midst of this chaos, the crew of the *Salvare* rose up in mutiny and killed Holden and his officers. This mutiny, bloody, violent and expertly planned, was led by none other than Haargoth Agamar.

Now in command of a well equipped voidship and possessing an intimate knowledge of the system and its hazards, Haargoth Agamar picked up where the unfortunate Holden had left off. He brought the remainder of the doomed expedition together and made them an offer. Those who would stay and work would be provided shelter, food and a cut of any profits. Those who wished to leave would be given a ship and sent on their way. A

DEFENDING THE YARD

The macrobatteries mounted to the Breaking Yards give the structure incredible defensive coverage for what is essentially a planet-scale scrapyard. From any approach, an attacking ship will find itself facing either two lances or four macrobatteries of any type (stats for these weapons can be found in Table 8-5: Supplemental Components on page 204 of *Rogue Trader*.) The scavenged defence turrets give the Yards a Turret Rating of 3, and the random auger arrays give it a detection of +12.

As for its fleet of cobbled together ships, the Yards should have as many ships as the Game Master sees fit, and can be represented by the Wolfpack Raider found on page 209 of *ROGUE TRADER*, usually armed with macrocannons such as the Thunderstrike. In general, Yard crews are no better than Incompetent, although the crews running the actual Yard defences are Competent.

surprising number decided to take Agamar up on his offer and stayed. They spent months in dangerous, back-breaking labour preparing the installation with what few supplies that they had left. The makeshift, temporary habitats were shored up and made, if not permanent, at least liveable. They towed hulks and scraps from around the system for salvage and building material. Agamar made deals with surrounding systems, trading ship parts and raw materials for food and supplies. Eventually, and much to the surprise of Agamar and his followers who knew nothing of them, the first of Holden's contract ships arrived from elsewhere in the Expanse to be broken down. They were followed by more, and soon Agamar found himself in the salvage business.

Sadly, soon after the operation was up and running, Agamar and the *Salvare* disappeared on a passage through the Maw. In response, most of Agamar's employees disappeared, fleeing to other regions with whatever equipment, goods and money they could carry. The remaining employees couldn't maintain the operation, which slowly collapsed into a skeleton of itself. Instead of a region-spanning ship-salvaging empire or an efficient and professional scrap concern as Holden and Agamar had envisioned, the breaking yards became a hellish industrial prison where the poorest and most desperate people of the Expanse toil away for endless hours in patched voidsuits, tearing ships apart piece by piece with inadequate tools. Here, life is incredibly cheap, the mortality rate is staggeringly high, and everyone is sick from radiation poisoning or contact with the dizzying array of hazardous materials used in building voidships. It became, like many places in the Expanse, not a place of hope but one of exploitation and despair.

THE YARDS TODAY

In the decades since their founding, the Breaking Yards haven't changed much. The complex is comprised of two main areas, the Receiving Yard and the Breaking Yards. The Receiving Yard is a massive, spindle-shaped space station thirty kilometres long that orbits the Breaking Yards. It is here that incoming

ships, many of which are completely unrepairable, are processed and inspected before being sent into the Breaking Yards for salvaging. The spindle contains the old administrative offices, along with living quarters for the clerks along with the yard foremen and their enforcers. A bustling marketplace dominates the central decks of the station, where ship components from the Breaking Yards are sold to anyone with the Thrones to purchase them. Everything from auspex array lenses to warp drives and Gellar Field generators can be had, in varying condition. Even whole ship hulls can be purchased at the yards, although these are a much rarer commodity. These are bare hulls, typically stripped to the gunwales and lacking even engines and generators, perfect for the Rogue Trader who wants to assemble a ship from the keel up.

The Breaking Yards are built on and throughout a clump of asteroids and planetary fragments roughly 3,500 kilometres in diameter, loosely bound together by one of SR-651's errant gravitational anomalies. Massive chains and hundreds of kilometres of flexible, semi-rigid pressure corridors connect the disparate pieces of the complex. Each asteroid in the clump is studded with a multitude of slapdash hangars, slips and workshops bashed together from hull plates and other random detritus. Leaky, unshielded pressure domes and temporary emergency habitats make up the living quarters for those workers lucky enough to have them. Even with their foetid, poorly recycled atmospheres and tendency to de-pressurise or implode without warning, they are still preferable to sleeping aboard one of the space hulks in a vacsuit or in a makeshift hovel built from the scavenged cockpit of a gun cutter—as so many do. The entire place is full of wretched, hollow-eyed people and has the look and feel of a huge, dangerous slum. It's dominated by the hulking shapes of derelict voidships and always lit by glaring floodlights and the glittering sparks of cutting torches.

DEFENCE OF THE YARDS

With its wealth of voidship salvage, the Breaking Yards seem a prime target for raiders and pirates. However, while there have been occasional shipment hijackings or daring cutting-out expeditions led against the Yards' fleet of marketable hulls, large-scale attacks are rare. This is due to a number of factors, the first being the Yards' location. Navigating SR-651's shifting asteroid belts is a dangerous proposition unless the pilot follows one of the charted passages, and the Yards' have broken the hulks of numerous pirates who have tried.

Those who do follow the passages must contend with the Yards' not inconsiderable defences. The facilities of the Yards mount hundreds of salvaged, dismantled macrobatteries and lances, along with thousands of close defence turrets, bristling from the rocks and asteroids. These are manned at all times by a rotation of trained gun crews and co-ordinated from a salvaged ship's bridge used as a command and communications centre. This allows the Yards to defend themselves and the Receiving

Yard at both short and long ranges. The Yards also maintain a small, ragged fleet of fast defence monitors and intersystem ships for interception and interdiction. While mostly made from spare parts and thinly crewed with poorly trained pressed men, these ships still provide a decent defence force, and have



driven off more than one raiding fleet. In addition, any number of powerful and expertly crewed Rogue Trader or pirate vessels can be found in the Yards at any given time. These ships are typically unhappy to be bothered in the middle of their business, and are more than happy to punish any interlopers. More than anything else, the power of the Yards' macro-batteries and the goodwill of its trading partners have kept the Orks of the nearby Undred-Undred Teef, clearly the greatest threat to the Yards, from completely overrunning the place.

Of course, some Rogue Traders have succeeded in taking over the Yards—through force or dealmaking—over the years. However, ownership of the Yards proved to be the ruination of each, driving them to poverty, shame, and financial collapse. Whether poor luck or simply that the Yards are an ill-conceived venture, the facility seems destined to survive on its own, running on momentum and directed anarchy.

USING THE BREAKING YARDS

Though the Yards have a poor reputation, they are something of a rarity in the Expanse—a (mostly) functional shipyard. This makes them invaluable for Rogue Traders who need to refit their vessels, or simply repair damage from a dangerous run.

In addition, rumour has it that due to a bureaucratic mishap, a perfectly serviceable cruiser, formerly the property of one of the branches of the Imperium, has recently found a new home at the Breaking Yards. As if that wasn't bad enough, depending on who you talk to, this ship is either equipped with some sort of heretical technology, or has a hold full of deadly weapons. Either way, if this is true, that ship is a danger to the yards and whoever lost it is going to want it back.

THE RAGGED WORLDS

"The Ragged Worlds may not be any safer than Winterscale's Realm, or any richer, but it's certainly easier by half to make money here than anywhere else."

—Cornelius Argyl, semi-retired Rogue Trader

The Ragged Worlds are an isolated cluster of star systems located high up in the galactic plane and spinward of Winterscale's Realm. This tiny region, once thought to be the total of the Koronus Expanse during the "Mistaken Age," has been all but abandoned for centuries. Once the true scale of the Expanse was realised with the first warp routes through the Maw and the discovery of Furibundus, Rogue Traders fled the Ragged Worlds in droves. The lure of boundless riches, ancient wonders and vast stretches of empty space to conquer won out, and the Ragged Worlds fell into a quiet obscurity that lasted for centuries.

The region itself is relatively small compared to other charted areas of the Expanse—a few hundred star systems and countless thousands of planets, moons, nebulae and asteroid fields packed tightly into an area only a few dozen light years across. Thanks to this density, and the region's close proximity to the mass of warp storms that separate the Koronus Expanse from the Calixis Sector, traversing the region is arduous and sometimes deadly. The region is constantly lashed by storms and temporal disruptions, and the warp tides created by so many gravity wells in so small an area are a navigational nightmare to even the most seasoned Navigator. There are a few stable warp routes in and out of the region, but they tend to be small and are under constant threat of collapse thanks to the forces of the Screaming Vortex.

The Ragged Worlds are also short of natural resources and exploitable assets. There are a handful of deposits of valuable ores to be found among its solid planets and asteroid fields, and few, if any, of its gas giants are composed of anything but the basest, most common elements. What civilisations the region possesses are typically so benighted and backwards that they are of little interest to anyone but press gangs or the God-Emperor's missionaries. The few ancient human and xenos ruins discovered were picked clean long ago, and the death worlds like Burnscour are so dangerous and difficult to exploit that most consider them hardly worth the effort. Despite this stellar poverty, Rogue Traders fought bitterly for centuries for what paltry wealth they could glean from this sparse region, and the blasted wrecks and blackened bones of those unlucky in their endeavours litter the systems of the Ragged Worlds.

Within the past few decades however, residents of the Expanse have once again turned their eyes toward the meagre riches of the Ragged Worlds. The steady influx of traders, pirates, scoundrels, missionaries and the Imperium into the Expanse, along with the endless bloody feuding in Winterscale's Realm, has driven many Rogue Traders to look elsewhere for their livelihoods. While some have gone rimward

toward the Accursed Demesne and the Unbeholden Reaches, many have taken up residence in the formerly abandoned Ragged Worlds. Despite its previous short and violent inhabitation, vast stretches of the region remain uncharted. Here among these quiet and isolated worlds the newly arrived pioneers see decent potential for trade in the undeveloped regions. They also feel that slightly reduced profits expected in so impoverished a region are a small price to pay for the freedom from the constant fighting and clamour found elsewhere. This has led to the slowly-increasing popularity of the Ragged Worlds, and the recent discoveries of some heretofore undiscovered systems containing dead hive worlds and mysterious xenos artefacts has created a small but fervent gold rush mentality.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

While there are myriad unremarkable worlds within the region and possibly thousands more to discover, a few worlds have gained notoriety and are recognised as places with great potential. Burnscour is one such place, with its burgeoning beast trade and lethal weather. Others have been found to harbour previously unknown xenos ruins, unexplored ancient human outposts and even vast, planet-scale sepulchres. While none of the worlds can match the unbridled wealth of those found in Winterscale's Realm, they still generate a small but respectable income stream for those with the right kind of vision and enough strength.

AUBRAY'S ANVIL

"You see a place like this and you wonder. You wonder how it could fail. What forces could pull down a people who possessed technology like this? What blasphemy, what heresy could they have perpetrated to make the God-Emperor turn His loving eye from them? Whatever it was, you need only look to the piles of bones in the streets here to see the final fruits of their labour."

—Attributed to the Rogue Trader Cort Saldanus

Located on the far rimward side of the region, Aubray's Anvil is one of the dead worlds recently discovered among the Ragged Worlds. Long bereft of human habitation and given over completely to beasts and plants, the Anvil more closely resembles an abandoned forge world than a typical hive. The face of the planet is covered with obscure laboratories and sprawling factories hundreds of kilometres long. Its great hives are a twisting maze of steel and stone and unidentifiable composites under crystalline domes thousands of metres high. Endless piles of rusted machinery and drifts of scrap materials clog the streets, where the bones of men lie tangled in snarls of wire or the limbs of long destroyed walking machines. Above it all orbit silent stations whose corridors are choked with dust and shrivelled remains, and empty shipyards, some still with keels laid in their slips, waiting for shipwrights who will never come.

While seemingly of human design, there are precious few hints as to the identity or fate of the previous inhabitants or the nature and purpose of their industries. A few antediluvian vox systems broadcasting repeated messages in an indecipherable language through the echoing ruins and the sun bleached bones piled in the streets are the only evidence that humans lived here at all.

A relative newcomer named Cort Saldanus—praised by his peers as a master navigator and voidman—discovered (and named) Aubray's Anvil. Rumours abound that he forced an unknown rival to battle in orbit at this planet, his foe driven into the atmosphere by the force of Saldanus's guns.

Using Aubray's Anvil

The sheer vastness of the ruins on Aubray's Anvil presents a number of potential money-making opportunities for the enterprising Rogue Trader. Obviously there is the archeotech trade, as the place is littered with ancient and wondrous technology. There is also the opportunity to gain or exploit contacts within the Adeptus Mechanicus, who will surely be intensely interested in what lies beneath the wreckage of this lost world. Finally, there is the question of the final fate of Cort Saldanus. Is Saldanus still alive and if not, what killed him? Perhaps the unknown rival is part of the mystery?

SELDON'S FOLLY

"If you should ever need an example of the terrible power of lust and jealousy, look no further. This place is a monument to those sins, and thousands more."

—Sergeant Erist Holk

Among the numerous reasons man has found to justify the pursuit of war and the wholesale slaughter of his fellow man, the love of a woman seems to be more justifiable than most. Once a pleasant planet known as Pastorus, this blighted, war ravaged world was relatively unknown until its discovery by the capricious Rogue Trader Marrus Seldon. On Pastorus, Seldon found an extremely advanced human society seemingly descended from an Imperial colony. They had a rudimentary knowledge of the God-Emperor, a wealth of ancient technologies, and even a small but well-trained navy of intersystem ships. Seldon, a devout follower of the God-Emperor and shrewd businessman, saw great potential for both conversion and archeotech trade. He brokered negotiations between the planetary governor, his dynasty, and the Ecclesiarchy that were extremely beneficial to all sides.

It was during these long meetings that he met the governor's young wife, and they began a long and passionate intrigue. Upon its

inevitable discovery, the governor furiously and forcibly ejected Seldon, his retinue, and the Ecclesiarchy delegation. In his leaving, Seldon raided the gubernatorial palace, taking his mistress with him and doing incredible damage. However, the planetary navy intercepted his ship, and a massive battle took place in low orbit. During the battle, Seldon's mistress was killed and, maddened with rage, he declared war on Pastorus. He brought his not-inconsiderable martial assets to bear and invaded the planet, causing millions of deaths and untold destruction. Not long after the invasion, Seldon was killed when his ship was destroyed by saboteurs, and his forces bogged down fighting the well-equipped and highly trained professional armies of Pastorus.

Now, decades later, the remains of Seldon's armies are still entrenched on the planet they've renamed Seldon's Folly, forever fighting the dwindling planetary defence forces. Unable to stop and unwilling to surrender, these armies have reduced the once-beautiful world to a smouldering, crater-filled warzone. Where the land is not poisoned it is radioactive, and the skies are clouded with chemical weapons and blackened by the smoke of charnel fires. Eventually, all life will be destroyed on Seldon's Folly, and it will forever stand as a monument to one man's jealousy and madness.

Using Seldon's Folly

The ceaseless war on Seldon's Folly presents a great opportunity for players to make money providing weapons, men and materiel to one or both sides of the conflict. Buying weapons and fighting vehicles in bulk and selling them at a steep mark-up is a time honoured tradition in the Rogue Trader business, and Seldon's Folly is a perfect opportunity to take part in a little war profiteering.

REDEMPTION

"It is the Ecclesiarchy's purview, and theirs alone, to interpret the word of the God-Emperor. Any teachings other than those sanctioned by the Ecclesiarchy are to be considered heresy."

—Excerpt from Ecclesiarchy Memorandum DCLXVII

This blasphemous world is a small, arid moon orbiting a gas giant in the far coreward reaches of the Ragged Worlds, well within sight of the seething warp storms that hem the Expanse. Recently declared off-limits by the Ecclesiarchy, Redemption was once the cemetery world for a long-lost cult dedicated to a heretical version of the teachings of the God-Emperor. What these teachings were and what befell their adherents is



THE SECRETS OF REDEMPTION

As is the case with most dead worlds, the allure of Redemption lies mainly in the money-making potential of its artefacts. Every Rogue Trader worth his warrant has at least a passing interest in the underground trade of heretical artefacts from man's distant past. With Redemption, the potential is increased tenfold by the nature of its ancient and heretical artefacts. There are more than a few organisations and individuals in the Imperium that would pay vast amounts of gelt to possess such knowledge as Redemption hides, or see it suppressed. What is actually on the moon and in its vast catacombs is unknown to the Expanse, as the threat of the Ecclesiarchy's censure and the power of Godwinne's blockade keeps curiosity seekers at bay.

The oldest crypts of Redemption date back to the earliest days of the Imperium and perhaps even before, to the time when the Emperor led His Great Crusade to re-conquer the galaxy. Some of the tombs may even have been raised to house great heroes of that time of legends. They could contain powerful relics and valuable treasures from the Imperium's hallowed past, but such things would pale besides the wealth of knowledge of those times. Information about the first days of the Imperium, secrets discovered about the Halo Stars then lost forever, or even knowledge of the Emperor Himself and His designs for the galaxy, all may wait behind the sealed doors of Redemption. Below are three potential plots that the Game Master may use with Explorers that visit Redemption.

THE TEMPLE TENDENCY

The Temple Tendency is the remains of a heretical and ancient cult that once held sway over the entire Imperium. Long ago, the Temple of the Saviour Emperor was one of the first—and most powerful—sects to worship the Emperor as a deity. Its power grew amongst the Imperium as it became the One Faith and evolved into the Ministorum. Eventually, with the Ministorum bloated with secular power and worldly wealth, the infamous Goge Vandire took control. He unleashed the Reign of Blood, throwing the Imperium into horrifying civil war.

An alliance between the Mechanicus, the Adeptus Astartes, and a powerful religious leader and reformer named Sebastian Thor eventually overthrew the Temple of the Saviour Emperor, and Vandire died at the hands of his most loyal servants. The remains of the Temple fled to corners of the Imperium, where they became known as the Temple Tendency. To this day they work against the Ecclesiarchy, attempting to restore themselves as the "true" representatives of Imperial faith.

Members of the Temple Tendency masquerading as regular Ecclesiarchy functionaries charter the players' ship to take them to Redemption for "field work." They have the proper papers and signals to move through the blockade, and may even contract some players and crew to assist them in their endeavours on the surface. Their informants among the Ecclesiarchy have passed them information about Redemption, and the Temple Tendency believes that the documents and artefacts buried here hold secrets important to their cause. Of course, there is a contingency of the Adepta Sororitas on the surface, and it's only a matter of time before Lord Captain Godwinne discovers that the priest's documents are forged.

THE ECCLESIArchY

The Ecclesiarchy has contracted the players to transport a few powerful priests and their retinue, along with a fair amount of unidentified cargo from Redemption to Port Wander. The priests and their people keep largely to themselves, and the cargo is sealed in heavy vaults and guarded by a small unit of Adepta Sororitas. Along the way, the ship is ambushed and the attackers attempt to disable the players' ship and board her. Are these random pirates? Rival Ecclesiarchy factions? Followers of Redemption's cult? Something worse? This is a good option for players interested in faith and prestige based pursuits.

IN HIS SERVICE

The players have been offered vast sums of money to travel to Redemption in pursuit of a particular item or artefact rumoured to be there. This will entail a great amount of pre-planning, stealth, and raw luck to get through Godwinne's blockade in orbit and evade the Ecclesiarchy agents and Sisters of Battle units present on the surface. The players will be given a rough description of the object to be retrieved, an estimate of where it might be found, and a hefty down payment on their fee. The money is very good, more than enough to make up for the risk involved, and the deal has every appearance of either a wealthy noble or high-ranking Imperium official looking for something for their collection. Is this a legitimate business transaction, or is it a set-up?

unknown, whether lost to time or suppressed by the Imperium, but the Inquisition has branded them heresy so heresy they must be. The moon is covered with ornate cyclopean tombs engraved with heretical bas reliefs, grand necropolises, and countless obscure monuments. Gigantic cathedrals decorated with frescoes and stained glass proclaiming the glory of the God Emperor and His saints stand shoulder to shoulder with humble monasteries and vast, silent crematoria. Every square metre of Redemption is covered in a strange luminescent marble veined with silver that throws back the baleful, flickering light

from the nearby warp storms and makes everything the colour of a day old bruise.

Beneath the broad marble avenues and numerous funerary buildings is a warren of thousands of kilometres of tunnels augered deep into the heart of the moon. These seemingly endless tunnels link colossal, city-sized ossuaries and great underground temples. Inside, the bones of countless billions lie stacked in these catacombs, marked with what appear to be purity seals and covered in painted tapestries. Where there

are not bones or the statues of saints, huge stone vaults with doors as strong and thick as a voidship's armour are bored into the living stone. These vaults are locked with arcane locks of blasphemous technology and sealed with more of the cult's purity seals. What they hide is anyone's guess, and the Ecclesiarchy refuses to disclose any of its findings.

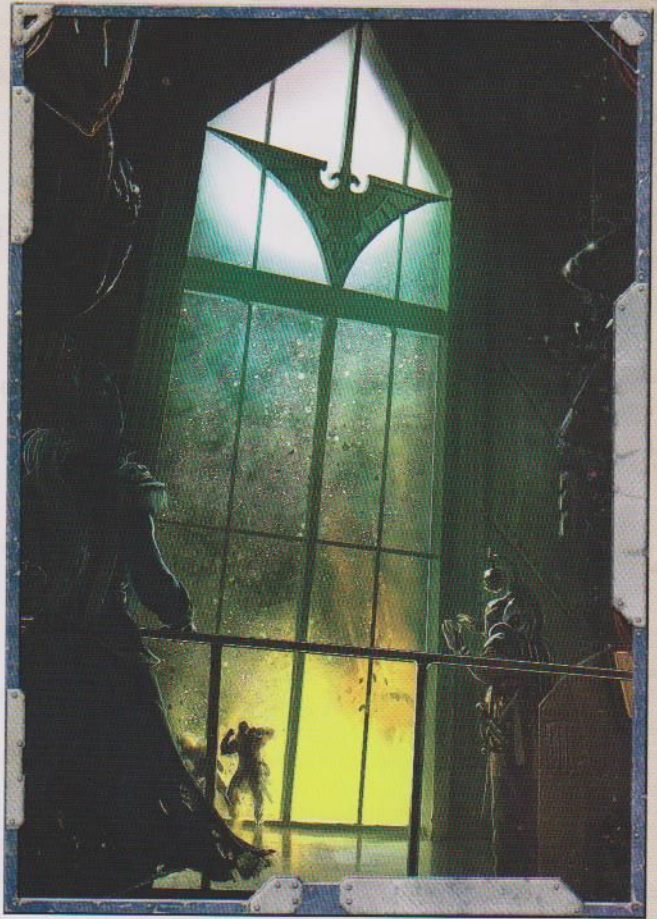
To ensure that Redemption remains sacrosanct, the Ecclesiarchy has retained the services of a particularly pious and zealous Rogue Trader named Alessaunder Godwinne. With neither the manpower nor the ships to maintain a blockade in a backwater system in the far off Expanse, the Ecclesiarchy has contracted Godwinne to keep trespassers away from the moon. Godwinne, always eager to serve the Ecclesiarchy and the God-Emperor, has dedicated a small number of his ships and ground forces to the blockade, and has been given free reign to destroy any ships that do not heed his warnings to stay away. Attempting a landing on the moon is tantamount to suicide, and numerous brave or foolhardy treasure hunters who have made the attempt have been destroyed by Godwinne's naval and ground forces. Redemption remains shrouded in mystery to this day, with the identities and crimes of its people hidden away in librarium vaults by the Ecclesiarchy.

THE SIREN STAR

"The song, it come through the Vox, clear as day and twice as loud. It promised us easy living, plenty of amasec and freedom from our bonds. Ev'ry hand aboard turned to his job right quick. We stretched out, but we never made it. A solar storm blew up and smashed the ship apart. Only me and a few of me messmates made it out in one of the ship's boats. I'm tellin' you boys, there's a star out there that sings to you, and it's the prettiest song you ever heard."

—Able Voidman Jak Plaice, former Gunner's Mate of the *Avarice*.

Rumours abound throughout the Koronus Expanse of a lone star in an empty system that mourns for its lost children, the long-dead inhabitants of the worlds it holds in orbit. It's said that this star sings a sad and deeply compelling song that can be heard through a ship's vox systems throughout the system. This song calls out to voidfarers, promising them peace and leisure and protection in the loving embrace of the star. It causes pressed men and Rogue Traders alike to throw aside all caution and run straight to the heart of the system in search of the source of this song. Those that succumb to the Song disappear into the void, never to be seen again. Some say that the star itself swallows ships and crews whole. Others say vile xenos live in the system, and they use the Song to lure in unsuspecting ships for their unspeakable designs. Others say it's daemons or spirits or one of a hundred other horrors cooked up by the over active imaginations of voidmen. No matter the cause, some version of this story can be heard in every tavern, public house and ship's mess in the Expanse. While none agree on where this star lies and what danger it hides, they all agree



on one point. The only voidmen known to have seen the star and lived to tell the tale were among the crew of the doomed tradeship *Avarice*.

Avarice, an extravagantly appointed Dauntless-class light cruiser formerly of the Imperial Navy, was the pride of a shipping fleet owned by a Rogue Trader named Graydon Gekkonidae. She disappeared with all hands, including her dashing captain, somewhere in the Heathen Stars region. A few years later, voidmen claiming to be the sole survivors of the *Avarice* began turning up in Port Wander and Footfall, spinning tales of a system where the star sang a song full of promise and hope. A song that drew their ship in and caused them to be dashed apart in an asteroid field by a violent warp storm. Being common deck hands, none could accurately describe where they'd been shipwrecked, but they all agreed that they were in or around the Heathen Stars region, and what they heard coming over the ship's vox was irresistible to even the most jaded and stalwart voidman. Rumours spread, and eventually the story passed into legend.

A LONESOME STAR

As is often the case with legends, very few of the details of this rumoured Siren Star are correct, but there is truth at the core of the story. On the far Spinward side of the Heathen Stars region, not far from the baleful light of the Rifts of Hecaton, is an abandoned system charted millennia ago by an unnamed surveyor and labelled on ancient charts as Devia Sirenum. Aside from bare facts such as the type and size of Devia Sirenum's star, the number of planets and known navigational

ANCIENT RADIATION

The lingering radiation from Devia Sirenum's ancient and unnamed cataclysm makes navigating the system fairly difficult. The interfering fallout ebbs and flows, reducing a ship's Detection by 2d10 (re-roll each day the ship is in the system), and reduces the range of all ship-to-ship vox systems to a distance of fifty kilometres. The reduction in vox range does not affect a ship's ability to hear the song of the Siren Star, for that plaintive wail can be heard everywhere in the system.

THE DRAW OF THE SIREN STAR

The plaintive song of the Siren Star can have such control over the minds of men that they will rush to their deaths only so that they can be closer to its source. Whenever a voidship enters the Devia Sirenum system, its vox and any other wireless comms systems immediately pick up the star's song, enthralling the Explorers and damaging Morale. Upon hearing the song for the first time, each Explorer needs to pass a **Hard (-20) Willpower Test** to withstand the draw of the Siren Star. If he succeeds without any degrees of success, he still takes a -10 to any tasks so long as he can hear the sound. If he fails the Test he feels a compulsion to travel towards the system's center, giving orders to that effect and arguing strongly if anyone disagrees. He suffers 1d5 Insanity Points and also suffers a -20 to all Tests due to the enthralling star, but every 6 hours he can attempt another **Hard (-20) Willpower Test** to snap out of it. He can also attempt the Test at the GM's discretion if another Explorer makes a concerted effort to get through to him.

However, if a player fails by five or more degrees, he is immediately driven completely mad (suffering 1d5+2 Insanity Points) and will do anything and everything in his power to reach the source, including attacking shipmates, stealing ship's boats, or even throwing himself out of an airlock. The only help for a character so compelled is to be restrained by his fellows until he can be taken somewhere out of earshot of the Song, at which point he may make a **Hard (-20) Willpower Test** every six hours to snap out of it. For every full six hours the Explorer is not exposed to the Song, the Test decreases in difficulty by one degree.

Upon hearing the Song, a ship's crew immediately loses 2d10 points of Morale, and an Explorer in a position of authority must make a **Difficult (-10) Command or Charm Test**. Success means the Explorers shut off vox communications and isolate the crew from the call of the star, suffering no further effect. For every degree of failure however, the crew loses an additional 5 Morale as the men begin to clamour for the song. For every thirty minutes that the ship remains in the system with the vox or other wireless comms systems active, the crew loses an additional two points of Morale as the call of the star spreads throughout the decks.

Any Explorer who succeeds on their Willpower Tests can attempt to shut down the ship's wireless vox systems to prevent the song from being heard. While shutting down the vox systems will isolate the crew from the Song, it obviously makes ship-to-ship communication with any cohorts difficult short of sending ships boats back and forth with messengers. If a Explorer or NPC has the skill, he can make a **Difficult (-10) Scholastic Lore: Cryptology** test to use the ship's running lights to send messages back and forth using ancient Naval semaphore codes. During the attempt to shut down the vox systems or wrest control of the ship from those already in the grip of the song, the Explorer may very well be prevented from doing so by those who have already succumbed to the compulsion. This could lead to situations where one half of the crew is battling the other among the decks, or where the bridge officers are trying desperately to wrest control of the ship for themselves to either escape or plunge further into the system to their doom. A ship with its crew in the full grip of the song, barring any accidents or interdiction by the system's pirates, will plunge at full speed directly into the heart of the star.

hazards, the only detail included in the report of any interest is the notation "Celestial Anomaly" attached to the description of the star itself. No other information appears in the chart, and no hint as to the nature of this celestial anomaly. Once the survey was complete, it seems that the system was judged unimportant and never revisited, only to be rediscovered centuries later by the Avarice.

The Devia Sirenum system is long dead, scoured of all life by some unnamed calamity ages before it was charted. The star itself is close to the end of its days, a dim white dwarf languishing at the centre of the system, struggling to cast its weak, guttering light to the outer planets. Vast asteroid fields and rings of debris orbit close to the star, the apparent remains of the system's inner planets. The outer planets, a mix of dead, ice-covered rocks and massive gas giants, circle in their ancient tracks, waiting out their final days. The only evidence that life ever existed here are a handful of dead, artificial satellites of

unknown and obvious xenos origin, some ruins on a few of the outer planets, and a strange, lingering radiation that disrupts auger arrays. The most notable thing about this system, aside from its desolation, is the "celestial anomaly," a sharp, keening wail that seems to emanate from Devia Sirenum itself.

The star emits a jumble of frequencies that are picked up on nearly every wireless system used in shipboard and in-system communication. What causes this star to sing and broadcast its songs to passing ships is unknown; it could be a natural phenomenon, or the work of some daemon or even some ancient xenos technology. Whatever the cause, it is this noise that gives Devia Sirenum its more common nickname, the Siren Star. The star's song drives men to distraction or madness, and compels them to make all possible speed toward the centre of the system and the embrace of the star's fierce glow.

Aside from the star and its song, there are a multitude of other threats within the system that make travelling through it a dangerous proposition. Dense asteroid fields, dangerous gravitational tides, and vicious solar storms that can blow up without a moment's notice present constant navigation hazards. Pirates lurk among the asteroid fields close to the centre of the system, preying on the unfortunates who are lured in by the mysterious star.

PIRATES OF THE SIREN STAR

The details on the pirates who live among the asteroids at the centre of the system have been left intentionally vague to allow the Game Master to tailor the encounter to match the strength of his players and the theme of his ongoing campaign. If the Game Master has no specific idea in mind that fits in with his campaign, he is free to choose from the following suggestions.

Renegades

The pirates are a group of human predators from somewhere in the Expanse. Whether fallen Rogue Traders or career pirates, these killers have found life easy and the pickings rich in Devia Sirenum. They have become immune to the Siren Star through either mutation, constant exposure or by simply keeping their wireless comms sets turned off. Game Masters should use the stats for **Voidfarers**, **Mutant Outcasts**, **Renegades** and **Void Pirate Captains** as found on pages 371-374 of *Rogue Trader*, and the ships should be either Hazeroth-class privateers or Havoc-class merchant raiders from pages 194-195 of the **ROGUE TRADER** core rulebook armed as the Game Master sees fit, or Wolfpack Raiders as described on page 209 of the **ROGUE TRADER** core rulebook.

Xenos

Vile xenos pirates have set up shop in Devia Sirenum and are preying on the unfortunate, misguided victims of the star's Song. They could be Eldar Corsairs, Ork Freebooters or even some home-grown xenos terror that the Game Master would like to unleash on the players. Whomever they are and wherever they come from, due to their alien nature they are immune to the song of the Siren Star. Game Masters should use the stats for Eldar Corsairs and Ork Freebooters from pages 376-377 of *Rogue Trader*, or feel free to create some new race using the rules and stats found on pages 364-369 of *Rogue Trader*. Their ships will typically be Eldar light cruisers like the *Memory of Lament* from page 62, or the Onslaught Ork Raider from pages 209-210 of **ROGUE TRADER**. For campaign specific xenos created by the Game Master, their ships should be based on the Wolfpack Raiders as described on page 209 of **ROGUE TRADER**.

SOMNIUM VIII

"...the dreams. The DREAMS! Fire and death and blood and screaming...the <garbled>...coming...coming tonight...coming here to kill us. I can hear their airships... their <garbled>...they've found us, the last of us...no escape...I won't let them take me...<recording ends with the sound of a chain weapon and screaming>."

—Transcript of a vox journal found in the crew quarters of mining outpost 14, Somnium VIII

Located in a distant corner of the Cauldron near the God-Emperor's Scourge is the Somnium system. Centred around a bright, blue giant star, the Somnium system consists of fourteen planets and hundreds of moons. The planets closest to the star are small, arid balls of rock baked hard by the intense heat and radiation of their massive star. The rest are a mix of mostly unremarkable feral worlds with little or no commercial value or worthless, lifeless rocks. Aside from its planets, the Somnium system houses little else of interest. There are no notable navigation hazards and the few asteroids and other stellar bodies are easily avoided. The one exception is Somnium VIII, a pleasant, medium-sized world that houses both a great treasure and a terrible secret.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF WAR

Somnium is a temperate world of lowlands and rolling hills with small, incredibly deep oceans ringing the equator. Its forests are dense with alien flora and fauna, and the seas of sighing grasses on its plains stand taller than a man. Scattered around the world are the remnants of huge, domed hive cities and sprawling industrial complexes. In the dim past, this world was home to two highly-advanced xenos races who lived together in relative harmony. They built their towering cities and graceful floating cathedrals dedicated to their alien gods, and they were the masters of all they surveyed, including the stars themselves. They ruled their vast star system together, exploiting its riches and building their legacy. As it is with most empires, however, its star eventually began to wane and both societies began to erode from the inside. Their institutions became decadent, their leaders corrupt, and eventually a devastating war broke out between the two races. This war, fought with machines of incredibly advanced technology, soon completely engulfed Somnium VIII, and after years of war, the two former allies annihilated each other completely. Whether they managed this through targeted biological weapons or some other heretical xenos technology is unclear, but every sentient being on Somnium VIII died a horrible, screaming death in a matter of minutes, the echoes of which can still be heard these many millennia later.

Over the following centuries, their proud edifices fell into ruin, swallowed up by the land as if the planet itself was desperately trying to cover some deep shame. The floating cathedrals crashed into the seas, and the vast hives decayed and crumbled. However, even though the people were gone, the effects of the great war remained. The shock of so many sentients dying at once left an invisible stain on the soul of the

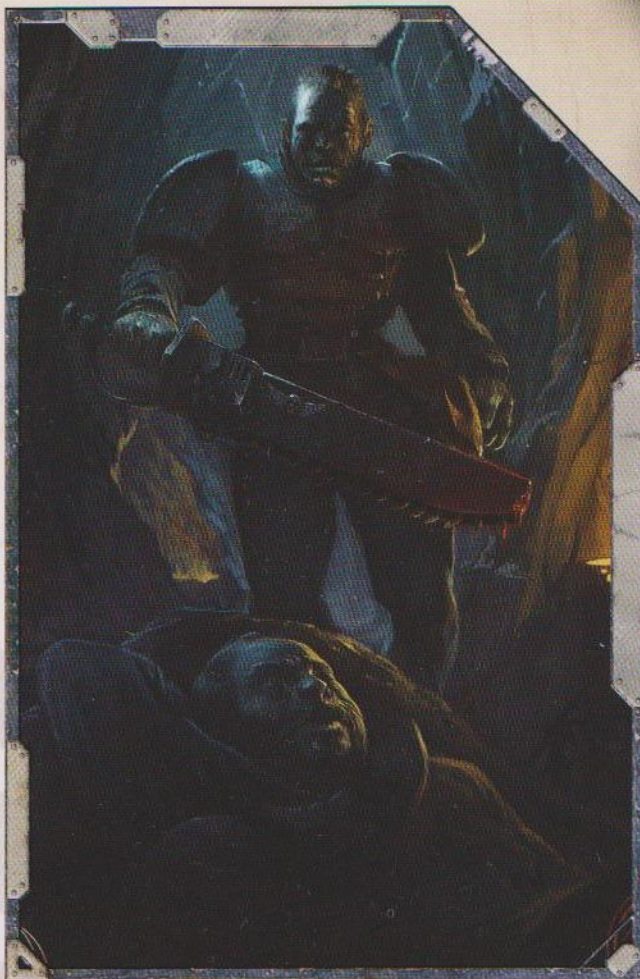
planet, a kind of psychic fallout that lingers in the cities and on the sites of ancient battlefields, ghostly echoes of cannons and the screams of the dying. Tortured spirits roam through the ruins, forever weeping for the souls of the dead and unable to find eternal rest. Ghost armies fight long-forgotten battles over and over, and flickering lightning or the light of the moon often reveals the shapes of ghostly airships bristling with weapons. It seems that the spirits of both races are cursed to relive their sins for eternity, with only the beasts to bear silent witness.

A LINGERING MADNESS

Somnium VIII lay undiscovered and unmolested for centuries, spinning in its ancient orbit with its vast domed cities turning to dust and its forests reclaiming the land. It would have stayed that way too, had a Rogue Trader on a survey mission not stumbled across the system. During their survey, it was discovered that Somnium VIII, along with an inordinate wealth of precious stones and metals, held an extremely rich adamantium deposit, a vein hundreds of kilometres wide stretching halfway around the planet's equator. News of the discovery quickly spread, and while the Rogue Trader who discovered it fought desperately to keep hold of the planet, prospectors and mining concerns from all over the Expanse descended on Somnium like a pack of ravening hounds. Quick and violent brushfire wars were fought both on the surface and in orbit as rival Rogue Trader houses and numerous factors representing powerful Imperial interests spared for control.

Eventually, a loose confederation of the strongest Rogue Traders and mining concerns was able to break enough heads and line enough pockets to gain control over the system and its resources. Plans were quickly drawn up and survey teams were sent down to the planet to chart the vein and divide claims among the major players. Once the surveyors were on the ground, however, trouble immediately began to hound them. The members of the survey teams began to complain of headaches and sleepless nights. Strange voices were reported whispering through vox systems, and vague, shadowy shapes were seen prowling the camps at dawn and dusk. Many individuals reported the sound of distant gunfire, or a far-off scream. A smell like burning flesh would occasionally waft through one camp, and another reported a steady rain of fine ash falling from the clear sky. Then, suddenly, one camp went silent, and then another. A third made a frantic, garbled vox broadcast begging for help and reporting "hostiles in the sky," before it too fell silent.

Investigators were sent to the surface, only to find scenes of unbelievable carnage. People in each camp horribly mutilated; burned or hacked apart or flayed or torn limb from limb with their blood soaking into the alien soil and looks of abject terror or poisonous rage on their twisted faces. Most died holding a weapon, and it appeared as if they'd gone mad and turned on one another. There were no survivors. Dataslates and vox journals found at the grisly scenes described men and women unable to sleep, gripped with paranoia and delusion. The records told of constant mutterings and whisperings from behind every tree and plaintive weeping from within every shadow. They showed how each man and woman in the camps succumbed



one by one to some unspeakable madness. The remaining survey teams were immediately recalled to their ships, some of their number already slowly drifting into madness.

Numerous stopgap solutions were proposed. First, the controlling parties attempted a series of rotations in which personnel would spend limited amounts of time on the surface before being rotated back to their ships. This turned out to be a logistical nightmare—some could withstand the madness for weeks, while others succumbed after a single night. They brought in hired psykers to help shield their workers, which worked until the psykers succumbed or were destroyed by their powers due to the strain. One Rogue Trader sent down a survey team escorted by an Untouchable, one of those strangely gifted individuals with no warp presence, and he reported being completely unaffected by the madness...until the Untouchable was killed in an accident. It seemed that no matter what was tried, luck or fickle fate would conspire against them.

It became increasingly difficult to operate on the planet. The surveying and construction of facilities staggered and lurched along. Work constantly stopped and restarted as people went mad and equipment was destroyed. Eventually, with the entire operation hemorrhaging gelt and the dates for starting production constantly pushed back, the largest of the interests cut their losses and left. This started a failure cascade that saw the confederation dissolved as each investor took what they could and ran. Eventually,

THE MADNESS OF SOMNIUM VIII

Prolonged exposure to the psychic fallout of Somnium VIII will drive even the strongest man mad in short order. Within 1d10 days of arriving on the planet's surface, a character will begin to experience horrific nightmares that make sleep nearly impossible. The player must then make a **Difficult (-10) Willpower Test** to determine the effects of the nightmares. Passing the Willpower test means that the character is able to process or shrug off the majority of the negative effects, but still has strange and disturbing dreams. Failure means he suffers the effects of Horrific Nightmares as described on page 298 of Rogue Trader and gains 1 Insanity Point.

If an individual remains on the planet for more than ten days after the nightmares start, he must make another **Difficult (-10) Willpower Test**. If he succeeds, he must make a new Willpower Test at the next difficulty rank in two days, and every two days thereafter at increasing difficulty ranks until he succumbs to the madness. Failing the test means that the character has finally snapped due to lack of sleep, the lurid nightmares and the constant muttering and whispering of the spirits. A character in the full grip of the madness will become extremely paranoid, withdrawn and easily agitated. He begins to have hallucinations where he sees the xenos who lived and died on Somnium VIII as flesh and blood. Once the hallucinations begin, the character quickly develops a delusion that he is one of the native xenos, and everyone around him is a member of the other race and intent on killing him. At this point the crazed individual flies into a rage and attack anyone and everyone near him with whatever weapons he has.

The effect of these nightmares can be counteracted with sleeping drugs, which reduce the difficulty of the Willpower Test by one rank. Psyker abilities that shield the mind or calm fear reduce the effects or even make a character immune to the nightmares, but this immunity is temporary and limited by the capabilities of the psyker. The presence of an Untouchable seems to be the surest protection from the madness. Untouchables, or those with powerful psychic wards or psy-blockers, are immune to the madness, and offer protection to those around them as well. Of course, Untouchables are incredibly rare.

An individual who has failed his Willpower tests will need to be sedated and restrained to prevent him from harming himself and others. If he is removed from the planet and the susurrations of the dead xenos early in the process, he will fall into a catatonic state which will last 1d5 days. Once he awakens, he is recovered but his experience has shaken him and he gains 1d10 insanity points. If he actually succumbed fully to the madness and was then subdued and removed from the planet, his catatonia will last 1d10 days and upon waking he will gain 2d10 points of insanity and will need to make a **Hard (-20) Willpower Test** or lose 1d5 points of Willpower.

ON PSYKERS

Psykers are affected differently by the madness of Somnium VIII than their more mundane colleagues. Thanks to their gifts and rigorous mental conditioning it's easier for them to resist the madness. When they are overcome, however, the results tend to be more horrifying and dangerous than are typical among non-psykers. A psyker will not begin to experience the nightmares brought on by the lingering psychic fallout for 2d10 days. Once the nightmares begin, the psyker must make the same tests as non-psykers to determine the effects of the nightmares on their psyche. The results of success or failure are identical to those for non-psykers, except once he reaches the level of madness, he does not fly in a homicidal rage. Instead, a psyker maddened by exposure to Somnium VIII is driven to distraction and hears the voices of the dead xenos every waking moment with shocking clarity. It becomes harder and harder to use his powers, and the effort required means the psyker may only use his powers at the Push level (however, he does not gain the increased Psy Rating for doing so, he simply suffers the ill effects). This effect lasts as long as the psyker is on the planet.

Psykers who are lucky enough to escape death on Somnium VIII suffer the same catatonia and accumulation of Insanity Points as their mundane colleagues with one exception. Thanks to their association with the Warp, they gain 1d10 Corruption Points as well as Insanity.

the half-built outposts, camps and mines collapsed into ruin and Somnium VIII fell silent again, save for the chattering of beasts and the mutterings of the spirits.

THE LURE OF RICHES

Everyone who knows the history of Somnium VIII knows that operating there spells almost certain doom. The draw of its wealth outweighs the risks however, at least in the minds of some, and over the years everyone from powerful Rogue Traders and Imperial organisations to small-time strip mining outfits has attempted to exploit the riches of this God-Emperor forsaken world. The

failures of the past are well known and well documented, and every fool who makes the gamble is convinced that they have the answer and the ability to keep an operation running. So far, no one has managed it. Somnium VIII has ruined more fortunes and killed more men than can be easily counted.

ILLISK

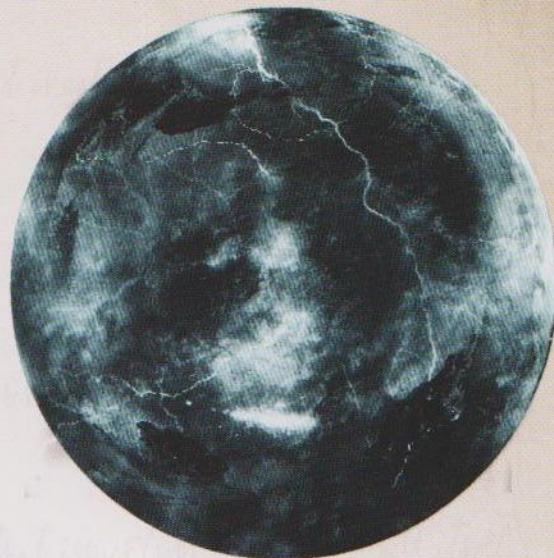
"This world, this massive thinking machine, shows us that the Ommissiab's gifts transcend even us. If this is not proof that the Ommissiab exists, I do not know what is."

—Magos Dakar, Disciples of Thule (declared Traitorus Excommunicate, 701.M41)

Illisk is a world orbiting a dying ember within the Unbeholden Reaches. It's a place known only to the Disciples of Thule and a handful of trusted Rogue Traders. According to most explorers and void-born operating within the Koronus Expanse, this world is worthless—all of its mineral wealth played out by ancient strip mining. Its resident xenos culture died off long ago, the entire ecosystem destroyed by their desperate final efforts. However, despite the apparent worthlessness of this world, Illisk harbours a terrifying secret, and a great discovery. A select few members from the Disciples of Thule, and by extension the Adeptus Mechanicus, continue to study and research the planet in an effort to unveil the secrets of its creation; perhaps even bringing them one step closer to the Ommissiab. Yet, the technology evidenced on Illisk was banned long ago by the edicts of the holy God-Emperor of Mankind. The Thuleans risk much in their quest, but they see it as a small price to pay for apotheosis.

Within the outer edges of the Unbeholden Reaches, close to the Rifts of Hecaton, the planet Illisk orbits a dying ember of a fuel-starved sun, one of four small planets and a sparse asteroid belt. The planets neighbouring Illisk are unremarkable; two worthless balls of mud and rock and a dwindling gas giant. The Disciples of Thule agree that if it weren't for Illisk itself, there would be no reason to visit this system, as its useful resources were exhausted ages ago. Illisk is a wind scoured and barren wasteland whose only native life appears to be stunted bushes of hardy scrub and lichen sparsely scattered within the rocks and crags. Its entire surface is blasted by powerful shatterstorms that can strip the flesh from the bones of an unprotected human in a matter of moments—and the most powerful of these storms can even rip through steel and ceramite.

No mountains exist anywhere on Illisk; the now extinct xenos strip-mined the entire surface for minerals and wealth. Even now, in the 41st Millennium, the evidence of this massive undertaking is still present. Dotted across the surface of this world are massive geothermal vents that reach deep below the mantle, venting their heat and vapours high into the atmosphere, exacerbating the planet's unstable weather patterns. These vents are tied into a vast network of geothermal power reactors used to keep the planet's systems operating. However, there is a steep price to be paid, as the atmosphere barely supports any life. Shredded and raggedly-torn pieces of Thulean and Imperial equipment lie scattered about as a testament to the tenacity of the Disciples of Thule to establish their presence on the surface. Since very few outside the Thuleans actually know about Illisk, not many scavengers have come to pick over the debris and detritus.



Aside from the massive open mining pits and hills, ten lonely citadels built of a curiously unknown black metal jut out from the sands and rock. Their echoing halls resound with the noise of the howling winds, the hum of the planet's ancient systems, and the sigh of atmospheric processors. The arrangement and placement of the citadels seems to have been of some importance to the ancient xenos, although what the purpose is has yet to be divined by the explorators of the Disciples of Thule. Eight citadels are situated equidistant from one another along the planet's equator. The other two have been placed at the poles of the planet. No one outside the Disciples of Thule knows why these massive hives were placed at these locations. Additionally, the citadels are the only structures that exist on the surface of the world that have withstood the raging fury of the shatterstorms.

The thin atmosphere of Illisk makes it very dangerous to work on the surface without some sort of breathing apparatus. However, the citadels (despite being open-walled cities) are sealed against the elements and maintain a breathable atmosphere inside. How this is accomplished is one of the many mysteries the Disciples of Thule are trying to solve.

THE THULEANS ON ILLISK

The Disciples of Thule discovered Illisk after following up on log entries regarding contact between xenos worlds and the Imperium, found within the famous Dolorium Vaults in 745.M41. After collating the data from hundreds of servitor-manned probes, they located what they thought was the location of a possible lost Explorer colony: the planet Illisk. Months of searching and research led the team to the conclusion that Illisk may have been visited by the Adeptus Mechanicus millennia ago, but for whatever reason they chose to not establish any settlements here. It was while probing the polar citadels that the Thuleans made one of the largest discoveries within the Koronus Expanse.

Magos Egan Vaughn, a devout disciple of Magos Solus Kanceme, and his team were exploring the ruins of the Arctic citadel in an attempt to discover what power sources were being used to keep the citadels' systems operational,

when they discovered a shaft leading down deep beneath the planetary surface. Taking a lift that ran the length of the shaft, they descended into a cavernous chamber with dimensions exceeding the limits of their hand-held auspex scanners. So immense was this chamber that it had its very own ecosystem, complete with weather and unique life forms. While this was noteworthy, it certainly wasn't remarkable. As the team pressed on they soon discovered other rooms packed with cogitator arrays and logic-engines. Soon, they uncovered more chambers filled with an array of computation devices and monitors. In fact, beneath the planet's surface rested billions upon billions of computation and calculating systems of xenos design.

SPECIFIC LOCATIONS ON ILLISK

While the citadels are the only structures capable of surviving on the surface of Illisk, there are several locations that are of interest to Rogue Traders and their crews. Since the Disciples of Thule do not control the entire world, it should be relatively easy for a band of explorers to find their way to the surface.

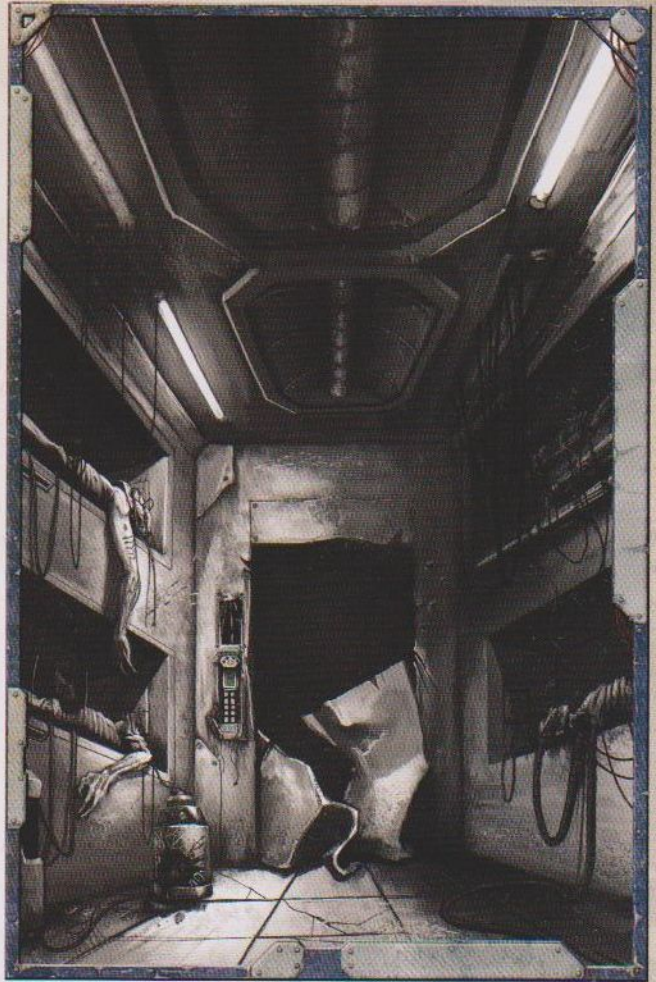
THE CRYPTS

As work progressed into understanding the scope and function of this machine world, members of other teams began finding numerous areas that could only be described as alien crypts. Walls hundreds of metres high were pocked with niches; each containing a single mummified corpse of what remained of the planet's xenos population. More astonishing still, each niche was surrounded by monitoring systems and displays resembling the sensoria-beds used in Imperial medicae facilities. Each and every one of the petrified bodies were inundated with tubes and cables attached to various points, piercing the flesh. To this day, the Disciples of Thule have no understanding of what purpose these niches—and the systems they are connected to—serve.

Magos Vaughn is rumoured to be considering connecting some test subjects to the systems once the team assigned to them figures out how to commune with the xenos machine spirits within. Once that happens, he will monitor progress and determine what exactly these systems are used for. There is some trepidation about this methodology, as some believe that whoever is directly connected to the machine spirits of these devices will become possessed by them—taking on the personalities of the xenos who were connected to it.

PICKET SHIPS

Once the significance of Illisk was discovered, the Thuleans wasted no time in bringing in ships to protect this world from scavengers and exploitation by those with interests contrary to their own. With the exception of the handful of Rogue Traders who have entered in a compact to assist the Disciples of Thule with their project, no one else has set foot upon Illisk.



Although the Thuleans maintain an exploration outpost on the world and have done so for years, there is still scant evidence of human habitation. Every so often an Explorator ship visits the system, but it seldom remains in orbit long.

So far, the system's relative obscurity and secrecy have kept it out of the way of Rogue Traders pushing their way into the interior of the Expanse, but on more than one occasion that peace has been disturbed by the arrival of pirates, raiders, or the frightening Rak'Gol. None of these incursions has managed to disrupt investigations, but the Thuleans are cautious all the same.

THE BLACK CITADELS

Illisk has ten massive hive-like citadels arranged across its surface. While all composed of the same material and all have the same general layout, each one is as unique as any human hive within the Imperium. The walls and corridors inside each citadel are covered in mysterious hieroglyphs that resemble the traceries of circuits, along with basic symbols such as circles and triangles.

Along with the ever-present howling of the storms outside, inside the walls of the citadels is a tinnitus hum at the very edge of human hearing. Many of the Thulean adepts with audio augmentics are constantly adjusting them to filter this noise out, without much success. The source of this noise is unknown, and Astropaths in the employ of the Thuleans report feeling edgy and irritable while they are within these

walls. Hundreds of thousands of chambers within each citadel house banks of cogitators and consoles, whose purpose can only be guessed at. Additionally, there do not appear to be any defences protecting the outer bastions of the citadels, at least none that the human adepts can find. Thus, several of the massive complexes are being refitted with Mechanicus technology and defences in the event of unwanted attention.

THE CHAMBER OF GHOLEMS

According to loose-lipped crewmen who claimed to have worked with the Thuleans operating on Illisk, there is a large chamber shrouded in shadow and lined with some sort of fog. The entrance to this chamber is guarded by the largest monotasked battle servitors the Mechanicus can provide, and no less than twenty elite Skitarii warriors who all stand before a pair of stone doors sealed with an arcane lock.

The stories purport that the chamber is sealed under penalty of death by flensing should any enter without the express permission of Magos Vaughn, and that within the chamber stand row upon row of mysterious xenos golems, constructs of metal given the form of the alien. No one claims to know much more about the nature of these automatons, only that rumour persists that messages and sealed shipments were sent back to the Lathe Worlds of the Calixis Sector once this chamber and its contents were discovered.

THE KING OF THE DEAD

As the data collectors and explorators of the Disciples of Thule have slowly made their way through the various black citadels and constructs that populate Illisk, there is one chamber that they have found no other of its type. Within the north polar citadel, situated at the uppermost spire, is a chamber decorated in rich tapestries. Arranged in niches around the perimeter of the chamber are various banks of cogitators and data-looms of indeterminate purpose; their lights constantly flickering on and off with a will of their own. Towards the back of this hall resting within a throne made of a clear quartz-like crystal, imbedded with all manner of circuitry, is a mummified xenos corpse. Unlike the other desiccated bodies that have been found previously, this one is dressed in the finery of a king or ruler. Like all the others encountered, he too is pierced with wires and tubes leading to plugs attached to the throne upon which he sits. Flanking the throne are what appear to be two robotic guardians, or golems, fashioned to resemble the native xenos, and armed with vicious-looking melee weapons. They have stood over their leader for aeons, forever guarding a corpse who will forever rule over a dead civilisation.

Working for the Disciples of Thule

While secretive and insular, the Thuleans are not above entering into compacts with the various Rogue Traders operating in the Koronus Expanse. However, they are very selective in who they choose and keep the number of captains who know about their operations on Illisk to a minimum to avoid exposure.

ADVENTURING ON ILLISK

A world of lost and forbidden technology, Illisk is rich for exploration. The Game Master is encouraged to develop their vision of what this machine world is like. There are hundreds if not thousands of lost chambers and caches beneath the shifting desert sands waiting to be discovered. Below are several Endeavours that GMs can use to springboard the Explorers into the action:

- **Scavenging Thulean Equipment (Lesser):** Scattered across the wastes are numerous corroding and decaying areas where the Disciples of Thule abandoned their equipment for one reason or another. Who knows what secrets and technology lie buried in the shifting sands; or what defences have been put in place to guard them?
- **Exploring Illisk (Greater):** It goes without saying that Illisk is a world ripe for exploration. The Disciples of Thule don't claim the entire world (nor could they). The details of what the Explorers may find are deliberately left open for the Game Master to develop. However, some suggestions include chambers full of ancient and proscribed archeotech, lost underground cities protected by ancient xenos guardians, and cyclopean tombs filled with unknown horrors.
- **Picket Duty (Lesser):** The Disciples of Thule have experienced an increase in attacks and raider activity by xenos (especially the Rak'Gol) near the planet Illisk. They are looking for ships that can help defend their interests in exchange for wealth and/or technology. If the Explorers assist, they may face everything from ork raiders to Rak'Gol Marauders and even Eldar Reavers. However, they may also discover the covert forces of the Ordo Xenos who may have an interest in what the Thuleans have found.

Those Captains lucky enough to find work with the Disciples of Thule can expect to transport goods and cargo to and from Illisk, ferry disciples into and out of the Koronus Expanse, and other jobs of a clandestine nature. The Disciples of Thule are very careful about who they select to enter into a compact with, and typically choose ships with crews who have a large number of worshippers of the Ommissiah. This not only ensures that there will be little difficulty in communication between the two parties, but also makes sure that their interests are protected.

There is one tale, told in hushed whispers, of the Rogue Trader Allandra Abaddos, who attempted to betray the Disciples of Thule to the Holy Inquisition. The luckless captain was ambushed by Explorator vessels at the entrance to the Maw, her ship crippled, boarded, and subsequently destroyed before anyone could come to her aid. The Inquisition lodged protests with the Lathes, and some more militant Inquisitors are said to have begun bloody investigations into the Disciples. As for Abaddos, the more apocryphal tales say she still serves those she betrayed as a servitor on Illisk.

THE SERPENT'S CRADLE

"The Serpent's Cradle? Aye, I've 'eard of that cursed star system, alright! Gems as big as a babe's fist! They say a man goes plain mad at just one look—all the beauty and fresh air. Forgets to feed 'emself, they do! Just waste away smilin' like idiots! No one ever comes back from that blighted place! Not ever! Course, that don't explain how all these tales are heard."

—Haspshur Gray, Hive Sibellus Scum

Within Winterscale's Realm there is a mysterious clutch of worlds orbiting a pair of ancient stars. Not much is known about these worlds, aside from rumours overheard in the dens of inequity and dark whispering corridors of Footfall and Port Wander. These tales speak of the planets of the Serpent's Cradle; where the air is pure and the water sweet, worlds that can heal any ailment. They also speak of gems the size of a human's hand that can easily be plucked from the ground—virtual paradises, according to the storytellers. However, they also add a dark shadow to these stories. They say that those who attempt to visit these worlds never return. They either waste away from hunger and thirst as they live on; drooling in ultimate peace and contentment, or some sinister protector of these worlds murders them before they can leave. Though they claim to speak from experience, none of the tale-tellers can explain how it is these stories are known if no one ever leaves these worlds alive, leaving most of what's known about these worlds open to speculation.

The system known as the Serpent's Cradle is an unusual arrangement of worlds orbiting the Serpentis Stars. These twin stars, Serpentis Alpha and Serpentis Beta, are ancient blue stars—resembling dazzling sapphires burning in the void. The planets of this system orbit the stars in a unique double-helix pattern. Every world in the Serpent's Cradle eventually passes between the binary stars, what's referred to as the 'Cradle,' and in the process they are exposed to massive amounts of severe radiation. Despite this fact, the habitable worlds remain green and lush with their own ecosystems and unique flora and fauna. The high number of worlds that can support life in this system is another unusual property. This has led those few adepts and savants who think they know about this system to postulate that the system was somehow engineered. However, until some credible data turns up, this will never be confirmed.

It is often speculated that Sebastian Winterscale visited these worlds and was the only one to ever escape them unharmed. His crew often spoke of a meticulously kept journal detailing his journeys and encounters. If this information is true, then perhaps there's some information to be found about the Serpent's Cradle and the worlds within it. Yet, if he or his crew did indeed visit these worlds, none of them ever spoke of it publicly, and Winterscale's journal has never been

found. Other Rogue Traders and members of the Disciples of Thule have tried to explore the worlds of the Serpent's Cradle, but most were either lost or have found nothing to corroborate the spacer tales about this system.

There are twelve planets that orbit the ancient binary stars, and the system is surrounded by a massive asteroid belt that likely formed as a result of the tremendous gravimetric stresses the stars placed on the belt when the system was first formed aeons ago. An ancient log purported to have been recovered from an automated servitor-piloted drone have reported that the habitable worlds appear to be in a state of evolutionary suspension—that is, the planet's ecology has been the same for the past several thousand millennia! The purpose for this can only be guessed at, however, this type of stagnation is only commonly found on Eldar Maiden and Exodite worlds to speed up the growth of the planet's vegetation in order to support future colonies. Given the distinct lack of Eldar presence in the system (aside from the occasional pirate and corsair fleet), it would appear that this practise is no longer limited to their worlds alone.

THE MONOLITHS AND ELDAR

Some of the few accurate records in the Koronus Expanse may be found in the archives of the Explorator Magos Talus Zane. Zane equipped his ship—*The Ommissiab Ascendant*—with a highly sophisticated (and extremely old) multiple auspex array, and spent several days studying the Serpent's Cradle from far beyond the system's Oort cloud. The long range scans and pict-records of the surfaces of the worlds within the Serpent's Cradle reveal that the surface of the habitable worlds are dotted with what appear to be some type of crystal structures that resemble organically-grown spires. It's also said that these objects appear to be meshed with other organic materials, not unlike that used by the ancient Eldar.

Three images of particular interest were taken of one of the worlds passing through the Cradle. The images, though fuzzy, show the structures apparently energised; glowing with a pale purple light, presumably the radiation and energy collected from passing between the two stars. Where this energy is stored, or why it's being collected in the first place can also only be guessed at, but it is speculated that some massive collector might be set deep beneath the surface of these worlds, and that the energy gathered is transferred to these locations for some unknown purpose. If this is the case, then the energy of millennia awaits below the crust of the planets.

It is thought that the Eldar marked these worlds out for colonisation based on ancient logs and records recovered from Sebastian Winterscale. However, there is a definite lack of Eldar activity not only within the system, but the Koronus Expanse as a whole. Even the members of Craftworld Kaelor and Eldar Corsairs have shown no interest in the Serpent's Cradle, aside from occasionally using it to stage ambushes on ships passing through the region from time to time. It is likely that Zane knows more than he has thus far revealed. However, should a Rogue Trader wish to learn from him, they will have to track down the reclusive Tech-priest and his ship—last seen deep in Winterscale's Realm.



NAVIGATING THE SERPENT'S CRADLE

Due to the massive gravity wells generated by the twin stars, all but the most exceptional Navigators must exit the warp well away from the system, leaving the dangerous and dense field of rock and debris between the ship and the interior of the Serpent's Cradle. Thus, among those few vessels that even find the Serpent's Cradle, only a fraction of them ever attempt to explore it. The remains of those who have tried and failed can be found drifting through the detritus of rock and gasses.

Aside from the dense field of rock that envelopes the system's outer reaches, there are mysterious gravity wells and isolated anomalies within the system itself. Because no one outside the few probes and passing vessels making course corrections has ever travelled in-system and returned to tell the tale, there is no concrete information on what exactly lurks in the near-void of the Serpent's Cradle.

Naturally, the various Rogue Traders and Explorators who have passed in and out of the Koronus Expanse have made attempts to gain access to the unspoiled worlds of the Serpent's Cradle in an attempt to survey and exploit them. Most have been unsuccessful, but those who have made attempts and were not destroyed in the process have an eclectic mix of stories of their attempts. It's thought that Sebastian Winterscale was the only one who actually passed through successfully and returned to tell the tale; all other tales are thought to be variations on the telling of the same story. Those who do actually claim to have set foot on the worlds of the Serpent's Cradle are thought of as braggarts, liars or fools. Given that Winterscale explored this realm over six hundred years ago, many of his reports are fragmented and have succumbed to time. This leaves many scholars to suspect that Winterscale may not have been as truthful about his exploits as originally thought.

On more than one occasion, Rogue Traders have reported entering the outer edges of the system, only to be attacked by bone-colored ships with tattered solar sails, reminiscent

of Eldar craft. They say that these reavers and pirates show no mercy, and that the crews who do survive, barely escape with their lives. Others contend that it wasn't Eldar pirates that attacked them at all, but other xenos of an unknown origin—possibly the Rak'Gol, who have been plaguing ships and colonies since their incursion from the Alenic Depths. Whatever the case may be, the Serpent's Cradle will prove a serious challenge for any who wish to investigate it.

WORLDS OF THE SERPENT'S CRADLE

While the exact nature of the system remains to be explored, over the past 800 years since the opening of the Maw Passage from the Calixis Sector, many have passed by (or through) the system. Explorator fleets of the Disciples of Thule have attempted to make forays into the system for their own obscure purposes, and they have been willing to share at least part of their findings—however meagre they are.

At least twelve bodies, not including the massive Serpent's Belt of asteroids, orbit the twin stars of the Serpent's Cradle. Of these, three worlds, documented and surveyed by long range auspex scans, appear to support life, although the Adeptus Mechanicus and the Navis Nobilite suggest that there may be more hidden from their augur arrays. The star system is very large, and the augur scans of the Mechanicus have only covered a small fraction of it at a long distance.

Each of these worlds supports an abundance of lush plant life that thrives in the strange radiation and electro-magnetic fields of the Cradle. It's thought that primitive animal life may also exist on these worlds as well, although only a landed expedition could confirm this. Naturally, spacers tell tales of giant armoured lizards as big as hab block and herds of herbivores wandering the plains. None of these stories can be confirmed, however.

Closest to the twin stars, on the inner reaches of the so-called "life zone," a lush tropical world has been discovered. Blanketed in thick jungles and craggy mountains, this world is thought to hold untold secrets deep beneath its canopy of verdant vegetation. Long range arrays have found images of strange structures on the surface, but nothing to show that anything beyond the primitive jungle fauna exists—nothing to show who built them without getting a closer look.

The second world, perhaps the most Terra-like world in the system, is covered in a wide variety of vegetation and stable tectonics. In the last century, Magos Paulius Strennus of the Adeptus Geologica, has taken on the task of compiling the scattered and fragmented reports from voidsmen and various other "reliable" sources. Magos Strennus postulates this world to be millions of years old, though it appears to be held in a state of geological stasis. What is causing this or why is unknown, but the planet does show tell-tale signs of being engineered. Thick forests of evergreen plants and whispering plains can be seen from the preliminary surveys taken. Additionally, structures similar to the other two worlds have also been noted here as well.

THE NATURE OF THE SERPENT'S CRADLE

The nature of the Serpent's Cradle and the threat it presents has been deliberately left open for the Game Master to interpret. An excellent source of adventures and endeavours, the Serpent's Cradle system offers a wealth of possibilities for a group of intrepid Explorers. As no one is certain what actually waits within the Serpent's Cradle, the GM is free to devise whatever he feels would be appropriate for the Explorers to encounter. Naturally, the asteroid belt presents its own unique challenges, but there are other decisions that need to be made concerning the planets themselves.

Since every campaign is unique, there is no one "right" or "wrong" decision. In fact, there are several suggestions listed below to help the GM customise the Serpent's Cradle for his campaign. Some of the areas that should, at the very least, be decided upon are the nature of the worlds, what type of guardians protect them, and the types of endeavours that can be created for the Rogue Trader and fellow Explorers to capitalise upon.

Rumours and tales told since the initial discovery of the worlds within the Serpentis system by Sebastian Winterscale have all spoken of planets whose waters can heal, where gems can simply be plucked off the ground, and a man could want for nothing. While exaggerations to be sure, there is a grain of truth within them. The GM should decide where tales end and truth begins.

An important mystery of the Serpent's Cradle is the system's "guardians." The rumours told state that those who set foot on these pristine paradise worlds never leave them again—but this leaves open any number of possibilities. Below are several example forces that the GM could pit the Explorers against:

- The sinister forces of Slaanesh tainted this world. It is a "Venus flytrap" that lures explorers to their death with its irresistible beauty and tales of infinite wealth and healing, a garden of forbidden delights to seduce the unwary.
- The worlds of the Serpent's Cradle are actually Eldar Maiden Worlds; they have set out mysterious guardians to skill any who dare set foot upon their virginal soil. These guardians might be Rangers, or a far older and more dangerous protector.
- Though the surfaces of the worlds are a mystery, the Eldar known as the Crow Spirits maintain a secret fastness amongst the complex planetary orbits that complicate the system. Anyone who discovers the Crow Spirits' secret will find his life forfeit as the hostile Eldar will expend every resource to destroy them.

Needless to say, the possibilities are only limited by the imagination of the GM and his players. One other item to consider is the nature of the crystal vanes that lie scattered across the surfaces of the inhabitable planets. The GM should consider their function and purpose, even if it's nothing more than helping to bleed off the incessant radiation that bathes the worlds as they pass through the "Cradle" between the stars in order to keep the worlds liveable.

Once he has these details figured out, no matter how preliminary, the GM can then move on with creating Endeavours that the Explorers will use to gain wealth and fame throughout the Imperium. The following are sample endeavours a GM can make use of, or combine into a single larger Endeavour.

- **Walk on the worlds of the Serpent's Cradle (Lesser):** Since the only reliable Rogue Trader to have ever set foot on the worlds of the Serpent's Cradle was supposedly Sebastian Winterscale, the Explorers will need to repeat that feat and be able to not only return to tell the tale, but also prove their story. What mineral wealth or other rewards (and dangers) await the Explorers is up to the GM, but even finding a route beyond the treacherous asteroids is a feat in and of itself. The Explorers must negotiate the dangers of the asteroid belt surrounding the system, and preferably find a route that others can use (and pay for the privilege).
- **Discover the terrible secret that lurks behind the facade (Greater):** Something malign awaits the Explorers within this system; some dark and sinister secret that doesn't want to be found, and is worth protecting at all costs. Some possibilities include an ancient xenos war world filled with terrible weapons and dark technology, a staging point for some conquering xenos armada, or perhaps a stable warp gate exists that leads deep into the raw immaterium—waiting for the stars to align before a mob of daemon-infested hordes spills forth ready to wreck havoc upon an unsuspecting (and unaware) sector. Or perhaps it is as the scholars and adepts postulated: this is a forgotten Eldar world, lost to the sands of time.

The last world identified is one that is dominated by deep oceans. Small chains of islands are scattered across the water in groups of archipelagos. Some of these islands have been identified as being ecosystems unto themselves—self contained worlds within a world. Naturally, like the other worlds located, this third planet also has structures and ruins on several of the islands. However, unlike the other two worlds, many of these structures and buildings appear to be tribal and occupied. That the probes and scans can reveal no more detail about the inhabitants has proven very disconcerting for the magos of the Adeptus Biologis aboard Altar-Templum-Calixis-Ext-17.

PSYCHIC PHENOMENON

Aside from the other strange phenomena concerning the Serpent's Cradle, many of the psykers and diviners of the Koronus Expanse and the Imperium have noted that there is something psychically "unnatural" about this system. Astropathic communication within the reaches of the Serpent's Cradle seem to be muted somehow, as if there is some kind of background noise interfering with the sending of messages. Castings of the Emperor's Tarot, both within and without the system, all point to some ancient force waiting and watching over the system.



FOES AND RIVALS

THE ORKS OF
UNDRED-UNDRED
TEEF

•
THE ELДАР

•
THE KROOT

•
THE RAK'GOL

•
THE STRYXIS

•
CHAOS REAVERS

•
IMPERIAL
ORGANIZATIONS

CHAPTER III: FOES AND RIVALS

"The only problem with these xenos scum is that they do not acknowledge our Emperor-given right to rule these stars."

—Rogue Trader Hadarak Fell

Beyond the Imperium's borders, the untamed wilds of space hold myriad threats and infinite dangers. Few are more treacherous and more resilient, however, than the threat of the xenos. Long forgotten alien empires lurk trapped within the darkest reaches of the Koronus Expanse, waiting to for some unlucky Rogue Trader to stumble across them. Deadly as they are, however, they can at least be conquered by humanity's superior knowledge of star travel, righteous hatred, and nigh-infinite resources.

Worse are the races who have mastered the secrets of interstellar travel. The destructive Ork hordes, the mercenary Kroot, the capricious Eldar, and the ravenous marauding Rak'Gol are all threats within the Expanse that wise Rogue Traders heed. Of course, they are not the only dangers one may face. Myriad human interests have travelled into the Expanse in the wake of Rogue Traders, and many are just as likely to become an Explorer's foe as an alien warship.



TOUCHED BY THE FATES

Some of the adversaries presented here are extremely dangerous individuals, meant to be rivals or even nemesis to Explorers. Therefore, some may have this Talent.

TOUCHED BY THE FATES (TALENT)

Prerequisites: Non-player Characters only, must have free will, may not be applied to Daemons or other non-living creatures.

The NPC has a number of Fate Points equal to half his Willpower Bonus (rounding up). He may use these Fate Points in the exact same way as an Explorer, and may even "burn" a Fate Point to survive death and destruction. In addition, the rules for Righteous Fury apply to this character.

THE ORKS OF UNDRED-UNDRED TEEF

"...Ork ships everywhere. Throne, there's so many. Hundreds, maybe thousands of vessels of all shapes and sizes, just floating around. Emperor's Teeth, look at the size of that one! It must mass more than a hundred million tonnes... oh no. It's headed towards us! Evasive Manoeuvres! Full power to the Voids! We've got to get out of..."

—Last log entry of the *Rhadamanthine*, after approaching the Ork-dominated world of Tusk.

Man kind has, for an age longer than the endurance of any one empire, warred against the Orks. It has been said that the greenskin menace was the first alien species humans ever encountered amongst the stars, and that when Man and Ork first met, war was inevitable. Nobody, except perhaps the Emperor, knows if this is true, but few question its veracity, so widespread and prevalent is conflict between these two species.

So it is within the Koronus Expanse. Ever since humans first ventured into the Expanse to find and exploit what lay within it, the Orks have been there to assail the efforts of man. In 108.M41, after the number of reported encounters had become intolerable, the Administratum within the neighbouring Calixis Sector commissioned a search of the Koronus Expanse to seek out and eliminate this Ork threat. The Imperial Navy light cruiser *Rhadamanthine* found them, more than a century later. Its final log entries, sent by the ship's Astropath with his last breath, told of a cluster of worlds dominated by the Greenskins, uncovered at the cost of a vessel that had served

THE SIEGE OF PORT WANDER

When Waaagh! Gulgrog attacked Port Wander in 422.M41, it struck suddenly and forcefully. With charts and observations of the Koronus Expanse even more limited than they are now, warning signs of the oncoming assault were few and largely unnoticed—those who did see the invasion coming either fled to safety or found their predictions falling upon deaf ears as the notably lax Port Authority busied itself with matters of profit. By the time the Ork fleet had swept past the recently established port of Footfall unhindered and entered the Maw, there was little that could be done to evade the swift and reckless invaders.

Moving at speeds that baffled Navigators who witnessed it, the Orks traversed the Maw in mere days, striking first at those vessels that rushed to depart Port Wander. Thirty-seven merchant haulers and transports were reduced to burning wreckage, and a dozen Rogue Traders found their prized vessels torn apart by swarms of raiders and frigates, while the bulkier “Kroozers” headed for the starport itself.

Port Wander’s own defences responded admirably to the invasion, crippling and destroying innumerable vessels as the Orks attempted to board and overwhelm it. On a hundred occasions in the first years of the war, the Orks managed to land groups of warriors within the fortress, only to have them repelled at significant cost by the mercenaries, voidsmen and Imperial Navy armsmen who defended it.

The first year ware, in the estimation of those who survived, the hardest of the siege. With most ships crippled or destroyed, and the outer defences bombarded to ruin, Port Wander was essentially alone amidst the Ork fleet. Their momentum failing, the Orks slowly divided into factions, each squabbling to salvage the most intact of the hulks that littered the Rubycon II system and competing to see which would be the one to claim the defiant fortress. After two years of battle, the first reinforcements arrived, as Battlefleet Calixis and the Adeptus Mechanicus rallied to form a substantial rescue fleet. A squadron of Sword Frigates—supported by the reconnaissance of Lathe monitor-cruisers—launched lightning raids to clear the outer reaches of the system. Then, a combined force of Navy warships and Secutor light cruisers arrived to begin the conflict in earnest, supported by the Navy warships on patrol from Passage Watch 27.

The resulting war of attrition may have actually extended the war—the Orks initial unity quickly fractured in the face of a prolonged conflict, and while Port Wander could not hold out indefinitely, the arrival of reinforcements did not have the desired effect of routing the Orks. Quite the opposite, in fact—faced with new enemies and new plunder, the Orks rallied together around Gulgrog’s flagship and fought all the harder. The counterattack lasted for another year, as the Orks rallied to the fight, and was costly in terms of men, vessels and money.

Lord Admiral Androvast Strophes is credited by many as being the hero of the war, leading fully two-thirds of Battlefleet Calixis in the final assault from his flagship, the Retribution-class Battleship *Fist of Adamant*, and crippling Gulgrog’s flagship in a punishing broadside duel that sentenced the *Fist of Adamant* to spacedock for half a century. After two days of conflict, the Orks were finally routed and, wearied from battle, the Imperial Navy moved to reclaim Port Wander instead of pursuing the Orks through the Maw.

proudly for millennia and had been part of the fleet of the Angevin Crusade. These Orks were no simple pirate raiders, but a growing menace that could escalate into a dire threat.

In spite of the successes of a small but growing number of Rogue Traders traversing the Koronus Passage, the Imperial Navy could not easily or swiftly muster a force through the Maw sufficient to destroy so large an Ork domain. The Maw was simply too unstable for so large a fleet to pass through. Worse, the Imperial Navy could not spare the ships to even attempt such a thing, as much of Battlefleet Calixis was embroiled within the Meritech Wars elsewhere in the Sector. In the early decades of the fifth century M41, a fleet consisting of hundreds of vessels burst from the Maw, laying siege to Port Wander for two years until Battlefleet Calixis and the Adeptus Mechanicus shattered the Ork forces—later identified as a part of Waaagh! Gulgrog—and reclaimed the starfortress.

Their forces broken and slaughtered, the Ork survivors slunk back to their worlds. Most believed that the threat had now passed, that the remaining greenskins were too few and too demoralised to pose more than a trivial threat. For a time, they were correct—Ork raids upon ships in the Expanse dropped dramatically in the following centuries. The relative peace, however, could not last, for Orks are not easily discouraged from acts of brutality and senseless violence. By

the early eighth century M41, the Ork menace had regained much of its strength and was as great a peril within the Expanse as they had been more than four centuries before, drawing in Rogue Traders in greater numbers to combat the escalating threat with the promise of handsome reward.

Yet still the threat grows, and now the Koronus Expanse stands on the brink of something terrible—a second invasion preparing to burst from its depths, just over half a millennium after the last.

UNDRED-UNDRED TEEF

Undred-Undred Teef consists of a dozen systems within the Accursed Demesne. Four of these are reasonably well-known to humanity through the recollections of Ork Freebooterz hired by unscrupulous Rogue Traders, and survivors’ tales of those who have passed nearby: barren Krakskull, smoke-wreathed Snagrutz, the broken moons of Stompgit, and the iron desolation of Tusk.

Perhaps fittingly in a place where Ork pirates are the dominant variety of greenskin, Undred-Undred Teef has little in the way of a permanent population. Freebooterz travel to and from Undred-Undred Teef with regularity, with Kaptins



and Oddboyz using their time amongst other Orks to trade and repair, while the common hordes clash on the worlds below in pointless battle solely for the sake of fighting. The workshops and mines and other lingering traces of civilisation change hands frequently, often abandoned when an Ork seeks to see the stars again, to be taken over by another some weeks or months later.

KRAKSKULL

A vast and barren world beneath a searing white star, Krakskull only barely supports life. A complete lack of native life has allowed Orkoid flora and fauna to spring up in places, though the general lack of moisture and the blistering heat make this difficult at the best of times. Surrounded by a dense asteroid field, only the smallest vessels can reach Krakskull safely, and few non-Orks are reckless enough to make the attempt. These asteroids hang closely enough to the world that, on occasion, orbital collisions (often between two asteroids, but sometimes between a ship and an asteroid) knock them deeper into Krakskull's gravity, causing them to plummet and cause vast devastation. For the most part, however, the dense clouds of asteroids, dust and debris cause fleeting, faint patches of almost-shade, diffusing the harsh light of Krakskull's star.

Much of the life on Krakskull is migratory, following these patches of respite and sheltering in the deepest craters to avoid the worst of the sunlight.

The settlement of Skulltown is the only lingering presence of civilisation anywhere

on Krakskull. Located on the walls of a long, deep crater-canyon, the lower tiers of the town are equal parts scrap pile, mineworks and refuse dump, all tended by hordes of Gretchin who work "Da Drops" for salvageable materials, edible fungus and Squigs, and useful minerals. Further up are the rough workshops of Mekboyz and other Oddboyz, and the huts of the common boyz who frequently roam out across the surface on ramshackle vehicles to do battle with one another or to carve up the wreckage of a ship that didn't survive passage through the asteroid field.

SNAGRUZ

A world choking under sulphurous fumes, Snagruz is a mineral-rich, highly unstable world where volcanoes and earthquakes are not only commonplace, but abundant. Caught between three powerful stars, the planet is constantly pulled in different directions. The gravity twists and tears the crust to leave great rents and causing floods of molten rock to boil forth from below.

Although the world is inhospitable even for the Orks, a crude space station sits in orbit above Snagruz, made from the wreckage of a larger "Kroozzer" with its engines torn off. From there, the Mekboyz build armies of Gretchin-piloted "Kans" and other machines, which travel down to the surface in heavy shuttles to collect metal ores and vast quantities of lava to be sifted, refined and turned into metal which the Meks then trade with others of their kind from other worlds within Undred-Undred Teef.

STOMPGIT

A massive, bright green gas giant orbiting a pale and ancient star, Stompgit is surrounded by the shattered remains of hundreds of moons and smaller planets in a vast asteroid belt. When the Orks found Stompgit, they saw within it a world like them, a great green monster that crushed and destroyed all around it. Believing it to be a lucky place, a gift from their belligerent gods, the Orks gathered around it, and formed haphazard settlements amongst the belt. Having established themselves, they sought out the largest asteroids and converted them into Roks. These massive impromptu spacecraft, little more than repurposed asteroids studded with engines and guns, were soon a common sight across Undred-Undred Teef.

Stompgit is not only a place of industry and worship for the Orks—of all the potential warp-routes into Undred-Undred Teef, the ones leading to Stompgit are the most stable. Further, the Warp around Stompgit allows easy access to the rest of Undred-Undred Teef. All of this has conspired to make the asteroid-choked system a natural gateway into and out of the Ork domain, easy to reach via the Warp but difficult to traverse in real space.

TUSK

The crown jewel of Undred-Undred Teef, Tusk possesses the largest population of Orks of any world in the Koronus Expanse. There may once have been an indigenous population on what is now Tusk, but it is long dead, any ruins of its existence ground to dust or torn apart to build the heart of an enduring Ork empire. Tusk is a world of factories and workshops, scaffolds and shipyards unceasing in their labours, producing weapons, vehicles, and starships for the Orks in vast quantities. The industry on Tusk has spread across the planet like a plague of fire and iron, the only remaining open spaces on the world serving only as testing grounds for new inventions and battlefields for restless greenskins (or both).

This industry is not confined to the surface, either. Hundreds of vessels crowd the orbits of Tusk, many of which are being constructed or repaired. Others, such as the massive and derelict space hulk *Fist of Gork*, sit idle above the world, serving no purpose save being immense steel carcasses for the Orks to plunder, salvaging scrap metal and starship components to use on the ships that will function.

Tusk's only moon, cracked and scarred where the *Fist of Gork* collided with it shortly after arriving, is no less polluted and metal-strewn as the planet it circles, but for different reasons. Constructed during the time of Warlord Gulgrog, the fortress moon Slagnaz dominates the skies above Tusk. Its spires and towers provide Tusk with an additional collection of planetary defences, mostly weapons salvaged from wrecked starships, and its great hall is resplendent with the trophies of whichever Ork can claim it as his own, plus those of every ruler who has come before. Currently, this is Snaga Morbad, who claims to have been one of Warlord Gulgrog's Nobz, centuries before. However, Morgaash Kulgraz is rapidly gathering the hordes of Undred-Undred Teef behind him, and Snaga may yet be defeated.

THE FIST OF GORK

Though no longer functional, the colossal bulk of this derelict vessel still hangs in orbit above Tusk, almost like a second moon. Once commanded by Morgaash Kulgraz before the Warlord's arrival in the Koronus Expanse from parts unknown, the *Fist of Gork* is now a shadow of its former self. Decades ago, when Morgaash first arrived in the Expanse, he did so aboard the *Fist of Gork*, its holds full to bursting with valuable loot from distant places. Unfortunately for Morgaash, the immense space hulk emerged from the Warp far too close to Tusk, bursting from the Immaterium at high speed and colliding with Tusk's moon only minutes later. The moon, much larger than the *Fist of Gork*, survived essentially intact.

Only the space hulk's unnatural construction prevented the collision from destroying it completely, but the damage was so great that it could no longer be considered anything other than scrap, and millions of Orks descended upon the wreckage to salvage anything of worth and loot the contents of its many holds. Morgaash Kulgraz, fighting off the lootas, had his boyz haul away the best of the loot and salvage and set their sights on the next biggest prize within Undred-Undred Teef—*Da Wurldbrea*.

A GREEN TIDE OF WAR AND PLUNDER

The number of Orks within Undred-Undred Teef is growing more rapidly with every passing year. As the months pass, new Orks are spawned, while at the same time, new ships full of grizzled Freebooterz burst from the Warp to see Stompgit's reflected glow, knowing that they've come to the right place. The Orks do not speak of it openly, for there is no need to speak of things that everyone knows. A Waaagh! is forming.

Though not fully formed yet, it is only a matter of time. Still the Orks fight amongst themselves, raging against one another for a place of dominance within the glorious times to come, and the remaining few Kaptins not already subordinate to a greater Ork engage in vicious battles and cunning raids to see who will lead an army of billions of Orks.

Waaaghs! have been encountered by the Imperium countless times, and they are seldom easily halted. Aside from the obvious orky pull of an immense green tide of destruction one thing seems to unite many of the Waaaghs! on record: the presence of Gargants. Waaagh! Gulgrog was different, and it appears that its successor will follow suit; originating from a region where piratical raids and ship-to-ship combat is the norm, the Orks of Undred-Undred Teef are primarily Freebooterz, concerned with looting and stealing as much as they are with butchery and war. No Gargants were sighted amongst their forces; indeed, their forces never made any actual landings upon inhabited worlds before they hit Port Wander, and during the siege, the conditions allowed for large scale boarding actions at most.

GATHERING FREEBOOTERZ

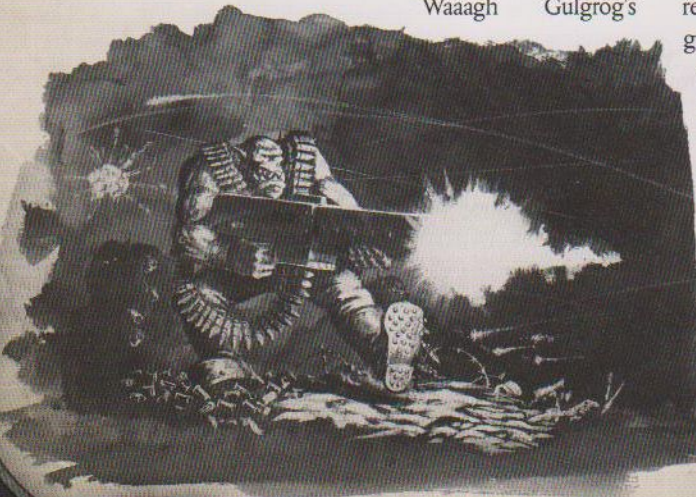
Though many Orks flock to the coming Waaagh! that is building in Undred-Undred Teef, there are still countless Freebooterz across the myriad systems of the Expanse, searching for loot and plunder. Some of these Freebooter Kaptins see the gathering Waaagh! as an opportunity, and are struggling to amass as much power and resources as they can grasp before it begins, to improve their own standing in the coming storm. Others simply can't stand waiting around, and every so often Undred-Undred Teef vomits forth streams of Ork ships filled with excited and impatient boyz.

No small number of Orks, however, have turned away from Undred-Undred Teef and its building Waaagh! Many do so out of a naturally rebellious or contrary streak, the feeling that no Ork's going to tell them "wor's wot." A handful of ambitious Orks simply think they could do a better job of piracy and mayhem on their own, rather than under the claw of some Warboss. Then, there are those who made their own bid for power, failed, and survived the wrath of the three rival Freebooter Kaptins long enough to flee. Those Orks who have left Undred-Undred Teef (on their own or as part of a small band) are most likely to end up working with a Rogue Trader.

In place of Gargants, then, it seems that the Orks of Undred-Undred Teef are more inclined to build starships than terrestrial war engines. Even amongst the smaller gatherings of Freebooterz, the Ork vessels encountered tend to be more ambitiously designed, constructed with better components (whether stolen or manufactured) and built more solidly than might be expected, as if the Mekboyz are lavishing greater care and attention upon their creations for some unknown reason. In one case, which has plagued human efforts to exploit the Expanse intermittently over the centuries, is this particularly evident—the infamous "battlekroozer" known as *Da Wurldbreaka*.

At the heart of the Ork fleet that besieged Port Wander was a colossal Ork vessel, identified through unclear and poorly-translated Vox-transmissions as *Da Wurldbreaka*. The same ship had been seen for decades, maybe even centuries before that, always slightly different than it had been before, always larger than its previous sighting. As the Ork hordes have grown again since

Waaagh Gulgrog's



defeat, sightings of a ship tentatively identified as *Da Wurldbreaka* have increased also, and rumours suggest that it is commanded by a powerful, cunning and ruthless Ork who cannot be stopped.

Scholars of the Adeptus Mechanicus and the Inquisition have theorised that this Ork society, so predicated upon combat between starships, has focused its religious fervour onto a starship, where other Ork empires revere Gargants. The only obvious conclusion, then, is that *Da Wurldbreaka* is this iconic vessel, the creation that represents the Ork gods. Consequently, a vast bounty exists upon *Da Wurldbreaka*, offered by the Inquisition and Imperial Navy to any who can bring back proof of its destruction, in the hope that without this vessel, the Waaagh! may stall.

THE BIGGEST KAPTIN

It is 816.M41, and three rival Kaptins stand opposed, each desiring dominance over the Orks of Undred-Undred Teef. For the last thirty years, the conflict has escalated, growing larger and more vicious as the number of independent Kaptins has grown fewer. With his arrival in orbit over Tusk, Morgaash Kulgraz swiftly crushed many of his lesser rivals and set into motion a brutal conflict that will only make the Orks involved stronger and stronger until one of them triumphs...and when that happens, they will be the one at the head of the new Waaagh!

SNAGA MORBAD

Claiming to be centuries old and having fought in the last Waaagh!, Snaga is really only clinging to power. Though perhaps not as old as he claims—few Orks ever really care enough about history to be certain of such things—Snaga is old, and while he retains the massive frame and powerful physique of his youth, something about him failed long ago, and the Kaptin is quite mad. His insanity has taken its toll, and he is easily distracted and often forgetful of simple matters, though still possessed of a fearsome rage that has left piles of corpses in his wake. Clad in a colossal suit of Mega-Armour, Snaga remains a terrifying opponent, so long as he remains lucid enough to fight. Snaga's dominance of the orbit of Tusk has forced both Grubskraga and Morgaash to establish bases of operations elsewhere.

GRUBSKRAGA "DA UNSTOPPABUL"

After fifteen years of raiding Winterscale's Realm, Grubskraga's return to Undred-Undred Teef was met with heavy fire from the guns of vessels commanded by Orks loyal to either Morgaash or Snaga. Since then, Grubskraga has proven to be a match for both his rivals, despite lacking the sheer numbers of Morgaash's growing fleet, or the resources that Snaga controls. Grubskraga is an exceptionally cunning creature, and though not as belligerent or ruthless as Morgaash, his grasp of Naval strategy is remarkable for an Ork, after years spent clashing against human and Eldar fleets and observing their tactics. He exemplifies the Ork trait of "brutal kunnin."

Grubskraga wants to control Undred-Undred Teef. To do so, he'll have to kill Morgaash and Snaga, or possibly supplant one and use his newfound resources to defeat the other. Force of arms is not an option, so Grubskraga may ally with one temporarily, looking for a chance to betray his "boss."

MORGAASH KULGRAZ, KAPTIN OF DA WURLDBREAKA, WARLORD OF UNDRED-UNDRED TEEF

Demonstrating fierce ambition and ruthless cunning of a kind seen only in very few Orks across the galaxy, Morgaash Kulgraz has slain and subjugated every Ork in his path, growing increasingly massive as other “Kaptins” challenge him. The last two decades have been particularly prosperous, with Morgaash ripping Uzrek Mag Nazdakka limb from limb in brutal unarmed combat and claiming Uzrek’s old ship, *Da Wurldbrea* as his prize.

Morgaash is a towering monster of an Ork, larger than most and physically imposing enough to back up his claims of being the Warlord of Undred-Undred Teef, though several rivals still claim otherwise. Few accurate records exist of Morgaash himself from the Imperial vessels he has assaulted—by the time Morgaash himself boards, the battle is normally won and all hope of escape lost. However, occasional survivor’s reports claim that the Warlord is some three and a half metres tall and may weigh as much as half a tonne, carrying a massive chain-axe that, wielded by Morgaash’s immense strength, is sufficient to shear through deck plating and leave gouges in bulkheads and blast doors. Worse, Morgaash is a bold and daring leader, particularly during ship-to-ship combat, and more than a few enemies have underestimated what the Orks are capable of under his leadership. Morgaash spends most of his time on *Da Wurldbrea*, where he is plotting the downfall of Snaga, whom he sees as his main opposition to power.



Morgaash Profile



WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
61	35	⁽¹⁴⁾ 75	⁽¹²⁾ 68	36	37	34	41	29

Movement: 5/10/15/30

Wounds: 56

Fate Points: 2

Skills: Awareness +10 (Per), Barter (Fel), Carouse (T) +10, Climb (S), Command +20 (Fel), Common Lore (Ork) (Int) +20, Common Lore (War) (Int) +20, Common Lore (Koronus Expanse) (Int), Dodge (Ag), Intimidate +20 (Str), Navigation (Stellar) (Int), Pilot (Flyers, Space Craft), Speak Language (Low Gothic, Ork) (Int).

Talents: Basic Weapon Training (Primitive, SP), Berserk Charge, Bulging Biceps, Crippling Strike, Crushing Blow, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Any Ork weapon), Fearless, Furious Assault, Hardy, Into the Jaws of Hell, Iron Discipline, Iron Jaw, Lightning Attack, Melee Weapon Training (Chain, Primitive, Power), Resistance (Cold, Heat, Radiation), Talented (Intimidate), Swift Attack, Touched by the Fates (2 Fate Points), True Grit, Two-Weapon Wielder (Ballistic, Melee), Void Tactician

Traits: ‘Ardest’, Brutal Charge, Enormous, Fear (1), Make It Work^{††}, Might Makes Right^{†††}, Mob Rule^{††††}, Sturdy, Unnatural Strength (x2), Unnatural Toughness (x2).

†‘Ardest: Morgaash quite simply one of the toughest Orks in the Expanse. He ignores the effects of Blood Loss, the Toxic Quality, or any adverse environmental conditions not

powerful enough to kill him outright, such as poison, disease, extreme temperatures, or even suffocation. Any environmental condition he cannot ignore, such as drowning and vacuum, he gains a +30 bonus to any Toughness Tests to resist, instead.

††Make It Work: Unreliable Ork weapons are not Unreliable in an Ork’s hands.

†††Might Makes Right: Amongst Orks, Morgash can use Intimidate whenever he must make a Command Test.

††††Mob Rule: Morgash adds +10 to his Willpower for each Ork within 10 metres.

Armour: Kustom ‘Eavy Armour (Body 7, Head 4, Arms 3, Legs 3).

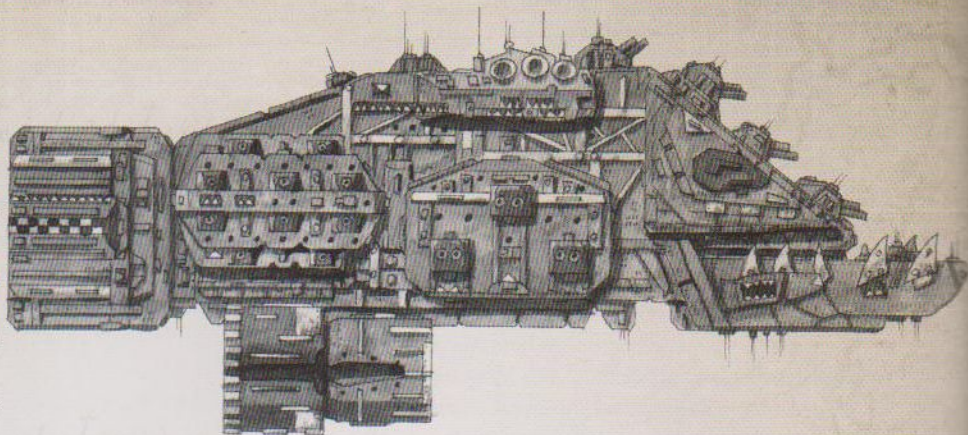
Weapons: *Da Rippa* (2d10+20 R; Pen 5; Tearing, Unbalanced), *Morgaash’s Kustom Blasta* (Basic; 100m; S/2/-; 2d10+7 E; Pen 8; Clip 13; Reload 3 Full; Blast (2) Inaccurate, Overheat, Recharge, Unstable), *Skatta Kannon* (Pistol; 30m; S/-/-; 1d10+6 I; Pen 0; Clip 6; Reload 2 Full; Inaccurate, Scatter, Tearing).

Gear: 4d10 Ork teeth (“Teef”), shiny bitz, scavenged machine components and trophies, 3 spare clips for the Kustom Blasta, 2 spare clips for the Skatta Kannon, crude hand vox, fancy hat, *Da Wurldbrea*, dozens of Gretchin.

WAAAGH! When Morgaash charges, he may make his three attacks from Lightning Attack, rather than one—all three attacks gaining the charge bonus. In addition, the first time he charges in a combat, all other Orks who charge that turn may make one additional melee attack.

DA WURLDBREAKA

Hull: Ork Battleship
Class: Unique Ork "Battlekroozer"
Dimensions: 11km long approx, 1.8km
 abeam approx
Mass: Unknown; believed to be greater
 than 100 megatonnes
Crew: Unknown, but likely at least
 250,000 greenskins
Accel: 2.4 gravities max sustainable
 acceleration



Nobody is entirely sure where *Da WurldbreaKa* came from, nor how old the vessel is. The Orks talk of it as a vessel that has grown like the legend that surrounds it, commanded by dozens of would-be Warlords over the years, taken as the spoils of war and rebuilt bigger and deadlier than ever each time. The oldest of tales, told by the oldest of the ship's Mekboyz, tell that it has existed for thousands of years and has fought in the biggest of wars, ravaging worlds across the galaxy. Whether or not this is true, the Meks enjoy telling the story and their audiences enjoy hearing it, so it continues to be told.

Now owned by Morgaash Kulgraz, *Da WurldbreaKa* has grown again, the upper decks swelling with the towers and cells of enslaved Weirdboyz, who strain and thrash in the proximity of more than a quarter of a million greenskins eager for bloodshed and plunder, and whose presence makes the entire vessel flicker and crackle with unconstrained power. Scores of Mekboyz labour eagerly all across the vessel, even in the midst of a battle, rebuilding and replacing systems with their own inventions with a manic fervour that seems almost religious, granting *Da WurldbreaKa* a capacity for destruction that seems limitless because its weapons grow and change with every conflict.

Speed: 4	Manoeuvrability: -10	Detection: +10
Void Shields: 2	Armour: 24 prow, 20 port and starboard, 16 stern	Hull Integrity: 120
Morale: 110	Crew Population: 120	Crew: Veteran (50)
Turret Rating: 2	Weapon Capacity: Prow 2, Dorsal 2, Port 2, Starboard 2	
Space: 150	Power: 120	

Essential Components

Looted Drive, Warp Engines, Multiple Void Shield Arrays, Air Pumps, Boyz Barracks, Armoured Captain's Bridge, Searchy Grubbinz

Supplemental Components

Prow 'Eavy Gunz Battery (Macrobattery; Strength 6; Damage 2d10; Crit Rating 4; Range 3)

Prow Zzap Kannonz (Lance, Strength 2; Damage 1d10+5; Crit Rating 3; Range 9)

Port 'Eavy Gunz Battery (Macrobattery; Strength 6, Damage 2d10; Crit Rating 4; Range 3)

Port Gunz Battery (Macrobattery, Strength 1d5+4; Damage 1d10+2; Crit Rating 5; Range 10)

Starboard 'Eavy Gunz Battery (Macrobattery; Strength 6; Damage 2d10; Crit Rating 4; Range 3)

Starboard Gunz Battery (Macrobattery; Strength 1d5+4; Damage 1d10+2; Crit Rating 5; Range 10)

Dorsal Pulsa Rokkitz Battery: Too small and short-ranged to act like true torpedoes, these bizarre rockets generate concussive shockwaves, gravity pulses and magnetic fields that disrupt enemy vessels (Macrobattery, Strength 1d5+2, No damage, but target suffers a -5 per hit to Manoeuvre during the next turn, Crit Rating N/A, Range 5)

Dorsal Weirdboy Towerz (Strength 1d5, Damage 2d10, Crit Rating 4, Range 3, May be fired as either a Macrobattery or a Lance, choose each time the weapon fires before rolling any dice. If fired as a lance and any single hit rolls an 18 or higher for damage, this Component is immediately destroyed from a backlash of WAAAGH! energy.)

Da Face of Gork: A huge Ork-like visage dominates the ship's prow. In addition to being heavily armoured, (already totalled into the prow armour) and dealing a total of 4d10+24 damage when ramming, the immense maw of the face is hinged and can be opened as *Da WurldbreaKa* approaches a victim, only to close down over it, allowing for boarding parties to swarm over in vast numbers through the boarding tunnels within the face. When attempting to Board an enemy vessel, if *Da WurldbreaKa* passes its **Pilot (Starships) + Manoeuvreability Test** by two or more degrees, then the jaws will latch on, dealing 1d5 damage to hull integrity, and granting the Orks an additional +20 bonus on the opposed Command Test to win the subsequent boarding action.

Loot Hole: A vast and cavernous chamber where piles of loot can be found. Often the site of vicious battles as different ship-board factions fight over particularly good bits of loot. Capturing *Da WurldbreaKa*—a difficult prospect to say the least—with this component intact grants the captors 300 Achievement Points from the sheer quantity of plunder contained within.

Trakta Beams: *Da WurldbreaKa's* Trakta Beams impose a -20 penalty to all **Pilot (Space Craft) + Manoeuvreability Tests** made by a single enemy vessel within 4 VU, chosen during *Da WurldbreaKa's* Shooting Action.



USING MORGAASH AND DA WURLDBREAKA

Morgaash and *Da Wurldbrea* are meant to be extremely dangerous opponents, and many Explorers may find them nigh-impossible to defeat. This is intentional—neither is a foe to be treated lightly! The GM should only pit his players against these opponents once they are of a suitably high level and have amassed considerable resources and a very powerful ship. It may be more appropriate for a suitably climatic moment in a campaign (such as the culmination of a long war against the greenskins, when the Explorers can count on powerful allies of their own).

Of course, a GM could also use Morgaash and *Da Wurldbrea* to remind his players that not everything in the Expanse is defeatable, and sometimes flight really is the best option for survival. Needless to say, the GM should not do this lightly or often, but used in this way both can become powerful plot points in a larger campaign.

SHIP COMPLICATIONS AND SPECIAL RULES

Orky Tek: This ship may not be piloted by a non-Ork crew. Components from this vessel will not function in non-Ork ships.

Loadz ov Boyz: *Da Wurldbrea*'s compliment of crew and warriors are all eager and deadly combatants, granting a +30 bonus on all Command Tests involving boarding actions and Hit and Run attacks.

Armoured Kaptain's Bridge: The bridge is heavily armoured, and if it every suffers a Critical Hit, becomes damaged, or suffers power loss, roll 1d10. On a 4 or higher, the damage is ignored.

Da Big Red Button: If this vessel chooses not to turn, it may move an additional 2d5 VUs during its Manoeuvre Action.

Lotsa Mekboyz: Always tinkering, inventing and customising, the vast compliment of Mekboyz on board never seem to stop trying to improve the ship, even in the midst of battle. All Tech-Use Tests made by the crew of *Da Wurldbrea* gain a +10 bonus. In addition, the Meks may, as an Extended Action once per turn, improve a single weapon component providing one of the following benefits: +2 Range, Re-roll the weapon's random Strength, +1 damage, +1 bonus degree of success on attack rolls. After firing, the improved gun immediately becomes unpowered for one turn as the improvements over-work the weapon.

USING THE ORKS OF UNDRED-UNDRED TEEF

The Ork menace within the Koronus Expanse grows greater with every passing day, and few who travel the Expanse do so without occasionally detecting Ork raiders on their augurs. But the Orks are not the only aggressors in this escalating conflict; humans, Eldar, Kroot and others all loathe the Orks sufficiently to act against them, or seek to gain something by the greenskins' destruction.

ENDEAVOUR: PURGE THE FREEBOOTERZ FROM THE REPHENID CLUSTER

Lesser Endeavour: +2 Profit Factor

Situated along the warp route between Footfall and Lucin's Breath, the Rephenid Cluster is an isolated collection of rogue planets, gas and dust clouds and asteroid fields clinging together under the influence of their collective gravity. No life exists here naturally, but its placement makes it an ideal stopping point on journeys towards Winterscale's Realm, where a ship and crew can take momentary respite from the difficulties of traversing the Immaterium.

Unfortunately, as is often the case, such places quickly become havens for pirates, hiding amongst the rocks and dust ambushing passing ships. In the case of the Rephenid Cluster, a sizeable band of Ork Freebooterz have found themselves a home, prowling and skirmishing among the asteroids and cold, dead worlds while they await the passage of a victim to assail. The Cluster has been cleared twice already, yet each time Orks return, new generations of Greenskins finding the remains of their predecessors as they search for a base of operations.

Objective 1: Locate the Freebooter base within the Rephenid Cluster

Keywords: Exploration

The worlds of the Rephenid Cluster orbit one another randomly and uncertainly, while clouds of dust and gas cause void shields to flicker sporadically and interfere with augurs, making navigation into the heart of the cluster perilous at the best of times. However, such is the reckless nature of the Ork that this place appeals to them, and like many pirates, take pride in their ability and willingness to venture into wild and dangerous places where their enemies and their victims cannot pursue them.

It takes a great deal of painstaking searching and careful manoeuvring to navigate the Rephenid Cluster and locate the Ork base. Those lacking the skill, luck, and daring to see it through may find their venture ends before it can truly begin.

Objective 2: Assault the Base

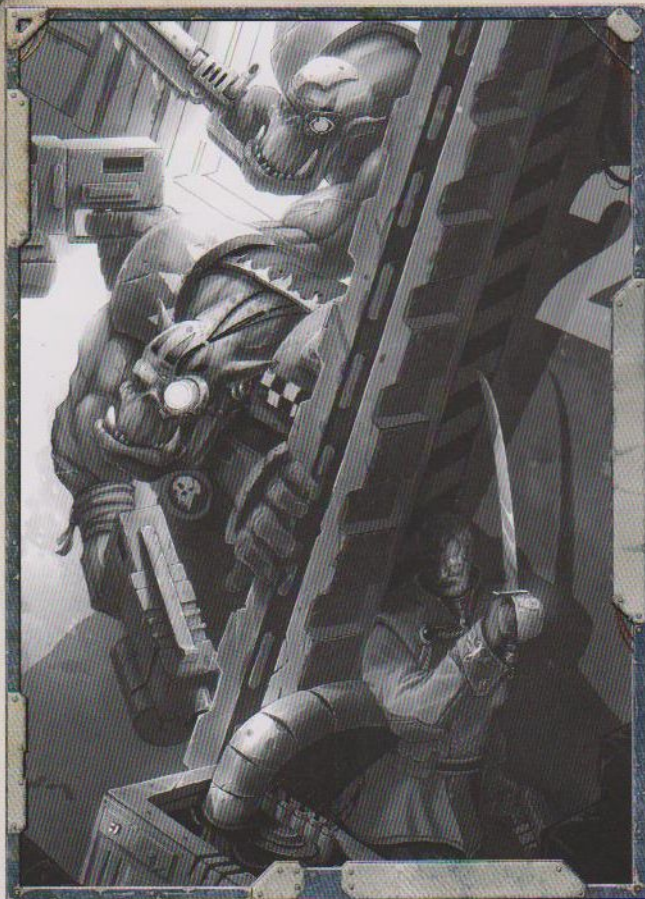
Keywords: Military

Locating such a hard-to-reach target is one thing, but destroying it is another. Those experienced in pirate-hunting (a noteworthy number of which are pirates themselves) know that striking while the enemy is unaware is often the best and most fitting course of action. Such battles are always swift and brutal, as the pirates soon try to flee to their ships and scatter rather than fight on another's terms.

Objective 3: Eliminate the Survivors

Keywords: Exploration, Military

An enemy that retreats shall return to avenge himself. An enemy crushed utterly vanishes from all but memory. Survivors from an assault upon a pirate base will tend to scatter deeper into



their labyrinthine domain aboard whatever ships they can muster, ready to regroup and re-establish their operation again elsewhere. Orks, being particularly persistent, have even been known to return to old bases and reclaim them rather than moving elsewhere. It typically takes some weeks to track down and wipe out those scattered survivors.

MISFORTUNE: ORK RAIDERS

Whether raiding and extorting tribute from settled worlds, assaulting ships for salvage and slaves, or simply picking a fight for the sake of fighting, a number of Orks have set upon the Explorers' holdings or interests, or even the Explorers themselves. Leaving them to raid and battle until they tire of it will be costly, but it will take a concerted effort to drive them off. This Misfortune can be used whenever the players suffer a Misfortune during their Endeavours.

Nuisance Misfortune: The Orks are few, thankfully, numbering only a raider or two. At this stage, they are more of an inconvenience than a menace, but where Orks do battle, more Orks are sure to follow behind in time. This Misfortune, if not dealt with, causes the Explorers to lose 1 point of Profit Factor.

Grim Misfortune: A squadron of raiders—five or six ships in total—represent difficult times and a significant threat to the Explorers' efforts. This Misfortune, if not dealt with, causes the Explorers to lose 2 points of Profit Factor.

Calamitous Misfortune: Under the leadership of a feared Kaptin, several squadrons of Ork raiders and a kroozer set about plundering and ransacking the Explorers' interests. It will take considerable effort, time and bloodshed to end this menace. If not dealt with, this causes the loss of 4 points of Profit Factor.

THE ELДАР

"Too often, the meddling of humanity uncovers things it should not know, your kind's base thoughts unclouded by regret and driven only by reckless ambition. I think the universe would thank me if I killed you now, before you can do any greater harm."

—Caedovir Oriosrith of *Iliasanae's Weeping*

The Eldar are amongst the oldest remaining species in the galaxy, with some suggesting that they may have existed for millions of years before Mankind built its first stone tools. It is thought that, at one point, the Eldar ruled an empire of such size and might that it would dwarf the Imperium of Man. However, for reasons none but the Eldar themselves know, it collapsed, leaving the Eldar scattered across the galaxy, a pale reflection of their former might. For all they have lost, however, the Eldar are still powerful, possessing sophisticated technology and powerful psykers reputed to be able to tell the future with uncanny accuracy, and graced with an ageless talent for warfare and voidfaring that makes them deadly in spite of their depleted numbers.

Within the Calixis Sector the Eldar have historically been a rare sight, with artefacts scattered across the region capable of projecting psychic beacons that warn others away. Many have wondered if the Eldar consider the place cursed, and why such an ancient and powerful species would be reluctant to travel there. Nonetheless, the Eldar do pass through Calixis at times, but seem to frequent the Expanse more. Several distinct factions seem to call the Koronus Expanse their home. For the most part, they choose not to involve themselves in local matters, seldom dealing with humanity save where it is absolutely necessary, and even then only for brief periods, often with bloodshed rather than with negotiations.

Yet, in spite of their typically isolationist attitude, the Eldar within the Koronus Expanse are getting bolder and sightings of their craft are becoming more frequent. It is whispered that so long-lived a species cannot act without great forethought, and that the Eldar do not do things without a reason, even if that reason may not be understood by man. Something is drawing them to the Expanse against their better judgement and the advice of their forebears, and few would be foolhardy enough to say that their presence heralds something good.

A SUNDERED PEOPLE

For around ten thousand years, the Eldar have been a scattered and divided species, surviving within myriad Craftworlds, Corsair fleets, Exodite colonies and in other places besides. As time has passed, each of these groups have found their own identities and become different from the others, and while a common racial heritage is shared by all, disagreements and differing goals can cause further division between the different kindreds and factions of the Eldar.

This is not only the case on a galactic scale, but on a more local one as well. Within the Koronus Expanse, there are at least four distinct groups of Eldar, in addition to those who cannot be identified as belonging to any one of those groups. These four

groups are the Eldar of Craftworld Kaelor, their pirate kin the Twilight Sword Corsairs, the savage and mysterious Children of Thorns, and the enigmatic Crow Spirits. While these factions seldom come to blows—or at least, such “kinstrife,” as the Eldar call this form of internecine warfare, is seldom observed—they appear to have very different goals and motivations, making cooperation just as unlikely.

CRAFTWORLD KAEOR

Distant and isolated even by the standards of the Craftworlds, Kaelor lingers on the edge of the galaxy, passing through the Calixis Sector only once in a millennium. As that time draws near once again, Kaelor sends warriors out into the Koronus Expanse, for its Farseers have seen something approaching, something wreathed in shadows that their sight cannot penetrate, which promises only doom for those that cross its path.

Already, several of its outposts and a number of the Maiden Worlds under its protection have suffered sudden and catastrophic losses, leaving them utterly devoid of inhabitants and deathly silent save for the psychic echoes of something in great pain. In the last few decades, sightings of Eldar wearing Kaelor’s crimson and orange livery within the Koronus Expanse have increased dramatically, particularly within the Heathen Stars region.

The most prominent leader of the Craftworld is Farseer Ela’Ashbel, an especially gifted and powerful psyker. Blinded at a young age during a confrontation with Chaos Space Marines of the Word Bearers Legion, she sheds tears of blood when she manifests her potent psychic abilities. Ela’Ashbel has a long history of manipulating humans and using agents of the Imperium as her cat’s-paws, often drawing them into conflicts that inexorably lead along paths of fate she has foreseen that lead towards the eventual benefit of Craftworld Kaelor.

Craftworld Kaelor seems to have an especially close tie to a band of Eldar Corsairs known as the Twilight Swords. These piratical Eldar primarily operate in the Koronus Expanse, occasionally assisted by Kaelor Aspect Warriors or supported by Kaelor Dragonships. What Kaelor gains from this relationship is an enigma, although some in the Ordo Xenos conjecture that Ela’Ashbel has made a pact with the Twilight Swords wherein the Corsairs serve in the role of a “stalking horse,” drawing out potential enemies and scouting ahead for the forces of the Craftworld. The Farseer may, in fact, be using the Corsairs for her own purposes, as she has been carefully directing their efforts in a search pattern throughout the Expanse. Exactly what, or whom, she is searching for is so far unknown.

SURVIVORS OF STRIFE

The Eldar of Craftworld Kaelor are more aware than most of the consequences of straying from the Eldar path of

A FATEFUL MEETING

Millenia ago on the planet Tyrine, Ela’Ashbel confronted the Chaos Space Marine Kor Phaeron, a Dark Apostle of the World Bearers Legion. This was to be a most fateful encounter, for neither the Eldar Farseer or the ancient Chaos Marine emerged unscathed. Ela’Ashbel lost her physical sight, but gained a great insight into both her own abilities and the Dark Gods who guide the Word Bearers in their unholy crusade. Kor Phaeron, in contrast, was left with a deep and abiding hatred of the Eldar, a thirst for vengeance that still burns brightly within his hearts centuries later.

discipline and control. Over three thousand years ago, the Craftworld was engulfed in a divisive conflict amongst its own people. Many Eldar had turned away from the paths and instead sought their own pleasures, a dark echo of the same behaviour that had heralded the Eldar race’s fall from grace and the birth of the Dark God, Slaanesh. This conflict was eventually brought to an end, and the Craftworld united, but the Eldar consider this event a most recent and distressful portion of their history.

Thus, Kaelor is now home to a very pragmatic and dedicated populace, each with a keen understanding of their own relative vulnerability. This has led the Eldar of the Craftworld to be very loathe to take risks unless forced into action, their outlook upon the universe coloured with caution and tempered with ruthless applications of practicality.

METHODS OF WAR

The Kaelor Craftworld warhost follows a doctrine of aggressive defence, preferring to strike hard and fade away before the enemy can gain the initiative. Kaelor possesses many shrines to the Warp Spider Aspect Warriors. These Eldar wear a heavily-armoured suit containing a short-range warp jump teleporter device. Warp Spiders follow a philosophy of war that perfectly matches Kaelor’s approach, attacking and then vanishing in the blink of an eye. The Kaelor warhost also contains a large number of fast vehicles, including many grav-vehicles such as Falcons and Vypers. It is not unknown for Ela’Ashbel to lead her kin in battle, riding a custom Vyper where her psychic powers can have the greatest effect upon the enemy.

Although the Kaelor warhost generally avoids engaging the enemy with their full force unless absolutely necessary, they are quite proactive and aggressive when following the visions and prophecies of their Farseer, Ela’Ashbel. Under Ela’Ashbel’s guidance, Kaelor’s forces do not generally seek out conflict against the Imperium, preferring to use deceit and guile to

-From the Journals of Mallachai Stern, 097.816.M41

I have heard the xenos, the effete and decadent Eldar, are a shattered and sundered people, a shadow of their former power in the galaxy. I can certainly believe it—I have seen worlds with their ruins, worn down by time and neglect. I have also heard that the Eldar worship many gods, an entire pantheon as if they were primitive savages. Ha! If it is true, that they pray to a host of weak deities and buttress their faltering faith behind a mob of gods, it’s no wonder they are in decline while humanity’s fortunes ascend. After all, we have one god, the God-Emperor, and in His light, all lesser gods are less than nothing.



mislead such Imperial forces that they encounter. When forced into battle, however, the Kaelor warhost attacks without mercy.

Unlike some other Eldar Craftworlds, who may see a host of equal threats in a hostile galaxy, Kaelor regards the Chaos powers as the most dire. The Farseers of Kaelor actively oppose the forces of Chaos, and they often guide the dragonships and Aspect Warriors of their kin to skirmishes and assaults that serve to hinder the servants of the Dark Gods.

THE CHILDREN OF THORNS

Perhaps unusually, the Eldar pirates known as the Children of Thorns seem completely oblivious to whatever it is that has the other Eldar factions so concerned—oblivious, or entirely uncaring. This faction seems to stand aloof from other Eldar, not deigning to involve itself in their business. However, even they seem to be arriving in the Expanse with greater frequency in the last century—or are simply becoming bolder in their attacks and raids.

Vicious and sadistic even by the standards of their kind, the Children of Thorns are said to prize stealth and surprise over all other strategies, ensuring that attacks can rarely be defended against as fleets of lightning-fast black-hulled raiders appear from nowhere bearing hosts of shrieking, darkly graceful beings who seem to desire only to inflict bloodshed and pain.

Few humans have faced the Children of Thorns and lived, but those lucky survivors report seeing tall, gaunt figures, enclosed fully in black armour covered in barbs and blades. They whimper about the capricious maliciousness of their foe, how they vanish as quickly as they appear, and how many of their victims seem to vanish with them.

Disturbingly, the Children of Thorns appear to have grown bolder in recent years, appearing more frequently and hiring out their services to unscrupulous humans, promising ruination to their erstwhile ally's enemies in exchange

for... something. Nobody is entirely certain what it is that the Children of Thorns accept in payment, for no man will admit to hiring them, but more than a few colonists have been redirected from their intended destinations, never to be seen again.

THE TWILIGHT SWORDS

The Twilight Swords Corsairs have always been a presence within the Koronus Expanse, for as long as humans have explored there. Their distinctively-coloured livery has often been an uncertain omen for other travellers, as the Twilight Swords are known to be as often friend as foe, though one thing is always certain—they never appear for peaceful reasons.

Many Rogue Traders have found their fortunes bolstered or saved by the intervention of Twilight Swords vessels at a crucial juncture, only to see the Corsairs vanish as the battle is won, or to linger only to pass on some cryptic message. At other times, they have appeared to cripple or crush a Rogue Trader's aspirations, taking to battle for only the briefest of times before disappearing from augurs altogether.

Many see them as being guided by some prophetic witch, for the Eldar are known to employ such methods extensively, overseeing some grand plan several millennia in the making. Others see their attacks and assistance as little more than the work of a spiteful and capricious mind, revelling in the power to shape lives at a whim. The truth is both of these.

At the leadership of Caeluthin Baharrudor and his predecessor, the Twilight Swords have struck as and when they desire for no reason other than that they desire it, driven by their moods and their inclination towards thrill-seeking. Yet, amidst this, many Twilight Swords are former citizens of Kaelor, and still have some loyalty for their old home, willing to accept the advice and the guidance of one of its Farseers from time to time. At Kaelor's direction, the Twilight Swords have halted the advance of many human expeditions that would lead them to precious maiden worlds or hidden colonies.

The connections between the Twilight Swords and Kaelor have become increasingly apparent as the latter has become a greater presence in the Koronus Expanse, and Twilight Swords vessels have been seen supporting Kaelor ground troops with ever-greater regularity. Amidst this, the Twilight Swords have worked to retain their independence, striking out at their own targets with greater frequency than they have in the past.

Over the last few decades, the traditionally gleeful nature of the Twilight Swords has taken a dark turn. They, like their brethren on Kaelor, have seen signs of something vast and terrible coming, and desire to avert its arrival. The shock of discovering so great a threat so close at hand has shaken them from complacency, and now they look upon the Koronus Expanse to see what is actually there, and shudder at the thought that they could have missed so much. The rising tide of Chaos, the gathering hordes of the Orks, and the nascent menace of the Rak'Gol all pose a threat to the Eldar within the Koronus Expanse, and the Twilight Swords are becoming desperate to do something about it. With their brethren from Kaelor, the Twilight Swords make plans to strike their opponents and establish their dominance in the Koronus Expanse, while preparing to face the greater threat to come.

PIRATE PRINCE CAELUTHIN

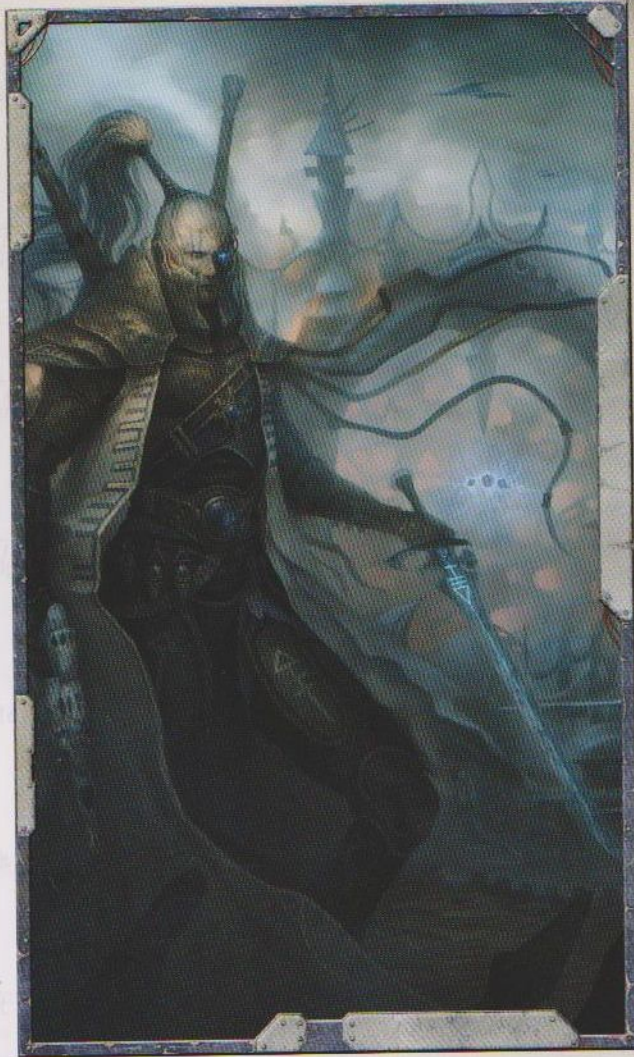
BAHARRUDOR, THE STORMCHASER

The Stormchaser is a legend spoken of fearfully amongst many of the crews that ply the Koronus Expanse, the vicious xenos pirate lord whose fleet emerges to strike vessels caught within the storms and tides of the Warp, attacking when their prey cannot escape, and leaving survivors enough only to whisper his name.

The truth is little different. Caeluthin was born to a life of structure and discipline upon the Craftworld of Kaelor, becoming a Mariner and sailing the void for many years before his boredom and wanderlust became too great. Leaving his home in search of something more, Caeluthin became an Outcast, a willing exile from his people for so long as his wanderlust consumed him. Some five centuries later, Caeluthin's sense of adventure is still strong, and he has risen to become the leader of the Twilight Swords Corsairs, and does not feel he shall ever return to the life he had upon Kaelor.

Caeluthin is cunning, but easily bored, and prone to variegated and ever-changing moods. He views humanity with a sense of faint amusement at times, as a man might look at an animal capable of an interesting trick, while in other moods, he deems them little better than vermin, worthy only of annihilation. Overall, he sees humanity as worthless creatures, useless to his plans.

This viewpoint conflicts with the guidance of Ela'Ashbel of Craftworld Kaelor, and is the cause of contention as the two sides work together more often. It is possible that the Farseer's council may moderate Caeluthin's views—or that her preference to use humanity to further Eldar goals may have some appeal.



Baharrudor Profile



WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
51	57	38	35	⁽¹²⁾ 68	54	50	61	45

Movement: 6/12/18/36

Wounds: 20

Fate Points: 3

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag), Awareness (Per) +10, Barter (Fel) +10, Charm (Fel) +10, Command (Fel) +20, Common Lore (Koronus Expanse) (Int) +20, Deceive (Fel) +20, Dodge (Ag) +10, Evaluate (Int) +10, Forbidden Lore (Pirates) (Int), Forbidden Lore (The Black Library) (Int), Forbidden Lore (Xenos) (Int) +20, Forbidden Lore (The Warp) +10, Gamble (Int) +10, Intimidate (S), Literacy (Int), Medicae (Int), Navigation (Stellar) (Int) +20, Navigation (Webway) (Int) +10, Pilot (Flyers) (Ag) +10, Pilot (Personal) (Ag), Pilot (Space Craft) (Ag) +20, Silent Move (Ag) +10, Scrutiny (Per) +10, Speak Language (Eldar) (Int) +10, Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Int) +10, Speak Language (Trader's Cant) (Int), Trade (Voidfarer) (Ag) +20.

Talents: Air of Authority, Ambidextrous, Basic Weapon Training (Las), Catfall, Counter Attack, Decadence, Exotic Weapon Training (Shuriken Catapult, Shuriken Pistol), Foresight, Into the Jaws of Hell, Iron Discipline, Jaded, Leap Up, Master & Commander, Melee Weapon Training (Power, Primitive), Pistol Weapon Training (Las), Rapid Reaction, Resistance (Fear, Psychic

Techniques), Sprint, Swift Attack, Touched by the Fates, Two Weapon Wielder (Ballistic, Melee), Void Tactician.

Traits: Unnatural Agility (x2)

Armour: Best Craftsmanship Eldar Mesh Void Armour (Body 6, Head 6, Arms 5, Legs 5), Eldar Forceshield†

†**Eldar Forceshield:** Appearing as little more than a gem-studded fin protruding from Caeluthin's left vambrace, this arcane device projects a powerful force field capable of turning aside even the deadliest attacks. A Forceshield has a Protection Rating of 50. When hit while the device is active, roll d100. If the roll is equal to or less than the Protection Rating, the hit's effects are ignored—though the attack may still have an effect upon other creatures in the vicinity, such as weapons with the Blast quality (roll separately for multiple hits). If this roll is also a natural 1, then the field has overloaded, and will not function until repaired.

Weapons: Shuriken Pistol (30m; S/3/5; 1d10+2 R; Pen 4; Clip 40; Rld 2 Full; Reliable), Eldar Power Sword (1d10+8 E; Pen 6; Power Field, Balanced).

Gear: Three clips of shuriken pistol ammunition, waystone gem, xenos-crafted medikit, xenos-crafted void-sealed armour (grants full life support, long-range encrypted vox, auspex and Dark Sight, and contains inbuilt void impellor units which grant Flyer 12 in null gravity), Webway Key, collection of runic talismans (charms), the *Memory of Lament*.

MEMORY OF LAMENT

Hull: Light Cruiser

Class: Customised Solaris-class Light Cruiser

Dimensions: 3.8km long approx, 0.4km abeam approx

Mass: 13 megatonnes, approx

Crew: unknown

Accel: 9.5 gravities max sustainable acceleration

A swift and deadly vessel, the *Memory of Lament* leaves few survivors in its wake. Faster and more agile than the larger Eldar cruisers, it is more than capable of eluding even the most determined pursuit or running down fleeing prey with terrifying ease, and sightings of it are few and far between. First identified during the Battle of Agusia in 742.M41, allied to the fleet of Rogue Traders as they descended upon the pirates and renegades for what would be the largest naval battle of recent decades within the Expanse, the *Memory of Lament* is thought to have been active within the region for far longer.

In recent decades, confirmed sightings of the *Memory of Lament* have remained scarce, but rumours of its presence—for Eldar ships are seldom easy to conclusively identify, due to their disruptive Holo Fields—can be found all over the Expanse; sometimes providing unrequested aid to humans, while at other times attacking without mercy or warning.

Speed: 14

Void Shields: —

Morale: 100

Turret Rating: 2

Space: 40

Manoeuvrability: +45

Armour: 15

Crew Population: 100

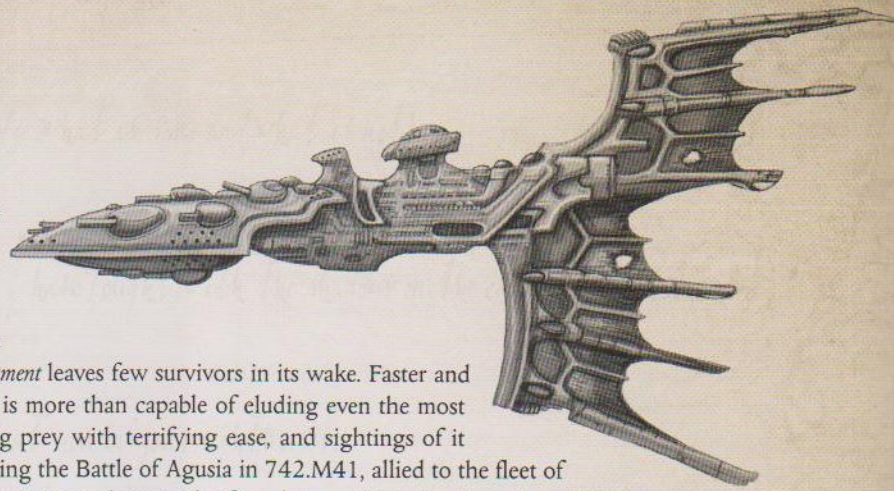
Weapon Capacity: Prow 3

Power: 70

Detection: +20

Hull Integrity: 50

Crew: Veteran (50)



Essential Components

Solaris Solar Sails, Warp-Plotter, Command Bridge, Xenos Life Sustainer, Xenos Crew Quarters, Xenos Sensor Array

Supplemental Components

Prow Pulsar Lance Battery x2: (Lance; Strength 1; Damage 1d10+3; Crit Rating 3; Range 6) The Eldar long ago mastered the technology of laser weapons, and their lances are far superior to the crude lances used by other races. When an Eldar pulsar scores a hit, roll to hit again, applying the same bonuses and penalties. A pulsar hit can score up three total hits when fired.

Prow Starcannon Cluster Battery: (Macrobattery; Strength 4; Damage 1d10+2; Crit Rating 4; Range 6)

Holo Field: A Holo Field is an ancient wonder of the Eldar race and the bane of Imperial gunners. The field disrupts and distorts the image of the ship it wreathes, making it almost impossible to target. All attacks made against a ship with a functioning Holo Field suffer –40 to any Test to hit in addition to any other penalties (for example, this would include both a Ballistic Skill Test to hit the ship with lances, and a **Pilot (Space Craft) + Manoeuvrability Test** to ram the Holo Field equipped ship). Macrobatteries, which fill a large area of space with ordinance, only suffer a –20 penalty to hit. Ships also suffer a –30 to any attempts to use any Extended Action against a holofielded ship that involves Detection (such as Lock on Target or Focused Augury).

Runecaster: Although the purpose the Eldar put this Component to is unknown, Imperial vessels can use the devices to help plot courses through the warp.

Complications and Special Rules

- **Master Starfarers:** The Eldar are some of the most skilled voidfarers in existence, and their ships are designed to make the most of their talents. Any Eldar aboard an Eldar vessel may re-roll any Piloting Tests for Manoeuvre Actions.
- **Starcannon Accuracy:** The accuracy of Eldar gunners grants a +10 to Ballistic Skill Tests made to fire a starcannon cluster batteries. This bonus does not apply to the Pulsar Lance.



USING BAHARRUDOR AND THE MEMORY OF LAMENT

The Pirate Prince and his vessel are intended as opponents and rivals for mid-level Explorers. Both are dangerous in combat, but have flaws skillful Explorers can take advantage of. In essence, both Baharrudor and the *Memory of Lament* can deal a great deal of damage when attacking (the pulsar lances of the *Lament* are especially deadly, as they can land as many as six lance hits on an unlucky vessel) and have several different ways of avoiding damage (the holofields on the *Lament*, and Baharrudor's Dodge Skill and Forcefield). Should they be struck, however, they are quite fragile. This makes them dangerous, but manageable, opponents for Explorers willing to use sound tactics and clever stratagems to defeat them. However, a GM can also use both as fickle allies for the Explorers. Perhaps both have similar goals, and are forced to overcome their prejudices long enough to complete them—each side anticipating treachery from the other.

SHIP COMPLICATIONS AND SPECIAL RULES

Master Starfarers: The Eldar are some of the most skilled voidfarers in existence, and their ships are designed to make the most of their talents. Any Eldar aboard an Eldar vessel may re-roll any Piloting Tests for Manoeuvre Actions.

Dying People: The Eldar are a dying race, and their ships concequentially require extremely small crews. However, this puts them at a disadvantage in a war of attrition. The ship suffers a -20 penalty on all Command Tests involving boarding actions and repelling Hit and Run attacks.

Supreme Manoeuvrability: A ship with solar sails may interrupt its Manoeuvre Action at any point to perform a Shooting Action. Once the Shooting Action is resolved, it must complete the remainder of its Manoeuvre Action. The limit of one Shooting Action per turn still applies.

MURDEROUS SPECTRES

Alongside the Twilight Swords, the Crow Spirits have been a constant presence in the Koronus Expanse since before the Imperium first discovered it. However, where the Twilight Swords have demonstrated at least some signs of benevolence towards mankind, even if that benevolence is fickle, the Crow Spirits are nothing but hostile.

Ever since humanity has ventured into the Koronus Expanse, the Crow Spirits have struck at them with unerring precision and a cold and calculating wrath that seems to possess no source nor be directed at any individual. Not every human to travel the Expanse is targeted—indeed, only a minority suffer that misfortune—nor are those who voyage to worlds identified as having significance to the Eldar targeted consistently. Whatever guides their attacks and chooses their targets, it follows an unfathomable plan.

In particular, their priorities appear to be the Unbeholden Reaches and Accursed Demesne. It is rare to encounter the ghostly-pale vessels of the Crow Spirits beyond those regions, though what significance those places hold is unknown, particularly as they border the blighted anomaly known as the Rifts of Hecaton. None could imagine that any creatures could keep something of significance close to such a dread place, yet the Crow Spirits seem intent to drive mankind away from it. In addition, the Crow Spirits have been sighted in Winterscale's Realm, near Maleziel and the Serpent's Cradle, though they do not tarry in Winterscale's Realm. Instead they pass through it as hurrying to another destination.

Where all the other Eldar within the Expanse have made some contact with humans besides overt aggression, the Crow Spirits remain a mystery, and little is known of their nature or their objectives beyond the most obvious facts. Many years and many lives have been spent attempting to discern their goals, so that they can more easily be defended against, but with little success. No signs exist of a base of operations anywhere near to the Rifts of Hecaton, and given

so inexplicable an origin, none have ruled out that they may originate from somewhere else. Interestingly, the most well-thought out suggestion as to the Crow Spirit's base of operations comes from the Imperial Navy squadrons assigned to guard Port Wander. In their long years fighting Eldar Corsairs, some Navy officers have encountered large Eldar void-stations. One of these "Haven-class spires" could serve as a base for extended periods of time, and be hidden in almost any star system or vast nebula.

As with both the forces of the Craftworld Kaelor and the Twilight Swords Corsairs, the Crow Spirits have become even more active in the last few decades, as if some part of their unknown plan was approaching a crucial point, or perhaps as if some event had spurred them to greater action. However, many of their recent actions have been just as perplexing as the pattern of their attacks. On a dozen occasions within the last thirty years, Crow Spirits ships have been sighted in direct and vicious conflict with ships of other Eldar, most frequently those of the Children of Thorns, but occasionally those of the Twilight Swords or Kaelor as well. While such violence between different factions of Eldar is not unknown, the frequency and brutality of these battles is unsettling; what could drive the Eldar to turn on their own kind so aggressively?

Extensive divination, including several hundred readings of the Emperor's Tarot by Inquisitorial seers and the Astropaths of paranoid Rogue Traders have proved to be of little benefit. The majority simply produce no result whatsoever, while a few predict what a handful of others have foreseen: an unholy green light, worlds stripped of inhabitants, a great pale horror, a cataclysm given form and substance, and the screaming of the ghosts of those slain long ago.

Worse still, something unspeakable plagues the dreams of psykers across the Expanse, passing from memory upon waking but leaving the impression of some vast and dreadful presence moving slowly through the void, leaving only silence and death in its wake.



AMONGST THE CROWS

The Eldar have long been a spacefaring race, and many ancient traditions have built up over the ages. The complex nature of Eldar culture, and the mingling and evolving of cultures since The Fall, means that no two fleets of Eldar vessels are structured in quite the same way, and though there are common themes and shared elements, there are as many differences—particularly where groups of Eldar are isolated from their kin.

Within the Crow Spirits, the following is true. At their head, leading each and every ship, is a Craftmaster, or *Athkion* as it is known within the Crow Spirits' traditions. As a spacefaring culture, the role of a Craftmaster is not entirely dissimilar to that of a Rogue Trader or pirate captain. Subservient to the Craftmaster are several individuals of significance.

The two chief advisors of a ship's Craftmaster are known as the Bloody Hand, or *Kaelamen*, a deadly warrior and bodyguard—who advises in all matters of warfare, and the Silent Hand, or *Istaурmen*, who is a skilled intelligence-gatherer, spy, and diplomat. Depending on the inclinations of their Craftmaster, either or both may also have skill as assassins and saboteurs.

Alongside the Hands, are Voidspeakers, powerful psykers who communicate with other parts of the fleet and foretell the future to better guide the Crow Spirits. Finally, are the Bonesingers, who are artisans responsible for growing and shaping all kinds of Eldar technology, and in the case of those aboard a starship, are responsible for repairing it in battle as well.

Above and beyond all these, however, are the Infinity Circuits of each ship. Containing the bound and conscious souls of past crew, each Infinity Circuit, like the far larger versions

which form the hearts of Craftworlds, communes with the living to guide and advise them, adding the experiences of past generations to aid those who live now.

With the Crow Spirits, this organisational structure is mirrored to the very highest levels, with the shadowy Lords of Crows ruling above all the captains and advised by the senior-most Craftmaster, Bloody Hand, Silent Hand, and Voidspeaker within the fleet. However, it is said that the Lords of Crows and their Council are not simply Craftmasters elevated amongst their peers. It is said they are powerful Eldar psykers, Farseers and Warlocks who guide the path of the Crow Spirits.

ILISTANETH ANTURIEN, BLOODY HAND OF THE CROW SPIRITS

The Crow Spirits have a long and bloody history, and much of it within the last eleven centuries can be attributed to one being. The deadliest and most experienced warrior of the Crow Spirits, Ilistaneth Anturien has been directly responsible for more death than almost any other individual within the Expanse. Cold and utterly ruthless, Ilistaneth harbours a profound loathing for all that is not Eldar and knows joy only in the moment of triumph.

Ilistaneth does not question the instructions given to him by his masters; his hatred for the enemies of his kind dwarfs any empathy he might have for the plight of his targets. A master of many weapons and just as many poisons, Ilistaneth is a terrifying adversary to face, and as many foes have died to his blades with a look of dread upon their face, as have perished at a great distance never knowing the cause of their demise.

Ilistaneth possesses a vast and bewildering array of armaments and tools. The most astounding is a Holo-Suit—normally worn by the mysterious Eldar warrior-troubadours known as Harlequins, gifted to him by a troupe of Harlequins as a reward for slaying a target whose fate interfered with their own.



Anturien Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
63	58	44	32	61 ⁽¹²⁾	44	47	64	26

Movement: 6/12/18/36

Wounds: 17

Fate Points: 3

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag) +20, Awareness (Per) +10, Chem-Use (Int) +20, Common Lore (War) (Int) +20, Concealment (Ag) +10, Demolitions (Int) +20, Dodge (Ag) +20, Forbidden Lore (The Black Library) (Int), Forbidden Lore (Xenos) (Int) +10, Intimidate (S) +20, Literacy (Int), Medicae (Int) +10, Navigation (Surface) (Int), Security (Ag), Shadowing (Ag) +10, Silent Move (Ag) +20, Speak Language (Eldar) (Int) +10, Tracking (Int) +20

Talents: Assassin Strike, Basic Weapon Training (Universal), Berserk Charge, Blademaster, Blind Fighting, Catfall, Chem Geld, Combat Master, Counter Attack, Crack Shot, Crippling Strike, Deadeye Shot, Die Hard, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Shuriken Catapult, Shuriken Pistol, Shuriken Cannon, Splinter Pistol, Splinter Rifle, Splinter Cannon, Eldar Longrifle, Eldar Lasblaster),

Fearless, Foresight, Guardian, Gunslinger, Hard Target, Hip Shooting, Independent Targeting, Jaded, Leap Up, Lightning Attack, Lightning Reflexes, Marksman, Melee Weapon Training (Universal), Mighty Shot, Nerves of Steel, Paranoia, Precise Blow, Quick Draw, Rapid Reaction, Rapid Reload, Resistance (Psychic Techniques), Sharpshooter, Step Aside, Strong Minded, Sure Strike, Swift Attack, Thrown Weapon Training (Universal), Touched by the Fates, Two-Weapon Wielder (Ballistic, Melee), Unarmed Master, Unarmed Warrior, Wall of Steel.

Traits: Unnatural Agility (x2).

Armour: Reinforced Eldar Mesh Armour with Advanced Helmet Systems (Body 6, Head 6, Arms 6, Legs 6), Holo-Suit.[†]

†Holo-Suit: These exotic devices, also known as Domino Fields or Jigsaw Fields, break up the image of the wearer as he moves, and blends his image into his surroundings when stationary, making him difficult to target with any accuracy. Enemies suffer a -20 to all Weapon Skill and Ballistic Skill Tests when attacking the wearer. Additionally, when stationary, the holo-suit grants a +30 bonus to Concealment Tests to its wearer.

Weapons: (note that Ilistaneth is skilled in the use of a great many different weapons) Pair of Best Craftsmanship Eldar Power Swords (1d10+9 E; Pen 8; Balanced, Power Field), Pair of Gauntlet-mounted Shuriken Pistols (21m; S/3/5; 1d10+4 R; Pen 4; Clip 40; Rld Full; Reliable), 3 Plasma Grenades (12m; S/-/-; 1d10+6 E; Pen 6; Blast (1))

Gear: Waystone gem, 3 pistol reloads, xenos-crafted medikit, xenos-crafted long-range encrypted vox, Webway Key.

USING THE ELДАР

Though relatively few in number, the Eldar are seldom content to sit back and allow things to happen. Instead, the Eldar remain a major force in events across the galaxy, whether secretly or overtly. Within the Koronus Expanse, the effects of their machinations and their attacks can be felt in a great many places, and the legacies and remnants of their ancient civilisation can be found scattered across the void, silent and empty.

As with a few other species, the Eldar are willing at times to deal with humanity as something other than adversaries, and on more than one occasion have alliances been formed and agreements been made that benefit both parties. Yet, in spite of this supposed common interest, the Eldar consider only what will serve their ends, whether or not their erstwhile allies and partners benefit. When combined with their perspective upon existence and their inclination towards secrecy and deception, it can make their goals difficult, even impossible to properly discern.

ENDEAVOUR: ESTABLISH A COMPACT WITH THE CHILDREN OF THORNS

Greater Endeavour: +4 Profit Factor

For all their grim reputation, the Children of Thorns appear oddly amenable to working with or for humans. Rumours abound in places like Footfall of deals struck and favours bartered for services which are seldom spoken of directly. It's widely known that the Children of Thorns are killers, remorseless and inhumanly vicious in the pursuit and annihilation of their

targets, and many guess that this is the service they so willingly trade. At what price can such things be bought? Few can say for certain, and they are reluctant to speak of it.

Objective 1: Locate and Contact a Thorn-Broker

Keywords: Criminal, Exploration

As with all Eldar, the Children of Thorns are elusive, but unlike most of their kind, they can be contacted if one knows the right people. Carefully placed agents—referred to in rumour as “Thorn-Brokers”—exist on Footfall and a handful of other human-settled worlds in the Expanse, and these men and women know how to contact the Children. Their loyalty is kept through abject terror of their alien masters, who are swift to punish indiscretion. That the Children of Thorns seem to know so much about the activities of their terrified servants suggests an information network that is both extremely widespread and incredibly pervasive.

Locating these agents is never easy; they do not advertise their role, instead using unwitting intermediaries to watch for and investigate potential “clients.” Establishing contact is more a matter of following rumour and hearsay until one of the Thorn-Brokers spots a worthwhile client and decides to act.

Objective 2: Negotiate with the Children of Thorns

Keywords: Trade

Merely finding a contact is not enough; the Children of Thorns do not work on behalf of anyone without discussing the matter extensively. Soon after locating a Thorn-Broker, a prospective client of the Children is contacted, often using some form of message device (usually a holographic projector of Eldar design) which appears suddenly and without any obvious signs of how it arrived.

These devices direct the client to a pre-selected meeting location—starships, derelict space stations, the surfaces of dead worlds, and similar isolated places—where the negotiations can begin. The intricacies of target and time and place, and of cost, are debated at length, with the Eldar always careful to give away only the most essential of information—like the Imperium, the Eldar know the power of secrets. However, some of these negotiations do not run as smoothly as the Rogue Traders desire. Every so often, those who seek out the Children of Thorns suddenly vanish after doing so. It is likely some aspect of the negotiations failed, and the Children of Thorns took their erstwhile partners as compensation for the failed arrangement.

Objective 3: Secure Payment

Keywords: Criminal, Military, Trade

With a price determined, the Children of Thorns allow their clients the opportunity to obtain the agreed-upon payment. The Children are uninterested in the normal forms of wealth, and sometimes ask for things of no obvious value, but one thing remains constant: no price the Children of

Thorns ask can ever be paid without bloodshed. Quantities of specific, well-guarded resources, obscure artefacts, slaves or secrets are all common demands, though the reasons behind these demands are never given. The details of these payments are always exact, demonstrating extraordinarily precise knowledge of the Koronus Expanse. Those few who dare to speculate on such things have suggested that the price they charge for service is part of some long and intricate scheme. These few claim that each payment secured is merely one part of a larger puzzle, leading them to the next part, to be obtained by some unwitting accomplice in exchange for the horrors they will inflict.

MISFORTUNE: THE CROW SPIRITS' WRATH

Grim Misfortune: As if from nowhere, the Eldar appear, heralded only by flickering, spectral augur reports. Typically numbering half a dozen pale frigates and destroyers, they attack swiftly and ruthlessly, and then vanish as suddenly as they appeared. For all their terrible fury, their vessels move as if participating in some grand and lethal dance, striking and withdrawing in perfect coordination.

Only the most learned can even guess at how the Crow Spirits manage to strike so quickly, without warning and in any place they desire. This Misfortune, if not stopped, causes the Explorers to lose 2 points of Profit Factor

MISFORTUNE: WHISPER OF ANARIS

Calamitous Misfortune: None can predict when or why this infamous ghost-ship will appear, or its intentions upon arrival, but even if its acts are benevolent—driving away pirates or raiders, or changing the course of a costly battle, for example— it is an ill-omen that this deathless vessel appears at all. Misfortune seems to follow in its wake even when it lends its aid to others; woe betide those who must defend themselves against it.

This Misfortune, if not stopped, causes the Explorers to lose 1d5 points of Profit Factor. Stopping the *Whisper of Anaris* may be impossible (as it is likely to vanish long before the Explorers arrive), so the Explorers must find a way to correct the results, instead.

THE KROOT

"You humans do not understand. You feed upon weak things, because you think you are strong enough, because you feed only to sustain yourselves. We feed upon the strong, because we know that no strength is truly sufficient, because we desire to make our children stronger."

—Chal'ka Nok, Kroot Mercenary

The Kroot homeworld of Pech lies on the far side of the galaxy to the Expanse, a distance that typically takes years to cross. That the Kroot have arrived in the Expanse is peculiar, at least to those who know of their origins and understand how far they are from the planet of their birth. That the Kroot seem not to realise just how far from home they are is a greater mystery—many Kroot hired as mercenaries speak of Pech as if it is within easy reach of the Expanse.

Certain Rogue Traders who possess powerful contacts within the Imperial Adeptus say there is one way the Kroot may have crossed into the Expanse without traversing the intervening galaxy—the Well of Night. However, if the Well exists, it is likely within Zone 15, an interdicted region of the Maw well-guarded by the Imperial Navy. If this is true, the Kroot must have entered the Expanse long before humanity rediscovered it.

Imperial records show the Kroot originated on the world of Pech, located in the Ultima Segmentum. Pech is a temperate world, and its primary landmasses are heavily forested. Those

few areas not covered by endless forests of evergreen

jagga trees are rocky and inhospitable. The Kroot are an arboreal race, and possibly evolved from some avian species. They are also deceptively primitive—Kroot clothe themselves in leather

hides and simple armour, and carry large-bore rifles with wooden stocks and vicious blades attached to the barrel and butt. However, their archaic-looking rifles fire powerful charged-particle blasts,

and they navigate the stars in

massive starships called warspheres—vessels that are part warship and part migratory home for countless Kroot. The disparity baffles the adepts and scholars of the Ordo Xenos.

The Kroot are a race of mercenaries, and their myriad clans—or Kindreds—travel across the stars, selling their talents as hunters and warriors to the highest bidder. It is thought they might do this to strengthen their



KINDREDS AND KROOT EXPLORERS

INTO THE STORM introduced the possibility of Kroot as player characters, and this section details more information about the Kroot found in the Koronus Expanse. One option the Kroot players have in INTO THE STORM is to select their Kindred, or the type of clan they come from. These selections were intended to encompass different types of Kindreds the Kroot character might hail from. The four Kindreds presented here are specific examples of some of the Kindreds a Kroot player could come from, and this sidebar indicates what Kindreds from INTO THE STORM can be found within their ranks.

- **Bloodhawk:** This Kindred's ongoing campaign against dangerous races in the Koronus Expanse means **Bold Hunters** and **Headhunters** are most likely to originate from it.
- **Windserpent:** This Kindred's Shapers direct their fellows to pursue the Stryxis, meaning a Kroot from this Kindred is likely to be a **Cunning Hybrid**.
- **Misthound:** This Kindred prizes stealth and fieldcraft, and possesses an interest in the warp and creatures touched by it. a Kroot from this Kindred is likely to be a **Stalker**.
- **Tuskbreaker:** The Tuskbreakers wage war against the Orks, meaning Kroot from this Kindred are commonly **Greenskin Hybrids**, or **Bold Hunters**.

race, as Kroot have an ability to absorb the DNA of creatures they consume, passing desired traits on to future generations of Kroot. If this is true, the Kroot likely see the diversity of the Expanse as an opportunity to grow stronger. Generations of Kroot, born on Warspheres and worlds within the Koronus Expanse, have adapted in ways unique to the region by feeding upon Stryxis and other species not found near their home.

To date, four major Kindreds have been identified by humans exploring the Expanse, though dozens of smaller Kindreds exist within the Expanse as well. The Bloodhawk Kindred were those first encountered within the Koronus Expanse, and seem to possess a particular viciousness that has led them into frequent conflict with other species, and their aggressive tendencies have only grown further since their first clash with the Rak'Gol, whom they now eagerly war against. The Windserpent Kindred are frequently seen working as mercenaries, and are known for their knack for negotiations and deal-making with potential employers, as well as their odd passion for hunting the Stryxis. The Tuskbreaker Kindred is a mercenary band obsessed with hunting and slaying Orks, hiring themselves out to whomever makes war on greenskins. Finally, the Misthound Kindred are obsessed by creatures touched by the Warp. Their Warspheres are notable for being able to travel the Immaterium more accurately and more swiftly than most other Kroot vessels, although their Shapers refuse to explain how this may have come to be.

MASTER SHAPER ASHAK KOR OF THE MISTHOUND KINDRED

Generations ago, before the Orks and the Tau came to Pech, a migrating group of Crotalid—large semi-aquatic reptilian predators who migrate from world to world through the Warp by instinct—found themselves amongst the ancestors of the Misthound Kindred, who descended upon them swiftly, glad to have found new prey to consume.

The peculiar warp-migration ability of the Crotalid seemed difficult to acquire, however, and the Kroot who carried the essence of the Crotalid within them were incapable of taking advantage of it. Successive generations of controlled breeding, however, after the Ork invasion, led to the first manifestations of

that ability, in a young Kroot whose parents had consumed Ork psykers early in the war. Over the following decades, additional Kroot were born with this ability, though it appeared only a handful of those who carried the essence of the Crotalid.

Ashak Kor was the first to gain this talent, a limited ability to travel short distances through the Warp, phasing slightly out of the material universe for short periods of time. As he came of age, he became a Shaper, and led his people off-world to find some way of developing this gift they had acquired. When the Misthound Kindred found themselves in the Koronus Expanse, Ashak felt that this was the place they would achieve that goal. Since that time, the Kroot of the Misthound Kindred have hunted those with a connection to the Warp as a way of expanding their ability to travel the Warp, so that one day, they might hunt across the stars without Warspheres, prowling from world to world.



Kor Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
52	38	40	45	54	30	49 ⁽⁸⁾	40	28

Movement: 5/10/15/30

Wounds: 15

Fate Points: 2

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag) +10, Awareness (Per) +10, Barter (Fel), Climb (S) +10, Command (Fel) +20, Concealment (Ag) +20, Dodge (Ag) +10, Intimidate (S), Silent Move (Ag) +20, Scrutiny (Per) +10, Speak Language (Low Gothic, Kroot, Tau), Tracking (Int) +10, Survival (Int) +20, Swim (S) +10.

Talents: Assassin Strike, Basic Weapon Training (SP, Primitive), Combat Sense, Crushing Blow, Exotic Weapon Training (Kroot Rifle, Krootbow), Furious Assault, Kroot Leap, Leap Up, Lightning Reflexes, Melee Weapon Training (Universal), Resistance (Fear), Sprint, Swift Attack, Touched by the Fates.

Kroot Leap: When taking the Charge action, the Kroot can ignore obstacles between him and his target by making a Running Vertical Jump (see page 266 of Rogue Trader). This Talent may only be used if there is room for the Kroot to land next to his target and if there is enough overhead space for

the Kroot to leap over the obstacles. For example, a wall that goes from floor to ceiling may not be leapt over, nor would something taller than the Kroot's vertical jump distance. If the Kroot successfully strikes his target whilst using this Talent, the Kroot may make a Knock-Down Action (see page 241 of *Rogue Trader*) against the target as a Free Action.

Traits: Fieldcraft†, Natural Weapons (Beak)††, Phase, Unnatural Perception (x2), Unnatural Strength (x2).

†**Fieldcraft:** Kroot gain a +10 bonus to all Concealment, Shadowing, and Silent Move Tests. In addition, Kroot treat forests, jungles, and similar environments as open terrain.

††A Kroot's beak follows all rules for natural weapons, except that it inflicts 1d5 damage instead of 1d10

†††Ashak Kor's ability to phase in and out of reality is imperfect and requires great force of will. When Ashak Kor spends a half action to become Incorporeal (as per the Phase Trait), he must make a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test**. Failure means he does not become Incorporeal. Ashak Kor may only remain Incorporeal for a number of Rounds equal to his Willpower Bonus.

Armour: Knarloc-hide Robes and Mask (Body 3, Head 2, Arms 2, Legs 2).

Weapons: Krootbow (Basic; 40m; S/4/8; 1d10+3 R; Pen 3; Clip 20; Reload 2 Full; Tearing, Toxic), Mono-Edged Groxwhip (3m; 1d10+13 R; Pen 2; Flexible, Tearing), assortment of long mono-edged knives (5m; 1d5+10 R; Pen 2), Beak (1d5+10 R; Primitive).

Gear: Pouches of fetishes and talismans, the skull of a Navigator, 3 clips of ammunition for Repeating Krootbow.

THE KROOT TUSKBREAKERS

Not friendly by most accounts but effective, this Kroot mercenary group takes combat prowess and especially the art of Ork killing quite seriously. Though willing to hire out for most jobs and to almost any employer with the sufficient means to pay, the Tuskbreakers specifically look



for work destroying the Orks of the Undred-Undred Teef. Their animosity towards the Orks goes back to a conflict many years ago during which a battle broke out between a contingent of Orks and the Kroot warsphere *Shek*. The Kroot were victorious but their warsphere was crippled, and they were left to fend for themselves amongst the dark stars of the Accursed Demesne. These times of conflict have since come to be known as the Darkening.

Not a forgiving people, the Kindred approached their Shaper Kangak and held council to plot revenge against the Orks of the Undred-Undred Teef. Through the use of cunning eugenics and by assigning them the responsibility of completing a decades-long spirit quest called the Great Ordeal, the Shaper answered the kindred's pleas to form a war party. The arduous and all-consuming journey from ruin

HIRING KROOT MERCENARIES

Rogue Traders often have a great deal of leeway in their dealings beyond the Imperium, and one of these is the opportunity to hire xenos mercenaries such as the Kroot. When hiring Kroot Mercenaries, the first step is to locate them. Kroot do not maintain offices or have representatives on human worlds—even outside the Imperium ingrained prejudices and suspicion mean xenos and humans do not typically co-exist. A Rogue Trader should find someone who has worked with or hired Kroot in the past, and find out how to contact them. Often, this turns out to be a far-flung system in the Expanse, with perhaps a coded vox-frequency.

Payment is relatively straightforward, although Kroot mercenaries in the Expanse tend to prefer barter to coin they do have a concept of worth and value. Supplies and provisions are often welcome, as are military arms and equipment, or small high-value items such as precious metals and gems that can be traded in turn.

In return, the Kroot provide skilled light infantry—highly proficient in tracking, wilderness combat, and guerilla warfare. They are at their best performing hit-and-fade attacks and raids, but are not equipped or trained in siege warfare or armoured combat. In fact, Kroot are likely to turn down employment if it involves a great deal of either. Typically, Kroot count as Good Craftsmanship infantry. Kroot do not generally have problems with working with non-Kroot, though human soldiers and mercenaries may not feel the same.

The numbers and quality of the Kroot mercenaries that an Explorer can hire should be left up to the GM, although more than a few thousand is fairly uncommon. As mercenaries, most Kroot in the Expanse also require the terms and length of their employment to be presented and negotiated before any contracts are signed. It is usually the Shapers who handle negotiations.

at the hands of the Orks to rebirth with the first banding of the Tuskbreakers, united these Kroot in a lasting cultural heritage now legendary within the Koronus Expanse.

THE GREAT ORDEAL

After the battle, his kindred's morale low, Kangak had to make a decisive plan lest his people wither in the desolate Accursed Demesne. He kept his mind on revenge and elaborated a spiritual journey for his Kindred that would breed in them a spirit of survival he thought necessary in such a home and qualities of martial acumen to destroy the Ork horde—the Great Ordeal. The Kindred selected from amongst themselves the strongest survivors of the Darkening and sent them on quests to remote and dangerous worlds. On these adventures, the warriors ceremoniously devoured those they killed and collected both artefacts and experience to bring to bear on the Orks.

Many died while fulfilling Kangak's proscribed missions, but the dedication to cause felt by the Kindred saw them through the worst of times. After generations exploring the Expanse, the Kindred enacted a massive ritual to confirm the Great Ordeal's end. The Kindred whose ancestry and personal achievements set them apart from the rest stepped forward to accept the Brand of the Tried, a series of primitive markings burned into flesh to signify membership in the Tuskbreakers. Upon receiving this promotion, each Tuskbreaker vowed to leave *Shek* in order to continue to hone his skills and, most importantly, destroy any and all Orks he came across.

THE BROKEN WARSPHERE: SHEK

The warsphere that spawned the Tuskbreakers floats amongst its own debris not far off from Lathimon's Death. Those few Imperial citizens who have seen the structure comment on the prevalent emptiness felt while in its shadow. Though still capable of supporting the Kroot population inhabiting it, *Shek* no longer travels long distances and when travelling at all, it always returns to the site of the ancient battle with the Orks. This stretch of the void holds holy significance to the Kroot who believe it masks them from their enemies. Whether superstitious ramblings or the truth, the Kroot have not suffered an attack since the Darkening while anchored here and voidfarers find the location notoriously difficult to find.

APPROACHING THE TUSBREAKERS

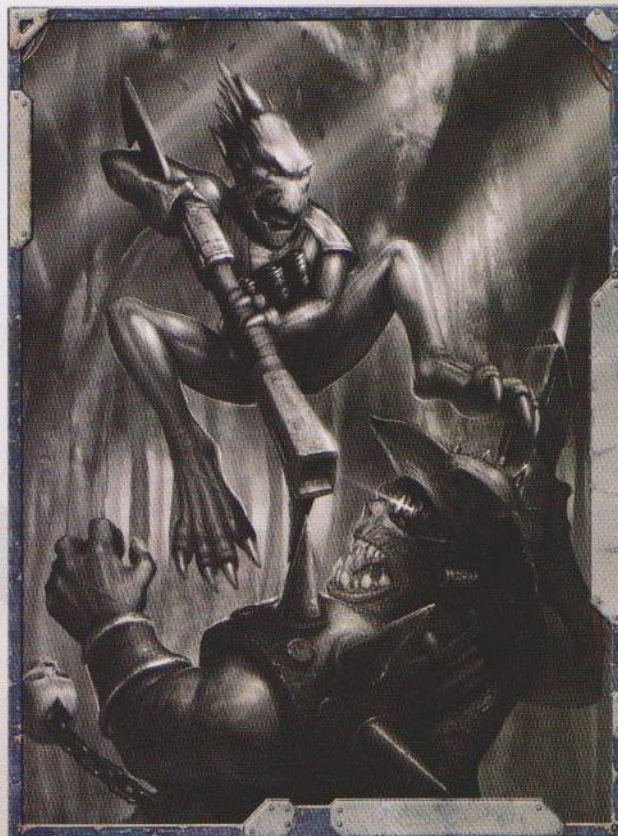
Only small numbers of Tuskbreakers remain on the warsphere at any given time and they never do for an extended period. To do so would contradict their mission in the Expanse and therefore they constantly move in search of combat. One does not seek them out, but encounters them when not looking and only then does the opportunity present itself for the two parties to negotiate. The Tuskbreaker's reputation precedes them. In hiring a cadre, one can expect to hire a few hundred loyal mercenaries capable of working in a wide variety of environments. The Tuskbreakers have a diverse array of Kroot beasts at their disposal, including Kroot Hounds, Krootox, and Knarlocs. The keen intelligence of the Tuskbreakers shows through in their shrewd deal-making. They have no standard fee for their services. Instead, the Tuskbreakers

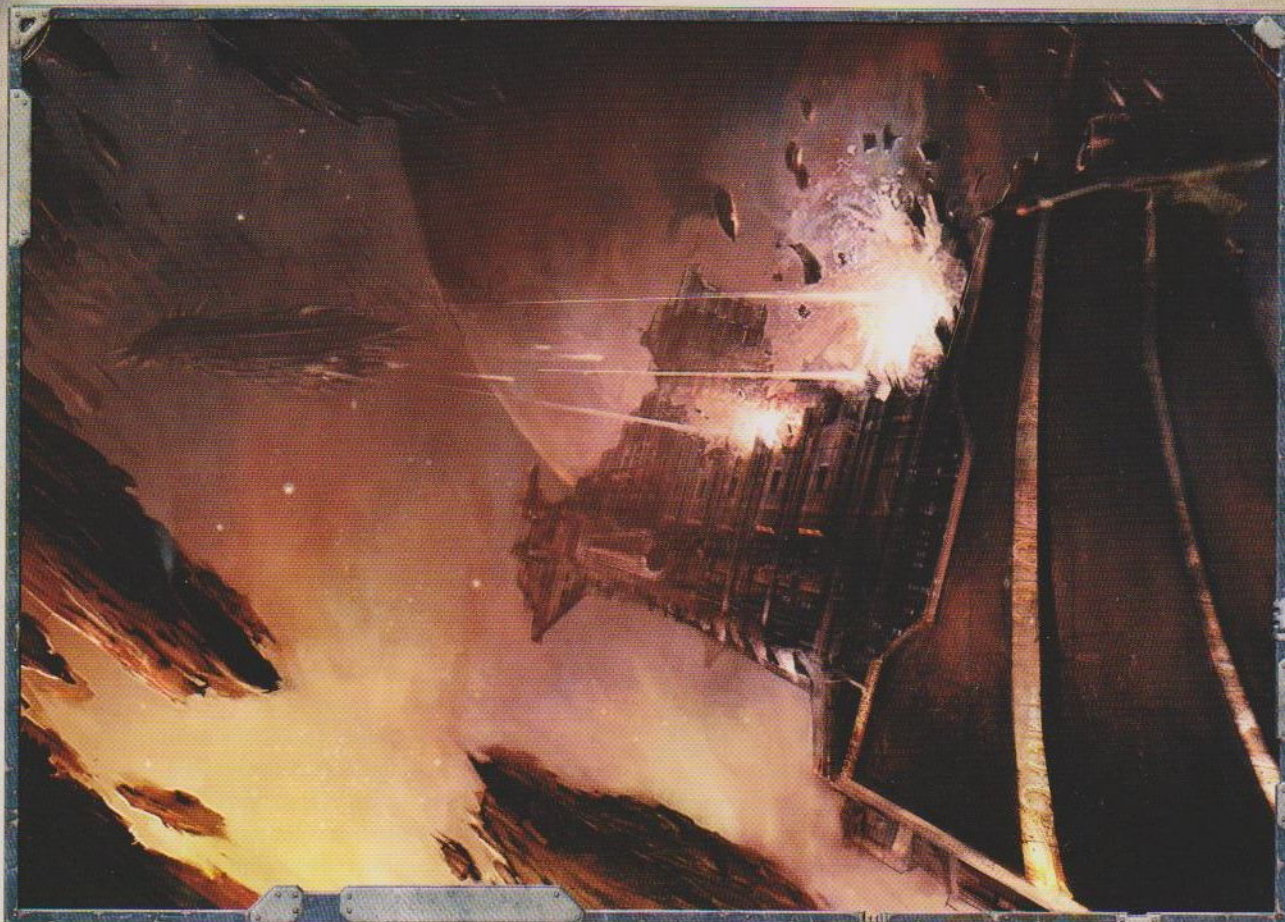
determine a price in Throne Gelt or in trade—based on the job's difficulty, the strengths to gain from the flesh of their marks, and the relevance it has to their conflict with the Orks of the Undred-Undred Teef. A potential employer has on more than one occasion left disappointed when the Tuskbreakers decided to charge an unacceptable fee. They have higher aspirations than material gain, and make sure that employers with goals divergent from their own pay dearly for the Tuskbreaker's services. The key to negotiating a successful contract: know the desires of all parties involved.

There is one exception to this—should the task involve attacking or preying on Orks, the Tuskbreakers will take almost any pains to be contracted for the work. They will attempt to hide this eagerness from potential employers (and will still negotiate for the highest commission possible), but passing a **Hard (-20) Forbidden Lore (Xenos) Test** reveals their negotiating weakness. In game terms, this should grant any attempts to Acquire the services of a group of Tuskbreakers a +10 bonus—and the GM can grant larger bonuses if he believes the task would be particularly appealing to the Tuskbreakers.

In game terms, Tuskbreakers can be Acquired in groups as small as a four Kroot squad, up to a 300 Kroot cadre, and always count as Best quality (or "Craftsmanship") mercenary soldiers. They will not fight against other Kroot, will not work willingly with Orks, and generally are disinterested in jobs lasting longer than six months. They are also highly skilled at their job—they are disinterested in suicide missions, and take great pains to hunt down anyone who betrays them.

Like all Kroot mercenaries, they are exceptionally good at tracking, scouting, and stealth. If the GM needs a profile, use the Kroot Mercenary on page 377 of **ROGUE TRADER**, increasing WS and BS by 10, and adding the Hatred (Orks) Talent.





THE RAK'GOL

"They come out from beyond the light of the Emperor, savages, who will skin you while you watch! There is no escape, they'll consume us all!"

—Hob Viech, survivor of a Rak'Gol attack

Across the Expanse, there is one race that is known to all, but seldom spoken of—the Rak'Gol. When their name is mentioned, the speaker may well make the sign of the Aquila for protection—for to speak the name of these vicious marauders is said to invite them to attack. The Rak'Gol are one of the single most feared, reviled, barbaric, and inhuman xenos species encountered in the Koronus Expanse to date. Their excesses are only surpassed by their brutality. Though they can be found throughout the Koronus Expanse, these near-primal, cannibalistic hunters are especially common near the ill-travelled Alenic Depths, where their packs of ships lurk and wait for prey.

THE ALENIC DEPTHS

Beyond the God-Emperor's Scourge, deep within the Unbeholden Reaches, lies a region of clouded space—the Alenic Depths. Dust clouds and shadowed nebula choke the region of light, wrapping a few frail stars in thick black cloaks. Navigation is next to impossible in this part of space, where even

the light of the Astronomicon grows dim and nebulous, and astropathic communications seemed muffled and indistinct.

The outward appearance of the Depths discourages most from venturing there—even the ships of the Disciples of Thule avoid that section of space. Those few who journeyed within the Depths (most in the early centuries after the Maw was opened) were inevitably well-armed and well-provisioned. They spoke of star systems cluttered with debris and half-formed planets, asteroid rings, rock fields, and dust clouds. Those few worlds capable of supporting human life were often dry and cold, cloaked in the omnipresent whips of dust. By day, their feeble suns scarcely illuminated the surface, while the nights were completely dark—no stars can pierce the shroud of the Depths.

Little was discovered that encouraged expeditions into the Depths, and in later centuries, most Rogue Traders ventured into more profitable regions such as Winterscale's Realm and the Heathen Stars. Only a few desperate or visionary individuals journeyed to the Alenic Depths before the Rak'Gol appeared on the edges of the Koronus Expanse. Now, only the insane venture within the shrouded nebulae.

THE RAK'GOL COME

None know when the Rak'Gol first left their accursed lairs in the far reaches of the Expanse and began to maraud across it. So few ships journey in to the Unbeholden Reaches that several missing vessels went unnoticed by all but their close peers. Even then, the Expanse is a wild and lawless space, and few could muster the interest to search for a few minor missing ships.

++Recovered Journal Fragment from the merchant brig *Solace of Dawn*, 710.M41++

[RECORDING INTERFERENCE] ...ship attacked by unknown xenos. We are adrift and venting atmosphere...Astropath Talisha is missing, and more than likely dead... days out from Ntharis...pilgrimage to Damaris. We were attacked without provocation. I don't recall much of the initial attack...remember the screaming and the inhuman screeching; nothing human could have made that noise, nothing holy. They were monsters. Oh, holy God-Emperor, please help... They stormed our ship... crawling on the ceiling...moving like ravenous hounds or strange insects. I saw them grab those who got in the way. If they didn't kill them with those blades, they ripped out chunks and ate them while they were still alive... Now there are only a few of us left alive. The rest they took with them...fate awaits them. I only hope that...[DATA FRAGMENT CORRUPTED] [RELOAD? Y/N] [UNABLE TO RECOVER/FRAGMENT CORRUPTED] [CRITICAL ERROR]

However, in 710.M41, a vessel from the Disciples of Thule stumbled across the wreck of the merchant brig *Solace of Dawn*, drifting without power near System Designate 368-2VR-3D. Only the ship's salvation beacon still operated on its isolated power storage, the rest of the ship was cold and dead. Inside, it was immediately apparent that the *Solace* had been boarded and her crew slaughtered by something. Vox fragments and auspex logs recovered from the remains of the bridge spoke of a new, unknown xenos, something perhaps from beyond the Alenic Depths.

Uncharacteristically for their closed order, the Disciples sent a message containing all information gleaned from the wreck to Altar-Templum-Calixis-Ext-17. In turn, the Mechanicus gifted the information to an infrequent Navy patrol travelling through the Maw. Word spread—a new threat had emerged in the Expanse.

It would be decades and countless atrocities before anyone knew more about this xenos race—the burning of Monastery 20, thousands dead on Savolis, the *Daughter of Regals*. Eventually, however, the xenos had a name, the Rak'Gol—although their motives remained as secret as when the *Solace of Dawn* was first discovered. As they push deeper into the Expanse, more than a few brash Rogue Traders have vowed to find their homeworlds and visit on them the same destruction the Rak'Gol bring. However, given how deadly the Rak'Gol have proven thus far, such boasting seems idle at best.

PHYSIOLOGY

The typical Rak'Gol possesses eight limbs. Normally, when not in pursuit of prey, they tend to walk upright on four limbs; using the other four to perform various other functions. However, when in pursuit of prey, they can easily shift into using up to all eight limbs for locomotion. A Rak'Gol's upper four limbs possess adaptable grasping appendages; they can change the musculature

to use these as hands, complete with opposable digits, instead of grasping feet. These appendages are strong enough that an adult Rak'Gol can actually climb and run completely upside down, attached to virtually any surface. The Rak'Gol also possess prehensile tails that assist in balance. In addition, the Rak'Gol possess keen senses of smell and sight, and these are often enhanced through their use of cybernetics and bionics.

When standing upright, the Rak'Gol tower over humans, standing at least 2.6 metres tall and weighing up to 175 kilograms. To humans, this xenos species appears reptilian, however, their skin does not possess the tell-tale scales that many reptoid species exhibit. Rather, their skin is a rough-hewn texture, almost stonelike—very similar to ancient Terran lizards. Non-modified Rak'Gol possess two eyes deeply recessed in their skulls, and a tympanic-like membrane for hearing.

SOCIETY

The Rak'Gol are savage and brutal. They are likened to primal beasts instead of an advanced xenos species, yet they have progressed to the point of being able to build crude voidships and bionics. Rak'Gol are very effective hunters, and they are utterly remorseless killers. They are led by a caste known as the Abominations—aptly named, for outsiders regard their entire appearance, from their patchwork, stitched-together hides to their crude bionics, as utterly grotesque. Their societal system seems hierarchical in nature, with older and more powerful Abominations controlling groups consisting of several vessels and their attendant crews. They have never shown the slightest interest in communicating with other species, or interacting in any way save slaughtering all they come across. Although several sects of the Magos Biologis in the Adeptus Mechanicus have attempted to capture Rak'Gol alive, every attempt thus far has failed. When faced with capture, Rak'Gol go completely berserk, throwing themselves at any containment without regard for their own well-being until they escape, destroy themselves, or must be put down by their captors.

Surprisingly little is known about Rak'Gol society. Most of what is known has been extrapolated through various encounters and tales of their attacks on the colonies within the Expanse. Their language is indecipherable—consisting of nothing more than screeches and rasps. No one knows their point of origin, or even if they originated within the Koronus Expanse. It is possible that they have a homeworld (or clutch of several) where they issue from and construct their warships. If this is true, the world must be far beyond the explored bounds of the Expanse, or hidden from prying eyes by some sort of phenomena. There appears to be no explanation as to why they attack the ships or colonies of the Expanse, and it might very well be an inscrutable aspect of their alien psychology.

MINDLESS SLAUGHTER?

The Rak'Gol are pack hunters. Within their society there is nothing more important than the kill, and much of their society revolves around slaughter. From a young age, the brood are taught to work together, meshing their strengths with others' weaknesses so the pack as a whole succeeds where the

ABOMINATIONS AND THE YU'VATH

There are many reasons the Rak'Gol Abominations have such a strong desire to locate ancient caches of Yu'vath technology. They have been found throughout the rimward areas of the Koronus Expanse looting various ancient Yu'vath hoards. One thought is that the leadership caste is drawn to the sites of the Yu'vath answering some sort of instinctual need to gather these ancient artefacts. Another theory is that the Rak'Gol were once the foot-troops of the Yu'vath in other parts of the galaxy and that only in the past century have they arrived to answer their master's long-ago summons, especially as it's unknown how they are able to achieve faster-than-light travel. The last possibility is that the Rak'Gol have found a kindred spirit in the Yu'vath, whose appetites for wholesale slaughter and the corrupting power of Chaos mirror those of the Rak'Gol.

individual would not. As they grow older, they are taught different types of tactics and eventually they are sent out with a Clutchmaster to be blooded—or die in the process. Once a Rak'Gol has seen combat, they are often 'gifted' with bionics and cybernetics by their Clutchmaster in order to make them a more effective at death and slaughter. Eventually those who manage to live long enough will appear to be more machine than living, a brutal and remorseless killing engine of death.

RAK'GOL MARAUDERS

Marauders are the 'foot troops' of the Rak'Gol. Most of these wretched xenos are modified with at least one type of cybernetic implant, though it is far more common for them to have more. These creatures have blooded themselves on hunts and survived to join in others. They are crazed and bloodthirsty, revelling in the destruction they wrought. Though they are capable of some level of tactical cunning, Marauders usually overwhelm their opponents with speed and raw ferocity. When they attack and board other ships in the voids, it's the Marauders that most face—each with their own combination of weapons and gear. Marauders are also rarely encountered alone; they tend to hunt in packs of ten to twenty, making the most of their terror-mob tactics.

Marauders are unsubtle in their brutal tactics. Many simply go for the direct kill, but they are not mindless brutes. Those that man the various gunnery and helm stations of their vessels show ingenuity and a grasp of spatial tactics that belies their primitive stature.

RAK'GOL BROODMASTERS

The Broodmasters are the commanders of the Marauders. These vicious creatures follow the directives of the leadership-caste Abominations and lead the numerous raids against the other races of the Expanse. The Broodmasters are also the ones who captain the larger ships of the Rak'Gol forces, and they tend to do most of the tactical planning with input from the Abominations above them.

They are typically distinguished by the

amount of bionics and cybernetics their bodies support, and by the fact that they inspire the loyalty of the other Rak'Gol (especially the Marauders). These horrid xenos organise packs into frenzied mobs, and work them into a wild fury, foaming at the mouth in anticipation of the kill.

Some of the tactics employed by the Broodmasters resemble those of bestial predators, yet there are some that are distinctly Rak'Gol in nature. One of the most common methods employed involves a single Rak'Gol ship laying in wait along a known warp route. When the ships travelling that route transition from the warp to change course or get a navigation fix, the Rak'Gol strike, attempting to disable the other vessel. Once disabled, the Rak'Gol board the vessel and kill any they find left alive, except for a chosen few. These they leave alive, shocked and horrified, to summon rescue through vox or astropathic signal. In the meantime, the Rak'Gol reinforce their position with a host of other ships, laying in ambush until the rescue ship gets within range. It has even been reported that the Rak'Gol leave behind a few of their own brood aboard the damaged ship, lying in wait for any potential rescuers. Once the leaders determine the proper moment to strike, the entire mob attacks in a frenzy of blood and gore; storming ships, tearing through bulkheads, and leaving barren vessels open to the void in their wake.

There is also a sub-class of Rak'Gol leaders called Clutchmasters. These are the lesser leaders of the caste, often acting as "lieutenants" or mob-enforcers during combat. Typical packs of Rak'Gol are almost always led by a Clutchmaster, who takes direction from either the Broodmasters, or the Abominations above them. Clutchmasters also captain the lesser Marauder ships of the Rak'Gol broods. It should also be noted that there is little to distinguish a Broodmaster from a Clutchmaster in close combat.

RAK'GOL ABOMINATIONS

The Abominations are the rarest caste of Rak'Gol encountered by the denizens of the Koronus Expanse, and appear to be the leaders of the Rak'Gol species—it is unknown if there are any other castes higher than them. Each one's appearance is unique and heavily modified. Many of them possess the bionic and cybernetic implants that are ubiquitous to the Rak'Gol—yet they also have been modified by what appear to be implants and devices very similar to those of the Yu'vath. In fact, there has been some speculation amongst the Magos Biologis of the Adeptus Mechanicus that the Rak'Gol may have stumbled upon ancient Yu'vath technology and somehow formed some manner of relationship with it. However, there exist no records of the Rak'Gol having served the Yu'vath during the Angevin Crusade. The Rak'Gol only appeared within the Koronus Expanse a little over a century ago, far too late to have fought with the Yu'vath in the Crusade.

As well as leading the Rak'Gol in battle, Abominations are thought to be their spiritual leaders—but like so much of Rak'Gol society, no concrete evidence exists to support this theory. It is thought that these Abominations also plan all of the Rak'Gol raids, positioning their warriors across the Koronus Expanse as if following some mysterious plan. Should this plan reach fruition, it could spell disaster for the other races of the Expanse.

PATH OF INVASION

When one plots all of the attacks the Rak'Gol have made over the past century, it clearly shows that they seem to be following some manner of path or direction. From the Alenic Depths, up past the God-Emperor's Scourge coreward, to the Phaineal Echoes spinward, a pattern is beginning to emerge. What these xenos are looking for or why they have chosen this route is anyone's guess.

RAK'GOL TECHNOLOGY

By the standards of the Imperium, Rak'Gol technology is quite primitive. Even their implants lack the utilitarian elegance exhibited by Imperium designs. Yet, this xenos race has managed to merge the biological with the mechanical, and have learned to construct ships that can traverse the void. Though they do not possess any psykers, the Rak'Gol also manage to navigate the immaterium. How this is accomplished is something the Holy Ordos (and some Rogue Traders) would pay dearly to find out.

Rak'Gol weaponry is as brutal as it is effective. Many of the weapons employed are designed for close combat, but they employ a few that are effective at range. Most of their weapons are deadly mono-blades, spears, or some combination of the two; all have wicked-looking curves to them and deadly barbs. Rak'Gol favour simple projectile weapons, firing either oversized stub ammunition, or barbed razor-shells that tear and rend on impact.

In addition to the various weapons, Rak'Gol also make extensive use of bionic and cybernetic implants. However, with the exception of the unblooded, all Rak'Gol possess at least one implant or prosthetic. They also possess implanted ceramic plates to reinforce their already resilient hides.

One of the most mysterious facets of Rak'Gol technology is the propensity for the Abominations to seek out and capture lost relics of the Yu'vath. These wretches will go to any length to possess Yu'vath implants and constructs—going so far as to even decorate their bodies with the silvered trceries and symbols used by the decimated race of Chaos-worshippers.

MARAUDER STATISTICS

Marauders are the most numerous of the Rak'Gol—making up most of the species foot troops. They have been blooded in battle and many have the scars and prosthetics to show for it.

Marauder Profile



WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
45	35	(8) 41	(8) 45	28	28	28	30	07

Movement: 5/10/15/30

Wounds: 25

Skills: Climb (S), Demolition (Int), Dodge (Ag).

Talents: Basic Weapon Training (Flamer, SP), Bulging Biceps, Die Hard, Fearless, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Pistol Weapon Training (Flamer, SP), True Grit, Sprint.



Traits: Fear (1), Hunting Frenzy[†], Multiple Arms, Size (Hulking), Quadruped, Sturdy, Unnatural Strength (x2), Unnatural Toughness (x2).

Armour: Implanted ceramic plates and stone-like hide (5 Arms, 8 Body, 6 Head, 5 Legs).

Weapons: Implanted mono-blades (1d10+12 R; Pen 4), Rak'Gol Razor Gun^{††} (40m; S/-/-; 1d10+5 R; Pen 0; Clip 10; Reload: Full) or Rak'Gol pattern heavy stubber (120m; -/-/10; 1d10+5 I; Pen 3; Clip 40; Reload: Full) or Rak'Gol pattern hand-flamer (10m; S/-/-; 1d10+4 E; Pen 2; Clip 2; Reload: 2 Full; Flame), 3 frag grenades, 1 Krak grenade.

Gear: Bionic respiratory system (Good Craftsmanship), implanted vox, photo-visor, and suicide device (as bomb collar, self-detonated), spare ammo drum for heavy stubber.

†Hunting Frenzy: Rak'Gol tend to go into a frenzied berserker rage once combat begins. Treat this as the Frenzy Talent, except that the Rak'Gol may enter it immediately, as a Free Action.

††Rak'Gol Razor Gun: Razor guns fire barbed slugs that augur their way through flesh and other soft tissue. Roughly 1 in 3 Marauders are typically equipped with them, although some are equipped with a Rak'Gol equivalent of a heavy stubber. Anyone who takes five or more damage from this weapon after Armour and Toughness suffers the Blood Loss Critical effect.

RAK'GOL BROODMASTER

Rak'Gol Broodmasters act as lieutenants to the Abominations; carrying out their will. It is their responsibility to lead the packs of Marauders to slaughter and victory. To represent the Broodmaster, use the Marauder profile, making the following changes, and add the following Skills and Talents to the profile:

- WS/BS+5; S +5; Int +7; Per +7; WP +5; Fel +8; Wounds +5.
- Skills: Awareness (Per), Climb +10 (S), Demolition +10 (Int), Dodge +10 (Ag).
- Talents: Combat Master, Hard Target.
- Traits: Fear (2).

RAK'GOL WAR VESSELS

The war vessels of the Rak'Gol are seemingly primitive compared to those of the Imperium of Man—crude amalgamations of armour plating and other systems resembling fins or the barbs of horned insects. All are covered with numerous weapon spines clustered around a central, elongated core containing propulsion and navigation systems. One of the most unique features of Rak'Gol vessels are their propulsion systems; they use fission-pulse drives powered by unshielded atomic piles. The radiation produced by such abominable devices is extremely intense and it's unknown if the Rak'Gol are naturally resistant to the radiation output, or if they are simply unconcerned with the increased mortality that comes from exposure to such heavy doses.

Like the race itself, Rak'Gol ship weaponry is similarly both brutal and primitive. They tend to favour the short-ranged, rapid-fire macroweapons, compensating for smaller warheads with increased rates of fire. This fits in with their favoured tactic of closing in with and crippling their opponents before boarding them in savage assaults. Their vessels also bristle with many short-ranged defensive turrets, designed to fill the space around the ship with clouds of high-velocity slugs. Needless to say, this can be highly devastating to smaller craft, and launching attack craft against Rak'Gol ships seems suicidal at best.

A few larger Rak'Gol ships are equipped with massive beam weapons that appear to run the entire length of the ship's spine. Though powerful, they are thankfully relatively rare.



RAK'GOL MARAUDER

Hull: Raider

Class: Xenos Pirate Vessel

Dimensions: approx. 1.5 km long; approx. 0.8 km abeam at widest fins

Mass: 7.2 megatonnes approx.

Crew: unknown number, but thought to be upwards around 20,000–30,000 xenofoms

Accel: 7 gravities maximum sustainable acceleration

Marauders are the name given to the most common of Rak'Gol ships, sharing the name with the Rak'Gol warrior caste. Given that no two are exactly alike, they are similar enough in size and performance to be grouped together into a broad classification. All Marauders seem to be haphazardly constructed with little regard for layout or comfort of crew. They are all generally brutal craft that are over-gunned and have impressive amounts of speed thanks to their fission-pulse drives. However, though they are quite fast they are slow to manoeuvre, and savvy captains have been known to exploit this weakness in order to win the day.

Speed: 9

Void Shields: 1

Morale: 100

Turret Rating: 3

Space: 40

Manoeuvrability: +6

Armour: 15

Crew Population: 100

Weapon Capacity: Dorsal 1, Prow 1, Keel 1

Power: 40

Detection: +12

Hull Integrity: 40

Crew: Competent (30)

Essential Components

Xenos Warp Drive, Warp Charms, "Stutter" Class Fission-pulse Drive†, Single Void Shield Array, Clutchmaster's Bridge, Rak'Gol Fume Sustainer, Brood-Warren, Xenos Void-Watcher

Supplemental Components

Dorsal, Prow, and Keel Howler Cannons: (Macrobattery; Strength 5; Damage 1d5+1; Crit Rating 5; Range 4) So-called because survivors of Rak'Gol attacks described the sound of the shells impacting their hull as an "unrelenting howl," Howler Cannons fire swarms of high-velocity shells to overwhelm targets with sheer volume. When firing a Howler Cannon, each additional Degree of Success on the Ballistic Skill Test results in two additional hits instead of one.

†"Stutter" class Fission-pulse drives are inferior the standard plasma drives employed by vessels of the Imperium; relying on explosive 'pulsed' fission reactions to move their ships through the void. In general, they can accelerate to great speeds, but fall short on manoeuvrability. A ship using this drive suffers a –10 penalty to Manoeuvrability, already applied to its profile.

USING THE RAK'GOL

The Rak'Gol are savage and brutal xenos, who attack in murderous hordes and strike using shock tactics. This makes them a perfect adversary for "survival horror" style games or for GMs who need a relentless and "alien" opponent.

SPECIAL RULES AND COMPLICATIONS

Xenos Horde: Rak'Gol ships are full of horrifying nightmare abominations. They gain a +20 bonus to all Command Tests involving boarding and hit-and-run attacks.

Cannot Be Reasoned With: Unless the GM has a very good reason to do otherwise, Explorers cannot communicate, deal, or negotiate with the Rak'Gol, their utterly alien natures making them entirely disinterested to such attempts.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

Yu'vath Cache: The Explorers happen upon an ancient store of what appears to be Yu'vath artefacts. However, before they can remove them from their resting place, the Rak'Gol strike. These xenos will stop at nothing to gain the items the Explorers now possess, and fight with fury unseen in this species before. What is in the cache that they so desperately want?

Drifting Ship: The Explorers come upon a ship that has been savaged by these xenos. They may have left some survivors on board. However, if the Explorers investigate, they find that the Rak'Gol left the crippled ship as "bait," and close the trap.

THE STRYXIS

"Yes, honoured biped, that is a strong and powerful weapon. The Stryxis will sell it to you, honoured biped, and warriors as well. They are strong meat, honoured biped, the best we could grow!"

—Stryxis Weapons Merchant

The Stryxis are a xenos race of wanderers, traders, merchants, and keepers of secrets. Scattered throughout the region in bands of nomadic tribes, the Stryxis make their way across the stars trading with those they encounter. They have a reputation for being untrustworthy scoundrels, yet there are many who would deal with them—if they could only stand their hideous appearance.

The Stryxis are a truly bizarre race of xenos. No one knows where they originated, and the only home they seem to have are caravans of ramshackle and barely-operational voidships. In fact, the Stryxis are widely known for taking anything that even remotely appears to be space-worthy and converting it into a viable vessel. They are a hierarchical species, and their government and system of laws, if they have such an organisation, is either so complex as to be incomprehensible to humanity, or is simply completely nonexistent. In either case, they are a race for whom betrayal and double-dealing is the norm, especially amongst their own kind. Aside

from buying and selling whatever strikes their fancy across the Koronus Expanse, the Stryxis also deal in slaves, soldiers, and vat-grown labour—which they simply refer to as "meat."

One of the oddest facets of Stryxis culture is their nearly irrational hatred for the Eldar. Stryxis will often go far out of their way to attack the aloof xenos. Failing that, they will simply avoid them at all costs. None but the Stryxis and the Eldar themselves know the reason for this loathing, and neither side has provided an answer to the mystery.

PHYSIOLOGY

To humanity, the Stryxis appear truly hideous. They are often described as gangling, multi-eyed creatures that resemble a human-sized, skinned dog embryo—an evocative, if somewhat inaccurate, portrayal.

All Stryxis encountered seem to have the same general appearance. One of the oddities of the race is that there appears to be no gender variations and no young have been encountered by outsiders. No one outside the race itself knows how they continue to breed, and the Stryxis avoid discussing the topic.

Stryxis have a pugnacious face, with an upturned nose faintly reminiscent of a Terran bulldog and four small, beady eyes. Imperial xenobiologists theorise the Stryxis have a terrible sense of smell, but make



up for this with greater visual and spatial acuity. The Stryxis have two arms ending in three-clawed grasping appendages, and two canine-like feet. They have a stooped posture and a bobbing gait when they walk, meaning they often seem shorter than their 1.8 metres. A Stryxis is able to fully rotate its hands and arms, swivelling its joints within their sockets. However, their physical anatomy is not readily apparent, as the aliens almost always swathe themselves in stinking, ragged clothes and voluminous robes. An adult Stryxis often adorns himself with all manner of trinkets it finds appealing—often without regard for the ornament's actual meaning (or previous owner).

SOCIETY

The Stryxis are wanderers and nomads who skirt across the Koronus Expanse in rickety fleets of ships. Their dark reputation as double-dealing backstabbers, shiftless grifters, pirates, and slavers mean many avoid them. Yet there are many Rogue Traders who deal with these bizarre xenos, as they possess a wealth of hoarded technology and information about many of the goings-on within the Expanse. While they care little for conquest and territory, or petty wealth, they have a unique understanding of concepts such as avarice and treachery.

It's considered a point of pride within Stryxis culture to be able to wrap subtle lies within the truth. Those who are lauded as masters of this technique are able to spin webs of falsehood and deception within a foundation of truth to the point that the two are inseparable. The Stryxis hold no loyalty for those they deal with, and the aliens will not hesitate to betray an erstwhile "partner" in search of a greater gain. As many have noted, the Stryxis have very little concept of value as it pertains to items of worth, and will as gladly buy worthless baubles as they would platinum ingots—and oftentimes for amounts that have little to do with the item's actual worth in the eyes of other legitimate traders.

DEALING WITH ROGUE TRADERS

There are some canny Rogue Traders who see these nefarious merchants for what they are: collectors. The Stryxis do not seem to be overly scrupulous in what they collect. However, there are often gems to be found amongst the dross they horde, in the form of weapons, valuable items, and even information.

It's something of an open secret among Rogue Traders—at least those who don't mind dealing with them—that the Stryxis are virtual treasure troves of legends, information, and dark lore concerning the Koronus Expanse. Sebastian Winterscale even said on occasion that if a Stryxis merchant could not obtain an item, it didn't exist. That colloquialism is just as true for baubles and trinkets as it is for the secrets they sell.

Naturally, brokering a deal with the Stryxis is different than setting up a buy from any other merchant-trader. These xenos have different outlooks and apply different values to items than humans do. A Stryxis may ask for a seemingly worthless bauble in exchange for valuable information, or demand vast sums for trivial items. However, they are always willing to bargain.

SLAVERY AND PIRACY

The Stryxis are also known for their dealings as slavers and pirates. Thankfully rare, the number of Stryxis who turn to these distasteful ventures are nevertheless often highly influential within their society. However, there is often no way to tell the difference between a Stryxis who wants to sell merchandise and one who simply wants to take it by force. In fact, most Stryxis alternate between piracy and trade depending on the circumstances. However, they are a somewhat cautious race in general, and will not risk piracy unless they are assured of success. Therefore, they are often more likely to turn to slavery.

Depending on who is asked, the lines between a Stryxis pirate, merchant, and slaver are often blurred. A known merchant and arms dealer might bargain with his clients one day and sell them into slavery the next. The only constant seems to be that they do whatever is in their own best interests at the time—which is why it is always best to deal with the Stryxis from a position of strength.

Although Stryxis slavers have no qualms about attacking ships and settlements for slaves, they prefer to have others do the work, and simply purchase their "meat." To the Stryxis, the slaves are simply another commodity to be traded and sold. In some ways this benefits their victims—slave pens are crowded but sanitary, and overseers rarely resort to lethal measures. A slave killed is profit lost, after all. However, the slave-traders of the Stryxis are still reviled and shunned throughout the Expanse. Once a slave is sold, a Stryxis does not care about its fate, and stories abound of entire cargos being traded to dark powers or vile xenos for unspeakable sacrifices or perversions. Likewise, a Stryxis will not hesitate to perform surgeries or behavioural modifications on slaves to make them more valuable or suited for a





MAKING DEALS WITH THE STRYXIS

If players want to make a deal with the Stryxis, the GM should see this as an opportunity for some interesting roleplaying. Obtaining an item or information from a Stryxis is never a simple matter of paying a fee or rolling dice. The aliens enter any situation expecting to bargain and haggle, so the GM should feel willing to open the negotiation with exorbitant demands and work downwards.

As the same time, the Stryxis place different values on items than humanity, and the GM can really play this up. In general, the players shouldn't simply make an Acquisition Roll to obtain something from a Stryxis. Instead, the GM should be creative in his demands. Some suggestions are that the Stryxis request something personal of the players' characters, such as a token or memento. An Aquila charm or personal laspistol the character has some connection to are some examples of items the Stryxis might request. These are aliens, so they can do things that seem non-sensible to a human. So if the players say they have a whole box of charms on the ship they'll trade instead, the Stryxis could still demand "only that one." The Stryxis may also request more disturbing payments, such as a consignment of crewmembers from the players' own ship. This could have interesting moral complications for the players, and morale complications if the crew finds out that some of their mates are being sold to aliens!

Alternatively, the Stryxis may request services. A psyker might be requested to perform an augury of an item, or a Rogue Trader may be asked to transport some Stryxis to another caravan in another system. Again, these requests do not have to be explained, in fact the more mysterious they seem, the better. Most players are likely to know of the Stryxis' unsavoury reputation, and a mysterious request is going to have them scrambling to figure out what the "catch" is.

THE COST OF MEAT

Interested Explorers and Rogue Traders might be curious to know the availability of Stryxis vat-brutes, slaves, soldiers, and other labourers they have "procured" through their travels. Listed below is the suggested availability of these items for Acquisition Tests (see page 271 of *ROGUE TRADER*):

TABLE 3-1: STRYXIS LABOUR COSTS

Labourers	Availability	Vat-Grown Labour	Availability
Labourer, untrained	Scarce	Vat-slave	Rare
Labourer, skilled	Rare	Vat-labourer, skilled	Very Rare
Stryxis Mercenary	Rare	Vat-brute	Extremely Rare

customer's needs. A Stryxis will purchase almost any race as slaves. The only notable exceptions are those species who can easily dominate the Stryxis (such as the Rak'Gol) and the Eldar—whom the Stryxis will waste no time in attempting to eliminate with extreme prejudice.

There are also those who have need of fighting soldiers to help them wage war. For them, the Stryxis can provide these needs in the form of slave-mercenaries who are controlled by a single Stryxis handler. The slaves are controlled by a variety of means from with bomb collars and excruciator devices to mental conditioning or drug-fuelled compliance. The Stryxis are happy to contract out their soldiers for limited engagements or lengthy campaigns, and once the matter concludes, they pack up any survivors and move on to the next war. Stryxis slave-mercenaries are often equally desperate and brutal. Those who do well and survive to fight again and again are sometimes released from their servitude to make their way through the galaxy as they see fit. This does not happen often, but the mere possibility makes the mercenaries utterly savage in combat.

However, it has been noted that on the rare occasions that the Stryxis participate in conflict themselves, they do not use their slave-mercenaries. Instead, they rely entirely on vat-grown warriors, perhaps preferring utter loyalty to convenience and low costs.

Stryxis pirates are really no different than Stryxis merchants, save that they turn to violence more readily. The xenos pirates

tend to utilise better-armed and armoured caravan-ships and attack targets of opportunity they come across, such as ill-defended ships and colonies—often demanding tribute in the form of whatever strikes their fancy. Should the hapless victims not have whatever these demented xenos desire, the pirates attack. If, by the grace of the God-Emperor, they should be able to comply with the insane depravities of these aliens, then they simply send over a party to gather the items and return another day.

STRYXIS TECHNOLOGY

Stryxis, known void-nomads, are not thought to possess any type of advanced technology—instead it's believed that they simply scavenge and take nearly everything they own. For the most part this is true. However, they are quite content to take advantage of other species' ignorance of their true technology. The appearance of the Stryxis and their ramshackle fleets belie the sinister and complex nature of their technology. As flesh-crafters, the Stryxis combine technology and biology together to shape creations that are both functional and extremely elegant, at least to those with an eye for such things.

The Stryxis tend to favour energy weapons. Their long-range armaments primarily consist of ornate and archaic-looking las weapons, similar in many ways to the las-weapons of the Imperium. However, Stryxis melee weaponry follows a very different

path. Stryxis blades, called æther blades, have an ethereal-like quality to them; they are able to pass through the solid material and directly attack the living being beneath. However, they are highly vulnerable to psychic shields and wards, and almost useless against the daemons and other warp-spawn. In the Imperium, they are also known as “ghost blades,” and the Inquisition is very eager to apprehend anyone who possesses one.

In addition to their unique weapons and fields, the Stryxis flesh-crafters are able to grow and create virtually any manner to biological creature they need. Using the term “meat” to refer to the hordes of slaves and other non-Stryxis in their custody, these vile xenos will gladly trade and sell them to the highest bidder; they also far outnumber the Stryxis aboard many of their vessels. The Stryxis are not above taking custom orders for their fleshworks, and are supposedly even capable of growing small armies for those who can meet their price.

STRYXIS MERCHANT

The merchants of the Stryxis race are the ones who are mainly encountered by the explorers and Rogue Traders of the Koronus Expanse. They are reviled and distrusted all across the Expanse for their shady dealings and treacherous leanings.

Merchant Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
35	35	32	39	46	60	37 ⁽⁶⁾	40	46

Movement: 4/8/12/24

Wounds: 15

Skills: Awareness (Per), Barter +20 (Fel), Commerce (Fel), Deceive +30 (Fel), Evaluate (Int) +10, Common Lore (choice of two) (Int), Forbidden Lore (choice of one), Inquiry (Fel) +20, Scrutiny (Per)+20, Tech Use (Int), Trade (Merchant) (Int).

Talents: Ambidextrous, Basic Weapon Training (Las, SP), Exotic Weapon Training (Stryxis Æther weapons), Hard Target, Hatred (Eldar), Jaded, Paranoia, Pistol Training (Las, SP), Polyglot, Total Recall.

Traits: Dark Sight, Unnatural Perception (x2).

Armour: Stryxis Ghost-field† and robes (3 All).

Weapons: Æther blade (1d5+2 E; Pen 0; Special), xenos Light-pistol (30m; S/-/-; 1d10+5 E; Pen 0; Clip 30; Full; Reliable, Accurate) or xenos Light-rifle (60m; S/-/-; 1d10+6 E; Pen 3; Clip 15; Reload Full; Reliable, Accurate), concealed mono-blade (1d5+4 R; Pen 2).

Gear: various trinkets and charms, smelly robes, spare energy cell for pistol.

†**Stryxis Ghost-field:** Stryxis merchants often equip themselves with subtle devices that often appear as bionics to the uninitiated. In fact, these devices can project a barrier of force that saps the strength of attacks. The Ghost-Field's

Armour Points cannot be reduced by the penetration of any weapons except those with the Blast or Flame Qualities, Æther weapons, or attacks generated by psychic techniques.

STRYXIS VAT-BRUTE

Vat-brutes are the massive slabs of muscle that have been created by the Stryxis flesh-crafters for a variety of tasks. They are vaguely humanoid, resembling something of a proto-human with smooth and featureless faces, and androgynous features. Their intelligence resembles something close to a mono-tasked servitor, with very little creative thinking outside the tasks they are created for. Vat-brutes can be used for anything from heavy labour to combat.

Vat-brute Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
30	30	60	60	20	10	30	40	—

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 18

Skills: Awareness (Per), Trade (any one) +10.

Talents: If the vat-brute is being used for combat it will have the appropriate Weapon Training Talents.

Traits: Auto-stabilised, Dark Sight, Machine (2), Natural Weapons (brute fists), Size (Hulking).

Armour (Machine): All 4.

Weapons: Brute fist (1d10+6 I; Pen 0; Unbalanced), combat equipped variants also have heavy stubber (120m; -/-/10; 1d10+5 I; Pen 3; Clip 40; Full).

Gear: Internal micro-bead, Stryxis controller rig.

STRYXIS SHIPS

The Stryxis travel the void in starships that appear as ramshackle as their owners. The Stryxis will take anything capable of traversing the void and mount engines and other components on it. Some of their vessels are hollowed-out asteroids, old space hulks, salvaged vessels, and discarded refuse that have been “renovated” by the Stryxis for travel through the void and Immaterium. Often, the hulls of salvaged vessels are towed in long strings, forming massive caravans. How they are able to do this without blowing themselves into the vacuum of space is anyone's guess.

One might look upon such a vessel and assume it is no match for a warship. However, Stryxis ships are often as deceptive as their masters. Their ramshackle hulls can be protected by powerful force fields, and something about the ships defeats all but the most powerful augur attempts. Finally, their ships project ethereal beams of “ghost energy.” Although they are no more effective than standard macroweapons at penetrating armour and void shields, they have a disconcerting and utterly lethal effect on the crew inside.

Xenographers suspect the Stryxis must equip their looted vessels with examples of their own advanced technology. If this is the case, this would support the theory that the Stryxis, while playing the roll of simple merchants, do reserve their most advanced technology for themselves.

ÆTHER BLADES

Often confused with the elegance of Eldar technology, Æther Blades are actually quite exquisite—especially for a race of vile and disgusting xenos as the Stryxis. The hafts of these weapons appear to have been grown, not manufactured, and resemble some type of blue-grey alloy. The energy blade projected appears to be ghostly and ethereal; almost like mist or smoke that dances and flickers.

These blades will pass through almost all solid matter, including flesh and bone, and leave no marks. However, these blades are quite fragile when pitted against psychic barriers and blanks, shutting down for days when coming into contact with them. Why this happens is a matter of much speculation.

TABLE 3-2: ÆTHER WEAPONS

Name	Class	Damage	Pen	Special	Weight	Availability
Æther Blade	Melee	1d5+2 E	0		3 kg	Near Unique†
Æther Lance	Melee	2d5	0	Unwieldy	5 kg	Near Unique†

† When sold by Stryxis merchants they are Extremely Rare.

This blade will not damage non-living items and machines, or any creature with the Daemonic Trait or the Machine Trait (5+). However, the blade is unaffected by the armour of the target or its Toughness, though the Strength Bonus of the wielder is not added into the damage as it is with other melee weapons. Should the blade come into contact with hexagrammic wards, untouchables, or similar psychic barriers (such as a ship's Gellar Field), then the blade will flicker and dissipate; it will remain inactive for 1d10 days.

The Æther Lance is a slightly larger version of the Æther Blade. Due to its long haft, it can be parried, although anyone attempting to do so suffers a -10 penalty (due to the blade being insubstantial). It cannot parry due to its unwieldy nature. The shorter hilt of the Æther Blade means it cannot parry or be parried.

STRYXIS CARAVAN VESSEL

Hull: Transport

Class: Xenos merchant trader

Dimensions: approx. 2.0-5.0 km long, approx. 0.3 km abeam

Mass: 7-14 megatonnes approx.

Crew: 5,000-20,000 crew approx. (most will be non-Stryxis)

Accel: 2.3 gravities max acceleration

The Stryxis caravan vessel is not so much a specific type of ship as it is a general class named by human xenographers. The Stryxis "vessel" often consists of several scavenged ship hulls from any number of races, towed in a line by a vessel augmented with additional engines. Sometimes the Stryxis will even sell individual hulls off their "caravan." However, beneath its benign exterior, the ships can often hold hidden dangers.

Speed: 4

Manoeuvrability: +0

Detection: +40

Void Shields: 2

Armour: 13

Hull Integrity: 40

Morale: 95

Crew Population: 100

Crew: Competent (30)

Turret Rating: 1

Weapon Capacity: Dorsal 1, Prow 1

Space: 40

Power: 40

Essential Components

Xenos warp engine, Phase-reality field (counts as a Gellar Field), Scavenged Lathe Pattern Class 1 Drive, Ghost-field Array (provides two void shields), Scavenged Commerce Bridge, Stryxis environmental architect, Pressed-crew quarters, Ghost-eye scanner

Supplemental Components

Multiple Cargo Holds: The Stryxis make use of the holds on all their scavenged hulls. Although unlikely, should this ship be involved in working towards a Trade objective, it earns an additional 100 Achievement Points towards completing that objective. If this ship is attacked and looted while this Component is undamaged, it grants an additional 1d10x10 Achievement Points towards any one of the Explorers' current Objectives.

Dorsal and Prow Ghost-light Macroweapon: (Macrobattery: Strength 4, Damage 1d10+2, Crit 6, Range 5) Whenever a hit from a ghost-light macroweapon hits a ship and is not absorbed by void shields—even if it does not do damage to Hull Integrity—it does 1 damage to Crew Population. In salvos, each individual hit still does 1 damage to Crew Population. This damage is in addition to all normal effects from macrobatteries.

Augmented Retro-thrusters: The bonuses for this Component have already been factored into this ship's profile.

Slave and Brute Barracks: Although unlikely, should this ship be involved in working towards a Military or Trade objective, it earns an additional 50 Achievement Points towards completing that objective.

CHAOS REAVERS

"The glittering cataclysm haunts the stars; it leaves empty worlds in its wake, empty worlds and the shrieking of the dead and damned. And he seeks it, this ageless tyrant who dreams of rage and fire and desolation. He walks the eightfold path, and hears the whispers of dark gods and the laughter of dead abominations in the corners of his mind."

—From the Footfall Lamentations

The lure of Chaos is one that tempts many, but which is seldom understood by those who have not felt its pull. The idea of debasing oneself in the worship of dark and terrible gods, of doing foul things in exchange for dubious promises of power, is not something that most who know of the possibilities ever want to contemplate. Yet to swear oneself to Chaos is not so uncommon amongst those who believe they have nothing else to lose, or who feel that the risks are worth the reward.

In the Koronus Expanse, these damned souls are a common enough foe, for the line between bloodthirsty pirate and Chaos Reaver is an uncertain one, and many cross that line without ever realising it, their debauchery such that fell inspiration worms its way into their minds and twists their minds with new ways of thinking. Dens of these Reavers exist in many places across the Expanse, hidden in asteroid belts and upon moons in some cases, and running rampant upon defiled colonies in others. No matter how forcefully they are driven back, they still seem to linger, infesting new worlds or lurking in the darkness, awaiting their next chance to strike.

THE LOST AND THE DAMNED

Chaos Reavers are a diverse group, to say the least. A great many are simply otherwise-mundane pirates who pay lip service to the Dark Gods, seldom possessing any true knowledge of the beings they claim to worship. A significant proportion of these foolish pirates find themselves forced to serve more powerful masters—those who actually do worship the Chaos Gods.

For these damned individuals, atrocities are a way of life, their leaders, and their gods encouraging even greater displays of depravity, violence and excess, explorations of forbidden warp-lore, and the summoning of daemons.

Great numbers of slaves are taken by these Reavers with every raid,

claiming hundreds or thousands of lives to be offered up in tribute to the Ruinous Powers.

Within the Koronus Expanse, several major groups of Reavers exist. Each of these gatherings operates with its own distinct motives. Others, independent of these major factions, spring up from time to time, but seldom remain independent for long.

THE SAYNAY CLAN

Once native to Dusk, the Saynay Clan is composed of bloodthirsty cannibals and sorcerers and is descended from the exiled scions of a vile and depraved noble family, who were driven from the Calixis Sector by Inquisitorial purges nearly two centuries ago. Stealing away upon pilgrim ships and bulk freighters, stripped of most of their wealth and power, the Clan made their way to Port Wander, butchering their fellow passengers and the ships' crews to commandeer the ships and dive into the Immaterium to pass through the Maw. How any survived the passage is subject to intense speculation, but it is reckoned they bound daemons into tormented, half-dead Navigators and used these unfortunate wretches to guide their journey and allow their escape into the Koronus Expanse.

Since then, they have used their viciousness and sorcery to raid other vessels across the Expanse, capturing crew and passengers to use as food, sacrifices, and daemon-hosts, and where possible stealing ships to add to their rag-tag flotilla. Saynay Clan ships are almost always in a state of disrepair, as the Clan lacks much in the way of technical knowledge, and are held together by the sorcerous powers of their witches and bound daemons. Their raids are typically unsubtle matters, simple ambushes followed by a swift, barely-controlled approach and an attempt to board.

Such was the nature of all Clan raids until just under a century ago. Having managed to elude the Haarlock Purges, the Navigator Ember Nostromo betrayed her new master, stealing his vessel, the ancient grand cruiser *Monarch of Whispers*, and gathering other members of the Saynay Clan to her side. Aided by such an old and powerful ship and an experienced—if insane—Navigator, the Saynay Clan is now able to raid far more ambitiously than ever before.

THE DAMNED HOSTS OF INIQUITY

Iniquity has long been a nest of corruption, an unlovely world bathed in the dull light of a dying red giant that is slowly but inexorably being devoured by the massive black hole that once was its twin. The brutal gravity vortex has wrecked havoc with Iniquity's star system, filling it with shattered planets, radioactive flare remnants, asteroid



swarms, and gravity tides. Navigating the system is next to impossible—only the pirate reavers of Iniquity can plot a course that does not lead to ruin.

Iniquity itself is a moon of the system's sole surviving gas giant, orbiting close to its parent and protected by the worst of the system's radiation by its faltering magnetosphere. In turn, it is also orbited by the remnants of its own shattered moon, long torn asunder by the conflicting gravity of Iniquity and its parent world. The planet is hospitable to human life—but only just. The surface is rent and broken, towering mountain ranges surrounded by acid seas. What little indigenous life that grows on the surface is just as hostile as the environment itself.

Few remember when the world was colonised by men and women loyal to the Imperium, but it was long ago. Mines were dug deep into the surface, and indentured workforces set to digging. It has been almost as long since some malefic force stirred beneath the deep mines and corrosive seas of the world to debase those who dwelt upon the surface. The legends told in the Expanse say the entire population was corrupted in a single night, their minds shattered and their souls befouled. Even if this is exaggeration, the fall of Iniquity happened quickly, too quickly for those who controlled the mines to respond. Those few who did not fall prey to the Ruinous Powers were slain by those who did. The souls of those who were murdered in that night linger still, trapped by whatever power dwells there.

The taint of Iniquity called to others, a scent like the smell of blood to a shark. As the years passed, more and more of those touched by Chaos travelled to that accursed world, and they found there a place where blood mingled with acid seas and the screams of the damned echoed through the mountains. Whether compelled by the taint deep beneath Iniquity, or driven by their own greed, the reavers and pirates who voyaged to this befouled world set forth into the Expanse, snatching up hundreds of thousands of unfortunates before returning. In time, Iniquity has become the dark port for piracy and the wolfpacks of the Expanse, a place where the fell ships of Chaos Reavers can rest and rearm before issuing forth again.

The mortal cargo of lost souls brought to the world are driven into the mines to toil unto death and sometimes beyond, with some scraping minerals and metals from the stone, while others labour in grand forges and furnace-pits to turn the metals into starship components, weapons and wargear for their masters. Others still are simply compelled to dig, burrowing deeper and deeper into the rock for no reason any can fathom.

AN ACCURSED CHAMPION

One of the three most prominent Chaos Reavers within the Koronus Expanse is a man whose name is seldom spoken except as a curse: Karrad Vall, the aptly-named Faceless Lord. For more than two decades, Vall's Wolfpack—as his fleet has come to be known—has slaughtered its way to infamy, to the point where many captains consider scuttling their ship at the first sign of its arrival.

Vall has never been seen in the flesh by anyone who has lived to tell of it, and little is known about him. He is a ruthless and effective Naval commander, skilled enough to have wrought great damage to Footfall and the ships

harboured there during the daring attack that heralded his arrival in the Expanse. While much of the man remains an enigma, his voice is well-known—his fleet projects his taunts and mocking laughter across a wide range of vox channels during their attacks and the Inquisition has matched his name and voice to a heretic who plagued the Ixaniad sector a millennium ago. In all other ways, the Faceless Lord is a mystery, and a dangerous mystery at that.

His first attack upon the Koronus Expanse was his assault of Footfall, and the fleet of Calligos Winterscale that was harboured there, yet nobody can confirm where he came from. All reports from Astropaths and Navigators in Winterscale's fleet state that he emerged from the Maw, yet nobody in Port Wander reports ever having seen his fleet pass through from the Calixis Sector. In the wake of his attack, his fleet seemed to vanish from Augurs, with even the most skilled of Navigators present unable to discern his route or follow his trail—not that any present at Footfall was in a fit state to pursue. Aside from terrible rumours and reports of missing ships, nobody heard from him again for a decade, until an astropathic message echoed out across the void, proclaiming that Vall was willing to pay handsomely for an abundance of slaves and sacrifices to “build and consecrate a new kingdom of slaughter.”

The world upon which Vall's empire will begin remains unknown and unnamed—though many suspect it to be Iniquity—yet dozens of pious Rogue Traders have sworn to locate and burn it, and the sermons and diatribes of preachers and missionaries across the Expanse call for Vall's blood. Amidst all this, the Inquisition watches carefully, using its spies and agents upon vessels all across the Expanse to gather intelligence that may lead them to this Faceless Lord.

In the years since he sent his message from this new stronghold, his Wolfpack has been seen scattered across the Expanse, raiding ships for slaves and supplies, and even converts to the cause—more than a few crews have surrendered rather than be captured or have their vessels destroyed. With every passing year, the numbers of Reavers who claim allegiance to Karrad Vall has increased, seemingly drawn not only from the Expanse, but from far-flung places all over the Segmentum Obscuras. All are utterly loyal to, and utterly terrified of, Vall, and hold only the Ruinous Powers themselves higher than their Faceless Lord. He has, so rumour suggests, been extremely vicious and creative in his punishments for disloyalty. A handful of sightings of vessels once associated with Vall, peeled open like a paper wrapper with nothing inside but the blood and bones of the dead and the ichor of daemons, have been a more than adequate demonstration of his power.

However, Vall is rumoured to have far more sinister powers at his disposal. Amongst the mines of Iniquity and the ships that hang in orbit, fearful underlings whisper of hulking, faceless warriors in ornate, rune and sigil encrusted armour that accompany Vall wherever he goes. Nobody knows who they are or what dark relationship they have to Vall. If he can command their loyalty, it speaks to the depths of his power. However, if they are agents of some higher power that directs Vall in turn, how formidable must *their* masters be?

Amidst it all, and for all his claims of building a kingdom, the Inquisition has found only one answer that satisfies every question about Vall's motives: he is looking for something. As yet, nobody has been able to determine what, exactly, he is searching for. On rare occasions where Reavers have been captured and interrogated, they have been unable to identify the object of Vall's apparent obsession. Only scattered and inconsistent prophecies, such as the Footfall Lamentation, which caused the deaths of thirteen Astropaths as they bled to share their revelations, provide any clue, and even then, their words are cryptic as prophecies are wont to be. They screamed and spoke of the "deathly pale light," and something ominous "spat forth from the rifts on the edge of sight."

Whatever it is, whatever grand horror or dark power Karrad Vall seeks, all can agree that if he finds it and survives the process—and none are so naive to hope that he will perish in its discovery—the Koronus Expanse will become a far more dangerous place than it already is. Those amongst the Koronus Cabal shudder at the revelations their seers and auto-séances produce; a great darkness clouds all but the most fragmentary of visions, which reveal an unholy green light, worlds stripped of inhabitants, and a great pale horror, a cataclysm given form and substance, and the screaming of ghosts.

CHAOS POWERS

"Though the fruit may taste sweet, the rot within poisons without fail."

—Astropath Soronis to an apprentice

The forces of Chaos are a constant and eternal foe for humanity. Though Chaos followers are debased and corrupted by the dark forces they worship, those forces also empower them with fell might and arcane abilities. Not only does this create extremely dangerous foes, it also is a seductive path that can lead even the most righteous individuals to fall.

The following section addresses some of the dark abilities of Chaos worshippers, from sorcery to fell psychic powers.



PSYKANA MALIFICA

The ways that a psyker can manifest his formidable powers are almost limitless. While many of them are taught by the Scholastica Psykana of the Imperium and are judiciously accepted by its rulers as useful and necessary, there are other, darker powers as well. The powers of a psyker can be manifested in ways that are truly dangerous and profoundly disturbing.

The psychic techniques found in this section are not part of any of the Disciplines found in the **ROGUE TRADER** rulebook or any supplements, as they are only known by sorcerers, renegade psykers, and other deviants. In effect, this means these powers cannot be taken by Astropaths as part of their standard advance scheme (although a GM may allow them to be purchased as part of an elite advance). Explorers with the Wyrdling mutation or those who have gained access to psychic powers through their Origin Path NPC characters, and those who have gained access to psychic techniques through Sorcery Talents can take these powers.

AGONISING GRASP

Value: 300 xp

Prerequisites: None

Focus Power Test: Opposed Willpower

Range: 4m x Psy Rating

With a simple hand gesture, the psyker seizes the target's vital organs with his mind, squeezing and twisting to cause agonising pain and bleeding. The psyker selects one target within range and makes an Opposed Willpower Test (the Focus Power Test) with the target. If the target loses the test, it is stunned for one round plus one additional round for every degree of success the psyker beat it by. If it loses by four degrees or more, it also takes 1d5 R damage not reduced by armour or Toughness Bonus from internal injuries. This power has no effect against non-living creatures or targets with the Machine Trait.

DARK CURSE

Value: 300 xp

Prerequisites: Warp Secrets

Focus Power Test: Opposed Willpower

Range: 10m x Psy Rating

The psyker opens his senses to the warp, influencing the malign energies to blight and curse a victim. The psyker makes an Opposed Willpower Test (the Focus Power Test) with one target within range. If the psyker wins, the target suffers a -10 to all Skill and Characteristic Tests for one hour, plus one additional hour for every degree of success the psyker beat the target by.

If the psyker wins and scores three or more degrees of success on his Test, he can choose to blind or deafen the target in addition to the other penalties (provided the target has eyes or ears). Blood wells up within the target's eyes or ears and it is blinded or deafened for one hour.

If the psyker wins and scores five or more degrees of success, he can permanently blind or deafen the target (again, assuming the target can be deafened or blinded). The target's eyes or ears rupture in a shower of blood, dealing 2d5 Rending

damage to the head location and permanently blinding or deafening the target (if it survives, it will require augmentic hearing or vision). The target also takes 1d10 Insanity Points due to the horrific nature of what has happened to it.

If the psyker fails his Focus Power Test, he takes 1d5 Corruption Points.

FLESH WARP

Value: 200 xp

Prerequisites: None

Focus Power Test: Willpower

Range: Self

The psyker can mould his flesh like others would mould clay, making himself stronger, tougher, or faster. However, every change comes with a price. If the psyker succeeds on his Focus Power Test, he may increase one of the following Characteristics by 1d10 plus 1 additional point per Psy Rating: Strength, Toughness, or Agility. However, he must decrease one of the other three Characteristics by 1d5. These changes only last as long as the technique is sustained.

If the psyker succeeds on his Focus Power Test by two or more degrees, he may alter his appearance. Gender, height, and body mass must remain the same, as must eye-colour. However the psyker can change hair colour, skin tone, muscle tone, and even apparent age—within 10 years of his actual age.

SERPENT'S SCALES

Value: 300 xp

Prerequisites: Flesh Warp

Focus Power Test: Willpower

Range: Self

The psyker warps his flesh into something alien and utterly terrible. His skin hardens into rough scales, his arms ripple with cords of muscle, and his hands warp into sharp talons. The psyker increases his Strength (not Strength Bonus) by a value equal to twice his Psy Rating, and gains additional AP equal to his Psy Rating to all locations that stacks with any armour he may be wearing. He cannot use weapons, however both of his hands count as melee weapons that deal 1d10+SB Rending Damage with the Toxic Quality.

SUMMON DAEMON

Value: 700 xp

Prerequisites: Warp Secrets or Warfire, Dark Curse

Focus Power Test: Opposed Willpower

Range: 1m

The psyker's mind descends into the warp, making contact with one of its nefarious denizens. Through force of will, the psyker attempts to compel the creature to do his bidding, though the process scars his soul. The psyker selects a Daemon to compel (what Daemons may be available are up to the GM), but must select one with a lower Willpower than the psyker. The power takes three rounds to manifest, during which the psyker may not move or take any action. At the end of the three rounds, the psyker must make an Opposed Willpower Test (the Focus Power Test), with the Daemon. Should he win the Test, the daemon appears within one metre of the psyker, under his control. He directs its actions, and it attacks targets of his choice.

Each five rounds the psyker must spend a half action to make an Opposed Willpower Test with the Daemon—if he fails or loses the test the Daemon breaks free from his control and immediately attacks the fool that summoned it. It will remain for five rounds before vanishing. If the psyker wins, he can chose to direct its actions for another five rounds, or banish it back into the warp.

Such is the nature of this power that the psyker gains 1d10+4 Corruption Points for manifesting it. In addition, if he ever rolls Dark Summoning on the Perils of the Warp Table, the daemon that appears will be one of the daemons he summons or has summoned in the past, eager for revenge.

TIDE OF LIES

Value: 500 xp

Prerequisites: Warp Secrets

Focus Power Test: Opposed Willpower

Range: 5m x Psy Rating

The psyker's mind descends into the warp, whispering lies and half-truths into the ears of his enemies, overcoming their senses and turning them against their fellows. The psyker makes an Opposed Willpower Test (the Focus Power Test) against a number of targets equal to his Psy Rating within range. If he wins the Test, he can choose one of the following effects.

From the Journals of Mallachai Stern, 001.816M41

The taint of Chaos is a perversion I have dedicated my life to combating, and I continue to fight its scourge to this day. It is a task I take up gladly. Over my years in the Expanse, however, I have only seen their foul scourge increase. I have seen far too many savage worlds turned to the light of the Emperor, only to be burned by the barbed ships of that foul creature V'ell. What horrors await the survivors on Iniquity I can only guess, and pray their souls reach the Emperor when they are slain. If it was in my power, I would raise a host and burn that tainted world to bedrock, and if the Rogue Traders of the Expanse could put aside their squabbles long enough, they would have the strength to do this deed. Sadly, my words fall on deaf ears.

TABLE 3-3: PSYKANA MALIFICA

Name	Focus Time	Sustain	Xp Value	Focus Power Test
Agonising Grasp	Half Action	No	300	Opposed Willpower
Dark Curse	Half Action	No	300	Opposed Willpower
Flesh Warp	Half Action	Yes	200	Willpower
Serpent's Scales	Full Action	Yes	300	Willpower
Summon Daemon	Three Full Actions	Yes	700	Opposed Willpower
Tide of Lies	Full Action	No	500	Opposed Willpower
Warpfire	Half Action	No	200	Willpower
Warp Secrets	Full Action	No	100	Willpower

He can force his targets to believe one falsehood for a number of minutes equal to his Psy Rating. This falsehood cannot be something utterly ludicrous (the psyker could not convince the target he was falling into a bottomless chasm if he's standing on solid ground). However, the psyker could convince the target he was someone else, that the target must report to his superiors immediately, or any number of other lies. If there is a debate as to what this power can accomplish, the final arbitrator is the GM.

Alternatively, the psyker can force his targets to spend their next turn attacking one random target within range of their weapons (or moving to attack one target within movement or charge range, if they are equipped with melee weapons).

WARPFIRE

Value: 200 xp

Prerequisites: None

Focus Power Test: Willpower

Range: 5m x Psy Rating

The psyker ignites the very air with the power of the warp, hurling balls of multi-hued flame at his unfortunate target. The psyker makes a Willpower Test (the Focus Power Test) to hurl warpfire at a single target within range. The target may dodge the attack, but suffers a -10 penalty to the Dodge Test for every degree of success the psyker scores on his Focus Power Test. The attack deals 1d10 E damage with +1 Damage per Psy Rating. The target must also make an Agility Test or be set on fire.

WARP SECRETS

Value: 100 xp

Prerequisites: None

Focus Power Test: Willpower

Range: Self

The psyker listens to the whispers of the denizens of the warp, learning secrets and gaining hits of things yet to come. If the psyker succeeds on his Focus Power Test, he gains a +10 bonus to one WS, BS, or Skill Test every round for one round, plus one additional round for every degree of success. The bonus takes effect at the start of the psyker's next turn.

Alternatively, the psyker can learn one secret about one target within line of sight. The GM determines what secret to reveal, and should moderate how important the secret is based on how many degrees of success the psyker scores on his Focus Power Test. However, before revealing the secret,

the GM should roll secretly to see if the secret is true or not—the warp is fickle and often deceitful. On an 80 or higher, the warp lies to the psyker, and the GM should make up a falsehood to reveal instead. Decrease the threshold by 10 for every degree of success the psyker scored on his Focus Power Test (the more important the secret, the less likely it's true).

THE DARK ART OF SORCERY

The scholarly and objective individual might describe sorcery as the manipulation of the warp through arcane ritual, occult formula, and intense belief in order to manifest abilities and powers not unlike those demonstrated by psykers. However, this clinical definition does not address the sanity-shattering dangers of such practices, or the often utterly horrific results.

Both sorcery and psychic powers manipulate the warp. However, psychic abilities are an abnormality that manifest in a relatively rare few individuals, a pure and potent connection to the Immaterium allowing that person to manipulate the very fabric of reality. In theory, the only limits on what psykers can accomplish with their powers are the limits their own mind imposes—although in actuality many facets of a psyker's life will determine what their abilities can accomplish.

Sorcery, on the other hand, is theoretically available for anyone to use. The sorcerous arts rely on formula, ritual, rite, and the user's own belief in such practices to briefly dip into the bottomless well of the Immaterium. Every mind—with a few rare exceptions such as Untouchables—has a presence within and a connection to the warp. Sorcery works through that connection.

Many sorcerers claim that their practices are simply an art or misunderstood science, unjustly persecuted by oppressive organisations such as the Inquisition. However, what these deluded souls fail to realise is that sorcery is always fraught with risk. The warp is fickle, the warp is dangerous, and the warp is aware of those who would use it for their own purposes. Even the most careful sorcerers are eventually consumed by the powers they attempted to control.

SORCERERS IN THE 41ST MILLENNIUM

Sorcerers in the 41st Millennium are almost universally shunned by the Imperium. Sorcery is considered a heresy of the most dire sort by Imperial authorities, and the Inquisition, Arbites, and other arms of the Adeptus Terra will not hesitate to hunt down



sorcerers and purge them with flame and bolter. Apart from a rare few radical Inquisitors and misguided fools, none within the Imperium tolerate the presence of a known sorcerer.

Even amongst Rogue Traders—a group known for their lax attitude towards humanity's laws and established norms—sorcerers are likely to be killed. Only the most desperate and deviate of Rogue Traders employ sorcerers, and all know that in the Imperium's eyes, those who harbour such individuals are as guilty as the individuals themselves. No loyal subject of the Emperor will harbour a known sorcerer.

On the worlds beyond the Imperium's control, sorcerers are likely to be treated with equal parts suspicion and fear. Though they may not know the source of a sorcerer's powers, primitive populations often recognise the inherent danger, and eliminate the threat with mob justice. Only among open heretics and worshippers of the Dark Gods can sorcerers find a true refuge.

SORCERY MECHANICS

In **ROGUE TRADER**, the powers sorcerers have access to are the same as those available to psykers, simply manifested using different methods, and possibly with more serious consequences. Unique sorcerous powers are fairly rare, as sorcery is a more limited art in what it can accomplish than psychic powers.

Sorcery is represented mechanically as a set of three different Talents, presented here. Each has a set of unique set of prerequisites, as well as a set of general prerequisites listed in the sidebar **Becoming a Sorcerer**. All prerequisites must be met before an Explorer can take the Talent.

BECOMING A SORCERER

Sorcery Talents are available to anyone to take, with the exception of player characters who are Untouchables or otherwise completely isolated from the Warp (if there is some question as to who may qualify this, the final determination is up to the GM). Anyone may take these Talents, even psykers, provided they meet the prerequisites listed before each Talent, and the prerequisites listed below.

A source of learning. All sorcerers must have access to some source of knowledge from which they can learn the sorcerous arts. What form this source takes is a matter of roleplaying more than rules, and should be determined by the GM and the player. Some likely sources include:

- Ancient tomes and grimoires containing information on the Daemonic and malefic, preferably written by other sorcerers.
- Another sorcerer willing to take on an apprentice.
- A dark pact through a fell power of the warp, such as a daemon or another warp entity.

It is up for the GM to determine whether the source is authentic or truthful enough to provide actual information, or if it will simply lead the player's character astray and teach him nothing of value.

Time for study. Each time a sorcerer takes a new sorcery Talent, he must spend a great deal of time learning to use his abilities. Before he can utilise his Talent, he must spend time equal to 2d10 weeks minus his Intelligence bonus—to a minimum of one week—studying his source of learning.

Spend Experience Points. Each sorcery Talent should always cost a certain amount of Experience Points. Since these are essentially Elite Advances, the GM is the final arbitrator of how much these cost. However, provided here are several guidelines, and unless the GM has a very good reason, the xp cost should never be less than what is listed here.

- Sorcerer: 750 xp
- Master Sorcerer: 1000 xp
- Sorcerous Power: The xp cost of the psychic power +250 additional xp.

Sorcerer (Talent)

Prerequisites: Intelligence 35, Forbidden Lore (Warp or Daemonology), Scholastic Lore (Occult).

The Explorer has mastered the basics of Sorcery. He may choose any one Psychic Technique (not Navigator Power) with an xp cost of 200 or less that he may now use as a sorcerous power. He is not required to pay the xp cost of the Psychic Technique, as this is already included in the Sorcerer Talent. However, he must follow any prerequisites for the Psychic Technique. He may use this power as if he was a Psyker with a Psy Rating equal to half his unmodified Intelligence Bonus (no benefits from Unnatural Intelligence, for example). The Focus Power Test for this power becomes Intelligence for the Explorer. If the Test was Opposed Willpower originally, the Explorer will use his Intelligence, although his opponents use Willpower.

Master Sorcerer (Talent)

Prerequisites: Sorcerer, Intelligence 45, Forbidden Lore (Warp or Daemonology)+10, Scholastic Lore (Occult)+10.

The Explorer has become a master of the forbidden arts. When using his sorcerous powers, he may use them as if he is a Psyker with a Psy Rating equal to his full unmodified Intelligence Bonus.

Sorcerous Power (Talent)

Prerequisites: Sorcerer

The Explorer has mastered another forbidden sorcerous power. He may choose any one Psychic Technique, paying

the xp cost listed in the technique plus any additional costs (see the sidebar **Becoming a Sorcerer**) as the cost of the Talent. However, he must follow any prerequisites for the Psychic Technique. The Focus Power Test for this power becomes Intelligence for the Explorer. If the Test was Opposed Willpower originally, the Explorer will use his Intelligence, although his opponents use Willpower.

Universal Sorcery Rules

Sorcerers are not psykers. Abilities and powers that affect or benefit psykers have no effect or benefit for sorcerers.

Whenever a character purchases a Sorcery Talent, he gains 1d5+1 Corruption Points. These Corruption Points cannot be avoided by any means, even Talents designed to reduce Corruption Point gain.

Whenever a Sorcerer is required to roll on the Psychic Phenomena Table or the Perils of the Warp Table, he adds his Corruption Point total to the result of his roll, before any other relevant modifiers are applied.

When a sorcerer uses a sorcerous power, he must use some sort of ritual. This can be tracing a pattern in the air, speaking a few words of power, drawing sigils in blood, or gesturing in a particular fashion. If he is unable to do this for any reason, the power is not activated.

Psychic Powers that have a Focus Time of a Free Action cannot be learned through Sorcery Talents. Even the most proficient sorcerer must undertake at least a brief ritual to manifest his power—such momentary manifestations are beyond them.

SAYNAY SORCERER

The sorcerers of the Saynay Clan are among the vilest practitioners of the sorcerous arts. Their rituals involve sacrifice, blood, and cannibal consumption, preferably while the victim is still alive to witness the feast. A sorcerer usually serves the Saynay clan in the role of advisor and enforcer both. They use their warp-divination to plot courses for their masters, and consume their masters' foes in hellfire. If a member of the Saynay Clan is to become a shipmaster, he must have the allegiance of at least one sorcerer, and the more successful one of those wretches is, the more foul conjurers flock to his banner.

Sorcerers are also known to infiltrate the worlds and stations of the Koronus Expanse. There they lurk in the darkest corners of society, sacrificing and bleeding their victims for the pleasure of their masters. More than one ship-master has discovered a gore-splattered abattoir in the lowest decks of their vessel, just as the planetary authorities find sewers and alleys drenched in blood. Sometimes, the Saynay sorcerer may summon fell warp-creatures to do their bidding, preferring to do so in packed marketplaces and other locations where helpless folk tend to congregate. What this accomplishes beyond slaughter is unknown, but whispered tales told of the Saynay

Clan say no sorcerer is allowed a position of leadership—they must always advise. Whether or not this is because the gore-caked masters of the Clan do not trust the sorcerers, or because the leaders of the clan are powerful enough to compel total obedience from the wretches, none can say.



Sorcerer Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
40	30	36	48	43	56	33	51	13

Movement: 4/8/12/24

Wounds: 15

Skills: Awareness (Per), Chem-Use (Int), Common Lore (Koronus Expanse) (Int) +10, Contortionist (Ag), Deceive (Fel) +20, Dodge (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Daemonology, The Warp) (Int) +20, Forbidden Lore (Pirates) (Int), Literacy (Int), Navigation (Warp) (Int), Scholastic Lore (Occult) (Int) +20, Secret Tongue (Dark Speech), Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Int)

Talents: Dark Soul, Heightened Senses (Smell), Fearless, Jaded, Master Sorcerer, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive, Universal), Pistol Training (Las, SP), Peer (Renegades), Resistance (Psychic Techniques), Sorcerer, Sorcerous Power x4, Strong Minded, Swift Attack, Two Weapon Wielder (Melee), Whispers

Armour: Gore-encrusted robes and chain (Body, Arms, Legs 2).

Weapons: Obsidian long-knife (1d5+5 R; Pen 4; Balanced, Tearing).

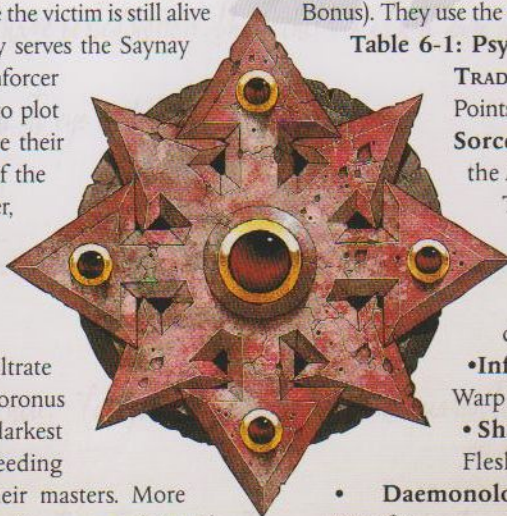
Gear: Runes, sigils, grimoire of sorcerer's rites, bag of rotting bits, tattered cloak.

Warp Sorcerer: The Saynay sorcerers are all skilled practitioners of the sorcerous arts. Each has a number of Psychic Techniques they can use as if they had a Psy Rating of 5 (their Intelligence Bonus). They use the Renegade Psykers and Sorcerers Row on

Table 6-1: Psychic Strength on page 157 in **ROGUE TRADER**. Each also has 40+2d10 Corruption Points.

Sorcery Powers: Each Saynay sorcerer has the Augury and Psycholocation Divination Techniques from **ROGUE TRADER**. In addition, they also have one of the three following power sets (the GM is welcome to select five different techniques as he prefers):

- **Infiltrator:** Flesh Warp, Tide of Lies, Warp Secrets
- **Shadow-stalker:** Agonising Grasp, Flesh Warp, Serpent's Scales
- **Daemonologist:** Summon Daemon, Dark Curse, Warfire



BLADE-THING

Those who live in the underdecks of Footfall tell tales of creatures that lurk in the dark corners at the edge of sight, things of mist, shadows, and far too many razor-edged blades. These creatures prowl in the unlit places below humanity's hives and stations, waiting and watching for some

GREATER DAEMON (WALKING NIGHTMARE)

lone unfortunate. Their victim's bodies are found days later, bled dry through a thousand cuts. The Ordo Malleus names such creatures Demons, but to their prey they are simply Blade-things.

The Blade-thing is a Daemon that thrives on fear and blood. It possesses a malicious, animalistic cunning, and often shows a proclivity to slay unseen, only to leave evidence of its work for others to discover. The sorcerers of the Saynay Clan delight in the creatures' work, and some twisted resonance between their spirit and the Daemon leads to the sorcerers showing a tendency to summon Blade-things to do their twisted bidding. In turn, Blade-things seem almost eager in their service. The rare few slaves and captives who have escaped captivity from the Saynay Clan tell frightening tales of the pens and pits in the bowels of their ramshackle vessels, and the sharp-bladed creatures that lurk and roam through unlit corridors, killing anyone—friend or foe—they find alone.

The rites to summon a Blade-thing and bind it in reality for any length of time are a secret passed amongst the Saynay sorcerers. It is likely the blasphemous rituals can only be found in their sorcerous grimoires—and perhaps in the hidden vaults of the Tricorn Palace on Scintilla, kept in the care of the Inquisition. Beyond the paraphernalia of blasphemous runes and a eight-pointed symbol of Chaos rendered into a summoning circle, the main ingredients of the rite are a light source (such a candle or lamp), and a sacrificial victim. The key act involves extinguishing the light, then, in the darkness that follows, slaying the sacrifice with a single cut, preferably to the throat or other artery. If the Blade-thing is lured by this offering, it will manifest in the shadows, listening to the sorcerer's whispered orders. However, tales are told that if the sorcerer has any open cuts or wounds on himself, the Blade-thing will take his life instead, and return to the warp.

Blade-thing Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
60	—	36 ⁽⁶⁾	30	60	28	60	40	10

Movement: 6/12/18/36

Wounds: 15

Skills: Awareness (Per)+20, Concealment (Ag) +20, Contortionist (Ag), Dodge (Ag)+10, Psyniscience (Per), Silent Move (Ag)+20

Talents: Blademaster, Heightened Senses (Hearing), Lightning Attack, Step Aside, Sure Strike, Swift Attack

Traits: Daemonic (TB 6), Dark Sight, Fear (3), From Beyond

Armour: Unseen armour (All 3).

Weapons: Far too many blades (1d10+5 R; Pen 6; Tearing).

Gear: None

Thing of Smoke and Shadow: The Blade-thing lives in shadows and darkness. When in a shadow or other dark area, it gains the Phase Trait. It may only become incorporeal or substantial in a dark or shadowed area.

Of all the dark fates that can befall a ship is the Warp should its Gellar field flicker or fall, the worst is the manifestation of a Greater Daemon. Born of nameless horrors and inhuman hatred, an entity of this magnitude is almost impossible to stop by mortal hands. Powerful beyond belief, this lord of darkness desires no more than to drag the screaming souls of its victims back to the abyssal depths of the hell-void from which it came.

Such horrifying entities are thankfully rare, but many voidsmen tell tales of such creatures manifesting aboard a vessel. Such stories inevitably end with the "walking nightmare" departing, leaving a drifting charnel-tomb in its wake.

Walking Nightmare Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
68	29	55 ⁽¹⁵⁾	54 ⁽¹⁰⁾	18	65	65	79	13

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 80

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Deceive (Fel) +20, Forbidden Lore (Daemonology, Heresy, the Warp, plus any other two) (Int) +20, Psyniscience (WP) +20, Secret Tongue (Daemonic) (Int) +20, Speak Language (all) (Int) +20

Talents: Ambidextrous, Furious Assault, Swift Attack, Two Weapon Wielder (Melee).

Traits: Daemonic (TB 10), Dark Sight, Fear 4, Flyer 8, From Beyond, Size (Enormous), Unholy Aura[†], Unnatural Strength (x3), Vortex of the Abyss^{††}, Warp Fire^{†††}, Warp Instability.

Daemonic Presence: All creatures within 35 metres take a -10 penalty to Willpower Tests as the walls weep blood, metal corrodes, vox systems scream with static and nightmarish visions plague the waking world.

Weapons: Claws and fangs (2d10+15 R; Pen 0; Counts as two weapons)

†Unholy Aura: The Daemon is not protected by armour, but shields itself from attacks using the raw power of the Warp.

††Vortex of the Abyss: Any Psychic power used within 35 metres of the Daemon automatically causes Psychic Phenomena (see **ROGUE TRADER**, page 160). The Daemon may vomit forth 1d5 Warp Predators as a full action, but if it does so, it immediately loses a number of wounds equal to twice the number of Warp Predators generated, not reduced by Armour or Toughness Bonus.

†††Warp Fire: As a Full Action the Daemon may choose to hurl a blast of warp fire. This is a ranged attack and the daemon must roll to hit normally. The attack inflicts 2d10+3 E damage with a Blast (2) and the Warp Weapon quality.

SENDAK VOLTRASSE

A spiteful vassal of Karrad Vall, Sendak Voltrasse—whose original name is now long forgotten, even to himself—has fought at Vall’s command for as long as he can remember. After what may be centuries of service, Voltrasse harbours great hatred for Vall, but is inexplicably powerless against the Faceless Lord, and cannot remember any reason for this hatred. For years now, Voltrasse has journeyed across the Void, seeming never to stop save to raid, plunder and destroy, searching for something that his master desires. None know what that thing is, save for Vall. However, his thoughts infest his servant’s mind, goading him ever onwards.

Voltrasse’s original nature is a forgotten thing, stripped from his mind until he remembers it no more, leaving him unable to recall what shape his body once had. He towers above all others under his command, his sickly flesh and iron-hard bone not truly alive. Beneath the surface of his gore-caked voidsuit, thin, dark veins worm across his pale skin, twitching and shifting as if imbued with a life of their own; he can no longer remove the suit, as it has long-since fused to his flesh. Visible to all through a hole in the front of the voidsuit, a sphere of obsidian covered in blasphemous engravings is embedded in his chest, held in place by a twisted scaffold of black iron festooned with barbed needles. His eye sockets are empty, as are those of many of his crew, and his face is covered in ancient scars and unnerving tattoos.



Voltrasse Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
52	18	51	58	44	41	61	51	38

Movement: 4/8/12/24

Wounds: 18

Skills: Awareness (Per) +20, Chem-Use (Int), Command (Fel) +20, Common Lore (Imperium) (Int) +10, Common Lore (Koronus Expanse) (Int) +10, Common Lore (War) (Int) +10, Contortionist (Ag), Deceive (Fel) +10, Dodge (Ag) +20, Forbidden Lore (Daemonology) (Int), Forbidden Lore (Pirates) (Int), Forbidden Lore (The Warp) (Int) +20, Interrogation (WP) +10, Intimidate (S) +20, Literacy (Int), Navigation (Warp) (Int) +20, Psyniscience (Per) +20, Secret Tongue (Dark Speech), Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Int).

Talents: Berserk Charge, Blind Fighting, Combat Master, Combat Sense, Crushing Blow, Die Hard, Disturbing Voice, Favoured by the Warp, Frenzy, Furious Assault, Hardy, Heightened Senses (Sound, Taste, Smell, Touch), Improved Warp Sense, Jaded, Lightning Attack, Melee Weapon Training (Universal), Pistol Training (Las, SP), Peer (Renegades), Psy Rating 6⁺, Swift Attack, True Grit, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee), Unarmed Master, Unarmed Warrior, Wall of Steel, Warp Conduit, Warp Sense.

†As Voltrasse is a renegade psyker, he uses the Renegade Psykers and Sorcerers row of Table 6–1: Psychic Strength in Rogue Trader.



Traits: Blind (penalty negated by Unnatural Senses), Fear (1), From Beyond, Regeneration, Unnatural Senses (122m).

Prowl the Warp: Sendak Voltrasse has been gifted with the ability to see into the Warp clearly, allowing him to steer his ship through the Warp as a Navigator does.

Disciplines: Telepathy, Telekinesis.

Psychic Techniques: Agonizing Grasp, Mind’s Eye, Mind Link, Mind Probe, Mind Scan, Precision Telekinesis, Psychic Scream, Telekinetic Shield, Warpfire, Warp Secrets

Armour: Corrupted Armoured Voidsuit (Body 3, Head 3, Arms 3, Legs 3).

Weapons: Dual gore-caked Chainswords (1d10+7 R; Pen 2; Tearing, Balanced).

Gear: Obsidian sphere, Lord-Captain’s Baton, Stolen and annotated Best-Craftsmanship Navis Prima, The *Promise of Sedition*.

PROMISE OF SEDITION

Hull: Cruiser

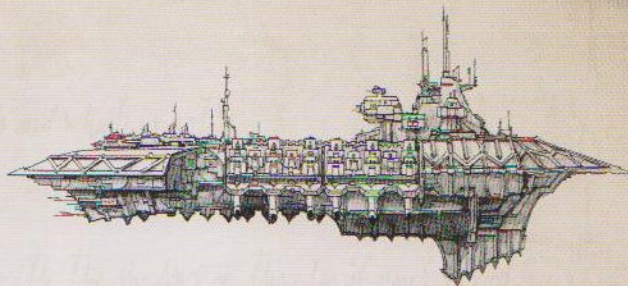
Class: Corrupted Murder-class Cruiser

Dimensions: 5km long approx, 0.9km abeam approx

Mass: 31 megatonnes, approx

Crew: 95,000 approx

Accel: 4.2 gravities max sustainable acceleration



Dating back to the early 33rd Millennium, the *Promise of Sedition* was once a proud part of the Imperial Navy, bearing the name *Cypra Vincere*. After four centuries of exemplary service to the Imperium, it was lost in the Warp on a routine patrol towards the Cadian Gate, inexplicably given that its escorts survived the voyage intact and without incident. In the 36th Millennium, a vessel superficially matching the description and broadcast codes of *Cypra Vincere* was sighted following the unexpected rebellion of the Haves-15 Agri-worlds, aiding in the resistance against Navy forces.

It was re-designated in Imperial Navy records as the traitor vessel *Promise of Sedition*, and several Battlefleets hunted the ship for many long centuries before it vanished again near the Gothic Sector, only to reappear in the Koronus Expanse many years later. Sebastian identified the ship in 211.M41, when it attacked colonist transports descending upon Lucin's Breath; Winterscale's fleet drove the tainted cruiser away, but not before the transports had been raided for prisoners. Since then, it has been sighted several times, sometimes raiding for slaves or resources, while at other times it has simply disengaged from the fighting, the warp-spawned storm clouds left in its wake making it difficult for any to pursue.

Speed: 7

Manoeuvrability: +15

Detection: +15

Void Shields: 2

Armour: 19

Hull Integrity: 70

Morale: 100

Crew Population: 100

Crew: Crack (40)

Turret Rating: 2

Weapon Capacity: Prow 1, Port 2, Starboard 2

Space: 75

Power: 90

Essential Components

Saturnine Pattern Class 4 Drive, Strelor 2 Warp Engine, Sacramentum Maleficus, Multiple Void Shield Array, Ship Master's Bridge, Vitae Pattern Life Sustainer, Pressed-crew Quarters, Mark-201.b Augur Array

Supplemental Components

Prow Lance Battery (Lance, Strength 2, Damage 1d10+1, Crit Rating 3, Range 11): The lances on the *Promise of Sedition* were originally limited-traverse weapons only capable of firing forward. The weapons have been modified to fire into the fore, port, and starboard arcs, but rebuilding the turrets cost the weapons power.

Port Mars-pattern Plasma Battery (x2): (Macrobattery, Strength 5, Damage 1d10+4, Crit Rating 4, Range 8)

Starboard Mars-pattern Plasma Battery (x2): (Macrobattery, Strength 5, Damage 1d10+4, Crit Rating 4, Range 8)

Munitorium: The effects of this component have been included in the damage ratings listed above.

Slaveholds: These cavernous chambers are filled with a screaming horde of slaves, driven mad by lack of sleep, the torments inflicted upon them by the ship's slavers, and a constant litany of heretical notions that blares at them through gargoyle-like vox-casters. In times of need, groups of slaves can be dragged to any other part of the ship to perform manual labour or reinforce boarding parties. This vessel halves any loss of Crew Population it suffers, rounding up.

Vaults: The ill-gotten treasures of countless vessels are contained within the *Promise of Sedition's* vaults. If the ship is captured with this Component intact, it grants an additional 100 Achievement Points towards any one of the Explorers' current Objectives.



USING SENDAK AND THE PROMISE OF SEDITION

Sendak Voltrasse and his ship, the *Promise of Sedition* are a cunning and dangerous foe GMs can pit their players against. Sendak himself can be matched against low to mid-ranked Explorers, while the *Promise of Sedition* is a threat to any ships smaller than another cruiser. However, Sendak is not foolish, and flees fights he cannot win. The GM may get the best use out of him and his ship as a recurring enemy for the Explorers to contend with, plaguing their endeavours or attacking them until they rally the forces to hunt him down and destroy him once and for all.

SHIP COMPLICATIONS AND SPECIAL RULES

Reaver Crew: The *Promise of Sedition* is an ancient and corrupt vessel, commanded by heretics and crewed by irredeemable traitors. Such is their eagerness to kill and despoil that they gain a +10 bonus on all Command Tests in Boarding Actions.

They Carry The Tempest: The *Promise of Sedition* is wreathed in unnatural clouds of vapour that crackle with lightning, trailing behind it as it moves. This storm is actually a psychic phenomenon, a sign of the universe and the Immaterium alike reacting to the corrupted ship's presence. With the exception of beings who have sworn themselves to Chaos, any creature within 5 VUs of the *Promise of Sedition* suffers a -10 penalty to Willpower Tests and Psyniscience Tests.

IMPERIAL ORGANISATIONS

"The Emperor's Light does not shine alone, for all its power. It must be carried, to dark places, in the hearts of the pious and upon the lips of the devout. Only then can His will and His vision dominate all the corners of the galaxy."

—Kalendra Asceline, Sister Palatine Famulous, during her service advising the Rogue Trader Ephranin Toba.

Though vast, the Imperium is not all-pervasive. Though it claims a greater portion of the galaxy than any other civilisation, the dominion of the Emperor's realm still covers only a tiny proportion—fewer than one in a hundred thousand star systems are reckoned to be home to Imperial worlds, with those that remain often uninhabitable or held by one of innumerable alien species that exist within the galaxy.

Beyond the reach of the many organisations, departments, offices and divisions of the Imperium, the galaxy is a vast, dark and wild place, full of wonder and terror in equal measure. It is these places, beyond the edges of the Imperium, which Rogue Traders and others explore, seeking to find worth amongst the stars so that the Imperium may expand across them. Beyond the light of the Astronomicon, beyond the laws and dictates of the Imperium, the comfort of familiarity is a precious thing, as is the support of those who share a common purpose. For this reason, the Imperium does not leave the exploration of space to one group alone, instead allowing many organisations to expand outwards into the darkness so that the Imperium might discover what lies beyond.

THE DISCIPLES OF THULE

For many long centuries, the Explorer Fleet of Magos Paracelsus Thule has pushed as far beyond the boundaries of the Imperium as possible, never content with those places already under the Emperor's rule. It is very likely they

voyaged into the Koronus Expanse secretly long before Purity Lathimon discovered the Koronus Passage. The scarcity of contact with the Disciples of Thule makes it difficult to confirm anything of their movements, and the Mechanicus within the Calixis Sector states that Thule's fleet did not venture into the Expanse before the Maw was discovered.

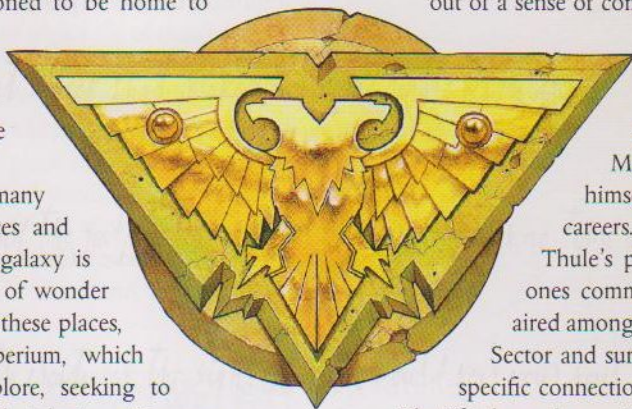
Quite how this is possible is unknown; while rumours and legends of the Koronus Passage have existed for several millennia, since Explorators and Rogue Traders first mapped what has since become the Calixis Sector, Thule's Explorators have only rarely been seen entering it from either side, leading many to suspect that the Magos and his closest followers know of other, secret routes through the Great Warp Storms. This alone has resulted in more than a few clashes between Rogue Traders and the Adeptus Mechanicus as the former have attempted to wrest these secrets from the Explorators.

Thule's fleet has not existed as a single coherent entity since the fourth century M41, and his followers are united more out of a sense of common philosophy and collective

respect for their nominal leader. Many of the smaller fleets that identify themselves as Disciples of Thule are led by Magi who studied under Thule himself at some earlier point in their careers. Others simply have adopted Thule's philosophies—for his views are ones commonly and often controversially aired amongst the Tech-Priests of the Calixis Sector and surrounding regions—but bear no specific connection to him. In any case, few who identify themselves as Disciples of Thule are ever seen in Port Wander or the Calixis Sector more than once a decade, and some who have been encountered in the Expanse have not returned to Imperial Space in over seventy years.

The latter group—those who follow Thule's example, rather than the man himself—are becoming increasingly common with each decade that passes. The last time that Paracelsus Thule was seen in Imperial space was upon Port Wander, nearly two centuries ago. While rumoured sightings of his flagship (a non-standard cruiser-class vessel known as the *Revelation*) within the Expanse are numerous, nobody seems able to confirm where he is, or even if he is still alive. With adherents to his philosophy swiftly becoming the majority within the Disciples of Thule, even those who follow him have little idea as to his location or his fate.

Amidst all the rumour and speculation, stands one man—



From the Journals of Mallachai Stern, 095.816 M41

Paracelsus Thule is a madman, his theories and postulations even more distasteful than the usual writings of the Machine Cult. I have read some of his works (though against my better judgement, as I prefer not to expose myself to the rantings of deviant faiths), and from what I can tell, his work is radical even to those in the Mechanicus. Amongst his less favourable qualities, I note a distinct disdain for the works of the Imperium, and a particular loathing for what he claims is the "enslavement of the machine by superstitious flesh-bound fools." His students and followers so often demonstrate an unpleasant antagonism towards those not initiated into the blessed secrets of the machine.

Were I to meet him, I would be pleased to demonstrate my antagonism in turn.



Mortigen Hale. One of Thule's oldest students and a prominent member of the Disciples of Thule, Hale claims to know for certain that his old mentor is still alive. More importantly, he claims to know his location. Hale recently returned to the Calixis Sector to repair and resupply, and brings with him news of Paracelsus Thule's greatest triumph—the supposed discovery of an intact STC database, deep within the Koronus Expanse. Thule, Hale claims, has spent the last few decades unlocking its secrets and will soon return with the knowledge he has discovered.

The uproar this claim has caused is considerable, with many condemning Thule of heresy for presuming to delve so deeply into sacred STC lore. Others claim that Thule and his followers are all insane, tainted by long exposure to the wilderness of the Expanse, and that this talk of an intact STC database is nonsense. A few say that perhaps Thule's followers have found something far worse, something vile and destructive beyond the imaginations of men.

Thule himself is not present to answer these accusations, and his last words before departing into the Koronus Expanse in the 7th century M41 provide little in the way of understanding as to what he sought: "I am driven to seek it, this ageless artifice. It is power and knowledge beyond any I have encountered, and it calls to me more strongly than anything I have ever known." The most recent rumours of his whereabouts say that his flagship is twisted and deformed, a mockery of its former glory. This does not bode well for Thule, if he even still lives to command the *Revelation*.

ENDEAVOUR COMPONENTS

In this section are a number of sections listed as Endeavour Components. These are additional elements and plot hooks that can be added to other Endeavours, allowing the Explorers to gain additional Achievement Points or some other benefit for performing particular actions. Some of these may come with a cost or drawback, however, which provide the GM with a few additional plot hooks to influence later Endeavours.

Some Endeavour Components have requirements—some particular objects, abilities or resources that are generally necessary to make use of the Endeavour Component. These can be ignored or altered at the GM's discretion, though lacking a particular ability or resource may make benefiting from the Endeavour Component more difficult, again at the GM's discretion.

HOUSE KRIN

"I'd rather die tortured on Iniquity than end up a Throne-grasping miser like the masters of House Krin."

—Calligos Winterscale

As one of the oldest and wealthiest of the Great Houses of the Calixis Sector, House Krin are an influential force in Sector politics, to put it mildly. Noble families, commercial concerns, even religious factions, local branches of the military and the Administratum and the Imperial Commanders of dozens of worlds all owe at least some of their prosperity and power to the support and financial backing of House Krin. Rare amongst its contemporaries as being one of the few remaining noble bloodlines of the Sector to have remained true to its familial roots rather than becoming a corporation hidden behind the façade of nobility, House Krin remain quietly content in their position.

With the discovery of the Koronus Passage, the eyes of the Calixis Sector's nobility turned towards the Expanse, expectant of the wealth and prestige that could emerge from it. It was at their insistence that the Lord Sector Calixis petitioned the Adeptus Terra for the right to issue Warrants of Trade to explore the region, suddenly granting all manner of individuals the right to venture into uncharted reaches and bring back riches.

House Krin moved subtly and slowly with this development, not wanting to appear as eager and desperate as other noble houses. However, since many of the newly-established Rogue Traders knew of House Krin's wealth, the banking house soon invested money in a succession of Rogue Traders, and established itself within Port Wander to deal with these would-be explorers.

The Expanse is a dangerous place, however, and many who invested in Rogue Traders found their money wasted as their chosen explorers simply failed to return, ruining a great many families and institutions in the process. House Krin was no different, finding fully half of its investments into the Koronus Expanse rendered worthless by death and disaster. Those that triumphed, however, brought back incredible wealth; by some accounts, many of those who returned were able to

AGENTS OF HOUSE KRIN

A sector-spanning institution with wealth and influence that eclipses that of even the wealthiest Rogue Traders, House Krin can bring almost any resource to bear should it need to do so. Consequently, its agents are numerous and varied. When the situation calls for the threat of violence, House Krin's coffers can afford elite mercenaries (the Oathsworn Bodyguard on page 372 of *ROGUE TRADER* is a good example) and even starships to convince their debtors to comply. At the other end of things, House Krin employs a great many people with a talent for numbers and a knack for spotting valuable customers.

HOUSE KRIN CLERK

The following template is designed to be applied to the Colonist NPC on page 370 of *ROGUE TRADER*. It represents a relatively minor employee of House Krin, the kind likely to be found in abundance within the Chamber of Gold on Port Wander.

Char: Int 40, Per 35, WP 35, Fel 40.

Skills: Commerce (Fel), Common Lore (Imperium) (Int) +10, Common Lore (Rogue Traders) (Int), Evaluate (Int) +10, Literacy (Int) +10, Scrutiny (Per), Secret Tongue (House Krin) (Int) +10, Speak Language (Trader's Cant) (Int) +10.

Gear: Auto-quill, collection of data-slates, vox-recorder and Remuneration Engine

HOUSE KRIN QUAESTOR

The Quaestructors of House Krin are a humourless and serious group, charged with ensuring that the investments of House Krin are spent wisely. This is a relatively major employee of House Krin, likely assigned to a specific Rogue Trader and accompanied by two Oathsworn Bodyguards at all times.

Char: Int 53, Per 48, WP 50, Fel 40.

Skills: Awareness (Per), Barter (Fel) +10, Commerce (Fel) +20, Common Lore (Imperium, Koronus Expanse, Rogue Traders) (Int) +10, Evaluate (Int) +10, Inquiry (Fel) +20, Literacy (Int) +10, Logic (Int), Scrutiny (Per) +10, Scholastic Lore (Bureaucracy, Cryptology, Heraldry, Imperial Warrants) (Int) +10, Secret Tongue (House Krin) (Int) +10, Speak Language (Trader's Cant) (Int) +10.

Gear: Compact Laspistol (15m; S/-/-; 1d10+1 E; Pen 0; Rld Full; Reliable), Two Auto-quills, numerous data-slates, micro-bead, vox-recorder.

pay back ten times what had been invested in them.

The opening of the Koronus Expanse shattered as many fortunes as it made, however, and many soon backed out of such ventures, leaving House Krin all but alone in their willingness to back Rogue Traders—few had the means to support ventures that could as easily bring ruin as it could immense wealth.

In the centuries that followed, House Krin's fortunes increased further, the roll of years giving their agents in Port Wander the experience needed to better judge who to back and who to refuse until almost eight in every ten of the expeditions they invested in return with their holds overflowing. When Waaagh! Gulgrog struck Port Wander, it was Istain Vanerrek-Krin, who operated the Port Wander offices, who opened his coffers and secured the services of every mercenary present—some hundred thousand men in total—for the port's defence, even as he boarded the trader that would take him to safety.

The years have not always been prosperous, however. After successfully backing the Rogue Trader Soldon Vex for many decades, an ill-fated attempt to break into the nephium trade on Lucin's Breath saw him ruined at the hands of Aspyce Chorda. Even as Vex attempted to wage war, Krin issued privateer commissions to hunt him down and claim his ship in the House's name. The threat of repossession—not to mention House Krin's political leverage—was sufficient to convince Vex to capitulate. Soldon Vex was bound to their service for twenty years before his debts were considered repaid. The cost to House Krin for his recklessness was enormous; they were forced to sell their stake in dozens of their least-profitable ventures across the Calixis Sector, loosening the House's hold on Calixis for the first time in two millennia.

Their position weakened, House Krin worked hard to reclaim what it had lost, turning its gaze back to the Calixis Sector for several decades, while leaving their ventures in the Koronus Expanse under the watchful eye of Justinian Krin, an eager and ruthless man who accumulated enemies as quickly as he did wealth. After nearly forty years of prosperous but unpopular decisions, Justinian's life was brutally ended a little under a decade ago by an assassin who appeared only as a "shining phantom," reducing Justinian's body to nothing more than a slick of toxic slime in the process.

The assassin has never been identified, let alone caught, and House Krin offers vast sums for any certain information about the assassin or those who ordered the killing. The man currently overseeing the Koronus ventures, Anastis Oroday Krin, is paranoid about his own fate, cautious to the extreme and seldom appears in person without a platoon of hand-picked armed men at his side. Even so, House Krin is working ruthlessly to reestablish themselves within the Expanse, and is always looking for promising ventures to invest in.

ENDEAVOUR COMPONENT: BACKING FROM HOUSE KRIN

Requirement: The Explorers must have a Profit Factor of 45, or a Profit Factor of 35 and the Peer (Nobility) Talent to use this Endeavour Component.

Every year, dozens of Rogue Traders deal with House Krin for loans, using the finances obtained to fund a planned expedition. Successfully negotiating for backing of this sort is a tricky matter, for House Krin's brokers are skilled, cunning

and cautious, unwilling to part with their employer's money on a venture deemed too risky or insufficiently profitable.

Successful negotiations result in an immediate 200 Achievement Points towards the Explorers' current Endeavour. This may be increased further at GM's discretion, but greater gains should be more difficult to negotiate. However, the Explorers' are then in debt, and this will come back to plague them in future. This should be resolved as one or more Misfortunes, as debt collectors begin to reclaim House Krin's money.

THE KASBALLICA MISSION

"The Kasballica? Cross them and you'll end up with a blade in your back, and they'll kill your kin as well, just for the inconvenience."

—Jonas the Sharp, Footfallen

It is not only the legitimate authorities who have much to gain from the exploration and exploitation of the Koronus Expanse. For centuries, criminal organisations have attempted to benefit from the wealth and power that flows back from the Expanse, with varying degrees of success. The Kasballica Mission, based in Footfall, is the latest and most successful in a long line of these criminal groups.

The Kasballica has a long and bloody history that predates the Calixis Sector. Carried into the sector to settle the worlds of the Drusus Marches in the aftermath of the Angevin Crusade, a dozen old and established criminal syndicates from worlds in Segmentum Solar warred silently even on the colonist transports that took them to newly-conquered worlds. By the time the transports finally reached the Drusus Marches subsector, the war was almost over, the shattered remnants of each crime baron's armies slowly rebuilt into a single, larger one—the Kasballica.

In the centuries that followed, this singular organisation fragmented again, splitting into more localised interests on several worlds, communicating only through their rulers, self-declared barons, dukes and princes who each ruled over a single world's Kasballican enterprises. Rivalries sprang up, and the line between healthy competition and outright war became blurred as each fought to obtain wealth with which to dominate their rivals.

Then the Koronus Passage opened, and suddenly a new source of wealth emerged, granting a new lease on life to the fractured organisation, particularly those parts of it that had made in-routes into the Cold Trade—the sale of forbidden xenos items throughout the Calixis Sector. Within a decade, the internecine war had stilled, the assorted factions regarding the new opportunity as too great for any one crime lord to handle alone, and they moved to infiltrate Port Wander.

Their operations on Port Wander were a limited success for a time, hindered by the relatively small population of the starfortress and its abundance of Imperial authority figures unwilling to let an independent criminal organisation get in their way. Their efforts were further set back by the siege of Port Wander, which prevented them from accomplishing anything for nearly a decade. After the Imperial Navy reclaimed Port Wander, the Kasballicans there departed, seeking a better base of operations in Dewain's Footfall, the new and more lawless settlement on the far side of the Maw.

Unfettered by the laws of the Imperium, and able to exert its power across the breadth of Footfall's society, the Kasballica Mission (a term which refers specifically to the Kasballican operation on Footfall), thrived as it had never done before, and soon, Footfall's Prince of the Kasballica was as wealthy as his peers within the Calixis Sector. It was not to last; seeing their investment turned against them, the other Kasballica factions pressed their peers in Footfall. The end result was a resurgence in the secret war between the Kasballican factions that continued for well over a century, weakening the Kasballica Mission to the point where its rivals in Footfall were able to hinder its efforts.

Between the increasing presence of the Amaranthine Syndicate, arms dealers hailing from the city of Gunmetal on distant Scintilla, and agents of the Malfian crime lord Iridan Nox, the Kasballica Mission was struggling to maintain its place on Footfall. The secret war between the Calixian Kasballicans and the Mission on Footfall ground to a halt, as both sides realised that neither would profit from being forced out of the Expanse.

The aftermath of the secret war brought a greater degree of stability, and the Mission was rebuilt to consist almost entirely of trusted vassals and retainers from the other factions. With rival criminal organisations from further afield moving in on Footfall, the Kasballica could ill-afford another schism. The new structure of the Mission was to ensure that it remained under the control of the Kasballica in the Calixis Sector, which in turn would maintain stability for the organisation,

When the Maw closed in 813.M41, this plan paid off. Amidst mass starvation, it was only the Kasballica, whose vaults were well-stocked with supplies, who managed to endure with little loss of power or life, as all around them begged and scrounged for those same supplies. When the Maw reopened at the end of that year, the Kasballica Mission had not only managed to hold out against the settlement's starvation, but had thrived in spite of it, gaining new ground and extending its influence across Footfall further than it had ever done before.

With every year, the Kasballica Mission attempts to negotiate better and longer-lasting deals with passing Rogue Traders. Lacking the resources to venture out into the Expanse by themselves, they must content themselves with trade deals, dealing illicit goods for a cut of the profits. This has always been sufficient, for there are precious few routes through which one may sell such proscribed items. Because of its long existence, and in part thanks to its recent resurgence, the Kasballica control many of the illicit trade routes into and around the Calixis Sector. However, when speaking of power and wealth, sufficient is never enough, and the Kasballica are not content to sit on their laurels and make do with what they have already accumulated.

ENDEAVOUR COMPONENT: CONTACTS IN THE KASBALLICA

Requirement: Must either have the Peer (Underworld) Talent, or have dealt with the Kasballica Mission before.

The Kasballica Mission is always attempting to deal more closely and more effectively with Rogue Traders, and a few of the more unscrupulous Rogue Traders have seen the advantages this sort of arrangement could have. With greater access

to the web of contacts, influence and favours the Kasballica have amassed, a Rogue Trader can more effectively engage in criminal pursuits. The Kasballica, however, always demand their cut of the profits when their resources are utilised.

Arranging a deal with the Kasballica Mission is not too difficult, although some may find negotiating with such criminal types unpalatable. Once an appropriate deal is struck, the Explorers can use their contacts in the Kasballica—so long as they have some way of contacting Footfall at the time—to earn an additional 100 Achievement Points when working towards a Criminal objective. However, the Kasballica demand their share of the profits: halve the number of excess Achievement Points gained during any Endeavour in which Kasballican contacts were used, to represent the significant cost of their services. Failure to do this should typically result in some form of unpleasant confrontation—and maybe a Misfortune—the next time the Explorers stop at Footfall...

THE BLESSED APOSTLES OF SAINT ASCELINE

During the Angevin Crusade, which founded the Calixis Sector, several Rogue Traders were called to serve the Crusade fleet, helping to pave the way for the Imperial Navy and Adeptus Astartes forces that comprised the bulk of the fleet. Amongst these was Ephranin Toba, a pious man who was already renowned for having set in motion the conversion of several non-Imperial human cultures, allowing for their swift integration into the Imperium.

The Calyx Expanse, as the region was known at the time, was reputed to be an ill-favoured and unholy place, and thus the Inquisition laid down a specific mandate, that all Rogue Traders serving the Crusade be subject to additional moral oversight, in the form of a Mission of the Adepta Sororitas from the Order of the Opening Eye, one of the Orders Famulous, whose numbers would be spread about the fleet. Upon the success of the Crusade, the Sisters would then be given leave to establish themselves within the new sector, to advise the new government.

Per this mandate, Toba was assigned Sister Palatine Kalendra Asceline, who was the overall commander of the Sororitas Mission. Much of the history of the Angevin Crusade neglects Asceline's admittedly-minor part in the campaign, and Toba's involvement is similarly lacking in noteworthy documentation, but both are featured prominently in Ecclesiarchal lore regarding the Crusade.

During the Golgenna Consolidation, many of the attached Rogue Traders were used to locate and prepare worlds for the next stage of the campaign. It was during this period, as Toba's flotilla entered the Tranch system to survey it, that disaster struck. Assaulted by construct-vessels of the dread Yu'vath, the flotilla was all but destroyed before the Yu'vath forces retreated for no discernable reason. Toba's flagship, the *Stern Voice*, was badly damaged in the battle, leaving the vessel without its captain, Navigator or most of its senior crew. With little chance to survive alone, Asceline took command, sending the vessel back into the Immaterium so

it could return to Malfi for repairs. With no Navigator, the decision was foolhardy, but miraculously, Asceline succeeded in steering the protesting cruiser to a safe harbour, attributing her success to the providence of the Emperor.

It took a century and a half for Asceline to be canonised as a saint, but from the moment of her divinely-inspired voyage through the Warp, Asceline had been regarded with reverence by members of the Missionaria Galaxia, who moved amongst the Crusade fleet and the new worlds it had founded, ever since her return to Malfi. Even so, her faith and resolve were rewarded by Lord-Militant Angevin, who transferred Toba's Warrant of Trade to Asceline, much to the protests of Toba's prospective heirs.

Some five centuries after her canonisation, veneration of Saint Asceline gained new life as Purity Lathimon—a self-confessed Ascelinite—charted a course through the Great Warp Storms of the Halo Margins and discovered what is now known as the Koronus Passage. With a new and unknown territory opened up, Missionaries from several sectors surrounding Calixis flocked to Port Wander. In the process, the veneration of Saint Asceline became increasingly common amongst these Missionaries, and soon a number of shrines were established within Port Wander, leading to even more widespread knowledge and the formation of a pilgrim movement.

Ascelinites believe that the Emperor guides those who travel into the unknown and allows the pious to prosper there. Many Ascelinites seek to embark upon pilgrimages into uncharted regions, and most of those do not actually care where they pilgrimage to—indeed, voyaging into unknown places is actually preferred.

Unfortunately, the abundance of Ascelinite Pilgrims is becoming increasingly dangerous. With many gathering to travel as passengers aboard a variety of Rogue Trader's vessels, groups of pilgrims can



often contain those of less beneficent motives. More than one Rogue Trader has been assassinated because his killer gained entry amidst a group of pilgrims, and several more subversive groups have gained access not just to ships, but to distant worlds, because they posed as Ascelinites.

ENDEAVOUR COMPONENT: ASCELINITE PILGRIMS

Requirement: None

So eager are the Apostles of Saint Asceline to voyage to new worlds, that they can normally be relied upon to gather in large numbers, eager to aid those that would convey them across the void. Carrying a pilgrimage of Ascelinites can be of benefit to a Rogue Trader, helping to convert native populations to the worship of the Emperor, or becoming colonists, eager settle newly-discovered worlds. A cunning Rogue Trader can turn an Ascelinite Pilgrimage to his advantage in a number of situations.

Taking aboard Ascelinite Pilgrims reduces Crew Morale by 1, as supplies are stretched a little bit more thinly by the additional passengers, but while they remain on board, they grant an additional 50 Achievement Points towards completing any Creed objective.

THE INQUISITION

"If you think I will stop my pursuit at the Imperium's borders, you are mistaken."

—Lord Inquisitor and Rogue Trader Korbras Aquairre

Uncounted worlds, untamed, innumerable wild skies, and the darkness between the stars... these are the things Rogue Traders face in the Koronus Expanse. Far from the Emperor's Light and the authority of His servants, any man might be led astray by the things that lurk in that darkness. Damnation comes swiftly beyond the frontiers of the Imperium, to those who are not wary of such peril.

The Inquisition exists in part to combat such threats to Mankind, no matter where they may originate. And, while they cannot so easily wander beyond the edges of Imperial space themselves, there are Inquisitors always watching the ports that lay scattered across these myriad frontiers, like Port Wander, waiting for a Rogue Trader to return so that he might be "questioned" about his activities and discoveries.

This is something that any Rogue Trader may face, and for many of the less scrupulous, represents a significant threat to their ability to accumulate wealth and power. For any Rogue Trader, a confrontation with an Inquisitor is likely to an unpleasant thing, for few Rogue Traders routinely deal with other individuals as powerful or forceful as they are. That is, essentially, what an Inquisitor represents to a Rogue Trader: an authority that matches their own, and may even surpass it, and the iron will to use that authority swiftly and ruthlessly to bring low any whom they deem corrupt.

The various threats and conspiracies that lurk within the Calixis Sector alone are sufficient to support what has at times seemed like a disproportionate number of Inquisitors for what is a young sector on the edge of the Imperium. The peril that the Koronus Expanse contains has only brought more Inquisitors into the region, determined to study and combat the quiescent menaces that dwell within the Expanse.

Foremost amongst these is Linetta Res, who has in recent decades moved her base of operations to Port Wander so that she can better monitor the comings and goings of the Rogue Traders who stop there. While she has not ceased investigations within the Calixis Sector, she, as with a few others in what has been collectively termed the Koronus Cabal, have recruited a considerable number of new Acolytes and relocated a number of existing Acolytes and Throne Agents into positions appropriate for the new lines of investigation, infiltrating a number of vessels, working openly upon others, and moving about places like Port Wander and Footfall in search of evidence of heresy or sedition.

Inquisitorial operations within the Expanse are limited by a simple lack of legal authority. Aboard a Rogue Trader's vessel, outside the Imperium, a Rogue Trader is lord and master and speaks with the Voice of the Emperor Himself, and is thus a very difficult person to accuse of heresy openly. Many servants of the Inquisition have learned to hold their tongues and compile their evidence quietly, waiting for the time when their mark returns to port and their Inquisitor can bring to bear the Emperor's Wrath.

ENDEAVOUR COMPONENT: INQUISITORIAL ATTENTIONS

Requirements: None

The Inquisition or its agents have contacted a Rogue Trader, demanding his cooperation and aid in a secret matter. This may range from simply transporting a team of Throne Agents to a far-flung location to aiding in a full-scale military campaign. Often, the Rogue Trader may not even know the point of what he has been contracted to do, simply the requirements he must complete.

This Endeavour Component is unique in that the Rogue Trader does not seek it out. The Inquisition chooses the Rogue Trader, based on their own unknowable criteria. They will request some sort of service. If the service is performed satisfactorily, the Rogue Trader receives 100 Achievement Points towards any objective he is working towards. If the task is performed especially well, he and his crew also receive the Peer (Inquisition) Talent. However, the consequences of failing the Inquisition are always dire.

THE CORTELAX CONFEDERACY

"You refuse my advice, sir? A benediction then—may your foolish venture lead to the jaws of the Undred-Undred Teef and thus spare you the wiles of the Contessas Cortelax."

—Chazez the Younger to an even younger Rogue Trader

Many a free spirited individual—if such an individual can truly be said to exist under the oppressive weight of the Imperium—has attempted to amass fortunes and practice freedoms previously only dreamed of by man. When these foolish dreams escape the cold drone of industrial production for the God-Emperor, they rarely go far and later serve as cautionary tales for the inexperienced and hopeful. However, on an exceedingly rare occasion an individual or group might escape notice just long enough to enjoy some measure of success.

The Cortelax Confederacy has its beginnings in a cruel pact between four women aboard a lost ship near the Rifts of Hecaton. How they came to captain the ship and its fleet as well as precisely how they managed to press their betters into high-suicidal loyalty remains a mystery. However, several high-ranking officers of the Imperial Navy have said they believe the Contessas are remnants of the Meritech Clans, a group of nomads with blasphemously advanced technology that rebelled against the Imperium more than six hundred years previously. Whether or not this is true, the Contessas defy capture and humiliate those who attempt to rein them in. Meanwhile, the four increase the size of their now-formidable fleet and have drawn the attention of the Imperium.

GOALS OF THE CONTESSAS

To supply a fleet of ships while remaining outside the jurisdiction of the Imperium requires talent and resourcefulness. They may have to rend the hulls of those unfortunates they come across, salvaging whatever possible from the wreckage. On the other hand, if they believe they can cripple the will of an enemy and make him their slave, all the better.

When fully supplied, the Confederacy turns its sights to xenos technology in an attempt to transcend the human condition. Mortality, the threat of corruption, xenos invasions, back-breaking labour, and a nameless existence of toil among billions characterise life as a human. These facts repel the Contessas, launching them to the stars in exploration of forbidden artefacts and knowledge, anything that might provide an escape from the fate so many succumb to under the Creed of the God-Emperor.

This laughable cause finds no purchase among the denizens of the Koronus Expanse. However, the violence the Contessas dole out overshadows any amusement those denizens may possess and leaves Rogue Traders and Naval Commanders alike in a state of dread. It is rumoured that the Contessas have recently uncovered powerful artefacts from the world of Illisk, snatching them from under the noses of the Disciples of Thule who zealously guard the machine-planet. Voidfarers whisper secrets of illicit cogitator tech, and strange perversions affecting the very hearts of their vessels.

THE CONFEDERACY'S FOUNDATION

Woe be unto he that falls pray to the Cortelax Confederacy and meets with her founders. Of the reported four contessas, only two interact with voidfarers frequently: the technologically savvy, combat proficient Contessa Shima and the brutal voice of the Confederacy, Contessa Elise.

CONTESSA SHIMA

Due to a birth defect, Shima's hands curl into her forearms, making her arms twisted and deformed. Though unable to use her hands, she surpasses this disability with her vast technical knowledge in the realm of engines, weaponry, data systems, and augury devices. In fact, she has constructed a host of augmentic systems that more-than compensate for her birth defect—and it is said that her back and skull is covered with MIU links and cortical plugs that can connect her to a horde of machine-minions. Shima prefers the reverie enjoyed while tinkering with machines and escapes to the engineerium for respite. Her command extends across the Confederacy's largest contingency of ships and violent encounters with her fleet happen more frequently than with others.

CONTESSA ELISE

A tale concerning Contessa Elise best illustrates what voidfarers know of her. At the end of a brief communication between the contessa and the late Captain Gnaeus Macer, an unknown man encased from head to foot in sophisticated carapace armour appeared out of thin air on the bridge of Macer's ship, the *Golden Finch* (suggesting the Confederacy has attained sophisticated archeotech or xenos technologies). Armed with a heavy bolter on grav-suspensors, he began spouting blasphemous prayers to the contessas and opened fire on the crew. Elise's hideous laugh echoed throughout the bridge as the crew attempted to take the man down. He slew many with the surprise attack and seemed little concerned for his own life. She then gave the *Golden Finch* the opportunity to surrender its valuables and supplies before going on its way. Macer refused her and lost the following battle.

Elise prefers to communicate on the Confederacy's behalf whenever possible. In fact, on the rare occasion an Imperial ship survives a meeting, they always have to wait for her to determine whether they have the freedom to leave. Most likely, Elise commands a bulk of the Confederacy's leadership responsibilities.

THE CONFEDERACY'S FLEET

Initial reports from the *Golden Finch* suggested that the Confederacy controls dozens of vessels in a hodgepodge variety including an array of capital ships and escorts. However, shortly before the Finch and its crew succumbed to the Confederacy—becoming the fleet's newest additions—its captain communicated

sighting another fleet, similar in size but in another neighbouring system. Spread throughout nearby systems but never far apart, the Confederacy trolls about the Expanse, especially in lightly-travelled or relatively unexplored regions. Collected stories suggest that the separate fleets maintain some distance in order to appear small and less defensible, but are able to quickly mobilise to each others aid, capable of amassing scores of ships.

ENDEAVOUR COMPONENT:

COMMISSIONED BY THE IMPERIAL NAVY

Requirement: Must either have the Peer (Imperial Navy) Talent, or some other relationship with the Imperial Navy (perhaps on one Explorer's Origin Path).

The Confederacy preys on the weak, but reserve their most heated ire for anyone they come across with close ties to the Imperium. Often, this means Rogue Traders feel the brunt of their wrath. In response, however, the Imperial Navy squadrons of Passage Watch 27 Est have been ordered to eliminate this insult to the Imperium. In fact, it is rumoured they are charged with this task by shadowy forces high up in the Imperial hierarchy, those with a deeper interest in the Contessas. However, space is large, and Battlefleet Koronus has paid handsomely for those willing to destroy their foes in the Imperium's name.

This Component can be included in an Endeavour the Contessas have become involved in. Perhaps they attack the Explorers in the midst of an unrelated task, or the Explorers find a valuable system under the Contessas' control. In any case, they can make their elimination profitable by dealing with the Imperial Navy. Should an arrangement be settled, the Explorers can earn 50 Achievement Points for every vessel of frigate size or smaller captured or destroyed and 75 for anything larger. They can also keep the ships they capture, provided they can assure the Navy they won't end up in the Confederacy's hands.

SALVATORUM LABORUS

The Missionaria Galaxia holds a presence on nearly every voyage into the unknown to spread the faith of the God-Emperor to the faithless and the lost. Precisely for this reason, the clandestine Salvatorum Laborus presents more than a thorn in the side of every expedition into the expanse. This secret society of missionaries sends its members on journeys not unlike those from the Missionaria Galaxia's main creed. However, the Salvatorum Laborus has taken to heart the Ecclesiarchal Proscription "Thou shalt rejoice in thy Service," believing the Imperium to have made a mistake by destroying more lives than necessary as it rediscovers worlds lost to the abyss of time. Should a life end, it may not participate in the glorious labour of Mankind, thus robbing the God-Emperor of His just reward.

More than one venture to a heathen world has come to destruction and loss due to a missionary from the Salvatorum Laborus. Typical acts include harbouring "converted" cultists (or worse) that should have died in a flamer's cleansing fire. These Missionaries will engage in deceits and fanatical acts in order to secure first contact with a heathen people, practising

cultural imperialism like a science and sparing even those who refuse to bend. Far from a humanitarian organisation, the Salvatorum Laborus seeks to devastate a heathen people culturally, rebuilding them in the image of the Imperium. All the while, they minimise the necessary casualties in this rebuilding and start the corrected humans working for their God-Emperor.

SOPHI ADRIANIS' MISADVENTURE

Sophi Adrianis learned too late the folly of this renegade sect. Rumours tell of the head missionary aboard her ship, destined for the uncharted segments of Winterscale's Realm. After making berth upon a forgotten world bearing a small population of feral humans, the missionary made contact and attempted an initial conversion of heathens to the right-minded thinking of the Imperial faith. Hearing reports that the inhabitants seemed not only unresponsive but violent, Adrianis determined them to lie far beyond redemption and commanded them wiped from the land's surface to make room for the extraction of precious raw materials by more amiable, hard-working folk.

The missionary requested more time with the indigenous, which Adrianis granted. In return for this patience, the daft missionary brought a large tribe to meet with dignitaries from the voyage to show their willingness not only to co-operate but also to defer to the God-Emperor and the Imperium of Man. Instead, they killed the unsuspecting Adrianis and a portion of her crew in an ambush of the missionary's design. Later, an investigation ascertained that the missionary chose to drive off Adrianis, believing her unlikely to salvage the lives of the planet's inhabitants and in hopes that a future mission might have more success.

Meanwhile, the survivors took Adrianis's ship and fled back to Port Wander with their tale. The Rogue Traders at the port reacted with expected outrage at the news. The Rogue Trader Bastille the Seventh has gone so far as to declare a substantial reward for anyone willing to take the time to journey to this heathen planet and provide the missionary and his charges with much-needed retribution.



THE MISSION OF JUVIAL ROSEN

Common knowledge to every member of the Salvatorum Laborus, the legend of Juvial Rosen provides a standard of behaviour for those devoted to his cause. Distributed in clandestine writings, the legend tells of a man who, many centuries ago, lived among the toiling citizens of an unknown Imperial hive world. He revelled in the massive labour, seeing it as a force divine in nature. Thus inspired, he managed through feats of devotion and will to travel as a missionary to the Koronus Expanse, intent on increasing this divine labour in service to the God-Emperor Himself. Rosen's experience aboard various vessels disappointed him greatly—he experienced the cruellest the Imperium had to offer to its long lost subjects. He committed himself to the rescue of those whose labour consisted of the divine, seeing the Imperium's emissaries to the unknown as at odds with the will of the God-Emperor.

According to these accounts, Rosen saw the Imperium as an imperfect tool in service to the God-Emperor. A missionary of pure faith would, Rosen claimed, defy even the Priesthood of Earth if it meant the preservation of human life for maximum production. The pseudo-prophet envisioned a day when, as a great working mass, humanity would elevate itself to the status of the divine and join the God-Emperor in His greatness. An anxiety attendant to this belief drives Juvial Rosen's disciples to acts of martyrdom—should they fail, humanity can never attain its divine potential.

Rosen spent his last days on a world among his converts. Some missionaries believe that the first followers of his cause came from this planet, but the "Mission of Juvial Rosen" lacks the names of locations and persons referenced. Scholars of religious matters have long debated whether or not Juvial Rosen actually existed.

MISSIONARIES IN THE EXPANSE

No Salvatorum missionaries advertise their affiliation with the sect except to other members. Rumours suggest that they convene on Footfall more often than anywhere else but the loose structure of the organisation prevents any regular meetings. Each member interprets the "Mission of Juvial Rosen" independently and though strategies vary, all Salvatorum missionaries must see martyrdom as a tool to further his cause. Once a missionary has decided to end her life in this way, she makes a confession to mark the act as that of the Salvatorum. Confessions might include notes left for others to find posthumously or public declarations during the martyring act. This way of introducing the mission certainly makes an impact and one spoken of throughout the Expanse.

ENDEAVOUR COMPONENT: HUNT OR HELP THE SALVATORUM LABORUS CADRE

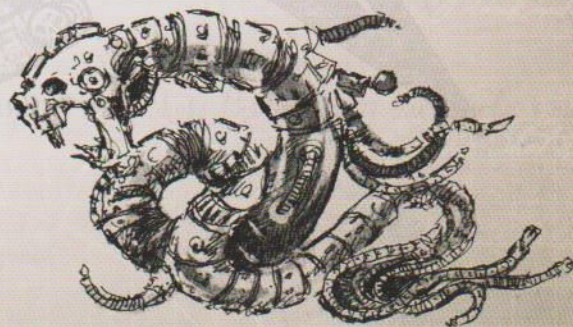
Requirement: Must either have the Peer (Ecclesiarchy) Talent, Peer (Rogue Traders) Talent, or the Peer (Workers) Talent, depending. Must be embarked on an Endeavour that the Salvatorum Laborus has taken an interest in.

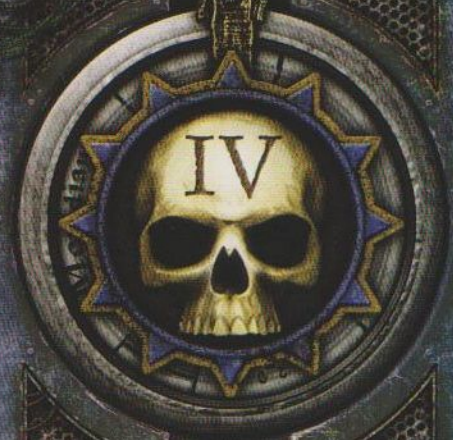
This Component can be included in any Endeavour that the Salvatorum Laborus has taken an interest in and decided to become involved in. Due to their interests, this is most likely to be a Creed Endeavour, but it is not limited to Creed Endeavours. The Salvatorum Laborus might want to accompany a military expedition to help convert recently pacified forces, or an exploration mission in case it discovers a heathen world.

In any case, this Endeavour Component can be added once the Explorers realize that members of the Salvatorum Laborus have become involved with their Endeavour. At this point, they can decide how to deal with them. Some Rogue Traders might decide on a simple but direct approach, eliminating the Salvatorum agents and capturing their leaders. It is likely puritan-minded members of the Ecclesiarchy or Ordo Hereticus, or vindictive Rogue Traders such as Lord-Admiral Bastille the Seventh would reward the Explorers handsomely to receive the leaders of a Salvatorum cell alive. However, this is not an easy task, as the agents of Salvatorum Laborus will fight hard and possibly even rally members of the Rogue Trader's own crew to their cause.

On the other hand, the Explorers could choose to support the actions of the Laborus agents, reasoning that it is better to direct their actions and position ones self to benefit from them. How they do this depends on the Salvatorum Laborus's goals, and the goals of the Explorer's Endeavour. They could adjust the Endeavour to benefit from Laborus's efforts, or even redirect the Salvatorum Laborus's attentions onto the Endeavour of a rival.

Either way, should the Explorers be able to benefit from the Salvatorum Laborus, they gain an additional 50 Achievement Points towards completing any objective they are working on.





FAMOUS ROGUE
TRADERS



- CALLIGOS
WINTERSCALE
-
- ASPYCE CHORDA
-
- JONQUIN SAUL
-
- AOIFE
ARMENGARDE
-
- SARVUS TRASK
-
- WRATH UMBOLDT

CHAPTER IV: FAMOUS ROGUE TRADERS

"Oh, I've seen 'em come and I've seen 'em go, lad. Your average Rogue Trader, if such a thing even exists in this galaxy, he's bigger'n life, and twice as dangerous. If I had to say one thing they all had in common though, I guess it'd be this. Evr' single one, you looked at 'im and you thought to yourself that when the God-Emperor made that man He said, I'll not do this but once."

—Able Voidman Jak Plaice

The taming of the Koronus Expanse has always required a particular kind of vision, a certain strength of will and character above and beyond that of the normal Imperial citizen. It has needed men and women unafraid of—indeed, drawn to—the baleful light of distant stars that no human has laid eyes on. It has needed individuals who could face down a horde of ravening xenos or hold fast to a pitching, burning deck or even withstand the horrors of a Gellar Field failure, all in the name of profit and for the glory of the God-Emperor. The Koronus Expanse has needed the Rogue Trader and his most holy Warrant of Trade. Only the Rogue Trader, unfettered by orthodoxy and convention and compelled by the writ of the God-Emperor to go forth and claim all he can find has the will and the vision needed to bring the Expanse into the Imperium.

For uncounted centuries, Rogue Traders have prowled the regions of the dreaded Halo Stars with their powerful flotillas. They've pursued riches, waged war on xenos (and each other), and brought the Light of the God-Emperor to benighted heathens everywhere. They have performed great heroic deeds, led vast mercantile empires and witnessed horrors—as often perpetrated by their fellows as by heretics or xenos—that would drive most men mad. They come from all walks of life, from the halls of the Administratum to the vaunted heights of the Imperial Navy. Noblemen and hivers, adherents of the Ommissiah and the strange, clannish children of the Void, all have heard the call and come to make their fortune. Some are brilliant tacticians, canny merchants, or pious evangelists while others are scoundrels, little better than pirates who would walk over the bones of their closest companions for a handful of gelt. They have names that are heavy with portent and ring with expectant fortune;

Dallactarius, Lee, Yefremova, Kim. Some, like the legendary Sebastian Winterscale, have whole regions of space named for them. Others have committed acts so heinous, so heretical that their names were stricken from history and they and their families hounded to the ends of the cosmos.

THESE ARE YOUR PEERS: USING THIS SECTION

The Rogue Traders presented in this section are provided for the GM's use. In *ROGUE TRADER*, the characters players make are limited only by their foes and their own ambition. It is not just possible that they will struggle to the heights of fame and power in the Koronus Expanse—in reality no true Rogue Trader should settle for anything less.

These NPCs, some of the most famous Rogue Traders in the Expanse, are provided for two reasons. The first is that they provide unique examples of Rogue Traders who have "made it," who have succeeded in becoming legends. However, it is entirely expected that successful Explorers will reach a level where they can count these legends as their peers. Therefore, these Rogue Traders can also be used as allies, rivals, or nemeses for an ongoing campaign.

The men and women outlined in the following pages are just a few of the known players in the high-stakes game of the Koronus Expanse. While certainly giants in their fields, they are not alone. For every Aspyce Chorda and Calligos Winterscale operating out there, there are dozens, possibly hundreds of younger, hungrier Rogue Traders waiting in the wings. These young men and women are always watching, forever working hard and biding their time and saving their Thrones until they get their turn, their big chance to sit at the table and be dealt in to the biggest game around.

Also included with the majority of the entries are the profiles of the Rogue Traders' personal vessels. Included in the profiles are summaries of the special ship rules that pertain to combat, for ease of reference. Rules that would not affect the ship in combat are not listed.

CALLIGOS WINTERSCALE

Ever since Purity Lathimon charted safe passage through the Maw and the stars beyond opened to exploration, there has been a Winterscale in the Expanse. This storied line of powerful Rogue Traders has waged wars, conquered planets, and written its name across the Koronus Expanses' very stars. The friends and resources of the Winterscale Dynasty are legion, but so are its foes—for if there is one thing a Winterscale loves more than profit, it's a worthy enemy.

The Winterscale legacy began with Sebastian Winterscale, the cunning and able youngest son of a minor noble house in the Ixaniad Sector, neighbour to the Calixis Sector. None are sure why young Sebastian was granted a Warrant of Trade, but likely supposition indicates his family saw an ambitious and extremely capable youngest child as a threat to the inheritances

(and possibly the lives) of his elders. Whether or not this was true, their assessment of his abilities turned out to be correct.

Sebastian arrived in the Koronus Expanse with no resources save a single cruiser, just as exploration of its unknown reaches was beginning. He quickly proved his worth, soundly defeating several more-powerful and better-connected opponents. Rather than crushing their dynasties, he incorporated them into his own rapidly expanding empire. Sebastian explored the clusters of stars spinward of the Maw and Furibundus, and it was not long before his efforts bore fruit. The region proved to contain many worlds and systems worth vast fortunes—in raw resources, xenos artefacts, and other valuable finds. Winterscale dominated and controlled his every find with an iron fist, and by his death, the region was known to all as Winterscale's Realm.

Centuries later, Calligos Winterscale is the latest of his dynasty to inherit the now famous Warrant of Trade. In the years since Sebastian died, the power of the Winterscales has only expanded, and Calligos Winterscale has proven unwilling to rest on his family's laurels. In the last half-century, he has proven himself as capable as his ancestor Sebastian, and now the name Calligos Winterscale is spoken with fear and awe throughout the Expanse.

However, little is known about the upbringing of this famous individual. Before Calligos, the Winterscale Warrant was held by Arturos Winterscale, but when he died no heirs stepped forward to claim the mantle of Rogue Trader. For many years, the Winterscale Warrant was held by a succession of regents and bannermen. Calligos emerged from complete anonymity, and claimed his prize as the rightful heir of the Winterscale Dynasty.

It was unknown if Calligos was the offspring of Arturos, the child of some parallel lineage, or simply a talented usurper. What is known is that within a single week, the Winterscale regents had either bowed to his will or vanished. With his authority firmly entrenched, Calligos Winterscale set about building on his ancestor's empire.

DEEDS AND MYTHS

Calligos Winterscale is known and feared throughout the Expanse. Stories of his words, deeds, and fiery temper are told in taverns from Footfall to Naduesh. However, it is difficult to separate the facts from the legend.

For example, although nearly everyone has heard of the man, few claim to accurately have his measure. It is well known that the man is a giant, tall and broad with terrifying physical strength, just as it is common knowledge that he is a man ruled by his passions. Winterscale goes from good-natured joviality to towering fury at a single word, and will tear into a man (often literally) at the slightest provocation. However, neither Winterscale's success in securing his lineage nor the undeniably effective management of the considerable Winterscale Dynasty match with a man unable to control himself. It's likely there are hidden depths to the man, but few know him well enough to confirm it. Or perhaps he simply knows his passions well enough to direct his inevitable rage in a useful manner.

Likewise, it is well known that Calligos has a unique rapport with hardened crew and scum. While others may command such individuals, Calligos has the singular gift of treating these killers as friends or equals, while still demanding complete and instant obedience. It's even said that Calligos frequents the fighting pits and gambling halls of low-born scum, where he drinks and wagers like a voidman on leave. However, whether the rumours that Calligos grew up a common pit-fighter in the lowest decks of Footfall are true, is unknown.

One fact that is known is that above all else, Winterscale respects strength of will. He has no interest in those who concede or beg mercy; they are simply tools to be used, exhausted, and disposed of. Of course, while he is likely to respect those who stand defiantly against him, his respect will not stay his hand from crushing them should he wish to. Those who wish to deal with Winterscale must walk a very thin line.

Even if one is to separate out those stories that must be lies—surely it is impossible for a man of even Winterscale's strength to subdue a power-armoured adversary with only his axe and bare arms—his list of known deeds are impressive. Since taking control of the Winterscale Dynasty, Calligos has split his time between his established interests in Winterscale's Realm and exploring amongst the stars of the Cinerus Maeficum and Accursed Demense. He rammed the Kroozer of the dread Freebooter Kaptin Snargrash Da Burna and personally led the boarding parties across to the crippled vessel. When he hewed Snargrash's head from his hunched shoulders on the Kaptin's own bridge, the Orks turned tail and fled. He walked the surface of Somnium even as his men grew mad and fell upon each other, and the spirits there shirked from his fearsome wrath. He hunted beasts on Burnscour, swarmed the Eldar corsair vessel *Silence of Eternity* with ships until the crippled cruiser retreated wholly from the Expanse, and even journeyed to the shattered systems that mark the edge of the Hecaton Rift. Winterscale's efforts have made him a legend amongst his peers, feared and respected in equal measure, and a man any new Rogue Trader could aspire to become—or defeat.



WINTERSCALE FLEET

Winterscale's fleet runs the gamut of vessels from seedy tramp freighters and lurking raiders to huge mass conveyors and everything in between. However, Calligos's love of war and conflict mean that his fleet has a higher number of "ships of the line" than other Rogue Traders. Multiple cruisers sail under his banner, led by his flagship, the grand cruiser *Emperor's Vow*.

Calligos prefers to commission or employ "independent interests" for his tasks, and thus the ship flying the Winterscale flag that shows up at a port may or may not actually be a Dynasty vessel. Therefore, the size of his fleet is constantly in flux, making it impossible to estimate Winterscale's true strength. Perhaps that is his goal.

CURRENT ENDEAVOURS

Calligos Winterscale's interests stretch across the Expanse, but they are unsurprisingly focused in Winterscale's Realm. Perhaps because it bears his name, Calligos does focus his efforts within this region of the Expanse. His interests and assets in this region are myriad and varied; they include arms dealing, dabbling in the Cold Trade, smuggling, piracy, exploration, and even "legal" trade ventures. If one can think of a money-making scheme, it is likely that somewhere a Winterscale agent is doing something similar. It would not be fair to say that Calligos does not serve Imperial interests, he is as loyal to the Imperium of Man as any Rogue Trader. It is more appropriate to say that to Calligos Winterscale, the Winterscale Dynasty is the Imperium, and that monolithic establishment back through the Maw is simply not his concern.

Calligos will not rest until the entirety of Winterscale's Realm bows to his rule—as preposterous as this goal is, he seems to be putting a massive effort behind it. The focus of his effort is the frozen world of Lucien's Breath. There he is embroiled in a bitter war with the Rogue Trader Aspyce Chorda. In Chorda, Winterscale has found an opponent he can neither cow nor crush, and to his fury he has been forced to split control of the world with her. All know this is only a temporary solution. Already skirmishes and raids break out between the rival sides, and Winterscale is openly gathering his strength and his allies to crush the usurper. It is likely that Chorda's competence and danger as a worthy adversary appeals to Winterscale's bloodlust, and only encourages his desire for conflict. The inevitable war between the two promises to be both bloody and massive in scale, and could plunge that entire region of space into conflict.

However, the approaching war offers Rogue Traders a singular opportunity. Winterscale is too evenly matched to Chorda to be assured victory. He is willing to hire cut-throats and mercenary Rogue Traders who are eager for war, and reward them well for their service.

Winterscale Profile



WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
59	54	60	62	30	47	39	63	55

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 30

Fate Points: 3

Profit Factor: 101

Skills: Awareness +10, Barter +10, Blather +20, Carouse +20, Charm +20, Climb, Commerce, Command +20, Common Lore (Imperial Guard, Imperial Navy, Imperium, Koronus Expanse, Rogue Traders, War)+10, Demolition, Dodge, Drive (Ground Vehicle, Skimmer/Hover) +10, Evaluate, Gamble +10, Interrogation, Intimidate +20, Literacy, Navigation (Stellar), Pilot (Flyers, Space Craft) +10, Scrutiny +10, Speak Language (High Gothic, Low Gothic, Trader's Cant), Survival, Swim.

Talents: Air of Authority, Ambidextrous, Armour of Contempt, Basic Weapon Training (Universal), Battle Rage, Berserk Charge, Blademaster, Bulging Biceps, Combat Formation, Combat Master, Crippling Strike, Crushing Blow, Decadence, Die Hard, Fearless, Frenzy, Furious Assault, hardy, Heavy Weapon Training (SP, Bolt, Launcher), Into the Jaws of Hell, Iron Discipline, Iron Jaw, Lightning Attack, Master and Commander, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive, Universal), Mighty Shot, Pistol Weapon Training (Universal), Quick Draw, Renowned Warrant, Resistance (Psychic Techniques), Strong Minded, Swift Attack, True Grit, Unarmed Master, Unarmed Warrior, Wall of Steel.

Traits: Touched by the Fates (3).

Armour: Enforcer Light Carapace (All 5).

Weapons: *Breaker*—Best Craftsmanship Power Axe (1d10+16E; Pen 7; Unbalanced, Power Field, +5 to WS), *Hostile Argument*—Best Craftsmanship Storm Bolter with Tempest Shells (90m; S/2/4; 1d10+7E; Pen 4; Clip 60; Rld Full; Storm, Tearing, Shocking, Never Jams), Voss Pattern Grenade Launcher with Krak Grenades (60m; S/-/-; 2d10+6X; Pen 6; Clip 6; Rld Full; Inaccurate), *Fair Point*—Best Craftsmanship Mono-knife (1d5+9 R; Pen 2; +5 WS).

Gear: Chrono, Micro-bead, Best Craftsmanship Uniform Jacket and Clothing, Data-Slate, Multicompass, Recoil Gloves, Best Craftsmanship Conversion Field (see INTO THE STORM page 130), one storm bolter reload.

Lead By Example: Once per Round, when Calligos Winterscale kills an opponent, all allies in the combat who can see him gain +2 to damage rolls until the end of the Round.

The Man...the Legend: Calligos Winterscale may spend a Fate Point to automatically succeed on any Skill or Characteristic Test, gaining a number of degrees of success equal to the Characteristic Bonus of the Characteristic used in the Test.



EMPEROR'S VOW—FLAGSHIP OF THE WINTERSCALE DYNASTY

Hull: Grand Cruiser

Class: Modified Avenger-class Grand Cruiser

Dimensions: 6 km long, 1 km abeam at fins approx.

Mass: 31.7 Megatonnes approx.

Crew: 120,000 approx.

Accel. 2.9 gravities max sustainable acceleration

Speed: 5

Void Shields: 3

Morale: 101

Turret Rating: 3

Space: 92

Manoeuvrability: +5

Armour: 20

Crew Population: 100

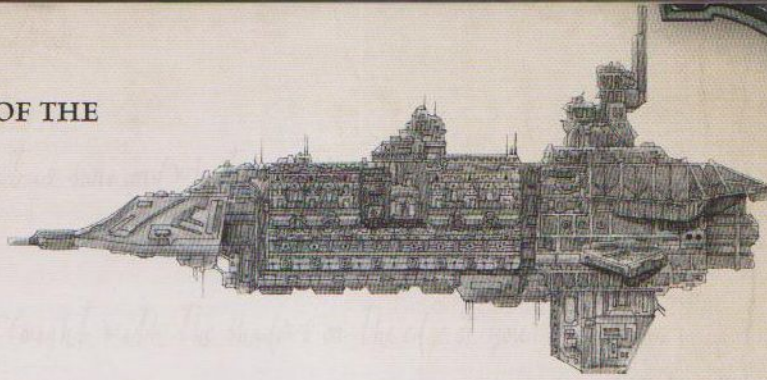
Weapon Capacity: Port 3, Starboard 3

Power: 92

Detection: +20

Hull Integrity: 90

Crew: Crack (40)



The *Emperor's Vow* comes from an earlier era of Imperial fleets. The grand cruisers straddled the line between cruisers and battleships, heavier and slower than a cruiser but less armed than a true battleship. In the last few millennia the Imperial Navy has moved away from grand cruisers, preferring the more agile and versatile battlecruisers. However, grand cruisers can still be found in reserve fleets across the Imperium.

Likewise, the Avenger-class is a holdover from earlier fleet tactics. Avengers were intended to be gun-boats and line-breakers, designed to race into the midst of an enemy fleet and sit, blazing away on either side with their massive broadside batteries. This tactic was often effective, but the rate of attrition amongst Avenger squadrons was equally brutal, and the ship fell out of favour.

No one knows for certain where the *Emperor's Vow* first originated, although the reserve fleets of Battlefleet Gothic are a likely possibility. Sebastian Winterscale journeyed through the Maw on its bridge, and it has called the Expanse its home ever since. Each Winterscale has ruled his interests from aboard it, to the point where Calligos does not bother to maintain a stronghold of operations on a planet or space station.

In many millenia of service, the *Emperor's Vow* has undergone a great deal of modifications. The original macro-weapons have been replaced with either longer-range laser batteries or extremely powerful short-ranged macrobatteries, guaranteeing the *Emperor's Vow* can crush its foes at any range. In addition, the aft gundecks have been removed and replaced with Titanforge lance turrets. Those foes foolish enough to fight the *Emperor's Vow* find a ship able to wreck havoc at long range, but as they close its fire only intensifies, until they flee or break up under the punishment.

The ship is utterly unsubtle, which seems to fit Winterscale's desires perfectly. Its martial pride and legacy of Imperial service are immediately obvious by the unmasked ranks of gun batteries and baroque ornamentation portraying it as an Imperial vessel. Those who serve aboard her report the vessel seems to contain an aura of complete confidence and utter pride, as if the vessel itself could not conceive of a challenge it could not overcome. This hubris may not be misplaced—in its centuries of service as the Winterscale's fleet, the times the *Emperor's Vow* has been forced to retreat from battle are few and far between.

Essential Components

Ancient Ryza Pattern Class 5 Drive, Strellov 2 Warp Engines, Gellar Field, Ryza-Pattern Extended Void Shield Array, Ship Master's Bridge, Vitae-pattern Life Sustainer, Voidsman Crew Quarters, Deep Void Augur Array.

Supplemental Components

Port and Starboard Sunsear Las-broadships, Port and Starboard Mezoa-Pattern Macrobattery Broadships, Port and Starboard Titanforge Lances, Barracks, Compartmentalised Cargo Hold, Extended Supply Vaults, Munitorium, Teleportarium, Trophy Room.

Armament and Ordnance

Sunsear Las-broadships (port and starboard): (Str 6; Dam 1d10+3; Crit 4; Range 9)

Mezoa-Pattern Macrobattery Broadships (port and starboard): (Str 5; Dam 1d10+4; Crit 5; Range 5)

Titanforge Lance (port and starboard): Str 1; (Dam 1d10+4; Crit 3; Range 6.)

Complications and Special Rules

Martial Hubris, Emissary of the Imperator

- The *Emperor's Vow* gains a total bonus of +15 to fire any shipboard weapons, and a +5 to all Pilot and Navigation Tests—but takes a -15 to any Manoeuvring Tests to escape combat. It usually has a large complement of mercenary soldiers aboard, and gains a +20 to all Command Tests involving boarding actions and hit-and-run actions (+40 when using the teleportarium).

ASPYCE CHORDA

Aspyce Chorda, the third of six children and only daughter of Rogue Trader Hamish Chorda, hails from a long line of influential voidfarers and star captains, to the infamous privateer Esme Chorda, who helped defeat the space hulk *Cauldron of Savagery* in 673.M40. Her father, a gregarious rake of expansive size, tastes and personality, was the latest scion of the only Chorda family line to carry an Imperial Warrant of Trade. He was a charitable spendthrift and habitual philanderer with dozens of legitimate and illegitimate children on both sides of the Maw, rapidly squandering the dynasty's wealth.

From an early age, young Aspyce was a quiet, brooding child given to fits of mania, melancholy, and cruelty. Her behaviour alarmed her parents. At the age of eleven, her father got her a commission in the Imperial Navy, where it was hoped she would either learn to control her daemons or have them beaten out.

Young Midshipman Chorda took to Navy life with alacrity. She quickly gained a reputation among her superiors as a competent and fearless young officer with a keen tactical mind. Her blatant disregard for the well-being of the voidmen in her division and her casual attitude toward wholesale slaughter went largely unnoticed among her peers. Among the voidmen she became known as a brutal tartar, quick with a lash or worse. Her brutality and lack of empathy only served to further her career, and she quickly attained the rank of Lord-Captain, was given a vessel, and dispatched amongst the borders of the Hazeroth Abyss.

On the edge of the Abyss she became a demanding officer who kept her passions tightly in check. While on the whole she was the very model of a faithful and pious Imperial officer, her rank and station gave her a taste for power. She pursued larger and more dangerous prizes, tackling pirates and privateers outside her class and jurisdiction. She took to extorting merchantmen, demanding exorbitant sums of "protection money" and turning pirates on them if they refused to pay. She played faster and looser with her commission each day, but as the first investigators of the Fleet Commissariat were dispatched, there came a summons from home.

Her father and oldest brother, the anointed inheritor of the Warrant of Trade, had disappeared along with the family's flagship and were to be declared dead. After gaining tacit permission from her immediate superior, Aspyce travelled to her home on Scintilla. Upon arrival she discovered the shocking state of her family's fortunes. With the death of the primogeniture and her father's constant

dalliances casting doubt on the legitimacy of all of his children, the Chorda Warrant of Trade was temporarily suspended until the question of a legitimate heir could be ironed out. Realising that the succession question could take a generation to answer, and that she would never wield the power and reap the much-needed benefits of the Warrant no matter what the outcome, Lord-Captain Chorda devised a bold plan to cement control of the coveted Warrant of Trade.

Chorda called on powerful contacts she had cultivated within the Imperial Adeptus. Within six months, overwhelming evidence arose indicating the majority of Hamish Chorda's heirs—save Aspyce—were criminals and heretics. Aspyce's siblings either vehemently denied the allegations, fled, or both. In an act of "mercy," the Lord-Captain was charged with hunting her heretical siblings down and bringing them to justice. One by one she found them and made an offer; they could willingly renounce any claim to the Warrant and be placed in cryovaults, or she would turn them over to the Inquisition. Invariably they chose the former, and within the space of a few short months Lord-Captain Aspyce Chorda found herself holding the Chorda Warrant of Trade.

She resigned her commission in the Imperial Navy and immediately set about putting her family's ailing fortunes to rights. Her first point of order was to reduce the Dynasty's financial obligations, and to that end she employed mercenaries and assassins to hunt down and eliminate all of her father's mistresses and bastard children. Then she expanded her operations into the Koronus Expanse.

Today, Lord-Captain Aspyce Chorda is one of the wealthier and more influential Rogue Traders operating in the Koronus Expanse. She is a hard and dangerous woman who believes that might makes right, and she will stop at nothing to fulfil her desires for wealth, power and acclaim. Whether standing on the bridge of her cruiser *Implacable Flame* pouring withering broadsides into a rival's ship or sitting down to negotiate a profitable trade agreement, she is an intense, driven opponent who brooks no insult and grants no quarter.

She is a pale, thin woman of middle age with a queer, lithesome grace that tends to make others ill at ease. Everything about her, from her rare complexion to her odd, graceful bearing, is proof positive of both her wealth and her love of form and finery. While potentially described as handsome, her beauty is marred by her cold, flat grey eyes and her thin, bloodless lips that seem unsuited to any expression save frowning or sneering. Inevitably, she tends towards clothing that is both highly stylised and highly ornate, whether uniforms or formal gowns. Lavishly decorated with medals, ribbons and religious ornaments, her dress is tailored to convey an unmistakable image of power, piety, and wealth: three things to which the Lord-Captain is deeply attached.



CHORDA DYNASTY FLEET

The Chorda Dynasty's mercantile fleet is the envy of most Rogue Traders in the Expanse, and rivals even Winterscale's vast flotillas in number of hulls and sheer firepower. Chorda's ships tend toward small, fast frigate and raider class hulls. These are multi-role ships that can carry a respectable amount of cargo and can either fend off or run from serious trouble with equal skill. Since she tends to haul smaller, higher yield cargoes, there are few capital ships in the service of the Chorda Dynasty—typically used to make a show of force or impress the impressionable.

In her tenure as head of the Dynasty, Lord-Captain Chorda has endeavoured to put her stamp on every aspect of the organisation. Her well-dressed crews and ornately detailed voidships engender comment, most of it envious, in every port from the Maw to Naduesh. Even her underdeck voidmen are required to uphold an uncommonly rigorous grooming standard or face a hundred lashes. The Lord-Captain's reputation for brutality and her perfect blending of form and function have made her one of the more feared and respected Rogue Traders in the Expanse.

CHORDA DYNASTY INTERESTS

Under the brutally efficient guidance of its matriarch, the Chorda Trade Dynasty has become a major player in the Expanse. Based largely in The Cauldron, where the location of its headquarters and shipyards remains unknown for security reasons, the Dynasty has interests in every major region, including quite a bit of Winterscale's Realm. The assets in the Expanse are only a fraction of the wealth of the Chorda Dynasty, whose homeworlds are in the Calixis sector, along with the bulk of their business and investments.

At least on paper, Lord-Captain Chorda is every bit the legitimate Rogue Trader. The bulk of her legitimate business is wrapped up in the arms trade, as well as buying, selling, and transporting high-end luxury items. Over the course of her career she has become known as the outfitter of the wealthy and powerful, a reputation that has provided incredible benefits, both personal and business.

While the majority of their business is what most would consider legitimate, the Chordas have never been a family that would turn its nose up at a profitable business opportunity. True to her roots, Lord-Captain Chorda has invested a not insubstantial amount of the Dynasty's assets in numerous shady activities, mostly through proxy agents and front agencies, including large interests in the Cold Trade. Chorda is one of the more aggressive Cold Traders in the Expanse, and fully a third of her wealth is derived from this dangerous business. She employs an army of well-paid scribes, researchers and historians, tirelessly poring over libraries full of old texts and star charts and constantly travelling the Expanse, searching for hints and leads on the next big xenos discovery. Certain highly-placed members of the Imperium are on her payroll as well, always happy to funnel information or postpone an investigation for a cut of the profits. Along with the vast amounts of gelt this has made her, with her constant research she has amassed quite possibly the most complete and comprehensive collection of star charts of the

Koronus Expanse. These charts alone would be worth untold riches if they were ever released into circulation.

CURRENT ENDEAVOURS AND RUMOURED ACTIVITIES

As with any successful Rogue Trader, it seems that more rumours than truth surround the operations of the Chorda Trade Dynasty. Currently, Lord-Captain Chorda is embroiled with a brewing conflict on Lucin's Breath with Calligos Winterscale, and is supposedly preparing for open war. There are also rumours circulating around Port Wander and Footfall—saying that someone in the Expanse is paying good money, very good money, for any information regarding the whereabouts of Chorda's missing siblings. Whether these wild claims have any validity is under debate, but could be very profitable if true.

Chorda Profile



WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
48	42	35	41	51	39	34	55	42

Movement: 5/10/15/30

Wounds: 20

Fate Points: 3

Profit Factor: 81

Skills: Command +20, Commerce, Charm, Common Lore (Imperium, Koronus Expanse), Deceive +10, Dodge +10, Evaluate, Interrogation +10, Intimidate +20, Literacy, Pilot (Space Craft), Scholastic Lore (Astromancy, Legend, Imperial Warrants), Search, Scrutiny, Secret Tongue (Rogue Trader, Underdeck), Speak Language (High Gothic, Low Gothic, Trader's Cant).

Talents: Air of Authority, Decadence, Disturbing Voice, Exotic Weapon Training (Digital Weapons), Iron Discipline, Leap Up, Melee Weapon Training (Universal), Peer (Nobility, Underworld), Pistol Weapon Training (Universal), Resistance (Fear), Talented (Command), Touched by the Fates.

Armour: Best Craftsmanship Integral Mesh-weave (Body 5, Arms 5, Legs, 5)

Weapons: Digi-melta (3m; S/-/-; 2d10+4E; Pen 12; Clip 1; Rld Full), *Discipline*—Best Craftsmanship Power Sword (1d10+9 E; Pen 6; Balanced, Power Field, +5 to Parry).

Gear: Micro-bead, voidsuit, wardrobe of fine clothing, dress uniform, working uniform, charm, filtration plugs, auto quill, data-slate, multicompass.

Acceptable Losses: During combat, the Lord Captain can spend one Fate Point to make one ally within 3 metres take any attack aimed at her. This could take the form of her using a follower as a human shield or distraction for a sniper. Attacks blocked in this way can be ranged or melee, but the GM should use common sense with this ability—Chorda could not grasp a man who is chained to a pillar and throw him in front of a melta-shot, for example.

IMPLACABLE FLAME—FLAGSHIP OF THE CHORDA TRADE DYNASTY

Hull: Cruiser

Class: Modified Ignis-Class Cruiser

Dimensions: 5.1 km long, 0.8 km abeam at fins approx.

Mass: 27.5 Megatonnes approx.

Crew: 95,000 approx.

Accel. 2.9 gravities max sustainable acceleration

Speed: 4 (6 in combat)

Void Shields: 2

Morale: 97

Turret Rating: 4

Space: 72

Manoeuvrability: +3 (+15 in combat)

Armour: 22

Crew Population: 100

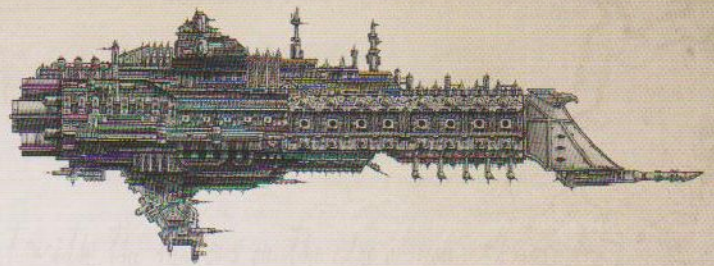
Weapon Capacity: Port 3, Starboard 3

Power: 75

Detection: +10 (+15 in combat)

Hull Integrity: 63

Crew: Crack (40)



Initially laid down in M37 at the Ryza yards as *Searing Light*, *Implacable Flame* was the lead ship of her class, the experimental and failed Ignis-class heavy cruisers. Designed to carry devastating plasma weaponry in large broadside batteries, the Ignus class was to be a close-quarters ship that would operate in squadrons of battleship killers. Their powerful engines and thick armour would allow them to weather fire while they closed with larger prey, where concentrated plasma broadsides would cripple a target. While good in theory, the plasma drives could not provide power for the weapons while maintaining thrust under heavy armour. Eventually it was decided that the continued upkeep of the only Ignus vessel was too expensive and she was decommissioned and sold out of the service.

Over the next few millennia she saw service with numerous provincial navies and private shipping concerns. She even spent a few centuries as the flagship of a corsair clan. She was rebuilt so often that it's thought her keel is the only part of the original ship remaining. Unwanted, unloved, and unnecessarily maligned, she bounced from owner to owner then disappeared from all records for at least a thousand years. Eventually, she turned up as a hulk in the Koronus Expanse at the Breaking Yards at SR-651. It was there in her pitiful state that this much-reduced ship was noticed by Lord-Captain Aspyce Chorda. Encouraged by one of her closest advisors, a representative of the Mechanicus, she purchased the sad hulk and returned her to the Drystan Construction Yards in the Calixis Sector world for a lengthy and expensive overhaul.

Finally, after decades of painstaking restoration and uncounted trillions of Thrones, *Implacable Flame* sails the void once again. Unique and slightly ostentatious in her flashy Chorda Dynasty livery, she cuts a fine figure among the ships of the Expanse, and is the perfect standard bearer for her elegant and dangerous Mistress and Commander. Despite the loving restoration and slavish devotion of her crew and officers, thanks to the millennia of abuse and neglect her machine spirit refuses to be placated or appeased. Her officers and crew note how she's slow to respond on peaceful cruises, as if sullen and acting just a little slower to infuriate those who sail her. In battle however, she becomes truly alive, sprightly even, and both her engines and plasma batteries burn hot and true.

Essential Components

Jovian Pattern Class 4 Drive, Strelov 2 Warp Engines, Gellar Field, Multiple Void Shield Array, Command Bridge, Ancient Life Sustainer, Pressed Crew Quarters, Auto-Stabilized Logis Targeter.

Supplemental Components

Port and Starboard Mars Pattern Macrocannon Broadside, Port and Starboard Ryza Pattern Plasma Battery, Prow Titanforge Lance, Cargo Hold and Lighter Bay, Reinforced Interior Bulkheads, Micro Laser Defence Grid, Luxury Passenger Quarters, Munitorium, Crew Reclamation Facility, Murder-Servitors.

Armament and Ordnance

Mars Pattern Macrocannon Broadside (port and starboard): (Str 6; Dam 1d10+3; Crit 5; Range 6)

Ryza Pattern Plasma Batteries (port and starboard): (Str 4; Dam 1d10+5; Crit 4; Range 5)

Titanforge Lance Weapon (prow): (Str 1; Dam 1d10+4; Crit 3; Range 6)

Complications and Special Rules

Wrothful, Turbulent Past.

- The *Implacable Flame* grants +5 to all Command Tests and +10 to all Ballistic Skill Tests to fire shipboard weapons.
- All crew loss in combat is reduced by 3 to a minimum of 1 (out of combat it is reduced by 4 to a minimum of 1). All Morale loss is increased by 1.
- When conducting a Hit and Run action, the *Implacable Flame* grants +20 to the Command Test and may select any result between 1 and 6 for the Critical Hit.

JONQUIN SAUL

Of all the ways for a Rogue Trader Dynasty to make its fortune in the Expanse, honest trade is possibly the least respected and most derided. The House of Saul, however, holds no such prejudices. The bearers of a Warrant of Trade older than Port Wander, the House of Saul has been pursuing business interests in the Koronus Expanse since the earliest years of the 41st millennium. They have slowly built their immense fortune on a foundation of solid business practices, conservative investing and a fine, detailed understanding of the markets within the Expanse, the Calixis Sector, and beyond. The current head is the dashing, charismatic Rogue Trader Jonquin Saul, who holds the ostentatious and self-ascribed title of Trade-Admiral.

Like many of his peers, the Trade-Admiral was born into wealth and luxury. The only child of Aesteban Saul and rightful heir to the House of Saul's Warrant, he was sailing aboard his father's flagship before he was weaned, and grew up playing among the decks and being catered to by the voidmen and petty officers in his father's employ. A precocious and highly intelligent child, he was a natural autodidact and absorbed everything he heard or saw, quickly outpacing his peers and many of his teachers. By his early teens, he had developed a fairly nuanced understanding of both the family business and interstellar trade in general, and was assigned as a Purser's Mate aboard one of his trade flagships.

As a Purser's Mate, Saul got an inside view of the workings of a massive trade organisation that few of his peers had. He discovered new joy in mathematics and figures, and gained a clear understanding of how the running of a trade ship was a small scale version of running an entire organisation. He enjoyed life aboard ship, the hard work and hard play of the voidmen and the refinement of the officers both appealed to him in equal measure. The captain he sailed under was a firm believer of discipline up front: the idea that having clear rules and high expectations of yourself, your officers and your crew drove men to succeed out of respect for their officers and themselves. Through this example, Jonquin came to understand that a well-fed, well-exercised, and well-paid crew was more efficient and easier to control than a sullen, unruly, dogged mass of men. He took to heart every lesson he learned about voidmanship, mercantilism, and financial responsibility, and when he was finally called upon to take his father's place as head of the Dynasty, he was more than ready.

When old Aesteban abdicated, Jonquin inherited a vast and powerful mercantile empire well into its prime. Never one to take good fortune for granted, the younger Saul jumped straight in to the family business. Applying what he'd learned, he set the Dynasty on a course that would make it one of the wealthiest in the Expanse.

While not a risk taker in the physical sense, Jonquin did have a taste for the kind

of risky business ventures that most traders shied away from. He could feel the ebb and flow of markets like a Navigator feels the Warp, and he instinctively knew when to buy in and, more importantly, when to cash out. At first, his practices scandalised the older members of the Dynasty, and gave his father cause to worry. Rarely did his investments fail to yield great returns, however, and soon the family trusted and respected his business and financial skills.

Now, after years of guiding his family's vast commercial empire through both fortune and famine, Trade-Admiral Saul has enviable investments, a long list of impressive achievements, and can count more people among his friends than his enemies. His shrewd business acumen and preternatural abilities at deal-making and negotiating have not only increased his fortunes, but have done the same for numerous allies and business partners throughout the Expanse. Indeed, more than one Merchant Captain or mercantile-minded Rogue Trader owes at least some portion of their success to a favourable business venture sponsored by the House of Saul.

The Trade-Admiral himself is a broad-shouldered and handsome man in late middle age. An affable, good natured man with a vaguely roguish cast to him, he is always ready with a witticism or a compliment for a handsome young woman. Saul cherishes wit and cleverness, both in himself and others, and has a full, round laugh that comes easily and has a shockingly infectious nature. While some may confuse his levity and good nature for frivolity, they could not be more wrong.

Many a rival has gone into a negotiation with the Trade-Admiral swaggering and overconfident, only to be blindsided by his ruthless negotiations. All, of course, delivered with a smile and in a self-deprecating, mildly conciliatory tone that leaves most of his competitors completely unaware that they'd played right into the Trade-Admiral's hand.

He is also a deeply spiritual man, a pious and fervent follower of the God-Emperor given to daily prayer and spirited theological conversation with his particular friend, a well respected Missionary named Lucius Yorke. While his faith in the God-Emperor is absolute and total, in recent years he has found his faith in the Ministorum wavering. He has sought the answer to his concerns in books of scripture and the writings of the Saints. Many of the books and scrolls and ancient dataslates he has collected over the years are of incredible antiquity, and some of their lessons and philosophies are shockingly heretical by the current standards of the Ecclesiarchy. His long studies and spiritual searching have only led him to more questions. He is loathe to discuss this with his friend Yorke, and has been quietly searching out more and more ancient texts and scriptures in an attempt to get closer to what he feels may be the true message of the God-Emperor.



SAUL DYNASTY MERCHANT FLEET

The trade fleet of the House of Saul is composed mainly of numerous Vagabond, Pedlar and Exchequer-class merchantmen and Jericho-class colony ships. While these massive bulk haulers are certainly majestic, they are also slow, wallowing, poorly-handling tubs with thin armour and precious little in the way of ordnance. To protect his trade convoys, Saul employs a rotating list of preferred mercenary captains, privateers and even Rogue Traders from smaller, less powerful dynasties on retainer to act as escorts. Saul also uses his House's considerable wealth to hunt down any foolish enough to prey on his shipping, leaving such activities as an act of desperation.

SAUL DYNASTY INTERESTS

The House of Saul is the perfect example of tenacity and courage in the face of vague market forces, shortages, natural disasters, pirates and import/export taxes. Their current interests within the Expanse are evidence of a consistent guiding vision under the leadership of level-headed, strong-willed men and women.

First and foremost, Trade-Admiral Saul is a merchantman. His fleets crisscross the Expanse, carrying trillions of megatonnes of bulk freight per annum and serving even the most benighted and backwater worlds. In their holds they've carried guns and grain, penitents and prisoners, detachments of the Adeptus Astartes and even high ranking officials of the Ecclesiarchy. Trade is the life's blood of the Expanse, and Trade-Admiral Saul is in the thick of it.

The House of Saul is also heavily invested in the transport of colonists and missionaries to the far reaches of the Koronus Expanse. As a faithful servant of the God-Emperor, the Trade-Admiral sees it as his duty to spread His message among the heathen peoples of the Expanse. Indeed, one of the clauses of the Saul family Warrant demands it. Many Missionaries and other servants of the Ecclesiarchy have been borne to their service in a ship wearing the livery of the House of Saul, and the Trade-Admiral is lauded as a good and faithful child of the Emperor amongst influential members of the priesthood.

While Trade-Admiral Saul may skirt the law occasionally in the pursuit of profit, he is by and large a faithful and law-abiding citizen of the Imperium.

CURRENT ENDEAVOURS AND RUMOURED ACTIVITIES

Currently, much of the wealth of the Saul Dynasty is tied up in the Trade-Admiral's plans for expanding into the Heathen Stars region. Seeing vast potential for profit among the teeming millions of benighted souls in that far-off region, he has embarked on an aggressive campaign of investing, trading and proselytizing. Word of this has spread among allies and enemies alike, and for every friendly Rogue Trader or Missionary ready to throw in with the Trade-Admiral, there are two who are travelling all the way to the edge of the Expanse to scuttle these plans, break the House of Saul once and for all and exploit the riches of the Heathen Stars for themselves.

Aside from the previously mentioned ancient scriptures that the Trade-Admiral is always in the market for, he has also put a reward on any and all information relating to the fate or current location of the merchantman once known as *Exchequer*. Jonquin Saul dearly loves his ship. Attracted to her stout construction, ease of maintenance and pleasant sailing, he has scoured both the Expanse and the Calixis Sector collecting her sister ships. He has nearly all of the class accounted for, and owns most of those still in service, but one continues to elude him, the class leader *Exchequer*. He is paying a premium for even the slightest rumours of her whereabouts, and who knows what he might give for the old girl herself.



Saul Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
40	37	35	42	34	51	49	41	66

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 20

Fate Points: 2

Profit Factor: 93

Skills: Awareness, Barter +20, Blather +10, Carouse, Charm +20, Ciphers (Rogue Trader), Command +10, Commerce +20, Common Lore (Adeptus Astra Telepathica, Adeptus Mechanicus, Imperium, Imperial Navy, Koronus Expanse, Rogue Traders) +20, Concealment, Deceive +10, Dodge, Evaluate +20, Forbidden Lore (Archeotech, Pirates, The Warp), Inquiry +10, Literacy, Pilot (Space Craft), Scholastic Lore (Astromancy, Bureaucracy, Heraldry, Imperial Warrants, Imperial Creed, Legend, Philosophy) +20, Scrutiny +20, Secret Tongue (Rogue Trader, Underdeck), Speak Language (High Gothic, Low Gothic, Trader's Cant), Tech Use, Trade (Voidfarer).

Talents: Air of Authority, Decadence, Foresight, Good Reputation (Ecclesiarchy, Government, Nobility), Jaded, Light Sleeper, Master and Commander, Master Orator, Melee Weapon Training (Universal), Nerves of Steel, Peer (Academics, Administratum, Ecclesiarchy, Government, Nobility), Pistol Weapon Training (Universal), Quick Draw, Renowned Warrant, Talented (Barter, Charm, Commerce, Evaluate), Touched by the Fates.

Armour: Best-Craftsmanship Enforcer Light Carapace (Arms 6, Body 6, Legs 6).

Weapons: *Reliant*—Best Craftsmanship Archeotech Laspistol (90m; S/3/-; 1d10+3E; Pen 2; Clip 70; Rld Full; Accurate, Reliable, Never Jams), two spare clips, Best Craftsmanship Power Maul (1d10+5 E or 1d10+9 E; Pen 2 or Pen 6; Shocking or Shocking and Power Field).

Gear: Micro-bead, Voidsuit, Wardrobe of fine clothing, Dress Uniform, Working Uniform, Charm, Filtration Plugs, Auto quill, Data-Slate, Multicompass.

Mercantile Genius: Saul is a master of trade and commerce, and few are his equal. Wherever he is, he negotiates the best possible deals for his dynasty, effectively commanding a location's resources. If Saul is in a star system, all Rogue Traders in that system (including the Explorers) count their Profit Factor as halved for the purposes of making Acquisition Tests or Influence Tests. (This does not actually halve their Profit Factor). If they choose to deal directly with Saul, their Profit Factor suffers a -10 penalty, instead of being halved.

NECESSARY EXPENDITURE—FLAGSHIP OF THE HOUSE OF SAUL

Hull: Merchant Trader

Class: Exchequer Class

Dimensions: 2.8 km long, .5 km abeam approx.

Mass: 10 Megatonnes approx.

Crew: 21,000 crew approx.

Accel. 1.8 Gravities max acceleration.

Speed: 5

Void Shields: 1

Morale: 103

Turret Rating: 1

Space: 40

Manoeuvrability: +15

Armour: 14

Crew Population: 100

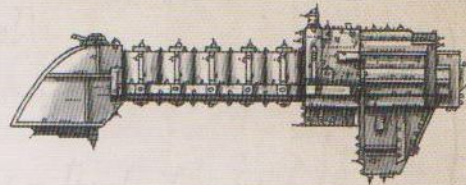
Weapon Capacity: Dorsal 1, Keel 1

Power: 40

Detection: +14

Hull Integrity: 40

Crew: Crack (40)



Necessary Expenditure is the rather tongue-in-cheek name of the richly appointed Exchequer-class merchantman operating as the current Flagship of the House of Saul. In service with the Dynasty since its beginnings, she's an old, staid, respectable ship, a comfortable home in the cold void and much beloved by her crew. Laid down at Kormishoshi Dockyards in M38 as *Almoner*, she and her sister ships, including the lead ship *Exchequer*, were designed and built to the specifications of a wealthy Free Trader who lost his fortune in a series of unfortunate events before he could claim his vessels. *Almoner*, *Exchequer* and their sisters lay partially-completed on the slips for nearly a year before being sold at auction to cover the slip fees.

Almoner served her new owner and his family well for nearly four hundred years, gaining a reputation as a fine sailor, if a little slow, with stout construction and a mild temperament. After she was retired from service with the shipping magnate, the records of her career become spotty and contradictory. At some point in her career she was heavily damaged in a warp storm, and was taken under tow by an Imperial cruiser to the Navy yards at Drystan Station, after being discovered drifting in orbit around the gas giant Sekmet with bloody bulkheads and no crew. It was after this last mysterious adventure, with dried blood still pooled under machinery and gumming up hatch hinges, that she was purchased by an upstart Rogue Trader named Camilo Saul. He bought the old ship with the last of his money and gave her the name *Necessary Expenditure*, a light-hearted nod to the price of doing business.

Since then she has weathered all manner of storms, carried every cargo imaginable—and many beyond the ken of normal citizens—and helped lay the solid foundations of the fortunes of the House of Saul. Throughout her service she has cradled countless generations of the House of Saul and their retainers and voidmen in her safe, steady embrace. So beloved is she, that even in death crew are loathe to leave her. Voidmen who have served aboard her claim to have been relieved by spectral shipmates, or shown up to stand a watch only to find someone unknown standing it for them. Ghostly damage control teams have responded to alarms during emergencies. There are whispers in her corridors, and occasionally the faint sound of laughter and music will echo from an empty compartment. Even Trade-Admiral Saul himself has witnessed the face of a long dead Void-Master appear on an auspex screen to warn of impending danger. While these strange events have all but stopped since a recent overhaul and refit, the men still talk of their spiritual guides and ghostly shipmates, easing their fear by convincing themselves that these ghosts of crews past are sent by the God-Emperor Himself to bring them success in their endeavours.

Essential Components

Modified Lathe Pattern Class 1 Drive, Strellov 1 Warp Engine, Void Shield Projectors, Gellar Field, Commerce Bridge, Ancient Life Sustainer, Voidsmen Quarters, R-50 Auspex Multi-Band.

Supplemental Components

Dorsal and Keel Mars Pattern Macro cannons, Main Cargo Hold, Augmented Retro Thrusters, Tenebro Maze, Observation Dome, Extended Supply Vault.

Armament and Ordnance

Mars Pattern Macro cannons (Dorsal): (Str 3; Dam 1d10+2; Crit 5, Range 6)

Mars Pattern Macro cannons (Dorsal): (Str 3; Dam 1d10+2; Crit 5, Range 6)

Complications and Special Rules

Resolute, Haunted.

- The spirits that haunt the *Necessary Expenditure* are known to the crew, and do not reduce shipboard Morale.
- The ship gains a +10 to all Repair Tests, and imposes a -5 penalty on any Command Tests made to attempt to board or perform hit and run attacks on her.
- When making Manoeuvre Tests to avoid Celestial Phenomena, the ship gains +5 to its Manoeuvrability.

AOIFE ARMENGARDE

Tradition and heritage are something Rogue Traders often value far more than Thrones. They are currencies more powerful (and often more tenuous) than wealth, and for a group of individuals who by nature tread the edges of the Imperium, one of the few means by which they retain legitimacy in humanity's eyes.

The Armengarde Dynasty is no different than its fellows in that regard. Familial lore claims the Dynasty's Warrant predates the founding of the Calixis Sector, and may even be as ancient as the commissions of Stavos and Haarlock. Armengardes fought alongside the Imperium during the Angevin Crusade, plumbed the depths of the Hazeroth Abyss, traversed the Drusus Marches, and when the Koronus Passage was opened, were amongst the flood of Rogue Traders who set out into the Expanse. For millennia, the Dynasty has been a solid and dependable presence amongst the ranks of Rogue Traders in the Expanse. Armengardes tended to be modestly successful, importing the Expanses' riches back to the Imperial nobility of the Sector—and in time, becoming nobility themselves.

Tradition and heritage, for the Armengardes, was something to be prized and embraced—until Aoife inherited the Warrant. Her actions since adopting the mantle of Rogue Trader would likely have shocked her ancestors just as much as they shock the noble circles her family travels in. However, she is also the first Armengarde since the Crusade to become truly renowned.

The Armengardes have a matriarchal tradition, with the oldest female child inheriting the Warrant upon the death of her mother. As first daughter, Aoife grew up on Scintilla with the knowledge that she would one day become a Rogue Trader. Her mother Marcella was away for years at a time (her father died before her birth), and Aoife grew up amongst the Sector's nobility and grandes. She was expected to learn decorum and etiquette in this environment, and become honed in the realm of political manoeuvring. To the great dismay of her advisors and tutors, she appeared to fail on all three accounts.

Whenever she could, Aoife shunned her studies and avoided her tutors. Rather than visit formal galas and banquets, she would vanish into the depths of Hive Sibellus for weeks at a time, ride the land-crawlers across the wastes to Hive Tarsus, duel in the deadly heat of Gunmetal City's Infernus, and swing from the chains below Ambulon.

Even when she did acquiesce to her advisors' demands and frequent the rarified circles of the noble classes, the results were far from ideal. The spires of Sibellus still hear the story of when Aoife Armengarde first witnessed "spurring"—where members of the

nobility abduct underhivers, inject them with the drug spur, then compel them to take part in a play or performance. The lucky victims are only mocked, while others suffer injury or death from the drug or the cruelties of their captors. While at a gala the young scion witnessed such an entertainment, and she swiftly denounced her host—a member of the Machenko Dynasty. The resulting duel was to be to "first wound" only. Unfortunately for the host, Aoife dealt her first wound by lopping off his hand. The resulting feud between their dynasties continues to this day.

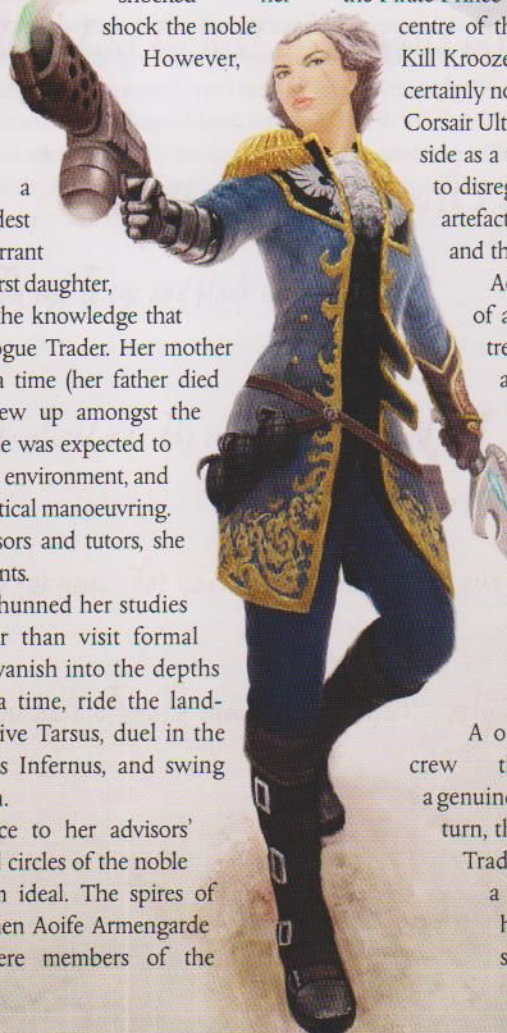
It was soon decided that the earlier Aoife began training to be a Rogue Trader, the better. Marcella took her aboard the Armengarde's flagship, the *Bansidhe*. Both departed for the Expanse, and Aoife would not return until her mother's death, several decades later. In that time, the carefree and rebellious girl matured into an intelligent and strong-willed Rogue Trader. However, she maintained her stubborn and idealistic core.

In the years since, Aoife has elevated the name of Armengarde to new heights. Her exploits are extensive and varied, to the point that it has grown difficult to tell truth from fiction. For instance, it is no secret that Armengarde avoided an arranged marriage by her mother, and had a child later in life—her daughter and heir Igraine. However if anyone in her dynasty knows the identity of the father, they remain silent. Rumours abound: a low-decks conduit-tender, a tragic romance with a Navy Fury squadron commander, or even a secretive marriage with a full-fledged Inquisitor. This last option is what worries Aoife's enemies the most—such an alliance would be powerful and dangerous.

Her exploits are equally legendary. She is said to have outwitted the Pirate Prince Mordread Drakeholm, descended to the fabled centre of the Dolorous Clouds, and dispatched two Ork Kill Kroozers in the process of claiming a space hulk. It is certainly no secret that she duelled a lieutenant of the Eldar Corsair Ulthyr Ellarion—she carries his power sword at her side as a trophy of her victory. Her apparent willingness to disregard Imperial law and possess proscribed xenos artefacts further demonstrates both her stubbornness and that some unseen powers work to protect her.

Aoife Armengarde is now nearing her first century of age, though careful use of rejuvenat drugs and treatments leave her looking young. She is fit and athletic, with a wiry build. It is only when one studies her closer that they can see her true nature: the scars left from decades of conflict and a gaze backed by a hundred years of experience. She is far tougher—physically and mentally—than she appears, and her Eldar sword has claimed the lives of countless foes who have dared to lock blades with Aoife.

Unlike many starship captains and Rogue Traders, Aoife earns the loyalty of her crew through charismatic leadership and a genuine concern for her subordinates. In turn, they respond with a dedication to their Rogue Trader that borders on devotion. She also keeps a close cadre of advisors and allies aboard her ship, some of which have been by her side her entire life. Her Engineer Prime, the



Magos Verona 112358, and Master-at-Arms Paxton Reese have been by her side since before her mother's death, and the Navigator House Aleen has provided Navigators to the Armengardes since they arrived in the Expanse.

However, her stubbornness has earned her many implacable enemies as well. The Machenko Dynasty is the most overt, with both sides working to sabotage the others' interests with an intensity equal to a true war. However, they are far from the only opponents to the Armengarde Dynasty. Aoife's unyielding determination to stand by her allies and oppose her enemies, no matter the circumstances, means the Dynasty is not as wealthy as it could be. Of course, however much this may dismay its members, it seems not to worry its head.

ARMENGARDE DYNASTY INTERESTS

Although the Armengarde Dynasty has traditionally relied on trade to support its operational base, Aoife has taken her Dynasty in a different direction during her tenure. The Dynasty owns a substantial interest in various merchant houses and chartist captain ships in the Calixis Sector. However, its investment in is largely financial, with the Dynasty controlling very few physical assets.

Within the Expanse, the Armengarde Dynasty's assets are focused around the ancient and powerful cruiser *Bansidhe*. Aoife has shown little interest in developing trade routes or the long-term exploitation of newly discovered worlds. Instead she has built her fortunes on the twin pillars of smuggling and exploration, selling valuable locations so that she may continue exploring unhindered by long-term operations.

Aoife also runs blockades to deliver supplies to beleaguered outposts and worlds, and smuggles rare and valuable items past rival Rogue Traders or the Imperial authorities on the far side of the Maw—though she tends to take such ventures for the excitement they may provide, rather than the monetary rewards. In the last decade, Aoife's smuggling operations have undercut several trade routes the House of Saul maintains, putting her at odds with Trade-Admiral Jonquin Saul. Thus far the rivalry has remained cordial—a surprisingly friendly competition. How long that lasts remains to be seen.

Rather than keeping a multitude of bases and installations, the Armengarde Dynasty maintains a web of contacts and agents across the more "civilised" portions of the Expanse. Aoife prefers to maintain friends and loose allies, rather than permanent facilities, making her Dynasty much harder to attack. From Footfall to the Egarian Dominion, it is difficult to find a colony or installation where someone doesn't owe the Armengardes "a small favour."

CURRENT ENDEAVOURS AND RUMOURED ACTIVITIES

For the last twenty years Aoife's daughter Igraine has remained in the Calixis Sector amongst the nobility, just as Aoife did while growing up. Aoife has been attempting to groom her daughter for the day when she will take the Warrant from afar, but rumours abound that she wants to see her daughter removed from the poisonous intrigues of the Sector Capital, so they may meet in Port Wander. However, there are certainly those

who desire to strike against the Armengarde heir while she is unprotected, as Igraine's worth to the Dynasty is incalculable. Such a task may be more dangerous than it appears, however, especially if Igraine is as competent as her mother. Then, of course, there is also the matter of her mysterious father.

Recently, the Machenko Dynasty has begun to move against the Armengarde interests in the Koronus Expanse with ever-increasing force. They have established a base of operations somewhere in the Rubycon II system, and are sending armed vessels to attack those associated with the Armengardes in the past. In response, an Armengarde agent known as Master Dougal has arrived at the Port. He is offering a great deal of wealth (and future favours) for someone willing to eliminate this threat.

Armengarde Profile



WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
60	33	37 ⁽⁴⁾	50	35	41	31	51	62

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 22

Fate Points: 3

Profit Factor: 50

Skills: Awareness+10, Barter+10, Blather+10, Carouse+20, Charm+20, Ciphers (Rogue Trader, Nobilite Encoding), Command+20, Commerce, Common Lore (Adeptus Astra Telepathica, Adeptus Mechanicus, Imperium, Imperial Navy, Koronus Expanse, Rogue Traders), Deceive+10, Dodge, Drive (Ground, Skimmer), Evaluate, Forbidden Lore (The Inquisition, Psykers, Xenos), Gamble+20, Inquiry+10, Literacy, Pilot (Flyers, Space Craft)+10, Scholastic Lore (Cryptology, Legend.), Scrutiny, Search, Secret Tongue (Rogue Trader, Underdeck), Speak Language (High Gothic, Low Gothic, Trader's Cant), Tech Use.

Talents: Air of Authority, Ambidextrous, Basic Weapon Training (Universal), Bastion of Iron Will, Blademaster, Combat Master, Counter Attack, Crippling Strike, Disarm, Enemy (Machenko Dynasty), Exotic Weapon Training (*The Mourning's Edge*), Flame Weapon Training (Pistol), Good Reputation (Void Born, Workers), Hardy, Into the Jaws of Hell, Iron Discipline, Jaded, Master and Commander, Meditation, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive, Universal), Nerves of Steel, Peer (Adeptus Mechanicus, Inquisition, Middle Classes, Nobility, Void Born, Workers) Pistol Weapon Training (Universal), Quick Draw, Renowned Warrant, Resistance (Psychic Techniques), Strong Minded, Swift Attack, True Grit, Touched by the Fates, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee, Ballistic), Wall of Steel.

Armour: Concealed Xenos-mesh (Arms 4, Body 4, Legs 4).
Weapons: *The Mourning's Edge*—Unique Eldar Powersword (1d10+10 E; Pen 7; Balanced, Power Field, +20 total to Parry attempts), Hand Flamer (10m; S/-/-; 1d10+4E; Pen 2; Clip 2; Rld 2 Full).

Gear: Chrono, micro-bead, Best Craftsmanship uniform, Best Craftsmanship bionic arm, data-slate, multicompass. Best Craftsmanship refractor field (see *INTO THE STORM* page 130).

Inspired by Loyalty: Aoife's charismatic leadership inspires greater efforts from those who serve beside her. Once per turn, one ally of Aoife's choice may re-roll any one failed Skill or Characteristic Test.

BANSIDHE—FLAGSHIP AND HOME OF THE ARMENGARDES

Hull: Cruiser

Class: Lunar Class

Dimensions: 5 km long, .8 km abeam approx.

Mass: 28.5 Megatonnes approx.

Crew: 80,000 crew approx.

Accel. 2.4 Gravities max acceleration.

Speed: 5

Void Shields: 2

Morale: 101

Turret Rating: 2

Space: 75

Manoeuvrability: +5

Armour: 20

Crew Population: 100

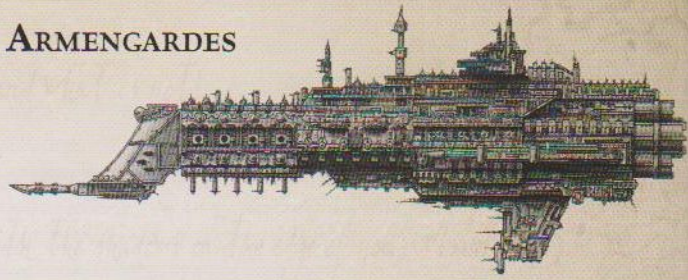
Weapon Capacity: Prow 1, Port 2, Starboard 2

Power: 75

Detection: +10

Hull Integrity: 70

Crew: Veteran (50)



The *Bansidhe* is an ancient vessel, a Lunar-class cruiser that has served the Imperium long before the Armengardes received their Warrant. It is said the ship's hull was originally constructed in the vast Jovian shipyards that share a sun with Holy Terra. Appropriately, the name *Bansidhe* is also said to originate on Terra, taken from the oldest legends of that sacred world. Not even the Armengardes know for certain how their dynasty obtained the ship, though they say it was awarded to them with their Warrant. Certainly, when the Armengardes fought in the ranks of the Angevin Crusade, they did so from the *Bansidhe's* bridge.

The *Bansidhe's* armaments are largely unchanged from her original design. Her port and starboard sides both sport a powerful macrocannon broadside and hulking lance turrets, the standard weapon loadout for the Lunar class. However, her torpedo tubes have long since been removed for additional space, as has a great deal of the redundant armour plating of her prow. Even so, it maintains the distinctive profile of an Imperial warship, the prow topped with a 50-metre-tall statue of Saint Celestine containing the *Bansidhe's* Gellar Field generator.

Most starships are expected to remain at void for months or years, but the *Bansidhe* is singularly well-equipped in that regard. Vast supply vaults mean the ship is largely self-sufficient, and over the years the sizeable crew has evolved to become a true community. In fact, visitors often observe that the *Bansidhe* feels more like a small city than it does a starship, a point Aoife does not dispute. Various decks have evolved into markets and chambers into homes and businesses, including taverns, artisan-shops, galleys, and unsanctioned surgeons. One could live in relative comfort for years amongst the *Bansidhe's* decks. In fact, it is said that there are many members of the crew who have never set foot on a planet's surface, living and dying amongst the adamantium bulkheads.

However, those who derisively assume the ship's "city-like" aspect weakens it in a fight find themselves sadly mistaken. From the forward barrack-holds filled with mercenaries, to the grim charnel-halls of the ship's reclamation facility, the *Bansidhe* is more than prepared for combat.

Essential Components

Jovian-pattern Class 4 Drive, Strelav 2 Warp Engine, Warpsbane Hull, Multiple Void Shield Array, Ship Master's Bridge, Vitae Pattern Life Sustainer, Clan-kin Quarters*, R-50 Auspex Multi-band.

Supplemental Components

Port and Starboard Titanforge Lance Battery, Port and Starboard Mars Pattern Macrocannon Broadside, Cargo Hold and Lighter Bay, Barracks, Extended Supply Vaults, Crew Reclamation Facility, Teleportarium.

Armaments and Ordnance

Port and Starboard Mars Pattern Macrocannon Broadside (Port and Starboard): (Str 6; Dam 1d10+2; Crit 5, Range 6)

Titanforge Lance Battery (port and starboard): (Str 2; Dam 1d10+4; Crit 3; Range 6)

Complications and Special Rules

Adventurous, Temperamental Warp Engine

- Aoife devotes a great deal of resources into keeping her crew well-provisioned and content, and they repay her with loyalty. All instances of Morale loss are reduced by 1, to a minimum of 1 (included in the total below).
- All Command Tests made to defend against boarding and hit-and-run actions gain +5. All hit-and-run attacks against opponents gain +20.
- All sources of Morale loss are reduced by 1 to a minimum of 1.
- All sources of Crew Population loss are reduced by 3, to a minimum of 1.
- All Piloting and Navigation Tests gain +5.
- All Ballistic Skill Tests to fire shipboard weapons gain +10.
- When making emergency repairs, repair 1 additional Hull Integrity.

SARVUS TRASK

For centuries, the name of Trask was seldom heard within the Koronus Expanse—it was the name of a Rogue Trader Dynasty fallen to petty corruption and self-centred hedonism, a small and easily dismissed family with few prospects and fewer aspirations beyond minor politics on the fringes of Imperial society. The Trask Warrant of Trade was first awarded to Godwyn Trask during the Age of Apostasy, an act that (according to some records) was intended to take the influential Godwyn away from the shifting tides of Imperial politics.

In the 39th Millennium, the Trask Dynasty relocated to the Calixis Sector on the frontier of the Imperium, placing the Dynasty's ailing fortunes into a long, slow decline. Only recently has the name of Trask regained meaning and significance amongst the powers of the Imperium and other Rogue Traders—due entirely to the actions and efforts of its newest scion: Sarvus Trask.

As has become his particular style, Trask made a grandiose and dramatic entrance to the political landscape of the Koronus Expanse in 814.M41. He seized his Warrant of Trade upon the death of his father and immediately made course for the Expanse one step ahead of creditors from House Krin seeking remuneration for his family's large debts. As a Rogue Trader, Trask wasted no time before venturing out on a series of adventures that brought him great wealth and fame. He achieved for himself the status of a rising star, a man to be watched—along with a darker reputation for taking insane risks to grasp any prize. Among these journeys, he uncovered a lost Adeptus Mechanicus Explorer vessel and exchanged its location for a gleaming suit of power armour presented by the grateful Magos of the Altar-Templum—Calixis-Est-17, and it is rumoured that he once scrawled his name across the surface of a lost planet within the Hecaton Rift as a means of claiming it for his own.

Not all of his encounters, however, have led to such fortune; there are many whispers upon Footfall that say Sarvus Trask has gone slightly mad, that his eyes have gazed into the abyss and seen too much. Even his own crew are reluctant to speak of their Lord-Captain, other than to spread tales of his recklessness.

The madness that afflicts Sarvus Trask tends to manifest itself as a wild, bombastic disregard for his own safety and those of his retinue and crew. In addition, he sometimes will speak to an imaginary person or inanimate object (such as his sword), consulting with them before

deciding on a plan of action. So far, Trask (and the efforts of his loyal crew) have kept these issues to a manageable level, and few of Trask's friends and rivals are even aware of the extent of his insanity.

Known by his peers as a man with unbridled ambition, Trask sees every setback as an opportunity for the advancement of his dynasty. He has left the Imperium far behind and now considers the Expanse to be his true home.

TRASK DYNASTY INTERESTS

Trask's Dynasty has risen swiftly upon the back of fortuitous ventures in exploration and founding trade routes into the Unbeholden Reaches of the Expanse. Along the way, Sarvus has laid claim to some extremely valuable finds, including the lost Adeptus Mechanicus vessel the *Magos Absolom* and the Imperial Navy vessel *Reliable*. In addition to these triumphs, Trask has set himself up quite comfortably within the Carros system, where he re-discovered lost Imperial colonies first founded by his ancestor Elayna. The resources within the Carros system have provided Trask with a small fleet of system ships and considerable reserves of promethium and manpower.

Much of this wealth has then been invested in the Ecclesiarchy—it is well known that Trask seeks closer ties with both the Adeptus Ministorum and the Adeptus Mechanicus, establishing outposts and auto-temples upon far-flung worlds along his journeys.

A great deal of Trask's remaining profit ends up being funnelled into his vessel, the *Cerberus*—often for repairs suffered during another daring adventure. Within the last two years, multiple encounters with hostile xenos (particularly the rapacious Rak'Gol) have required regular returns to the maintenance yard.

Although Trask's ship often returns limping along with plasma venting through holes in its superstructure, it has so far always returned victorious from these conflicts.

CURRENT ENDEAVOURS AND RUMOURED ACTIVITIES

Most recently, Trask has been seeking an opportunity to establish a stable Imperial shipyard within the Carros system. However, many of his peers consider this a foolhardy effort, given the difficulty of providing adequate security and protection from Ork Freebooters, given the proximity of Undred-Undred Teef.

It is rumoured that Trask has stumbled across a stockpile of ancient Imperial atomic weapons on some world within the Hecaton Rift, and more than a few interested parties have had meetings with Trask to discuss their sale or distribution. So far, nothing more than talk has resulted from these meetings, but there are many on Footfall who are confident that Trask will be making an



announcement soon regarding the buyer.

Trask has modelled much of his actions on the legendary exploits of Calligos Winterscale. The two men have met—most famously in a dinner held upon Footfall that began with a tense standoff, but ended with both men holding great respect for the other. So far, Trask has scrupulously avoided encroaching into any of Winterscale's operations, and some of his bridge crew have begun to speculate how long it will be before Trask weighs in on the rivalry between Winterscale and Aspyce Chorda. Trask is certainly anything but subtle, and his recent overtures towards gaining a larger, more powerful ship, and his designs upon creating a shipyard in his home system have made him both a role model for younger Rogue Traders and a target for those more established peers who consider him a growing threat to their power.



Trask Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
54	44	30	41	43	42	33	50	56

Movement: 4/8/12/24

Wounds: 20

Fate Points: 5

Profit Factor: 52

Skills: Awareness (Per), Carouse (T) +10, Charm (Fel) +10, Command (Fel) +10, Common Lore (Imperium, Koronus Expanse, Rogue Traders) (Int), Deceive (Fel), Dodge (Ag), Evaluate (Int), Gamble (Int), Literacy (Int), Pilot (Spacecraft) (Ag) +10, Scholastic Lore (Astromancy, Legend) (Int), Scrutiny (Per), Speak Language (High Gothic, Low Gothic) (Int).

Talents: Air of Authority, Ambidextrous, Enemy (House Krin), Exotic Weapon Training (digital weapon), Iron Discipline, Jaded, Master & Commander, Melee Weapon Training (Universal), Nerves of Steel, Pistol Weapon Training (Universal), Quick Draw, Resistance (Fear), Sprint, Touched by the Fates, Two-Weapon Wielder (Ballistic, Melee)

Armour: Best Craftsmanship Power Armour (All 9)

Weapons: Best Craftsmanship power sword (1d10+11 E; Pen 6; Balanced), two las-gauntlets with motion trackers (50m;

S/4/-; 1d10+4 E; Pen 1; Clip 20; Rld Full; Reliable); Best Craftsmanship plasma pistol with red-dot laser sight (30m; S/2/-; 1d10+6 E; Pen 6; Clip 10; Rld 3 Full; Overheat).

Gear: Chrono, best-craftsmanship clothing, lord-captain's baton, Mefonte's orthodoxy, micro-bead, photo-visor, void-suit, Common Craftsmanship Bionic Heart, Best Craftsmanship Bionic Eye.

Crazy Enough To Work: Trask is undoubtedly mad, but there are those who say he has a method to his insanity. Once per combat (or other instance of structured time), Trask or one of his allies gain a +10 bonus to all Tests he makes until the end of that combat. If he ever fails a Test, he suffers a -20 penalty to all Tests he makes until the end of that combat instead.

Favoured by Fate: Trask is unusually fortunate (some might say suspiciously so). For the purposes of Touched by the Fates, Trask gains a number of Fate Points equal to his Willpower Bonus, not half his Willpower Bonus as per usual.

THE CERBERUS—FLAGSHIP IN THE (EVENTUAL) GRAND FLEET OF TRASK

The first ship in Sarvus Trask's fleet and the ancestral flagship of his dynasty, the *Cerberus* is an old ship with a service record spanning centuries. Originally, it served as a pilgrim vessel before being purchased by Rogue Trader Elayna Trask in 402. M41.

Since that time, the *Cerberus* has been heavily modified into a fast and extremely well-armed raider to match the original capabilities of its hull. The ship contains immense and powerful plasma batteries along with some proscribed xenotech grav-sails—the source of which remains a secret held only by the Trask family records. The ship is crewed by a crack group of experienced voidfarers, kept well-motivated by the (so-far) astounding success of Trask's endeavours amongst the stars.

Many of the crew, however, spread stories that the ship itself is haunted by the spirit of Elayna Trask. It is said that she guides her heir through visions and dreams, although many dismiss such tales as mere excuses for Sarvus Trask's numerous eccentricities.

To my friend and colleague Malachi Stern,

The man's mad, I tell you! Oh, I grant you that he seems sane enough most times, but I was there when he ordered us full speed ahead into the nebula, all augurs blind and the Navigator fairly screaming for us to move with caution. He's got a horde of murder-servitors, all made up with his own likeness, and I once saw him try to bargain with the Mechanicus for a Titan—not to use for conquest, mind you, but to mount on the hull of his ship as a monument to himself! Oh, that Sarvus Trask is a right mad one, for sure...but he's lucky, too, and he and his crew have gained great fortunes amongst the Expanse.

- Missionary Ezekial Thone

Hull: Raider

Class: Modified Havoc-Class Merchant Raider

Dimensions: 1.6 km long, 0.4 km abeam approx.

Mass: 6 megatonnes approx.

Crew: 24000 crew, approx.

Accel: 5 gravities max sustainable acceleration

Speed: 10

Void Shields: 1

Morale: 100

Turret Rating: 1

Space: 40

Manoeuvrability: +30

Armour: 16

Crew Population: 100

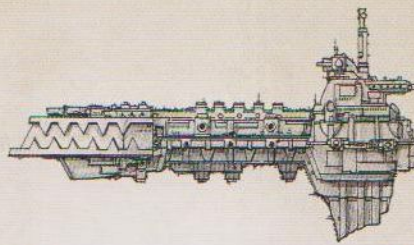
Weapon Capacity: Prow 1, Dorsal 1

Power: 45

Detection: +21

Hull Integrity: 30

Crew: Veteran (50)



Essential Components

Jovian Pattern Class 2 Plasma Drive, Strellov 1 Warp Engine, Gellar Field, Single Void Shield Array, Combat Bridge, M-1.r Life Sustainer, Voidsmen Quarters, M-201.b Augur Array

Supplemental Components

Gravity sails, murder-servitors

Armament and Ordnance

Ryza Pattern Plasma Battery (Dorsal): (Str 4; Dam 1d10+5; Crit 4; Range 5)

Sunsear Laser Battery (Prow): (Str 4; Dam 1d10+2; Crit 4; Range 9)

Complications and Special Rules

Stoic, Haunted.

- Whenever a Component on this ship becomes damaged or unpowered, roll 1d10—on a 7+ the damage is ignored.
- Any attempts to board or Hit and Run against the *Cerberus* suffer a -5 penalty. When conducting a Hit and Run, the *Cerberus* gains +20 to the Command Test and may select any Crit Result between 1 and 6.
- All Tech-Use Tests to repair the ship gain +10.



WRATH UMBOLDT

Years of plying the Expanse and coming up empty-handed or worse would madden most Rogue Traders. Wrath Umboldt has taken this sad experience and instead refined it into a sober view of reality, hoping one day to make sense of all that fate has handed him. His journeys of late have been low risk and reaped paltry rewards, but also hazard less the horrors of the void so that he may spend more of his valuable time reflecting on past misfortunes and the lessons taken from them. His frugal aesthetic and sombre disposition remind those who know him of the most pious and humble of the faithful, yet his years upon the *Righteous Crusader* have withered his soul to but a few bare threads.

Among his many experiences, the unexpected voyage into the Processional of the Damned haunts him most. Beyond the eerie memories of horrifying visages, the confusion of machine spirits, and the ghastly, dark mass at the system's centre lies the guilt of having abandoned some of his crew,

lost among the myriad husks floating in orbit about the turbulent star. Were their souls silenced by death he could rest better, but rumours from other explorers who claim to have reached the Processional say that desperate scavengers skirt the system's edges. These lost humans claim to be the descendants of the *Righteous Crusader's* past crew. Umboldt profited from this venture through rare artefacts he extracted from the system's space hulks, but these hollow earnings do not bring him the sleep lost in the journey's wake.

BARSAPINE AND FIRST ADVENTURES

Umboldt hails from the bustling Calixis Sector hive world, Barsapine. The unlikely heir to his family's Warrant of Trade, he laboured studiously under the tutelage of his uncle Luthin Umboldt, expecting to inherit a cogitator factorium. When word came that his grandfather, Kaden Umboldt, left the Warrant in Wrath's name, a number of other relations quickly mobilized to intercept his inheritance through guile and assassination. Wrath outwitted his assailants. Having as little time

as they to process this winning opportunity he predicted their response, calculated the threats, and made his escape on the *Righteous Crusader*. He never did return to Barsapine and only inquires cordially when met with an acquaintance recently arrived from the Adrantis Nebula. Since fleeing the hive world, his family has neither attempted contact nor risked attack.

Since his escape from Barsapine, Umboldt has travelled the width and breadth of the Koronus Expanse, if only having encountered a small fraction of what it had to offer. He made significant profits in his early years and gathered knowledge that would serve him well during his later trials. However, as time passed he suffered setbacks including dead end missions, heavy crew losses, and a mutiny he barely survived. The discovery of the Processional of the Damned made him famous with the Expanse's explorers but changed the course of his life dramatically. At that time, Umboldt withdrew to his quarters on the *Righteous Crusader* and spent more and more time berthed in Port Wander. A crew still mans his ship and enjoys a share of his wealth but they wonder just how long his coffers can support them without going deeper into the Expanse.

PORT WANDER, TALES OF WARNING

Longingly, Umboldt looks out upon the void. His Warrant afforded him an escape from a life he did not desire administering a hive world factorium, and yet condemns him to a life of misfortunes experienced at a grand scale. The lives of thousands rest in his hands, responsible for manning his ship and carrying out his commands. Though loyal today, they have in the past rebelled, suffered, and only on rare occasion enjoyed rewards for their long years spent in the Expanse. Fortunately for all involved, Umboldt's few successes have afforded him and his crew a lions share and to date, his mind for fiscal matters has kept them comfortable in their refuge at Port Wander.

For now, he tentatively plans future voyages through the Expanse and counsels those who have heard of his mishaps in the Processional of the Damned and elsewhere on their activities. Surprisingly friendly, Umboldt sacrifices a competitive edge to give advice to those in need of it. Though known for his troubles in the Processional, he has committed himself to many ventures and met with varying degrees of success. His experience has enough breadth to provide both advice to those who would seek him out and room for his own machinations in the future.

To find Wrath Umboldt, one should start by checking for the *Righteous Crusader* docked in Port Wander. Once the hands working about the docks ascertain the identity of the interested party and decide that

USING UMBOLT

Unlike the other Rogue Traders in this section, Wrath Umbolt does not have a profile or a starship. This is because Umbolt is intended for a different purpose. He is a valuable resource for new Explorers, a potential mentor with useful advice and guidance, or simply someone who can pass along rumours and stories that may lead to adventures in the Expanse. However, he also exists to serve as a cautionary tale. Players should keep in mind that for every fortune made in the Expanse, there are a dozen failures, and Umbolt is an example that failure is all too easy.

it might be worth the Umboldt's time to arrange for a meeting they will send for Fritz Dormund. The ship's ambassador and Umboldt's most trusted ally, Fritz sees to it that guests have all the courtesy the *Righteous Crusader* has to offer and inquires about the details for the visit. Once Umboldt arrives to greet his guests, he knows why they have come and has prepared a well thought out response to their questions.

For his trials, Umboldt suffers few augmentations and scars. An ornate bionic device replaces his left hand, complete with brass-inlaid fingers and metacarpals in addition to a flexible rotation device set where he once had a wrist. His clothing is simple, elegant, and old, but fastidiously well-kept. Listeners sometimes feel rushed by his no-nonsense, utilitarian diction, as though he wishes to dispense his wisdom as quickly as politeness dictates and then send his guests on their way. However, when they impress him with their adventures, he praises them for their insights and encourages them to visit again. Those that approach him amiably often leave satisfied with his wisdom and some make regular visits, especially if they have stories to tell.

SPEAKING OF UMBOLDT

A peculiar tradition has settled in with the denizens of Port Wander when discussing the exploits of the rich and powerful: when Wrath Umboldt comes up, one only speaks of him with respect for his experience, never insults his name, and under no circumstances makes light of his misfortunes. On this last point everyone agrees, even the slanderous Rogue Trader Castigar Aciris who recently decided to keep his criticisms of Umboldt to himself. This pervasive sentiment expresses a superstitious dread felt by the port's citizens. Many believe Umboldt to have a curse of sorts, perhaps issued from the God-Emperor as a test of will, a moulding of character, or a punishment for some hitherto undisclosed sin. To insult or scoff at him might offend the saints.





VAULTS OF THE
FORGOTTEN

EGARIA OMEGA

•
SECRETS OF
EGARIA

•
INTO THE MAZE

•
AT THE HEART OF
THE MAZE

•
ANTAGONISTS AND
NPCs

CHAPTER V: VAULTS OF THE FORGOTTEN

"There are places in the Dominion where even old Winterscale himself dared not tread. Sure, his Writ of Claim said he could, but he didn't. Maybe you'd be best to follow his example, friend..."

—Cold Trader Mad Kal (retired)

For many centuries, the curious, the avaricious, and the downright foolish have been drawn to the deathly worlds of the Egarian Dominion to seek their fortunes amongst the ruins of a long-dead civilisation. Though no more than a handful have ever returned, untold numbers make the perilous journey each year. Some seek the dubious fortunes of the Cold Trade or forbidden lore, while some seek communion with powers long extinct from the galaxy.

Vaults of the Forgotten takes the Explorers into one such dark and deadly place—the world of Egaria Omega. But far from empty catacombs and dusty treasure chambers, the Explorers find themselves pitched into a battle for their very survival. The Egarians might be long gone from their stellar domains, but the savage and bloodthirsty Rak'Gol are a very real threat indeed, and one that the Explorers must overcome if they are to exploit the riches of the Cold Trade.

THE SETTING

The adventure is set on the dead world of Egaria Omega, deep in the Egarian Dominion. The planet is known to host at least one Egarian maze city, and the Kasballica Mission has sponsored a xenoarchaeological expedition to plunder its riches. But the expedition has thus far failed to pay dividends, and the Mission is pushing its overseer for results. The Explorers have a stake in the expedition (see the "Using this Adventure" sidebar for more on this), but the dig's overseer resents their presence, for all is not as it seems on Egaria Omega.

The reason for this resentment is awful indeed, for the Overseer is concealing a terrible secret. Eight months ago, he discovered a halo artefact, and conspired to keep it for himself. During a confrontation with his deputy, who had discovered the overseer's duplicity, he plunged it into the other man's heart and in so doing brought about the unholy birth of a man-xenos hybrid. The monster fled to the nearby maze city, but ever since has preyed on the hapless expedition staff. Not long after the Explorers' arrival, the marauding Rak'Gol descend upon the dig site, intent on sating their ravaging hunger for xenos artefacts and pitching the entire expedition into bloodshed and anarchy.



GM'S BRIEF

Vaults of the Forgotten introduces the Explorers to a location and situation in many ways typical of the Egarian Dominion. They will meet some of the characters that ply the Cold Trade, and become embroiled in the type of dangerous situation that can ensue when things go wrong far beyond the borders of the Imperium.

The expedition site is populated by the servants of the Kasballica Mission, and they range from the brutal overseer and his guards to the dedicated xenoarchaeologists and the indentured workers that aid them. The staff presents the Explorers with a wide cross section of those who pursue the Cold Trade, whether through their own choice or through circumstance. The Rak'Gol represent another side of the Egarian Dominion, for these savage, seemingly mindlessly violent xenos are an ever-present and lethal threat to any who would seek their wealth out amongst the cold worlds at the heart of Winterscale's Realm.

Vaults of the Forgotten is also an unusual adventure, in that the Explorers become involved in the Egaria Omega expedition not as masters of all they survey but as partners to the Kasballica Mission. They may be present at the dig for a variety of reasons, but they do not have complete charge over its staff or operations. Of course, they may well rise to the challenge of leadership when the Rak'Gol attack, but how successful they are in this will depend upon how they have interacted with the various factions amongst the dig staff.

Throughout the adventure, Achievement Points are used to track the Explorers' progress (see page 278 of *Rogue Trader* for more details on Endeavours and Achievement Points). The points are intended to contribute towards the adventure ending in a manner conducive to the Explorers' Profit Factor. While some awards may appear to be earned for fairly trivial things at the time they are awarded (such as befriendings the indentured workers) doing so will be revealed to have had a positive effect when the dust settles and the Explorers take stock of events at the end of the adventure.

At the end of the adventure, the Explorers will have survived the maze city and the monstrous beast lurking in its dark passageways, and defeated a ravaging horde of Rak'Gol. With any luck, they will have shown themselves bold leaders, taking charge of the defence of the expedition and rallying

ADVENTURE SEEDS

There are a number of ways Vaults of the Forgotten can be integrated into an existing campaign, a few examples of which are presented below. As the expedition to Egaria Omega has been sponsored by the Kasballica Mission, which is based on Footfall, these adventure seeds all assume that the PCs have at some point stopped off there and got themselves involved, one way or another, in this undertaking. If this is not convenient to the GM (perhaps because the Explorers dare not set foot there having made powerful enemies!) then the business of buying in to the venture could always have been conducted elsewhere, or by brokers and agents of the Explorers' dynasty.

Each of these Adventure Seeds is an Endeavour (see page 279 of **ROGUE TRADER**). If the group does not meet an Endeavour's Requirements, then doing so could either form part of the adventure, the GM could forego the requirement, or he could simply choose one that does apply.

ADVENTURE SEED 1: A SIMPLE CONTRACT

Lesser, +1 Profit Factor, Trade

The Explorers have been commissioned to make a supply run to the Egaria Omega expedition, payment being offered as a stake in its outcome. They are not made aware that the patrons of the expedition are the agents of the Kasballica Mission, though they may find this out during the adventure itself. Ferrying the supplies from their vessel to the surface should take around twelve hours, during which time the Explorers have plenty of opportunity to interact with the staff and become embroiled in unfolding events.

Requirements: The Explorer's vessel must have the Cargo Hold and Lighter Bay Supplemental Component.

ADVENTURE SEED 2: AGENTS OF THE MISSION

Lesser, +1 or 2 Profit Factor, Criminal

The Explorers have connections with the Mission and have been asked to visit the expedition to find out why it has yet to deliver any results. The Explorers can handle this task however they like, interviewing the overseer, touring the site and interacting with the staff.

Requirements: At least one of the Explorers must have the Good Reputation (Underworld) Talent, in which case this Endeavour will earn +1 Profit Factor, or the Peer (Underworld) Talent, which will earn them +2 Profit Factor (the Kasballica Mission is willing to pay well for the best!).

ADVENTURE SEED 3: WINDEALL

Greater, +3 Profit Factor, Trade

One of the group has won a cut in the Egaria Omega expedition in a high-stakes game of regicide in one of the less respectable gambling dens of Footfall. The visit to Egaria Omega has been arranged so that the Explorers can familiarise themselves with the undertaking, and events proceed from there.

Requirements: The group must have a Profit Factor of at least 40 (it was a high stakes game that not just anyone was allowed to enter!)

ADVENTURE SEED 4: A DEAL TOO GOOD TO PASS UP

Greater, +x Profit Factor, Special

Agents of the Kasballica Mission have approached the Explorers and offered them a stake in the Egaria Omega expedition. They are visiting in order to size up the offer before putting their money where their mouth is.

Requirements: The group must stake between two and four points of their Profit Factor in their investment in the expedition. If the Endeavour is successful, they receive double that number of points back. If it is not, they lose the points from their total.

THE LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Whichever of the Adventure Seeds is used, the Explorers are provided with a Letter of Introduction, which they must present to the overseer of the Omega Dig upon arrival at Egaria Omega. The overseer will not be expecting such a visit, and presenting the letter will ensure that the Explorers are accepted for who and what they are—partners with a share in the enterprise who should be treated with respect.

Should it occur to any especially sneaky Explorers to attempt to tamper with the letter, there is a chance this will be discovered, for the Mission is not stupid and utilises various ciphers, known to its agents and servants, to guard against such things. Doctoring the Letter of Introduction requires both a **Hard (-20) Deceive Test** and a **Hard (-20) Trade (Scrimshawer) Test**. The Game Master should apply further modifiers based on the exact nature of the lies the players dream up, and how likely the overseer is to believe them. If either of the tests are failed the overseer will know that something is wrong and distrust the Explorers from the moment he meets them, with whatever consequences the GM chooses to impose in further Interactions with him.

Planetary Data-fax: Egaria Omega

Population: 0

Tithe Grade: N/A

Special Notation: Uncategorized.

Geography/Demography: Cold. Abiding climate is arid with constant winds, ranging from low to moderate to storm force. High amounts of airborne particulates scoured from the plains make exploration hazardous, especially using conventional aircraft. Topography is largely uncharted, but no surface seas are known to exist. Small amounts of frozen liquid observed at poles, but no samples are known to have been taken. Equator is ringed by a substantial mountain range, on a plateau of which a single Egarian Maze City has been discovered. Further exploration of the mountains has proven inconclusive. No autochthonic life forms known to exist and no further lifeforms are known to have been introduced.

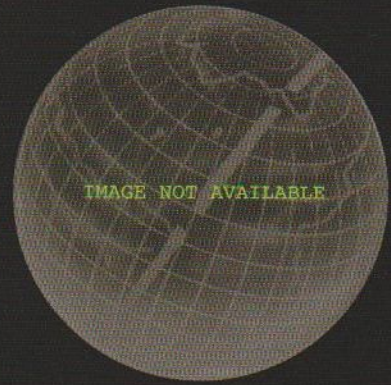
Governmental Type: Subject to the Winterscale Writ of Claim.

Planetary Governor: Heirs to the Winterscale Writ hold nominal title (non-ratified, pending nominal exclusion process).

Adept Presence: 0

Military: N/A

Trade/Economy/Addendum: An estimated total of twelve officially-recognised expeditions have been mounted to chart Egaria Omega, with only limited survey results submitted to the proper authorities. In recent years the Kasballlica Mission has sponsored several more expeditions, none with official recognition. A single Egarian Maze City has been discovered, but all attempts to penetrate it have failed. The Mission has sponsored the latest "Omega Dig," initially confining its activities to plateau surrounding the city. Very little has been discovered and the Mission has ordered the dig staff to begin operations inside the city itself.



its beleaguered staff. Doing so will put them in a powerful position with the Kasballlica Mission, and fill their coffers for quite some time to come.

SYNOPSIS

Vaults of the Forgotten consists of three parts, each punctuated by a number of events and encounters. Throughout each part, the Explorers will meet and interact with a variety of characters and face a range of challenges, from uncovering hidden secrets to full blown combat.

PART 1: SECRETS OF EGARIA

The Explorers arrive on Egaria Omega and are introduced to the staff of the Omega Dig. They come into contact with each of the various factions amongst the staff, and may learn something of the mysterious disappearances that have occurred of late. Part 1 culminates with a sudden and unheralded attack on the Omega Dig by the savage Rak'Gol.

PART 2: INTO THE MAZE

The Rak'Gol prove unstoppable in their furious assault, and the staff of the Omega Dig have no option but to flee for the (relative) safety of the maze city. The Explorers are pitched into a battle for their very lives, affording them the

opportunity to shine as heroes, or to save their own skins. Once inside the maze city the Explorers must contend with growing friction amongst the factions, before discovering that they are not alone within the alien passageways. First they encounter an Eldar Corsair on a mysterious mission, and then they are faced with the monstrous hybrid of man and xenos responsible for the disappearances of so many of the staff.

PART 3: AT THE HEART OF THE MAZE

The adventure concludes with the Rak'Gol breaking into the maze city at the very moment the Explorers discover the monster at the heart of the Maze City. The mission of the Eldar Corsair is revealed as she attempts to seal the maze city forever. The Explorers must deal with a rampaging xenos hybrid, a capricious alien and marauding Rak'Gol whilst looking to save their own lives, those of the staff and (perhaps most importantly) escape with their profit factor intact!

EGARIA OMEGA

"There are many tales of woe told of the worlds of the Egarian Dominion. None are told about Egaria Omega, for no one's alive to tell them..."

—Lord-Captain Harak Catallus VII

The world classified as Egaria Omega is one of seventy-two catalogued stellar bodies in the Egaria Abundus/12 system. The system's star is old, its light weak and its biosphere extends only half an Astronomical Unit. The system hosts six main bodies—two barren rocks, two gas giants and two that are little more than large chunks of ice. The first five bodies from the star have no satellites at all, but Egaria Abundus/12f, the outermost world, has an incredible sixty-six, leading astronomers to posit that Abundus/12f's gravity captured the satellites blown from the orbit of their original hosts in some ancient stellar upheaval.

Not all of these satellites orbit 12f itself; many are secondary bodies orbiting the world's own satellites, creating a complex sub-system out on the system's edge. Moons orbit moons in an incredibly complex stellar ballet, making passage between them unpredictable and dangerous as tidal forces radically realign with the ever-shifting configurations of the satellites. While 12f itself is uninhabitable, at least five its moons are thought to harbour a breathable atmosphere. The remainder

ORBITAL INSANITY

In game terms, there are two main effects of the complex orbits of Abundus/12f and its many satellites. The first relates to space combat, and the second to the light levels on the surface itself.

All Pilot Tests to pilot a starship suffer a -10 penalty within the Abundus/12f sub-system, and if the Test fails by more than four degrees, the ship runs into a Gravity Tide (**ROGUE TRADER**, page 227). The Active and Focused Augury Extended Actions (or any attempt to use the ship's Augur Arrays) suffer a -30 penalty, but Jam Communications is made easier by the complex interplay of energies, receiving a +20 bonus.

If the Explorers want to, they can leave their vessel at high anchor above the worst of the orbital insanity, and travel to Egaria Omega via shuttle or guncutter. A small craft can avoid any problems with ease, and no tests are required in this case. Of course, this means the Explorers will not have their ship available should they need it.

To account for the ever-changing light levels, assume that most of the time the Explorers are in the open there is sufficient illumination to count conditions as Bright. For every hour or so of narrative time, there is a 75% chance that the next hour will be in Shadow, and a 25% chance of all being plunged into Darkness. See page 268 of the *Rogue Trader* for more details on the effects of Lighting.

have too weak a gravity to sustain their own atmospheres, and any gases exuded from these bodies are soon stolen away by their larger siblings.

The sheer unpredictable nature of this system-within-a-system is one of the main reasons its bodies remain all but unknown. Capital vessels are in danger if they linger too long within the Abundus/12f sub-system, meaning that expeditions to any of the satellites must be conducted by long-range reconnaissance in smaller, more nimble vessels. It is unknown how many ships have floundered amongst the complex tides of Abundus/12f, for a vessel can be becalmed in an instant as it is locked in the gravity neutral "Lagrange point" between several bodies, and then expelled violently the next as another mass exerts its capricious influence.

Egaria Omega is the only world within the system known to have been the target of sustained exploration, possibly because it is the largest of 12f's unruly children and has a breathable atmosphere. In common with most of the dead worlds of the Egarian Dominion, Egaria Omega is an arid, windswept planet, the majority of its surface dominated by wind-scoured plains and twisted mountain ranges. The skies are choked with airborne dust, which gathers in vast storms that make much of the surface perilous to explore at best, and impossible to survive in without a sturdy survival suit at worst. With so many bodies soaring through its skies, there is no easily predicted day/night cycle on Egaria Omega. Even when the system's star is high in the sky, it is eclipsed several times a day, and when it is not, its light reflects from dozens of the smaller bodies, casting moving shadows across the moonlit night.

The world falls under the Writ of Claim of the Winterscale domains, but that has not stopped numerous parties attempting to exploit the riches that many claim lays waiting beneath its wastes to be taken by those bold enough to penetrate its dangers.

Over the centuries, countless adventurers have lost their lives on Egaria Omega, drawn there by the lure of the Cold Trade. Few have ever returned, and those that have rant and rave about voices on the storm, their every waking moment haunted by the dreams of a long dead xenos race. Very few descriptions of the world are to be found, and certainly none of them are reliable, meaning that any expedition seeking to gain a foothold on Egaria Omega will be forced to rely upon its own resources, or else heed the words of madmen.

Aside from the sheer danger of the place, the only thing that accounts seem to agree upon is the fact that an Egarian maze city is to be found upon the world, situated atop a wide, tall plateau that straddles Egaria Omega's equator. Descriptions of this place tell of gleaming white slabs of an unknown rock rearing from the dust clouds, with but a single entrance leading inside. Of the city's interior, no reliable accounts exist at all, for those few to have emerged from that portal have been blasted of their sanity.

PART 1: SECRETS OF EGARIA

"In my experience, most secrets are that way for a reason..."

—Cold Trader Mak t'Nook

In the first part of the adventure the Explorers arrive at Egaria Omega with nothing more than the co-ordinates of the expedition dig site and their Letter of Introduction, which they must present to its overseer. Should they wish they have the opportunity to acquaint themselves with the various groups that make up the expedition staff, and doing so will soon lead them to the conclusion that all is not well with their investment.

THE OMEGA DIG

The site of the "Omega Dig," as it is referred to, is an area precariously balanced at the edge of the plateau on which the maze city stands, a hundred metres or so before its single portal. The Kasballica Mission commissioned the dig on this site because all previous expeditions into the maze city itself have resulted in disaster, and it is hoped that something of value might be uncovered in the city's environs.

The Omega Dig was established a year ago, and to date it has only discovered small shards of the unknown substance from which the city itself is constructed and some strange artefacts of unknown purpose. Such artefacts are of some value to the Kasballica Mission, for there exists a market for them amongst the idle rich of the Calixian elite, but the Mission demands more. As the months have passed, the agents of the Mission have put increasing pressure on the expedition, and they are now insisting that its leader on the ground, Overseer Leerus, delivers more profitable results.

The Omega Dig consists of a number of individual locations and groups of people.

OVERSEER LEERUS

The leader of the Egaria Omega expedition is a man known as Overseer Leerus, a long-serving agent of the Kasballica Mission. Leerus is well known in the circles of the Cold Trade, for he has led a number of expeditions into the Koronus Expanse. Despite his many successes, Leerus remains a relatively small cog in the workings of the Kasballica Mission, for he lacks the personal means to purchase a sizable stake in any of its investments, and must therefore serve, rather than lead.

In appearance, Leerus is imposing and large, a powerful man running a bit to fat as the years of administration catch up to him, and tanned from working under dozens of different stars, and accentuates this by wearing impressive-looking military uniforms invented by himself. He affects a haughty and proud demeanour, and truly believes the situation he finds himself in is beneath his talents. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Leerus is a bitter man. He covets the riches that would enable him to rise

within the Mission or even establish himself as a rival. Never a man to tolerate failure in his underlings, Leerus has become a downright tyrant of late, pushing the staff of the Omega Dig ever harder in an effort to deliver results.

What the Kasballica Mission does not know of its agent is that the dig has, in fact, made one major discovery, which Leerus has not reported to his masters. Eight months ago, the dig unearthed an artefact of black, pulsating crystal with a strange, troglodyte design carved over it, an object that Leerus knew the collectors of the Calixis Sector would pay a fortune for. Leerus sought to withhold this artefact from his masters, but his deputy, a man called Stahk, discovered his plan and confronted him. The two clashed, angry words soon turning to blows, and in a fit of madness Leerus took up the crystal shard and plunged it into the heart of his deputy. Stahk was transfixed through the heart, but to Leerus' horror, did not die. Instead, a black light arced from his eyes and mouth and he was instantly flooded with preternatural strength and vitality as alien powers rushed through his system. His mind gone, Stahk lashed out at Leerus, knocking him to the ground unconscious. Leerus was only saved from death when one of the dig's H-Grade Servitors happened on to the scene and Stahk fled, disappearing through the portal of the maze city. In the days and weeks that followed, Stahk was transformed into something hideous and utterly alien.

Fortunately for Leerus, the only witness to his crime was a mindless automaton with no ability or inclination to reveal his secret. Though Leerus was able to conceal this event, ever since that time there has been a growing number of unexplainable disappearances amongst his staff. At first, this allowed Leerus to cover up Stahk's own disappearance, for surely whatever fate



had befallen the missing workers and guards and also overtaken his deputy. Yet, as the months have passed and the Kasballica Mission has demanded results in the form of an expedition into the Maze city itself, Leerus has come to dread what he knows must surely prowl the endless corridors of the alien city, his former deputy, transformed into some terrible hybrid of man and alien.

Overseer Leerus' profile can be found on page 142.

THE XENOARCHAEOLOGISTS

Serving under Overseer Leerus is a cadre of xenoarchaeologists, a group of savants some thirty strong drawn from a range of interrelated disciplines. All of these individuals are highly experienced in their fields, having served the Kasballica Mission for many years. Having trod worlds long forbidden to common man, most of the xenoarchaeologists are in effect outlaws, and many are known to the Ordo Xenos of the Calixian Conclave. Now they rely upon the protection of the Mission to safeguard them from the attentions of the authorities. In fact, several have been the target of low-level kill-missions, and live constantly in fear of Inquisition-sponsored assassination.

The xenoarchaeologists are highly professional, if often somewhat single-minded and obsessed with their work. Several of them have clearly seen sights and handled objects that have left them tainted, whether spiritually or emotionally, and Leerus keeps a close watch upon them for signs of overt corruption, especially in the light of what happened to his deputy. None of the xenoarchaeologists are directly aware of what befell Stahk, though because several of their own number has subsequently gone missing some harbour suspicions that an unknown terror prowls the nearby Maze city.

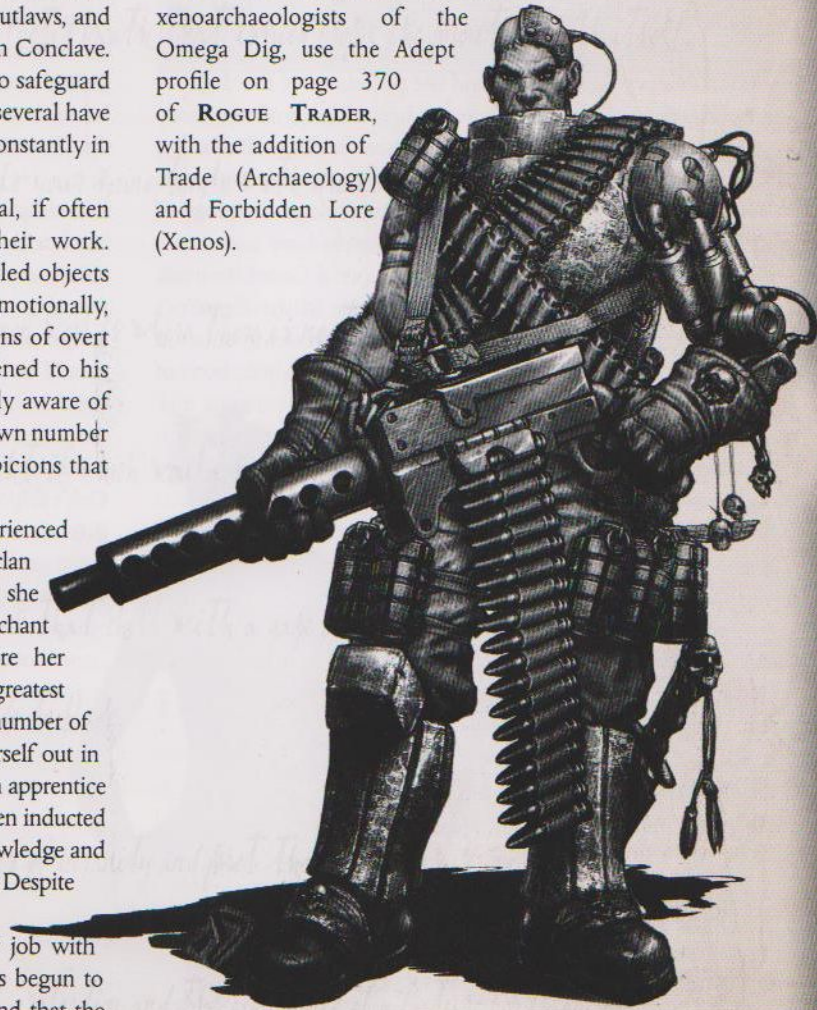
Adept Zpha: Scelene Zpha is an experienced xenoarchaeologist, raised amongst a minor noble clan on Malfi in the Calixis Sector. As the twelfth child, she was to be married off to the son of a middling merchant concern upon reaching majority. Zpha fled before her marriage day, and within a year was using her in greatest asset—her intelligence—to get by. She fell in with a number of less-than-salubrious groups, and eventually found herself out in the Expanse, working for the Kasballica Mission as an apprentice xenoarchaeologist. It wasn't long before Zpha had been inducted into many secrets of xenos lore, and her thirst for knowledge and her great intellect soon saw her rise to a high position. Despite her fierce intelligence Zpha is largely innocent to the realities of the Cold Trade, approaching her job with purely intellectual zeal. It is only of late that she has begun to feel concern that all is not well on Egaria Omega, and that the artefacts she has helped dig up may have something to do with the recent disappearances.

Adept Zpha is harried looking middle-aged woman who might appear attractive if she paid any attention to her appearances. Her short-cropped hair and multi-lense auto-spectacles make her look more like an Administratum clerk than a field-researcher. Her profile can be found on page 142.

Logist Svanka: Kolok Svanka is perhaps one of the longest serving xenoarchaeologists working for the Kasballica Mission, and he has uncovered such mysteries to have earned him a thousand Ordo Xenos death warrants. Yet, Svanka is completely

unaware of the price on his head, for he has contracted a memevirus that has made him so utterly dedicated to uncovering ever more xenos secrets he barely able feeds himself. Consequently, he is a gaunt, skeletal man with thinning hair and squinting eyes. On the rare occasion when he is lucid, Svanka is a bottomless well of arcane lore, yet much of the time he is more interested in uncovering stones and delving into dark corners, utterly unable to stop himself. In the face of danger Svanka might become a liability, but Explorers who can utilise his skills might find them extremely useful. For Svanka's profile, use the Adept on page 370 of *Rogue Trader*, with the addition of Scholastic Lore (all Skill Groups). The Game Master should not make Svanka a font of all knowledge the Explorers can dip into at any point however, and they will suffer -20 to any Interaction Tests should they try to coerce information from him unreasonably.

For the remainder of the xenoarchaeologists of the Omega Dig, use the Adept profile on page 370 of *ROGUE TRADER*, with the addition of Trade (Archaeology) and Forbidden Lore (Xenos).



MERCENARY GUARDS

Leerus employs a force of around a hundred mercenaries, all of whom he has known for some time and trusts implicitly. They have served him throughout many perilous missions and he always insists that the Mission pays them handsomely. The guards are responsible for maintaining the security of the Omega Dig, both internally and externally. To a man, they are highly experienced xenos-fighters, having guarded many an

expedition against the depredations of Orks, Eldar, Kroot and other, nameless things. In addition to this, the guards serve as wardens of the force of indentured workers that provides the raw manpower such an expedition always needs, and are figures of ruthless suppression to many of the unskilled serfs who find themselves on the Omega Dig.

The guards are well armed and equipped, for Leerus has always ensured that the resources of the Kasballica Mission are not wasted. They carry the finest hellguns the Forge Worlds of the Calixis Sector can provide, as well as carapace armour, heavy stubbers, and a range of personal survival equipment. Their dedication to Leerus is beyond doubt, and in common with many of the archaeologists, most of them are as good as outlaws to the Imperium.

To date, only one of the guards has fallen prey to the terror of the maze city, disappearing during a routine patrol of the plateau on which the city stands. The remaining guards have since redoubled their watch, deploying a number of man portable heavy weapons around the perimeter of the dig.

Captain Bren: Bren is the leader of Leerus' corps of mercenary guards, and he has served the Overseer and the Kasballica Mission for several decades. A compact, muscular, and scar-covered man, Bren never talks of his past, though the range of skills he exhibits suggests that he must surely have served in a formal military institution such as the Imperial Guard. In truth, Bren has seen and done it all, from service in the Emperor's armies to rubbing shoulders with the worst recidivist scum the galaxy has ever produced. Bren was raised in war, born of refugees from the horrors of the Jericho Reach, and he has lived in war ever since, selling his services to the highest bidder, from crime boss to Inquisitor. Over the years, Bren has become increasingly withdrawn. He regards those under his command as weapons, with no more or less value than the lasguns they wield. He is loyal to his employer, and sees risking his life for another as the cruel reality of war. He knows that one day war will claim him, and many would say that Bren is simply treading water until that day arrives. Captain Bren's profile, and the profile for his mercenaries, can be found on page 143.

INDENTURED WORKERS

The last major faction is also the largest, consisting of around three hundred indentured serfs as well as two-dozen servitors. Most of the serfs are the down-and-outs of Footfall, tricked or bullied into the service of the Kasballica Mission. Though most were promised remuneration, in truth they will be lucky to return at all. They are considered expendable, and treated as such.

It is the workers who have suffered the

most from the predations of the thing that Stahk has become. Before the disappearances began, the workers were allowed a relatively free reign of the camp and its environs. When people started going missing, however, it was assumed that they had made some foolish attempt to flee and what few freedoms they had were ruthlessly curtailed. It became obvious that some external agency was at work when the first of the guards disappeared, and the workers have become ever more fearful. There are many within the ranks of the workers who would revolt against their brutal masters were they able—but even the most desperate know that without a means of escaping Egaria Omega, an uprising would doom them.

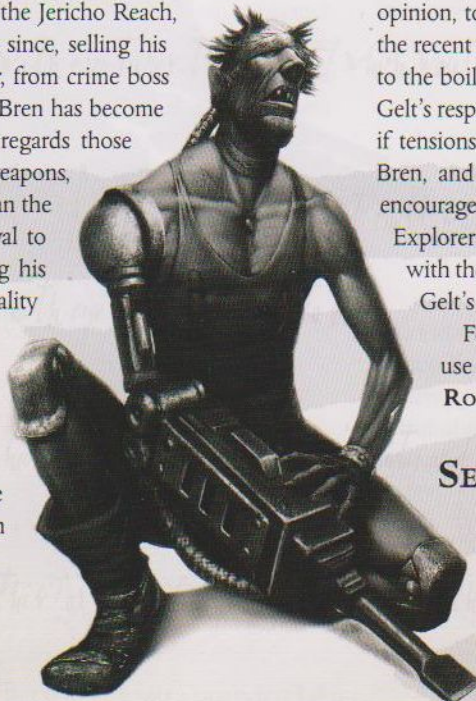
Rhiner Gelt: Gelt is a brawny, muscular individual and the most senior of the indentured workers, though his position as leader is due to the respect of his fellows rather than any rank bestowed upon him. Overseer Leerus recognises Gelt's position when it suits him, using him as an intermediary when passing on orders or threats, to the rest of the indentured workforce. Gelt is a true leader of men, and although few others know it, he once served as a sergeant major in the Barsapine Yeomanry, the planetary defence force of a minor hive world in the Calixis Sector. He saw plenty of action against recidivist elements of the underhive population and was highly regarded by his troops, but not by his superiors. Gelt cares deeply for the fate of his fellow workers, and bitterly resents the conditions they are all forced to work in. In particular, he hates Captain Bren's guards, and he would not be averse to bumping one or two of them off should he have the chance. In fact, Captain Bren has voiced the opinion, to Leerus in private, that Gelt might be responsible for the recent disappearances, and a mutual hatred is slowly coming to the boil between the workforce leader and the guard captain. Gelt's responsibility to his fellow workers remains his priority, but if tensions reach boiling point he will not hesitate to confront Bren, and if necessary, Overseer Leerus. The Game Master is encouraged to use Rhiner Gelt first as a potential enemy of the Explorers, but later, should they prove themselves good leaders with the dig staff's interests in mind, a very strong ally. Rhiner Gelt's profile can be found on page 143.

For the remainder of the indentured workforce, use the profile for the Colonist given on page 370 of **ROGUE TRADER**.

SERVANTS OF THE MACHINE-GOD

Mankind can accomplish little of import within the Imperium, or indeed beyond it, without the aid of the Tech-Priests and other servants of the Adeptus Mechanicus. The Kasballica Mission maintains links with various secretive groups within the Calixian Mechanicus, and through these has secured the services of two Tech-Priests, a dozen lay-technicians, and twenty servitors. It is the responsibility of this group to operate and maintain the expedition's equipment, and without them, the entire endeavour would soon grind to a halt.

The Tech-Priests are typically uncommunicative, and it will take a **Very Hard (-30) Forbidden Lore (Adeptus Mechanicus or Rogue Traders) Test** to discern the reason. Success suggests that the pair are members of a proscribed sub-



WHAT'S REALLY DOWN THERE?

It was from the primary excavation site that Overseer Leerus recovered the shard that brought about the fate of his deputy. He managed to conceal his discovery, but suspects that more such items exist further down. If only the Kasballica Mission had allowed the staff more time, they would have struck the mother lode long ago, for an Yu'vath artefact of great power awaits discovery just below the lowest point of the primary excavation, and was perhaps a contributory factor to the fall of the long-lost Egarian race. Whether or not this artefact will play a part in the adventure is up to the Game Master. It could be discovered later in the adventure at the crucial moment, or if the Explorers gain the confidence of one or more of the staff they might hear of the theories and aid in its retrieval.

sect of the Cult Mechanicus, expelled from the greater body of the Mechanicus for their delving to far into forbidden xenos lore. In fact, the two Tech-Priests have served the Kasballica Mission for several decades, trading their esoteric skills for the opportunity to go where few of their kind ever get the chance.

Of course, enterprising Explorers might surmise that there must be a substantial bounty on the Tech-Priests' heads, and they would be correct in this. However, such followers are invaluable to the Kasballica Mission, so turning them in would definitely work against the Explorers' long-term interests.

Tech-Adept Oddyle: Oddyle is a virtual outcast from the Calixian Mechanicus. The reason for this outsider status is that Oddyle has pursued a number of esoteric theorems relating to the underlying nature of matter that his peers have come to regard as downright heretical. Though never formally censured, Oddyle has found discretion the better part of valour and isolated himself from any who might take exception to his pursuits. Out in the Expanse, beyond the formal borders of the Imperium, Oddyle has been able to pursue his theories, delving into forbidden xenos lore in an effort to discover the essential metaphysical truths that he sincerely believes exist. Tech Adept Oddyle's profile can be found on page 142.

Artificer Boran: Boran is as close to a disciple of Oddyle as it is possible to be, and what remains of his biological mind has been blasted by the things he has seen following his mentor. Boran swings from cold, hard logic to outright paranoia and madness, and in truth is only kept around because he is an artificer of great skill. Boran is able to craft tools and even weapons from almost any mechanism or material, and is not above utilising forbidden xenos tech when in the grip of one of his "episodes," including the esoteric graviton gun he calls the 'Odic Accumulator' his mentor carries. Artificer Boran's profile can be found on page 142.

Lay-Technicians: The dig employs a number of menials who, although not inducted into the secret rites of the Cult Mechanicus, are nonetheless entrusted with basic tasks such as maintenance and operation of simple machinery. The most trusted of these are even allowed to undertake the sacred "Rite of Awakening," activating the dormant machine spirits of otherwise latent devices. For a Lay-Technician, use the Colonist on page 370 of **ROGUE TRADER** with Tech Use and Common Lore (Tech).

Servitor Drones: Oddyle and Boran are assisted in their duties by twenty Servitor Drones. These mindless conglomerations of man and machine can perform a wide range of highly technical duties, but are entirely without personality or the capacity for independent thought. The profile of a typical Servitor Drone can be found on page 375 of **ROGUE TRADER**. They also maintain four flamer-armed Battle Servitors for clearing underbrush.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY DIG SITES

In the year since the Omega Dig was established, one primary and five secondary excavations have been undertaken. The primary site is roughly circular, some forty metres deep and twenty in diameter. Access to the bottom is by way of an array of gantries lining its walls, which have grown from temporary walkways to something more substantial as the excavations have continued. The dark interior is lit by way of stark, white arc-lights, the generator for which is located just outside the rim and attended at all times by at least one indentured worker,

whose work is regularly checked by one of the Tech-Priests.

At the bottom of the primary site, the work face is constantly attended by at least a dozen indentured workers, and normally at least five xenoarchaeologists. Spoil is transported out of the excavation by way of a crane, its bucket filled by the toil of the workers.

To date, the primary excavation has provided many tantalising clues that something of value lurks beneath the hard soil, but little more than xenos curios have been discovered. The xenoarchaeologists are convinced the smaller, seemingly insignificant objects are the precursors to something of far greater value. Unfortunately for them, whatever it might be is taking far too long to recover for the Kasballica Mission, and as a result the secondary excavation sites have been ordered.

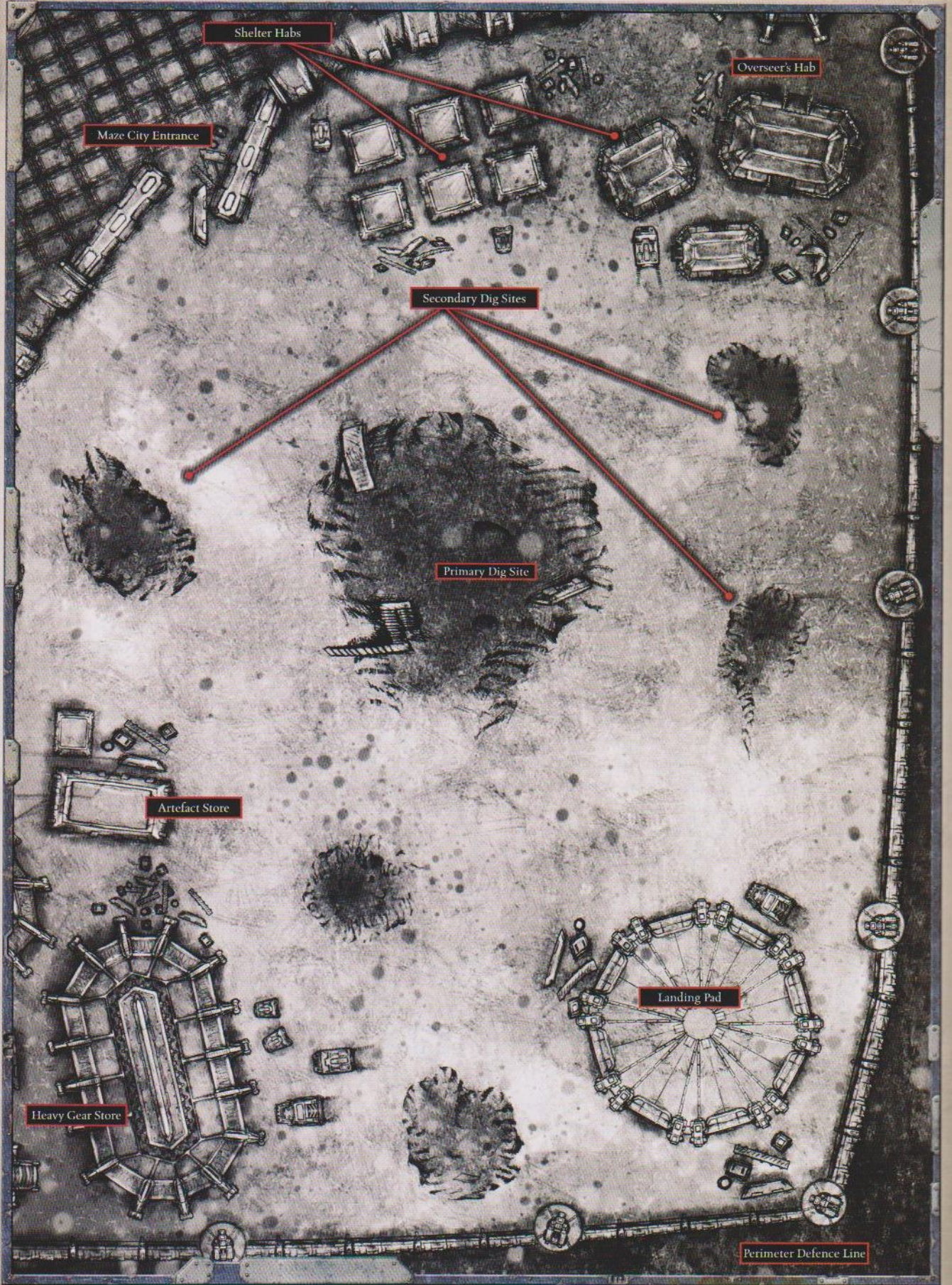
The secondary excavations are in essence smaller versions of the primary. Nothing of any value has been retrieved from them, save some small bits of wall and chips of stone.

HEAVY GEAR STORE

Not far from the primary excavation site is the heavy gear store. This is a storage depot and repair shop for the Omega Dig's various vehicles, plant and servitors, and is attended at all times by a Tech-Priest and at least three guards. The store is a solid, prefabricated structure, designed to withstand a harsh environment as well as small-scale attack.

The Lay-Tech in charge of the heavy gear store, Klistus, is ill-disposed towards people poking their noses in what he treats as his personal domain. Even should they have genuine and urgent need of any of the items stored within, Klistus is unwilling to issue equipment without the Explorers completing the Rite of Requisition, during which they must sign out the items (in triplicate) and promise to reimburse the Mission for any loss or damage. The store contains the following equipment.

- Two Sentinel Power Lifters. These utility walkers are used to transport especially heavy loads, such as when a cargo is being unloaded from a re-supply shuttle. One is undergoing routine maintenance and it will take a **Hard**



(-20) **Tech-Use Test** to get it working in a hurry. The other is operational, and can be utilised as per the rules for vehicles found in **INTO THE STORM**. If this book is not available, these vehicles are not crucial to the adventure and can simply be removed. The profile for a Sentinel Power Lifter can be found on page 144.

- Three Chimera Trojan Support Vehicles. A non-combatant variant of the military Chimera armoured transport, these vehicles are used to move loads around the camp, clear debris with their dozer blades and the like. Each has a single heavy bolter mounted in its forward section, although only a hundred rounds of ammunition are kept ready to use. One of the Trojans is currently near the Maze city portal having thrown a track, while the other two are at the heavy gear store. The profile for a Trojan Support Vehicle can be found on page 144. If **INTO THE STORM** is not available, these can simply be used as stationary emplacements with a heavy bolter.
- Sundry survival gear, including around a hundred respirators and survival suits.
- Sundry tools, including a dozen auspexes and combi-tools, five demolition charges, a (damaged) diagnoser, a hundred glow-globes, fifty micro-beads and a multicompass.

In addition, the store contains three thousand rounds of heavy bolter ammunition, divided into ready-to-use drums of one hundred rounds each.

PERIMETER DEFENCE LINE

A perimeter defence line guards the entire Omega Dig. Following the recent disappearances this has been upgraded with additional heavy weapons and a containment field. The defence line takes the form of a raised walkway, reinforced with flak board revetments. A gun tower stands every fifty metres along the line, equipped with twin heavy bolters, a searchlight, and around six hundred rounds of ammunition. The walkways are patrolled by pairs of guards at all times, while the gun towers are always manned by at least two more guards.

Twenty metres beyond the perimeter a ring of containment field pylons provide the first line of defence should an actual assault be launched upon the Omega Dig. The pylons are some thirty metres apart, and between each is projected a shimmering blue field of energy. Due to the power required to maintain the field, it is usually kept at a low setting, sufficient to inflict shock but not to kill. Were an assault on the lines to develop, the guards in the gun towers would throw a switch, increasing the field to its full, lethal power level.

Anyone passing through the containment field when it is set at its low power output automatically suffers 1d10+3 Energy Damage with the Shocking Quality, reduced by armour and Toughness as normal. When the power output is ramped up to full, the damage increases to 2d10+6.

SHELTER HABS

This cluster of prefabricated structures provides shelter for each of the groups on the Omega Dig. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Overseer Leerus has the most well appointed habitation, equipped with environment systems as well as a personal arsenal of weapons.

OFF-WORLD COMMUNICATION

The Omega Dig does not have its own Astropath. This is a deliberate policy on the part of the Kasballica Mission, partly because of the risk to the dig's secrecy, but also to ensure the loyalty of the staff. Messages are delivered by agents of the Mission, who come and go with the irregular re-supply shuttles. Because these are never announced ahead of time, simply arriving in orbit and declaring their intent to land, not even Overseer Leerus has much in the way of the opportunity to double-cross the Mission. Or so the Mission believes.

The xenoarchaeologists have the use of a group of shelters that serve as both sleeping quarters and work areas, while the workers are packed into cramped bunkhouses. The guards have their own area of the camp, which includes a small armoury as well as a firing range (for practice as well as executing rebellious workers).

The Guards' quarters contain a variety of weapons and ammunition, including several hundred autopistol, laspistol and lasgun clips, around a hundred frag grenades and twenty lasguns. All weapons and ammunition are stored in a locked store, which will take a **Very Hard (-30) Security Test** to open.

Overseer Leerus' shelter contains a substantial cache of liquor, as well as ten reloads for each of his weapons and an environment system.

The workers' shelter contains little of interest, although Rhiner Gelt has secreted a poor craftsmanship laspistol beneath a loose floorboard, for use in an emergency, which will take a **Hard (-20) Awareness Test** to locate.

ARTEFACT STORAGE

The artefacts discovered thus far are stored in a small, windowless shed next to Overseer Leerus' shelter. The door is locked and sealed, requiring a **Very Hard (-30) Security Test** to open (although Leerus will open it for the Explorers if they have a controlling interest in the dig and want to see their investment). The building is a single room with rows of shelves. It is approximately half-full with boxes containing sculpted crystal shards and chunks of stone with blocky and indecipherable writing carved in them. There are several incomprehensible devices made out of a dark metal-substance, shafts with rings of spikes protruding at regular intervals. These have no decipherable purpose and do not play a role in the adventure—the GM can add other strange-looking items if he wishes.

The items within are valuable to collectors in the Calixis Sector, although it should be obvious to anyone with Forbidden Lore (Xenos) that the dig has yet to “strike it rich.”

LANDING PAD

In the Southeast corner of the Omega Dig site, the landing pad provides facilities for a single small shuttle or gun cutter, including refuelling and basic maintenance. The operation of the facility is the responsibility of the Tech-adepts, and they have a small staff of workers and a number of servitors to

assist them in this. The Omega Dig does not have a permanent shuttle capacity on station, relying instead on regular supply runs from the agents of the Kasballica Mission.

MAZE CITY ENTRANCE

Near the camp, just outside the perimeter, the curtain wall of the maze-city rises sharply into the sky, casting deep, sharp-edged shadows over the dig. A faint path leads from the dig to only opening in the wall, one of the city's few ward-gates. The ward-gate is 50 metres tall, and has two massive doors that have frozen part-way open. There is no obvious means to open or shut the doors, cursory examination reveals the doors do not seem to even have hinges.

No one from the dig enters the city anymore, although the entrance does have some abandoned gear and arc-lumens.

ARRIVAL

Before the adventure begins, the Game Master should set out to the players how and why the Explorers got involved in the Omega Dig, with reference to the Adventure Seeds box on page 119. An important thing to get across to the players is that although they have a stake in the dig, they are not its masters. Thus, while they have some authority, they should not expect to simply stroll in and order everyone around. Ultimately, the entire enterprise is being undertaken at the behest of the Kasballica Mission, and the Explorers really don't want to make enemies of them!

The Game Master might decide to introduce the Explorers to the Abundus/12f sub-system before they arrive at Egaria Omega itself, and this will involve a series of difficult manoeuvres and sensor readings, to avoid the capricious gravitational fluctuations and to locate the correct satellite amongst the huge number of bodies orbiting 12f.

Otherwise, start the adventure with the Explorers arriving at the dig site. This may be by way of a shuttle or gun cutter, or perhaps by teleportation if the Explorers' are willing to risk their vessel in high orbit. Either way, the dig staff will not be expecting a visit, but that in itself is not unusual. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

Egaria Omega is a windswept hellhole of a planet, but no one ever got rich in the Expanse without visiting a few hellholes. The instant you set foot on the world, a cold wind blows right through you. But something more than cold assails you. You instantly feel that you should not be here, as if you are intruding on lands long ago claimed by something far older than the human race. Echoes whisper on the wind, just beyond hearing, sending a chill not just through your body, but through your very soul.

Upon their arrival the Explorers are met by a squad of mercenary guards. The guards know that it is unlikely that anyone wishing the dig ill would simply walk in the front door, but are cautious nonetheless. Unless the Explorers do anything really stupid, the guards assume a neutral stance, standing watch while one of their number goes off to fetch Overseer Leerus. The guards are not a talkative bunch, and any attempts

STICKING THEIR NOSES IN

The degree of freedom the Explorers are allowed within the Omega Dig depends on several factors, which the Game Master will need to consider during the encounters presented here. If they present themselves as senior backers looking to examine their investment, Overseer Leerus is keen to play along, but he will make every attempt to wrap the whole thing up and pack the Explorers off to civilisation. He is hospitable enough, but insists of conducting the tour in person, with his guards keeping the workers a respectful distance away. If he can get away with it, Leerus would prefer to simply entertain the Explorers in his own quarters, plying them with drink in an attempt to distract them from the details of the dig.

Alternately, the Explorers might insist they be allowed to tour the site on their own. In this case, Leerus becomes noticeably uncomfortable, insisting that a squad of guards remains close by, "for the Explorers' own protection." Even if the PCs dissuade Leerus from this course, his guards keep a watch on their activities, shadowing their movements from a distance.

by the Explorers' to engage them in conversation is likely to be met with a professional, if somewhat sullen indifference.

Not long after, Overseer Leerus arrives. Not recognising the Explorers, he immediately inquires who they are and what they want. This is the Explorers' cue to present Leerus with the Letter of Introduction.

Leerus reads the letter straight away, his expression growing darker as he comes to the end. What happens next depends upon the exact reason the Explorers have come to Egaria Omega, but as it is likely they have acquired a share in the enterprise they will probably want to have a look around. The Letter of Introduction instructs Leerus to facilitate this, which accounts for his less than enthusiastic reaction. Unless they make totally unreasonable requests, the Explorers are allowed to get acquainted with the Omega Dig, snooping around the various sites already described. Below are a number of events that can take place throughout the Explorers' time at the dig. Use as many or as few of these as appropriate, before moving on to main event—the attack of the Rak'Gol.

DIG SITE EVENT 1: THE DARK CACHE

Should the Explorers visit any of the excavation sites, they are greeted by the sight of dozens of workers hauling large amounts of spoil and heavy equipment around. The poor treatment of the workers is immediately obvious, as is the general air of tension mixed with despondency. If the Explorers request or insist on visiting the actual workings of the excavation sites, they get to meet the various xenoarchaeologists.

One of the xenoarchaeologists, a woman called Adept Zpha, is hard at work. As the Explorers climb down the gantries, a successful Opposed Awareness versus Agility Test will reveal her uncovering a small, crystalline shard, which she immediately secrets in a nearby crate, looking around nervously as she does so.

Adept Zpha has been hiding such small discoveries for some time, not for her own benefit, but because she has grown increasingly to believe that they are cursed in some way, and linked to the recent disappearances. She is right in this, although she does not know about what happened to Stahk. To discover this, the Explorers need to either befriend Adept Zpha or conversely, threaten her, depending on their "people skills." Adept Zpha can be cowed by intimidation, but if the Explorers attempt to befriend her, they gain a +10 bonus to any Tests made to do so (the woman is uneasy about the situation, meaning she is more likely to trust "outsiders" as people uninvolved in the camp's problems). In addition, any Explorer who engages her as a fellow "intellectual" gains an additional +10 bonus to his Tests.

If the Explorers take the former approach and succeed by three or more Degrees of Success, Adept Zpha goes so far as to beg the Explorers to rid her of the shards she has already found. She informs them where the rest are hidden and urges the Explorers to collect them.

The crate contains twelve Egarian crystals, worth a decent sum to collectors. How and when the Explorers wish to retrieve the crate is up to them. To attempt it straight away they will need to engineer a distraction while one or two of their number sneaks in and locates the crate (which weighs twenty kilograms, including contents). Alternately, they could wait until after dark, dodging the increased guard patrols and the searchlights that sweep the camp by night. If they are discovered doing this they will have some explaining to do, and if things get nasty it might be a good idea to proceed directly to the Rak'Gol attack.

DIG SITE EVENT 2: A PLEA FOR HELP

Throughout the Explorers' tour, they become increasingly aware of the evident dissatisfaction of the indentured workers. The guards attempt to keep the workers away from the Explorers, and Leerus himself is dismissive of their plight.

Should the opportunity arise, a group of three workers attempt to contact the Explorers, and they are doing this behind the back of their leader, Rhiner Gelt. How they attempt this depends on whether the Explorers are being accompanied by Overseer Leerus and his guards, and how closely supervised they are. It might be through a clandestinely palmed-off message or a whisper in the dark, whatever is most appropriate. The group of workers want out of the Omega Dig, and want to cut a deal with the Explorers. Though they own nothing of any value, they will willingly serve as ship's crew, reasoning that such duty could hardly be any worse than what they have undergone on Egaria Omega.

The conversation should be used to impart knowledge of the recent disappearances, which have afflicted the workers the most, though several of the other groups have also gone missing. The workers have many theories as to what is causing the disappearances, some plausible, some bordering on the insane. A few of their theories are included here, and Game Masters are encouraged to think of yet more:

- The Guards are murdering workers as some sort of cruel game, or because they belong to a blood-sect that demands sacrifice on a regular basis.
- The Tech-Priests need spare parts for the servitors, as no such parts have been delivered during the semi-regular supply runs.

- Overseer Leerus is under the influence of some mind-controlling brain parasite that is compelling him to acts of cruelty and murder.
- An Imperial assassin is at large in the camp, his mission to eliminate the staff one by one.
- One of the disappeared staff members has been cursed by a xenos-artefact, transformed into a raging murderous half-man-half alien and is dragging victims to the maze city (this is of course the truth, but the workers don't know it!)

Feel free to resolve this event however feels appropriate. If the Explorers agree to take some or all of the workers with them, they will not actually get the chance, as the Rak'Gol will attack before then. However, if the workers' pleas fall on deaf ears, you might like to have a group of workers attempt to hijack the Explorers' shuttle or gun cutter (if they have one) or a group of them, drunk and angry, attack the Explorers late at night when there are no guards around.

DIG SITE EVENT 3: UNEASE IN THE RANKS

Should the Explorers visit the perimeter defences, this is a great opportunity to ramp up the tension, letting the players know that all is not as it seems on Egaria Omega. The guards are obviously tense, and unwilling to talk to the Explorers, so any attempts to question them will suffer a -20 modifier to Interaction Tests.

While at the perimeter, the following events can occur:

- A guard in one of the gun towers detects movement on his auspex and opens fire with a brief burst of heavy bolter rounds. If the Explorers question the guard, he cannot explain what he saw and is obviously spooked.
- A successful **Hard (-20) Awareness Test** using an auspex reveals movement, at least a kilometre into the wastes. The Explorers might like to investigate, but will find no evidence. Furthermore, not a single one of the guards can be convinced to accompany them.
- An Explorer passing a **Difficult (-10) Awareness Test** notices what appears to be a falling star streaking across the skies, accompanied by a brief burst of light and a column of dust rising into the air some fifty kilometres distant.
- One of the guards is right on the edge, muttering to himself about 'voices in the dust'. His fellows attempt to keep him away from the Explorers, but should the party include a Missionary he will make every attempt to corner him. A successful **Very Hard (-30) Charm or Command Test** reveals that several guards have gone missing and that the Overseer has been ordered by his superiors to begin excavations within into the maze city itself, which he has yet to communicate to the staff.

DIG SITE EVENT 4: WHISPERS ON THE WIND

If the party includes an Astropath Transcendent, have him make a **Very Hard (-30) Psyniscience Test**. Success indicates a subtle psychic presence nearby, though the exact location cannot be



discerned. Passing the test by two or more Degrees of Success brings to the Astropath's mind visions of the Eldar. This is no more than a background presence, and no more can be ascertained. It provides a foreshadowing of the involvement later in the adventure of an Eldar Corsair from the Crow Spirits (see page 358 of **ROGUE TRADER**). This could cause the Explorers to prepare the camp for an attack. Even though they would be preparing it against a different enemy than they expect, the GM should reward any cautious thinking on the Explorer's part.

DIG SITE EVENT 5: REMNANTS

As the Explorers pass a heavy servitor carrying waste to a large spoil heap, a successful **Challenging (+0) Awareness Test** reveals something out of place amongst the rubbish. When recovered, the item proves to be some form of crudely constructed and battered augmetics. It was constructed by the Rak'Gol, a fact that will be revealed by a successful **Difficult (-10) Forbidden Lore (Xenos) Test** or **Very Hard (-30) Common Lore (Tech) Test**. Should an Explorer fail the test by three or more Degrees, he will draw the (incorrect) conclusion that the item is the work of Orks. Passing the test by two or more Degrees of Success reveals that the item is not old, and that traces of biological material still on it have yet to fully decompose.

HELL BREAKS LOOSE

When the Game Master is ready and the players have explored as much of the dig and interacted with as many of its staff as feels appropriate, it is time to introduce the Rak'Gol. The aliens have come to Egaria Omega in search of Yu'vath artefacts, and regard the presence of the humans as little more than a territorial challenge. The attack comes out of nowhere, perhaps once the sun has gone down, and the Explorers are thrown right into the action. Regardless of the Explorers' actions, the staff are forced to flee in the face of overwhelming odds, the only possible sanctuary that offered by the maze city not far away. While they cannot stop this from happening, the Explorers' actions can help to save lives and thus affect later events.

The attack proceeds according to the following chain of events, any of which the Explorers may involve themselves in whatever fashion they wish. There should be around five minutes of narrative time between each event, so that the whole battle lasts between thirty minutes and an hour. However, the most important consideration is the pacing, with the action getting faster and more intense from one event to the next. Some events might be overlaid, while others might be extended, especially if Explorers find themselves on different parts of the battlefield helping different groups. The sirens mounted upon the gun towers let out their mournful wail, and every member of staff stops what they are doing immediately, cold dread writ plainly across their faces.

- First one, then all of the gun towers suddenly open fire, blazing away into the wastes.
- The perimeter containment fields flare into life as half-seen bodies throw themselves against the invisible shields.
- Overseer Leerus bellows for all guards to man the defences.
- The Rak'Gol break through the containment field by sheer weight of numbers, clawing over the bodies of the dead in their eagerness to kill the humans.
- Overseer Leerus orders the workers armed and sent to the perimeter. This is an indication how dire the situation is, as he would ordinarily not trust them with weapons.
- The Rak'Gol assault the perimeter in overwhelming numbers, overrunning it in several places.
- The workers begin to flee towards the shelter-habs, while the guards fall back, firing as they go.
- Overseer Leerus realises that the dig is lost, and pleads with the Explorers for aid. By this point, hordes of Rak'Gol are pressing in, and the landing pad has been overrun (if the PCs have a lander this will be left unmolested, for now at least).
- The only course of action is to fall back towards the portal of the nearby maze city (which is shown in the map on page 120). Ideally, one of the Explorers should reach this conclusion themselves. If one does not, the workers will simply flee towards it regardless, which should prompt the players that this is actually a sound idea. If they still don't get the hint, Overseer Leerus will make for the portal himself, with or without the Explorers, and the rest of the staff will follow him.

RUNNING THE BATTLE

The battle should be presented as a confusing and violent affair, with events unfolding quickly all around. The Explorers can intervene in each stage in many ways, playing to the strengths of each Player Character. A Missionary for example could rally the troops, especially the workers, inspiring them to great deeds and turning what would otherwise be a panicked rout into an orderly withdrawal. An Explorator could get a Sentinel Power Lifter running, or try to shunt more power to the containment field.

However the battle unfolds, keep the pace fast. Don't give the players the chance to debate their course of action, just move on to the next event if they take too long to respond and they should soon get the idea. Punctuate your descriptions of the attack with the mindless howls of the Rak'Gol, the deafening report of a dozen heavy bolters firing into a tsunami of marauding aliens, the screams of the wounded and bellows of anger from the guards. Describe the Rak'Gol as the Explorers would see them—in fleeting glimpses amidst the carnage, all blood and pounding limbs.

THE ENDLESS HORDE

The Rak'Gol attack the Omega Dig in an endless tide, and realistically, there is no chance of the Explorers fighting them off. The players should come to this conclusion themselves

MEANWHILE, IN ORBIT

At the exact moment that the Omega Dig came under attack, so too did the Explorer's vessel in orbit. If all of the Explorers are dirtside then the first they hear of this is a hurried report by the officer left in charge, but they are not able to intervene in any way. As the ground battle progresses the Explorers are unable to raise their vessel, by any means, and they should be left in the dark as to what has actually happened until they are within the Maze City.

The ship has been attacked by a Rak'Gol Marauder class warship (see page 74). Taken unawares, the bridge crew were forced to battle their way clear, and by the end of the ground battle are outside of vox-range. An Astropath Transcendent will be able to communicate with any Astropaths on the vessel using his Astrotelepathy power, but success will only indicate that the ship is under attack and is withdrawing.

If one or more of the Explorers remained on the vessel then the job of the Game Master becomes interesting indeed. The Explorers on the vessel are able to conduct the battle as normal, and if they beat the aliens they may be able to send relief to the party on the ground. If a small group (perhaps the remaining Explorers and a small retinue of household troops) is dispatched these can use cunning to sneak past the Rak'Gol and rejoin the team. Sending a larger group results in the Rak'Gol becoming aware of its presence, and it will have to fight through a large enemy force to reach the portal.

and not be allowed to get the impression that the GM will just keep throwing enemies at them forever. At least one Rak'Gol Broodmaster (see page 73) is present, and whether or not the Explorers decide to take it one depends very much on the make up of the party. Certainly, any Arch-Militant character would have a few tales to tell were he to take one down in combat!

ENDING THE BATTLE

The battle only comes to a (temporary) end when the bulk of the dig staff has been evacuated into the maze city and the portal has been barricaded. There is plenty of material around that can be used to barricade the entrance, including crates, flak board and even a Chimera, and hopefully the players will reach this conclusion themselves. If they don't, the Rak'Gol keep attacking, and the surviving guards just manage to hold them at the portal, until the workers start building the barricade themselves.

Finally, the attack stops as suddenly as it began, and the Explorers can take stock of their surroundings and their situation. Read aloud the following:

One moment you're fighting for your life, and the next everything is deathly silent. Without warning the alien horde simply vanishes, the ravaging beasts retreating for no reason you can fathom.

As the realisation that you are still alive despite the odds strikes home, you can finally draw a breath and take a look at your surroundings. You are in the portal of the maze city, a space so huge it dwarfs even the most impressive of Imperial cathedrals, and this is just the entrance! The walls rise a hundred metres and more towards a ceiling made indistinct by distance, and those walls appear to glow with a hazy white, inner light.

Behind you is an irregularly shaped archway, and beyond it what appears to be a space larger even the portal you occupy now. You can see that the space is not a hall, so much as a vast passageway, with dozens more branching off in every direction.

With a rising sense of cold dread, you realise that you have entered one of the impossibly ancient Maze Cities of the long-extinct Egarian Dominion. Outside, beyond the hastily erected barricades, is a horde of bloodthirsty alien marauders. Inside? Who knows... but there's only one way to find out...

At this point, the Game Master should make a note of who and how many of the dig staff have survived, and what state they are in. This very much depends of the actions of the Explorers. If they made every attempt to aid the guards and the armed workers then as many as half of their number may have survived, and these are well disposed towards the Explorers. If they bolted as soon as the sirens went off and simply looked to saving their own skins, then only Leerus and a few dozen guards, workers and xenoarchaeologists survived, and they are regarded with open scorn. Most likely, the truth is somewhere between these two extremes, and some groups within the staff are better disposed towards the Explorers than others, depending on which they tried to help.

PART I ACHIEVEMENT POINTS

- 50 Achievement Points—If the Explorers befriend Adept Zpha in Dig Site Event 1.
- 50 Achievement Points—If the Explorers agree to aid the Indentured Workers in Dig Site Event 2.
- 50 Achievement Points—If the Explorers infer from the events of Dig Site Event 3 that some form of attack is immanent and prepare for it.
- 25 Achievement Points—If the Explorers discern the presence of the Eldar in Dig Site Event 4.
- 50 Achievement Points—If the Explorers correctly identify the remains of Rak'Gol bionics in Dig Site Event 5.
- 100 Achievement Points—If the Explorers pull the expedition staff back to the maze city in the face of the Rak'Gol attack.
- 100 Achievement Points—If the Explorers actively take part in the rearguard action and put themselves at risk to defend the dig staff.
 - 50 Achievement Points—If the Explorers instigate the building of the barricade across the maze city portal.

PART 2: INTO THE MAZE

"Getting into a maze city is child's play. Getting out's the trick..."

—Cold Trader wisdom

In Part Two of *Vaults of the Forgotten*, the Explorers get the chance to discover just a little of the interior of an Egarian maze city. But this is no sightseeing tour, because there's a ravaging horde at the gates, wounded to aid, a mutiny to put down and if that weren't enough, there's something every bit as dangerous as the Rak'gol roaming the empty depths of the maze.

After the bloody, frenetic action of attack on the Omega Dig, part two provides something of a change of pace. Part Two consists of a series of encounters that the GM can string together in any way he feels works. The atmosphere goes from one of all-out battle to lurking dread. The Game Master should make frequent reference to how insignificant the Explorers feel in the cyclopean maze, and how none can shake that feeling that they are intruding where humans were never meant to go.

THE MAZE CITY

Though they may not know it, the Explorers are the first humans to have set foot within this particular maze city for many decades (not counting the monster that Stahk has become). Their overwhelming sense is one of insignificance, for the human form is utterly dwarfed by the surroundings. The passageways rear a hundred metres and more into the air, intersecting with one another at sharp angles so that turning every corner results in yet another vista seeming to stretch to the very horizon. Conversely, the walls are studded with small openings through which a man must stoop to pass, revealing a myriad of chambers. These must once have been the abodes and working spaces of the maze's original builders.

The material from which the maze is constructed appears to be some manner of translucent stone, which glows with the light of the system's sun transmitted throughout the entire structure. At night or during one of the frequent eclipses, something of the glow remains, so that while light levels dip to the equivalent of a bright, moonlit night, the Explorers need not utilise any light source to move around.

Only once the Explorers and their companions have been within the maze city for around three hours will they begin to notice the odd sense of disquiet the place breeds. The more they explore the vast passageways, the more their senses become unsettled by the bizarre geometries. Any attempt to actively memorise the lay of the land results in the onset of a feeling of nausea.

INTO THE MAZE

Throughout the time the Explorers are in the maze city, a number of events should occur. These can be played in any order the GM like, and only the last one is actually needed to

MORALE

Throughout this adventure, the Game Master should keep track of the morale of the dig staff. This is because the Explorers cannot hope to defeat the Rak'Gol horde on their own, and will need to rally every resource at their disposal. The Explorers' actions throughout the adventure will affect how well the survivors are disposed towards them, and how willing and able they are to follow the Explorers' orders. It may also come into play in the aftermath of the adventure, as the Explorers seek to consolidate their profits. The players need not be informed of the mechanism that is used to track the group's morale, but they should certainly be made aware that there are consequences to their actions. Should they leave a group of workers to fend for themselves against the ravaging aliens, what hope have they of being helped out when they need aid? Conversely, if the Explorers show willingness to put themselves in harm's way to help the survivors, they might very well reap the rewards.

Each of the groups within the Omega Dig staff starts out at a particular "morale level," as shown below. This is modified throughout the adventure, as described in various sections and as the Game Master sees fit. See page 293 of *Rogue Trader* for details on using Interaction Skills.

- Overseer Leerus starts the adventure Hard to interact with.
- The Mercenary Guards start the adventure Difficult to interact with.
- The Indentured Workers, servants of the Adeptus Mechanicus and the Xenoarchaeologists start the adventure Challenging to interact with.

move the story on to the third and final part. The remainder present some challenges the Explorers must overcome, as well as a few hints as to what else is occurring on Egaria Omega.

Before any of these events occur however, the Game Master should give the Explorers a chance to catch their breath, take stock of supplies, tend to the wounded and familiarise themselves with their immediate surroundings. This is a great chance for the Explorers to interact with the dig staff. They might take control of the situation and be hailed as saviours or bitter recriminations might fly back and forth. If the Explorers did well helping out one group of staff they may have made enemies in another. However the battle turned out it is likely Overseer Leerus and Captain Bren will be confrontational and want to take control for themselves.

For additional atmosphere, have some or all of these events occur during the night. The city is lit by a lambent silver glow, the rock of its construction giving up the last of the sunlight absorbed during the day. In the main passageways, enough light is given out to count conditions as Bright, but in the smaller side chambers this should be reduced to Shadow. See page 286 of *ROGUE TRADER* for more details on Lighting.

WHAT ABOUT THE RAK'GOL?

The Explorers might consider barricading themselves into the entrance of the maze-city and staying put, or even try and make a break for their shuttle. Neither of these ideas are wise. Though the Rak'Gol have pulled back, they have not left. The GM can remind the Explorers about their predicament by having the sentries catch glimpses of the Rak'Gol just at the edge of their light sources or frantic and broken vox communications from their vessel in orbit about how they've had to pull back from the planet. If the Explorers are feeling too comfortable about staying at the entrance, the GM can even have the Rak'Gol bring up one of their assault ships, an ominous barbed assault boat thirty metres long with powerful weapons. The Rak'Gol can even destroy the entrance-way with a sustained barrage, forcing the Explorers to seek salvation deeper within the city.

MAZE CITY EVENT 1: MUTINY (OPTIONAL)

At some point, a group of ten guards decide they are better off going it alone. Depending on how well disposed they are towards the Explorers they might approach them, especially if the party includes an Arch-Militant who performed well during the attack on the Omega Dig. If not, the guards strike out on their own, but the Explorers should have a chance to dissuade them, perhaps noting their departure and following to see what is going on.

The guards intend to sneak over the barricades, reasoning that as the Rak'Gol have withdrawn, for a time at least, this is the only chance they will get. They hope to make it clear of the maze city and trust in the Emperor to keep them safe, perhaps even stealing the Explorer's lander if they have one.

It goes without saying that the attempt fails. If the guards cannot be dissuaded, or if they manage to slip away without the Explorers noticing, they bring down another assault on the barricades. Play out the attack, with the Explorers having to pitch in and rally the remaining defenders. The Rak'Gol do not make any attempt to breach the barricades, withdrawing once they have killed a few defenders (including the hapless guards).

- If the Explorers manage to dissuade the guards from deserting, all of the guards increase their Disposition level towards them by +1.
- If the guards desert, but the Explorers rallied the defence against the subsequent attacks, all remaining guards increase their Disposition level towards them by +1.
- If the Explorers simply let the deserters go, or made no attempt to fight off the subsequent attack, all surviving guards reduce their Disposition level towards them by -1.

MAZE CITY EVENT 2: RAK'GOL IN THE WIRE (OPTIONAL)

The portal is the only way into the maze city, and that has been barricaded and is guarded constantly. Surely, none of those things could have got through, right? No, during the initial attack, one of the beasts did get through. Only later does this become evident, as the Marauder attacks suddenly from the shadows.

THE MADNESS OF THE MAZE

Finding one's way around the maze city is a bewildering and disturbing experience, for the geometry of the passageways seem to subtly grate on the psyche of anyone who studies them too closely. Navigation (Surface) Tests are required to keep one's bearings and move around the city. If none of the Explorers have Navigation (Surface) as a Skill, Adept Zpha does have it.

A Navigator may use the Navigation (Warp) Skill whilst within the Maze City (subject to his companions taking the normal precautions!). In doing so, he will be able to find his way, but will discern faint echoes of a long lost time when the city was populated by the Egarians. Misty figures ghost across his vision, and although he cannot make out anything of them, he knows implicitly that they are the shades of the Maze City's builders. A successful test allows the character to get his bearings if he is lost, find his way around, etc., but a failed one will necessitate a **Horrifying (-20) Fear Test** as the character is overwhelmed by the ghostly apparitions.

The Difficulty level of either test is up to the Game Master, taking into account how far the character is from where he wants to be. If the current and desired locations are only a single passageway apart (around ten minutes travel) then Ordinary or Routine Tests may be appropriate. Trying to find his way back through a mile or more of twisting passageways might require anything up to an Arduous test.

The place can play other tricks on the mind too, with the Explorers hearing strange whispers, seeing fleeting shadows in the corner of their vision, etc. A good way to handle these low level 'background' distractions and disturbances is to keep an eye out for failed Awareness Tests that are taken in the course of the game. If such a test is failed, the character thinks he sees or hears something scary, its potency determined as follows.

TABLE 5-1: MAZE MADNESS

Degree of Failure	Result
One	The character is spooked, and takes a -10 penalty on the next Skill Test.
Two	Character must take a Disturbing (0) Fear Test
Three	Character must make a Frightening (-10) Fear Test
Four (or more)	Character must make a Horrifying (-20) Fear Test

A single Rak'Gol should not present a major problem for the Explorers in itself, but it can certainly wreak havoc amongst the surviving non-combatants, potentially killing dozens before the Explorers can intervene. The attack should come when least expected, with the Rak'Gol leaping out of the darkness with a savage roar that can be heard from several chambers away. The Explorers will arrive in time to find bodies littered about and staff fleeing in panic. If the Explorers met Adept Zpha in part one, then have them greeted by the sight of her facing off the beast alone, armed with nothing more than a laser-trowel. If they want to save the hapless xenoarchaeologist they had better act fast.

Throughout this scene, keep in mind that the Rak'Gol are utterly savage, bloodthirsty killers. Even an Ork knows when it's beaten and it's time to run away, but not the Rak'Gol, who will keep fighting until they are victorious or are cut down. If a Rak'Gol know it is going to die, it only redoubles its efforts, in an effort to take as many of its foes down with it as possible.

Depending on how well the Explorers did dealing with the intruder, they may have made allies of the xenoarchaeologists, especially if they saved Adept Zpha, or enemies, if they left her to her death. This will prove relevant as the numbers of defenders dwindle and the Explorers must rally those who remain to fight on.

- If the Explorers killed the Rak'Gol personally, the xenoarchaeologists increase their Disposition level towards them by +1. If the Explorers saved Adept Zpha as well, this is increased to +2.
 - If the Explorers took no part in dealing with the Rak'Gol, the xenoarchaeologists decrease their Disposition level towards them by -1.

There is one last outcome for this event, which the Explorers may attempt (though they should not be prompted). It is possible that they might stun the Rak'Gol into unconsciousness, with an eye to keeping it prisoner, perhaps to be sold on to Cold Traders or other interested parties (such as the notorious Beast House of the Calixis Sector) later on. If this occurs to the players, they should be rewarded, but not without some work. The Rak'Gol should regain consciousness with alarming regularity, and will have to be restrained lest it escape and wreak havoc all over again. See the Further Endeavours section at the end of the adventure for more details.

MAZE CITY EVENT 3: OLD BONES (OPTIONAL)

Just when all has calmed down and at least some of the survivors are trying to get their heads down for some well-needed rest, a scream echoes down the passageways. If the Explorers investigate, they find an indentured worker standing over the long-dead and half-eaten figure of a man in one of the smaller side chambers.

The body is that of Skan Worllen, one of the first workers to have disappeared when people started going missing several months earlier. The body has been mauled severely, and the face is locked in a rictus of utter horror. Soon after the Explorers arrive, Overseer Leerus comes into the chamber, and upon seeing the body goes as white as a sheet. He orders one of his ever-present guards to allow none into the chamber, and orders one of his men to incinerate the body immediately.

TABLE 5-2: DETECTING THE CROW SPIRIT

Degree of Success	Event
Standard Success	Tracks found, +10 to next Test.
One	A shadowy shape ducks down a side passage. +20 to next Test.
Two	Badb Ra is discovered, but is also aware of the Explorers.
Three (or more)	Badb Ra is discovered and is unaware of the Explorers.

Unless the Explorers intervene, the guard goes off to fetch a flamer, returns, and does as ordered.

If pressed, the Overseer states that he has ordered the incineration of the body in case it has been infected with alien microbes. This sounds pretty unlikely to the Explorers, and they may decide to press him further, by way of an Opposed Interaction Test. If the Explorers are successful, Leerus tells them of the disappearances (though nothing of the reason for them) and says he doesn't want the survivors to find out about the discovery of the body, as this would ruin what little remains of their morale. Despite his purely selfish motives, the Overseer is correct in this—should the staff learn of the body their morale will suffer, unless the Explorers can restore it, perhaps by way of a rousing speech by a Rogue Trader or a passionate sermon by a Missionary. In this instance, have the player make a relevant Interaction Test, awarding a bonus of +10 should the player in question give a good performance.

- If word of the body's discovery gets back to the other indentured workers, decrease their Disposition level towards the Explorers by -1.
- If word gets out but one of the Explorers passes the Interaction test, increase the workers' Disposition level towards them by +1.

MAZE CITY EVENT 4: THE CROW (MANDATORY)

Unknown to the Explorers, another party arrived at Egaria Omega at the same time as them, though with a very different reason. A single Eldar, a Corsair of the Crow Spirits, intends to drive the human presence from Egaria Omega and to stop them uncovering things best left undisturbed.

Rather than introducing the Corsair in a single encounter, it is recommended that she be hinted at several times before finally being revealed. The best way to achieve this is by having various Player Characters make Opposed Awareness or Tracking Tests versus Badb Ra's Concealment Skill at various stages throughout any previous events set inside the maze city. Consult **Table 5-2 Detecting the Crow Spirit** to determine the result

of the test. Even if these tests are failed they should hint that something is afoot, and set the players on edge. Have the players keep making the tests until the Corsair is finally discovered.

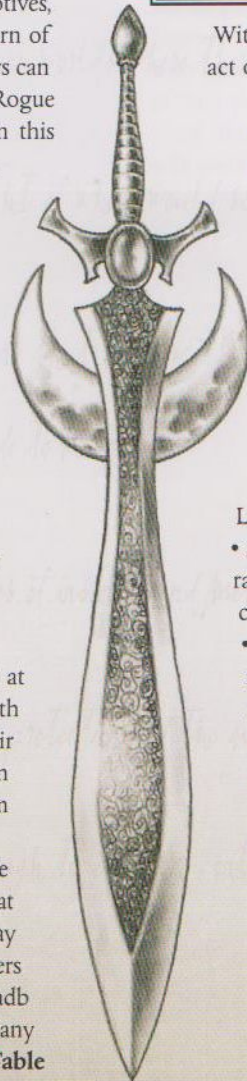
When she is at last discovered the Corsair will either attempt to flee deeper into the maze city, or fight her way through the Explorers if it looks like she can. Should the Player Characters pursue or attempt to hunt her down, she is eventually either cornered in a dead end passageway or otherwise subdued. At this point, it is time to introduce her to the Explorers. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

The stranger is clearly an Eldar. She is tall and lithe, and clad in a ragged travelling coat with dozens of small animal bones dangling from it. Her face might be counted beautiful, were it not for the utter scorn radiating from her dark eyes and curled lip. After looking each of you up and down as if you were something she's just trodden in, she speaks.

"Fools," she says in a lyrical, yet otherworldly voice. "This place is damned, and so too are you. You will release me and leave, or you will die."

Before any of you can answer, a gut-wrenching wail resounds the lengths of the maze city, and you are filled with cold dread. The Corsair merely cocks her head, looks you up and down once more, and says "Or perhaps we shall all die..."

With that, it is time to move on to the third and final act of the adventure.



PART 2 ACHIEVEMENT POINTS

- 100 Achievement Points—If the Explorers dissuade the mutinous guards from striking out on their own.
- 100 Achievement Points—If Adept Zpha survives the Rak'Gol attacks.
- 25 Achievement Points—If the Explorers learn something of the disappearances by way of a successful Interaction Test with Overseer Leerus.
- 25 Achievement Points—If the Explorers can rally the workers' morale after they find their dead comrade.
- 50 Achievement Points—If the Explorers increase the disposition of the majority of the survivors to Ordinary.
- 50 Achievement Points—If the Explorers discover Badb Ra. If it is on the first Opposed Test (thus not wasting time in an extended hunt), they gain 100 instead.

PART 3: AT THE HEART OF THE MAZE

"It's not what might be sleeping in such places you need to worry about—it's what's just woken up..."

—Explorator Michendus

In part three of *Vaults of the Forgotten*, the action reaches a bloody and chaotic climax. With the scream still echoing in their ears, the Explorers find that first one, then more of their companions have been slain by something terrible that stalks the Egarian maze city. As if this were not bad enough, they have the mysterious Crow Spirit Corsair to contend with, as well as an increasingly erratic Overseer Leerus. They must discover and defeat the beast that stalks the maze, and finally, just as they corner it, the Rak'Gol find a way inside. With bloodshed and anarchy erupting all around, the Explorers must muster a defence, or fall prey to the dark legacy of the Egarian Dominion.

THE MONSTER IN THE MAZE

Now its time to introduce the Explorers to Overseer Leerus' unfortunate former deputy, Stahk. Having been infected by the curse of the halo artefact that Leerus attacked him with, Stahk has been transformed into a vile and terrifying parody of all he previously was, a blasphemous hybrid of man and alien. The monster is a huge, twisted conglomeration of human and alien flesh, visibly infused with the pulsating energies of the Warp. Despite its size however, the monster is surprisingly agile, and is able to move about its lair and track any intruders with a preternatural skill afforded by the curse of the Yu'vath. Its musculature throbs with the vile energies infusing its frame, the source of which is the halo artefact plunged into Stahk's heart by Overseer Leerus, which is still to be seen protruding from the creature's chest.

The monster should be introduced incrementally, one murder at a time, until the Explorers decide to do something about it. Its actions take the following form:

- Initially, Stahk kills a single indentured worker who wandered too far from the light. His body is found torn to pieces, and the other workers are up in arms. Leerus tries to play the event down, blaming it on the Rak'Gol. If present, Badb Ra derides this explanation, but offers no alternative. Leerus takes exception and tries to pin the murder on the Eldar, but Badb Ra points out that if she wanted to kill someone, she would have made sure the body wasn't found, and she does not have any weapons to tear someone apart.

BADB RA, AGENT OF THE CROW SPIRITS

The Eldar Corsair that the Explorers have encountered goes by the name of Badb Ra. She has been sent to Egaria Omega by her masters because they have detected the meddling of human hands in a region they are sworn to keep the "despoilers" away from. Badb came to Egaria Omega alone, not to fight the intruders in the Egarian Dominion but to use an artefact her masters have given her to close the maze so that none may enter again. Getting caught was not in her plan, but Badb is resourceful and utterly determined to complete her mission in any way possible.

Badb Ra wants to seal the maze city because in its heart, it contains an artefact called the Hollow Atlas. The Hollow Atlas is a rare and powerful device made by the Egarians in their last days, and could grant great power to those who wield it. In essence, it is a map of the Expanse, but in actuality, it is far more (see page 140). The Crow Spirits know of the Hollow Atlas, and originally sent Badb Ra to seal the maze city so that the Hollow Atlas (and other secrets of the Egarian Dominion) remained undiscovered forever. However, with the possibility of Rak'Gol in the city, Badb Ra is having second thoughts. She knows the Rak'Gol hunger for warp touched artefacts, and fears the thought of them getting their claws on the Hollow Atlas. Depending on events, she may even be agreeable to taking the Hollow Atlas from the city to protect it.

The artefact that Badb is carrying takes the form of a pendent made of irregularly formed, jagged white rock, and is in effect a key. Badb keeps the key on a silver chain about her neck, tucked inside her ragged clothes. When the time is right, Badb will use the key to realign the Maze City, and escape in the process. So long as they do not actively attempt to stop her, Badb does not care what happens to the Explorers and their friends. Should they try to cross her, they will find even a single Crow Spirit Corsair a dangerous foe.

Throughout this part of the adventure, Badb Ra remains cold and aloof, and it takes a charming Explorer to elicit much in the way of conversation from her. Badb will not allow herself to be taken prisoner, at least not without a major fight, but will not give the Explorers any reason to do so.

When running Badb Ra, the Game Master should always keep her mission in mind. To complete it she needs to reach the centre of the Maze City and use the key to activate its ancient mechanisms. She may decide to ally herself with the Explorers if it suits her, or she may decide to slip away into the shadows and pursue her mission alone, depending on circumstances. When things get chaotic, Badb fights side by side with the Explorers, until it is safe to proceed with her task.



- Leerus orders the guards to redouble their vigilance, but within hours of the first kill, two of the mercenaries are slain—one torn to bits again, and the other vanished expect for bloodstains. A tried and true horror trope could be for the Explorers to hear their screams over the mercenary's microbeads, and come find the dead bodies. Tensions rise between various groups, with the workers demanding that the Explorers take a hand.
- Then one of the most senior xenosarchaeologists is killed. A successful **Challenging (+0) Awareness Test** reveals that the savant was attended by a Servo Skull, and that its spy-lens may have caught something. A successful **Hard (-20) Tech-Use Test** is required to extract the recording from the Servo Skull's machine core. This can be replayed on a standard auspex or similar device, and if the Explorers do not have one then another of the xenoarchaeologists offers his. Though the scene captured by the Servo Skull is dark and blurred, the attacker is revealed as a hulking monstrosity, and obviously not a Rak'Gol. Leerus demands to see the recording, and when he does his face goes pale. Still, he does not reveal his dark secret, but should an Explorer attempt to use an Interaction skill to coerce him to do so, the Explorer will be subject to a -30 modifier. Even should the Explorer succeed, Leerus only lets slip the odd detail—he won't just spill his guts.

By this point, the Explorers should have taken it upon themselves to hunt the murderous beast down, but if they have not then someone, perhaps Savant Zpha begs them to,

offering their own help in the endeavour. Overseer Leerus grows increasingly agitated during any such conversation, and although he has no better idea is determined that no one should go off alone. This is an ideal cue for a battle of wills between the Explorers on the one hand and the Overseer and his guards on the other. This scene should be played out as a tense confrontation, bearing in mind the Dispositions of all involved (as modified by previous events). Eventually, the entire group will be split down the middle, with Leerus and probably his guards on one side, and the Explorers with whichever factions they have been able to persuade on the other. Remember that Leerus is an experienced individual who has served the Kasballica Mission for many years, and he has seen many "investors" such as the Explorers come and go throughout that time. Still the Explorers are technically agents of the Kasballica Mission, and besides, he has the secret of Stahk to conceal.

At the height of the confrontation, Leerus takes his followers and departs for the barricades, declaring the Explorers fools. The Explorers can gather their own faction, arm up and head off into the maze. This faction is dependant on their actions and who they have befriended. It is likely to include the surviving workers and xenosarcheologists, and may include some of the mercenaries. Any group that is at an Ordinary Disposition Modifier or higher is likely to side with the Explorers, except for a core group of a dozen guards who stay with Leerus. If the Explorers are working with Rhiner Gelt openly, Bren will stick with Leerus. Of course, if the Explorers have won Leerus over to their side, he will accompany them.

At this point, Badb Ra also determines whether she will work with the Explorers or not. If they decide to hunt the monster in the maze and have not overtly threatened or intimidated Badb, she states that she'll accompany the Explorers. If not, she takes advantage of the human squabbling to slip off into the darkness to complete her mission.

TRACKING THE MONSTER

To confront the monster, the Explorers will first have to find it. This is not easy, because the beast has had many months to become the master of its domain and it knows every twist and turn of the maze city. The Explorers are following trails of long-dried blood, cracked bones and scuff marks on the ground. Hunting the monster should be presented as a tense episode in the adventure, with the possibility that death waits around the next corner hanging over everyone. Don't forget about the "Madness in the Maze" rule on page 134, as a few failed Awareness Tests and subsequent Fear Tests will really add to the tension and sense of foreboding. The Game Master should play up the sheer "alienness" of the interior of the maze city as the hunt progresses, perhaps hinting at odd whispers echoing down cyclopean halls not trodden in millennia and ghostly movement only ever seen in the corner of the eye. The descriptions of the maze city found on page 21 can flesh out what the Explorers encounter.

In order to locate the hybrid, the Explorers must undertake an Difficult (8 Degrees of Success needed) Exploration Challenge (see page 263 of **ROGUE TRADER** for details of how such challenges are handled). Any dig staff accompanying the

Explorers may contribute to the effort, with each one adding +5 to the Explorers' Exploration rolls. However, doing so increases the risk of the monster becoming aware that it is being tracked. Should any of the Exploration Tests be failed, a number of dig staff equal to the degrees of success the test is failed by are dragged screaming into the darkness before the Explorers can react or intervene in any way. The first time this happens the remaining staff must take a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test** (use the highest Willpower among the group). For every degree of failure, one staff deserts the Explorers and either heads back to Leerus or makes his own way in the maze (likely dying). Each subsequent test increases by one Difficulty level. Depending on their Disposition towards the Explorers, the dig staff might be Commanded to stay, but otherwise they will desert in increasing numbers.

As the Exploration Challenge progresses, the GM should add in some atmospheric to heighten the tension and fear of the situation. Here are some possibilities, which could happen after an Explorer makes an Exploration Skill Test, indicating that they are either getting closer or farther away from their goal.

- The Explorers enter a low room containing a massive, lambent crystal that they remember passing through earlier. Obviously they are travelling in circles, but as they move through the room, one notices a bloody hand-print on the crystal. A quick head-count reveals one of the indentured workers is missing.
- A distant set of screams followed by a roar seems to issue from an entrance to a passage above the Explorer's heads.
- The Explorers' vox or microbeads crackle to life, hissing static for a few minutes before falling silent.
- One of the workers who leaves their party flies out of the darkness to land at the Explorers' feet, slashed and torn by claws and fangs (and quite obviously dead).
- One of the NPCs the Explorers have a rapport with vanishes. When the Explorers look for them, they hear a trailing scream down a distant hall. When the Explorers find the beast, they'll find the NPC alive and about to be devoured.

Finally, having passed the Exploration Challenge, the Explorers locate the monster's lair. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

Turning a final corner, you find yourself in an impossibly tall, bone-strewn chamber, a single shaft of light spearing down from high above and illuminating a massive crystal plinth. In front of the column is a beast from a nightmare, stooped and ready to charge. The thing is over three metres tall, its black limbs twisted masses of knotted muscles, and covered with layers of chitin and horn. Worst of all is its face, which is obviously that of a man. Its eyes are wide and beseeching, as if the soul within is consumed with misery at the knowledge of its own continued existence. The monster utters a soul-wrenching roar of pain and suffering, before throwing itself at you in a storm of rage!

The Explorers must now face or escape the Monster in the Maze. If Overseer Leerus happens to be present the monster will focus its attacks upon him, if it is able. If any of the xenoarchaeologists are still around, they will recognise the monster's face and exclaim the name "Stahk." There

won't be time to elaborate while the combat is raging, but more can be explained later on.

When running the combat, the Explorers may attempt to rally the remaining workers and guards to fight the beast with a **Difficult (-10) Command Test**. If they succeed, those with guns open fire, desperately raking the monster with bullets and las-blasts. Don't worry about rolling for each NPC with a gun. Simply describe their desperate barrage of small arms fire, and subtract 1d5-1 wounds from the Monster per round—not reduced by armour or toughness. The idea is that they can aid, without supplanting the actions of the Explorers.

Badb Ra may join in as well, although again her role should not be to supplant or outdo the Explorers. If she attacks the Monster, it loses an additional 1 wound per round. Once during the encounter she can also step in to parry an attack that would kill an Explorer or important NPC, such as Adept Zpha. The GM should keep in mind, however, that Badb Ra should aid the Explorers, not supplant them.

In turn, however, the monster should focus most of its attention on the Explorers. Cinematically, if it moves near any minor NPCs such as workers or mercenaries, it can lash out with a tentacle or claw as a Free Action and slay one. This can also reinforce just how dangerous the monster is.

However, time runs out for the Explorers in more ways than one. At the exact moment the Explorers are facing the Monster in the Maze, the Rak'Gol launch an all-out assault in the barricades, smashing it apart and bursting through. If the door was sealed by their lander, volleys of high-explosive weaponry blow it open again. If the Explorers are carrying any communications gear, the channels are suddenly filled with desperate, garbled reports as the defenders are overcome.

The Rak'Gol know where the chamber with the Hollow Atlas and the Monster are located, and are heading straight towards it—and the survivors within. The GM should make this clear to the players, through frantic vox-calls for help and roars and howls echoing through the maze-city that get ever louder.

THE KEY

The chamber that the Monster in the Maze has chosen for its lair is far more than it appears. If and when the Explorers defeat the beast, Badb Ra enters (or steps forward if she has accompanied the Explorers all along), intent upon completing her mission. She takes the key from around her neck, steps into the column of light at the chamber's centre, and places it in a socket on the ground at her feet. It is possible that the Explorers might try to interfere with the Corsair, in which case she berates them as fools and tells them they will all die unless they allow her to complete her mission. Meanwhile, the Rak'Gol hordes are closing in...

The Corsair needs ten Rounds (or roughly a minute if not applicable) to complete her task. The key is used to realign the maze city, but can be used to realign small or large sections. At this point, she is just manipulating this room, to access the treasure stored within the plinth. As soon as the key slots into the socket, the plinth splits apart to reveal a single pedestal. On it, resting in a shallow depression, is the Hollow Atlas (see the sidebar). Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

At the apex of the plinth is a clear crystal sphere, covered in etchings so detailed and intricate that the actual patterns are indecipherable without careful study. The sphere seems to be spinning, and on closer examination the sphere contains dozens (or even hundreds) of smaller spheres within its shell, each spinning in a different direction. Each of the inner spheres is also covered with etchings and delicate designs. The entire device glows with a soft blue light that seems to emanate from the centre of the device.

Badb Ra grasps the sphere in both hands and looks at it for a long moment. Then she looks up at you with an indecipherable expression on her face.

"I was instructed to seal the city forever, to keep this...safe." She grimaces. "But now, the beasts are within the walls. I can see no choice, the Hollow Atlas must be taken from its resting place, and the beasts trapped within. If you do not interfere, I can create a means of escape for us both."

Badb Ra's plan is to use the key for a much more drastic realignment of the city, opening a temporary passageway to the edge that will seal after a few short minutes. At this point, the Explorers have three choices:

- **Kill Badb Ra, take the Hollow Atlas, flee the city:** Killing Badb Ra won't be easy, and will delay the Explorers as they attempt to flee (their first Agility Test to escape will be **Ordinary (+10)** instead of **Easy (+30)**—see below). If they kill her, a **Challenging (+0) Scholastic Lore (Cryptology), Ordinary (+10) Forbidden Lore (Xenos) Test, or Hard (-20) Tech-Use Test** reveals how the key can be used to open the passageway.
- **Let Badb Ra keep the Hollow Atlas and flee the city:** Badb Ra's opinion of the Explorers is improved, as she half-expects them to turn on her.
- **Demand the Hollow Atlas from Badb Ra and flee the city:** The Explorers can simply demand the Atlas from her (or threaten to kill her and take it). This should be an Intimidate Test, with a +5 bonus for every Explorer who is on his feet and not suffering Critical Damage. If the Test is successful, Badb Ra acquiesces with ill-grace. She would rather see the Hollow Atlas in the hands of humans than the Rak'Gol, and as long as she is alive she can work towards retrieving it later.

In any case, when the key is activated a second time, the plinth re-seals. Then, with the sounds of thousands of tonnes of stone and crystal grinding on each other, the walls around the room begin to shift and move. After a few minutes, the walls align into a long, straight passage, at the end of which the Explorers can see a glimmer of daylight.

Escaping the City

As the passageway through the maze city begins to realign and seal, the Explorers must hurry to escape with their necks! To escape the city, each Explorer must make four Agility Tests, representing him fleeing as the walls seal behind him and passages open and close. The Tests begin as **Easy (+30) Agility Tests**. Should the Explorer pass that test, his next test will be at the same difficulty. If he fails, his next Test is one step more difficult. Failure by four or more degrees at any point means the Explorer has been caught by the crushing

MEANWHILE...

Far above the action, the Explorers' vessel is finally caught up by the Rak'Gol warship, and a desperate battle ensues. If any of the Explorers are on board this can be played out as a space battle. Otherwise, the vessel eventually drives the Rak'Gol ship off, sustaining ugly, but essentially cosmetic damage in the process. Once the Explorers on the ground are clear of the maze city conventional communications between ship and shore are possible once more and the crew can lend what aid they are able.

walls and almost killed—burn a Fate Point. However, other Explorers can make their own next Test one step harder (or if they have no more tests to make, make a **Difficult (-10) Agility Test**) to pull their ally free at the last minute.

The GM should also make four Agility Tests for the remaining survivors as a group, using their lowest common Agility. These Tests work the same way as the Explorers' Tests, except that for every degree of failure, one of the survivors is killed, either by the closing passageway or Rak'Gol popping out of suddenly opening side-passages and grabbing them. Of course, the Explorers can intervene as described above to save them. If Badb Ra is alive, the GM should consider putting her in peril of being trapped behind a closing wall. Whether or not the players save her, is of course up to them, but saving her will drastically improve her opinion of the Explorers in the future. (The Hollow Atlas, however is important to later adventures, and whatever happens, it should not be destroyed. It can be lost inside the maze-city, however.)

As the Explorers are fleeing the rapidly closing passageway, the Rak'Gol reach the chambers surrounding them and begin pursuit. If the Explorers attempt to stop fight them, they count as automatically failing one of their Agility Tests by 1d5 degrees, but will have two rounds to fight before they need to start running again. However, a much better idea is to flee as fast as possible.

Once outside the maze-city, the Explorers can stop and try and keep the remaining Rak'Gol from escaping the trap the maze-city has become. Only five Rak'Gol are close enough to the entrance to have any chance of escape, and the Explorers have four rounds before the outer doors seal. They can keep the Rak'Gol in with straight combat, but the GM should also allow more creative plans to work, such as a bundle of photon-flash grenades or a booby-trapped flamer tank that drive the Rak'Gol back long enough for the outer doors to seal.

CONCLUSION

At the end of the adventure the maze city is sealed off, the Rak'Gol having been locked inside or crushed as the portal closed. However, there are still several loose ends that need tidying up.

- **Overseer Leerus:** It is likely that the overseer died, either during the Rak'Gol final assault or at the claws of the Stahk-Monster. However the GM can have him escape the final attack on the barricades if he stays

behind, fleeing the city in the heat of the attack. If he survives, the Explorers may well be suspicious of him, and if questioned closely he'll eventually cave (although maybe an Intimidation Test is in order). At that point the Explorers can kill him, take him back to the Kasballica Mission (who would pay handsomely for an employee who has "gone astray"), use the fact that he's in their debt, or simply leave him be. The last two are an option even if they don't discover his secret, after all without the Explorers Leerus wouldn't be alive. If they push it, he will agree to be "their man," in the future, and run any future dig sites for them.

- **Rhiner Gelt:** If the Explorers ignored Gelt, he'll do the same to them—assuming he survived. However, if they befriended him or impressed him with their care for his fellow workers, the Explorers find themselves with a valuable and loyal retainer. Like Leerus, Gelt might make a fine choice for a new overseer of any future dig-sites.
- **The Egarian Expedition:** Although the Expedition suffered a great deal of damage, if the Explorers managed to preserve the lives of at least half the crucial dig-site employees (the tech-adepts and xenosarcheologists being the most important, with the workers and mercenaries less so), they can set up a new dig or rehabilitate the old one. However, they may want to do it on a different part of the planet, just in case the Rak'Gol weren't entirely captured.
- **Badb Ra and the Hollow Atlas:** Presuming Badb Ra has survived the adventure, what she does next depends on her relationship with the Explorers thus far. If it has been indifferent, she leaves with the Hollow Atlas, attempting to reach a Vampire flyer hidden in the wastes of Omega and from there to a rendezvous with an Eldar ship in orbit. The Explorers may try and claim the Hollow Atlas for their own, in which case she'll attempt to flee. If her relationship with the Explorers was good—and especially if the Explorers saved her at any point—she offers the Hollow Atlas to them as a "loan" to reward them, saying only it is an artefact that those in their line of work will find very useful, and that her kind may return for it some day in the future. Finally, if the relationship has been hostile (such as if the Explorers demanded the Hollow Atlas from her), she vanishes into the desert, plotting to return with her kin and reclaim the prize.

There are plenty of other courses the Explorers might take once the city is sealed off, and the Game Master is encouraged to allow the players to be creative in this regard. They could simply plunder the place and take the dig staff on as their own retainers, desert them, or stay around to get the expedition back on its feet. Future dealings with the Kasballica Mission will of course be coloured significantly by the Explorers actions here.

When finally the Explorers return to Footfall, word of their adventures has preceded them. They are the toast of the drinking dens and flesh joints, and every spacer within earshot wants to hear their tales. There only concern is who else might be listening, for the agents of the Ordo Xenos are everywhere...

THE HOLLOW ATLAS

The Hollow Atlas is a series of clear crystal spheres nested within one another. Each sphere is covered in spindly, complex etchings impossible to decipher, and all but the outermost sphere are rotating rapidly in different directions. The entire assembly glows with a soft-blue light.

The Hollow Atlas was constructed by the Egarians during the twilight of their civilization, a fusion of their crystal manipulation and darker powers. The Atlas is exactly what its name claims, a series of maps of the entire Koronus Expanse. However, using such a strange xenos device is not for the weak-willed.

Activating the Atlas requires a **Difficult (-10) Willpower Test** that can only be attempted once every day. Only those with a Psy Rating, Navigators, and Footfallen may attempt to activate the Atlas. Failing the Test by four or more degrees results the user suffering 1 Insanity Point as the alien device twists his mind instead.

When active, a series of highly detailed three-dimensional star-charts in glowing blue energy erupt from the Atlas to fill whatever room or area it is currently occupying (within reason). Usually, these charts are of a region of space the user is interested in visiting and thinking about—granting a +30 to all Navigation (Stellar and Warp) Tests while in that region. The region can be as large as a sub-sector or as small as a single solar system.

However, sometimes the Atlas does not show the user what he wants to see, but other regions entirely. Often there is no discernible reason for this, however should the user heed the Atlas and travel to this region of space, he seldom finds the trip wasted.

PART 3 ACHIEVEMENT POINTS

- 50 Achievement Points—If the Explorers located the Monster without losing more than 10 dig staff.
- 75 Achievement Points—If Badb Ra lives.
- 100 Achievement Points—If the Explorers gain control of the Hollow Atlas.
- 100 Achievement Points—If at least one third of the dig staff survive the adventure.
- 25 Achievement Points—If the Explorers discover the cause of the Monster in the Maze.
- 200 Achievement Points—If the Explorers end the adventure in control of their own dig site, either by controlling Leerus or setting up their own operation.

ACHIEVEMENT POINTS

In order to complete whichever of the Adventure Seed Endeavours was used to introduce the Explorers to Vaults of the Forgotten, the group must have amassed at least 900 Achievement Points throughout the course of the adventure. If they fail to do so, their actions may well have spoiled the Kasballica Mission's business in the Egarian Dominion for many

years to come, and the Explorers may have made themselves a bitter enemy indeed. In this case, the Game Master might like to have agents of the Mission turn up every now and then during future games and either offer them the chance to redeem themselves or to eliminate them once and for all.

However, if the Explorers accumulate enough Achievement Points to equal the 900 point threshold, they have walked away in a favourable position. The maze city might be sealed, but at least the Omega Dig can be re-established. Vaults of the Forgotten awards bonus Achievement Points for acts that would contribute to the Omega Dig's long term survival as a viable investment (saving the necks of the hapless, but highly skilled staff for example). For every 100 Achievement Points they exceed the Threshold by, the Explorers receive an additional +1 Profit Factor.

In addition, the Explorers gain extra achievement points for obtaining the Hollow Atlas, recognizing how useful it may be in the future.

REWARDS

Surviving the sealing off of the maze city and rescuing the dig staff is a major achievement in itself and the Game Master should reward the players accordingly. Experience should be awarded per gaming session as described on page 291 of **ROGUE TRADER** core rulebook. In addition, the following bonus Experience Points may also be granted to all Explorers:

- 200xp—If the majority of the Indentured Workers survive thanks to the Explorers' efforts.
- 200xp—If the majority of the Xen archaeologists survive thanks to the Explorers' efforts.
- 100xp—If the majority of the Mercenary Guards survive (and end the adventure well disposed towards the Explorers or actually under their command).
- 100xp—If the Explorers defeat the Monster in the Maze.
- 250xp—If the Explorers actively defended the expedition from the Rak'Gol (rallying the defenders, manning the perimeter defences etc).
- 250xp—If the Explorers either eliminate Overseer Leerus or force him into their employ.

In addition, if the Explorers make an effort to tidy up the mess left behind after the adventure by getting the Omega Dig back on its feet, they are well rewarded by the Kasballica Mission. The GM should award them an additional +2 to their Profit Factor.

If the Explorers recovered the Egarian crystal shards hidden away by Adept Zpha, they may trade them for an additional +50 Achievement Points. If traded, the GM should consider this in future games, as they may well have come to the attention of other Cold Traders, the underworld or even the spies of the Ordo Xenos.

If the Explorers recovered the key used by Badb Ra to seal the maze city, they can use this in future adventures involving Egarian Maze Cities, at the GM's discretion.

If the Explorers recovered the Yu'vath artefact that transformed Stahk into the hideous Monster in the Maze, this could form the basis of future events. For more ideas on such artefacts, see page 360 of **ROGUE TRADER**.

FURTHER ENDEAVOURS

The following are some ideas for future Endeavours that could lead on from the events of Vaults of the Forgotten. Each is presented as a basic idea, which the Game Master can expand upon depending on the specifics of his own campaign and how this adventure played out.

ALIEN AUTOPSY (LESSER, CRIMINAL)

If the Explorers captured the Rak'Gol in part two, they might seek to sell it on to interested parties. These could range from Adeptus Mechanicus xeno-generators to Ordo Xenos Inquisitors of a somewhat Radical bent. Beware of double-crosses!

HOSTILE TAKEOVER (GREATER, CRIMINAL)

Perhaps the Explorers feel they deserve more of a cut in the future profits to be had from the Omega Dig? They might decide to take the place over entirely, cutting the Kasballica Mission out of the deal. Doing so might spark a vicious underworld war, with Cold Traders the length and breadth of the Koronus Expanse being dragged in on one side or another.

IF YOU CAN'T KEEP IT, IT WAS NEVER YOURS (GREATER, MILITARY)

Some time after the events of Vaults of the Forgotten, the Explorers could experience a sudden drop in their fortunes, caused by rivals intercepting artefacts uncovered by the Omega Dig as they are shipped back to the Cold Trade markets of Footfall and beyond. The Explorers must identify which of their many rivals is behind this outrage, and teach them a lesson they won't forget. What starts out as grudge match could soon escalate into a war scale territorial war.

ANTAGONISTS AND NPCs

The following presents some useful NPCs and antagonists for use with the Vaults of the Forgotten adventure. For save space, descriptions of the individual characters are presented in the main body of the adventure.

The profiles for Rak'Gol Broodmasters and Marauders can be found on page 73. That of a Marauder class warship can be found on page 74.

If any further characters are needed the standard NPCs listed in the Rogue Trader rulebook should be used, with appropriate minor alterations by the Game Master.

OVERSEER LEERUS

Overseer Leerus is the cruel and prideful overseer of the Omega Dig.



Leerus Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
48	34	42	52	30	40	32	38	34

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 18

Skills: Awareness (Per), Barter (Fel), Carouse (T), Ciphers (Int), Climb (Str), Commerce (Fel), Command (Fel), Common Lore (Int) (Imperium, Koronus Expanse), Deceive (Fel), Dodge (Ag), Evaluate (Int), Forbidden Lore (Int) (Archeotech, Xenos), Intimidate (Str) +20, Literacy (Int), Navigation (Int) (Surface), Scholastic Lore (Int) (Cryptology), Scrutiny (Per), Search (Per), Speak Language (Int) (High Gothic, Low Gothic), Survival (Int).
Talents: Air of Authority, Basic Weapon Training (Bolt), Counter Attack, Deadeye Shot, Die Hard, Light Sleeper, Melee Weapon Training (Universal), Pistol Weapon Training (Bolt), Rapid Reaction, Resistance (Psychic Techniques), Strong Minded, True Grit.

Armour: Light carapace (Arms 4, Body 5, Legs 4).

Weapons: Best Quality Customised Boltgun with Motion Predictor, Silencer and Lamp Pack (90m; S/2/4; 1d10+5 X; Pen 4; Clip 24, Reload Half, Tearing), chainsword (1d10+6 R; Pen 2; Balanced, Tearing)

Gear: 2 bolt pistol clips, 1 boltgun clip, 1 lamp pack recharge, expensive survival suit, filtration plugs, auspex, data-slate, micro-bead, multicompass.

TECH-ADEPT ODDYLE

Tech-adept Oddyle is the renegade Tech-Priest working the Dig.



Oddyle Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
34	24	33	30	29	41	34	35	20

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 14

Skills: Awareness (Per), Chem-Use (Int), Common Lore (Tech) (Adeptus Mechanicus) (Koronus Expanse) (Int), Logic (Int) +10, Forbidden Lore (Adeptus Mechanicus) (Archeotech) (Xenos) (Int), Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Techna-Lingua) (Int), Tech-Use (Int) +20.

Talents: Binary Chatter, Chem Geld, Electrical Succour, Energy Cache, Ferric Lure, Foresight, Luminen Charge, Meditation, Melee Weapon Training (Chain, Power, Primitive), Pistol Training (Bolt, Las, Plasma, SP).

Traits: Mechanicus Implants.

Armour: Flak cloak (Head 3, Arms 3, Body 3, Legs 3).

Weapons: Chain axe (1d10+7 R; Pen 2; Tearing), laspistol (30m; S/-/-; 1d10+2 E; Pen 0; Clip 30; Reload Full; Reliable).

Gear: MIU, Cybernetic Senses, Memorance Implant, Locator Matrix, Augur Arrays (all Good Craftsmanship), Odic Accumulator (counts as a Best Craftsmanship Graviton Gun).

ARTIFICER BORAN

The off-kilter Boran is Oddyle's somewhat reliable assistant.



Boran Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
25	32	30	30	32	45	32	32	15

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 12

Skills: Awareness (Per), Chem-Use (Int), Common Lore (Tech) (Adeptus Mechanicus) (Koronus Expanse) (Int), Drive (Tracked Vehicles) (Walkers) (Ag), Logic (Int) +10, Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Techna-Lingua) (Int), Tech-Use (Int) +20, Trade (Armourer) (Ag) +20.

Talents: Binary Chatter, Chem Geld, Electrical Succour, Energy Cache, Luminen Charge, Meditation, Melee Weapon Training (Shock, Primitive), Pistol Training (Bolt, Las, Plasma, SP), Rite of Pure Thought/Frenzy†

Traits: Mechanicus Implants.

Armour: Flak cloak (Head 3, Arms 3, Body 3, Legs 3).

Weapons: Plasma pistol (10m; S/2/- E; Pen 6; Clip 10; Reload Half; Overheat), Shock Staff (1d5+6 I; Pen 0; Shocking)

Gear: MIU, Optical Mechadentrite, Utility Mechadentrite, Cranial Armour (all Good Craftsmanship), 2 plasma flasks, data-slate, respirator, personal cogitator, tools.

†Boran's cranial implants are one chip short of a set, causing him to flip from cold and logical to irrational and angry in the blink of an eye. Boran starts out with the Rite of Pure Thought applying, but should he ever fail any Willpower based Test, Frenzy applies instead. Further failed tests cause him to revert to the opposite rule and so on.

ADEPT ZPHA

Adept Zpha is the Dig's foremost scholar.



Zpha Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
25	20	24	22	30	50	40	44	33

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 9

Skills: Common Lore (Int) (Imperium, Koronus Expanse, Tech), Evaluate (Int), Forbidden Lore (Int) (Archeotech, Xenos), Literacy (Int), Navigation (Surface) (Int), Scholastic Lore (Int) (Archaic, Cryptology), Search (Per), Speak Language (Int) (High Gothic, Low Gothic), Tech-Use (Int), Trade (Int) (Archaeologist) +20.

Weapons and Armour: None.

Gear: Rugged work wear, simple tools, lamp pack, Hadd-pattern data-loom.

THE MONSTER IN THE MAZE

The terrifying remnants of a man who haunts the maze city.

Monster Profile



WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
48	—	(10) 51	(12) 60	34	20	32	50	05

Movement: 5/10/15/30

Wounds: 40

Skills: Awareness (Per), Concealment (Ag), Shadowing (Ag), Survival (Int),

Talents: Berserk Charge, Blind Fighting, Hatred (Overseer Leerus), Lightning Attack, Rapid Reaction, Swift Attack, Warp Sense.

Traits: Brutal Charge, Dark-sight, Fear (3), From Beyond†, Natural Armour, Natural Weapons, Regeneration†, Size (Enormous), Sturdy, Warp Weapons†, Unnatural Strength (x2), Unnatural Toughness (x2).

Armour: Hideously twisted chitin/hardened skin (All 8).

Weapons: Chitinous Claws (1d10+10 R; Pen 3; Tearing).

†**Shardheart:** Protruding from the centre of the Monster's chest is the darkly pulsating halo artefact that Overseer Leerus plunged into Stahk's heart, thus creating the beast that is the Monster in the Maze. Any attack that causes Critical Damage to the Monster's Body has a 20% chance of hitting and instantly destroying the shard (in addition to any other Critical Effect rolled). Alternatively, an Explorer can target the shard with a called shot. Should this happen, the Halo Artefact is instantly destroyed, and the Monster loses the Regeneration, From Beyond and Warp Weapon Traits. In order to notice the shard in the heat of combat an Explorer must pass an **Very Hard (-30) Awareness Test**. Having passed this, a successful **Challenging (+0) Logic Test** will reveal that destroying the shard would be a good idea.

RHINER GELT

The leader of the workers at the Dig.

Gelt Profile



WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
38	35	44	46	23	30	40	37	40

Movement: 2/4/6/12

Wounds: 15

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Command +10 (Fel), Common Lore (Imperium) (Imperial Guard) (War) (Int), Interrogation (WP), Intimidate (Str), Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Int).

Talents: Basic Weapon Training (Las, SP), Disarm, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Peer (Workers) (Military), Pistol Training (Las, SP), Takedown, Unarmed Warrior, Unarmed Master.

Armour: None.

Weapons: Unarmed fists (1d10+4 I; Pen 0).

Gear: Rugged work gear.

MERCENARY GUARDS

Dangerous mercenaries hired to protect the camp.

Mercenary Profile



WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
40	40	35	35	30	25	35	30	25

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 10

Skills: Awareness (Per) +20, Common Lore (Int) (Imperium, Koronus Expanse, Underworld), Dodge (Ag) +10, Inquiry (Int), Intimidate (Str) +10, Scrutiny (Per) +10

Talents: Basic Weapon Training (Universal), Disarm, Heavy Weapon Training (SP), Melee Weapon Training (Primitive, Universal), Nerves of Steel, Pistol Training (Universal)

Armour: Flak armour with carapace chest plate (Arms 4, Body 6, Head 4, Legs 4).

Weapons: Hellgun (110m; S/3/-; 1d10+4 E; Pen 7; Clip 30; Reload 2 Full) or Heavy Stubber (120m; -/-/10; 1d10+5 I; Pen 3; Clip 40; Reload Full), 3 Frag Grenades (9m; S/-/-; 2d10 X; Pen 0; Blast (4))

Gear: Rugged clothing, filtration plugs, photo-contacts.

CAPTAIN BREN

Captain Bren commands the mercenaries in the camp. For his profile, use the mercenary profile with the following changes and additional Skills and Talents:

Char: WS 50, S 40, T 40, Int 30, Fel 20, +5 Wounds

Skills: Common Lore (War) (Int), Pilot (Flyer) +10, Security (Ag) +20, Shadowing (Ag) +10, Silent Move (Ag)

Talents: Ambidextrous, Crack Shot, Iron Discipline, Quick Draw, Two Weapon Wielder (Melee, Ballistic)

Weapons: Replace hellgun or heavy stubber with a best craftsmanship hellpistol (35 m; S/2/-; 1d10+4 E; Pen 7; Clip 40, Reload 2 Full) and a power sword (1d10+9 E; Pen 5; Balanced, Power Field)

BADB RA, CROW SPIRIT CORSAIR

The mysterious agent of the Crow Spirits in the maze city.

Monster Profile



WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
52	55	33	35	(10) 55	39	58	43	20

Movement: 5/10/15/30

Wounds: 18

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag) +20, Awareness (Per) +20, Concealment (Ag) +20, Deceive (Fel) +20, Dodge (Ag) +10, Evaluate (Int) +10, Forbidden Lore (Int) (The Black Library, Xenos, The Warp) +10, Gamble (Int), Navigation (Stellar) (Int), Pilot (flyer) (Ag), Medicae (Int), Silent Move (Ag) +20.

Speak Language (Eldar, Low Gothic, Void Cant) +10.

Talents: Basic Weapon Training (Las), Catfall, Exotic Weapons Training (Shuriken Catapult, Shuriken Pistol), Foresight, Hard Target, Leap Up, Melee Weapon Training (Power, Primitive), Pistol Weapon Training (Las), Quick Draw, Rapid Reaction, Resistance (Fear, Psychic Techniques, Sprint).

Traits: Unnatural Agility (x2).

Armour: Xeno mesh void armour (Body 5, Arms 4, Legs 4).

Weapons: Best Quality Shuriken catapult (60m; S/3/10; 1d10+4 R; Pen 6; Clip 100, Reload 2 Full; Reliable), xeno-crafted laspistol (30m; S/-/-; 1d10+2 E; Pen 0; Clip 30; Reload Full; Reliable), xeno-crafted mono-sword (1d10+3 R; Pen 2; Balanced), 1 plasma grenade, 1 blind grenade.

Gear: Ragged outer garments adorned with a variety of bone fetishes, 3 spare clips of Shuriken catapult ammunition, waystone gem, xenos-crafted medkit, auspex, the key.

SENTINEL POWER LIFTER (LATHE PATTERN, MARK XXV)

Type: Walker

Tactical Speed: 8 m

Cruising Speed: 45 kph

Manoeuvrability: +10

Structural Integrity: 15

Size: Hulking

Armour: Front 18, Side 18, Rear 18

Crew: Pilot

Carrying Capacity: Approximately 1 metric tonne.

Weapons

Powerlifter (Facing Front, Melee, 2d10+10, Pen 2, Unwieldy)

Special Rules

Grab and Smash: The Omega Dig site is strewn with heavy objects such as crates and barrels that an Explorer piloting the power lifter could use as weapons, picking them up and smashing them down on the larger Rak'Gol beasts. As a Full Action, the lifter may grab such an item and lift it in its powerlifter. Its next attack inflicts an additional d10 Damage, and the object is smashed apart and another must be found. If the hit misses or is parried by the opponent, there is a 50% chance that it will be smashed, but otherwise the pilot may continue to use it. While laden, the walker's Manoeuvrability becomes -10.

Open-topped: Enemies may target the pilot using a Called Shot Attack Option.

Walker: The Sentinel Powerlifter ignores penalties for moving through difficult terrain, and negotiates obstacles such as rock slides and shattered dig machinery without penalty.

TROJAN SUPPORT VEHICLE (IDUMEA SUB-PATTERN 99X)

Type: Ground Vehicle

Tactical Speed: 8 m

Cruising Speed: 45 kph

Manoeuvrability: +0

Structural Integrity: 20

Size: Enormous

Armour: Front 24, Side 18, Rear 18

Crew: Driver, Chief, Operator

Carrying Capacity: 8 passengers or approximately 4 tonnes of ammunition.

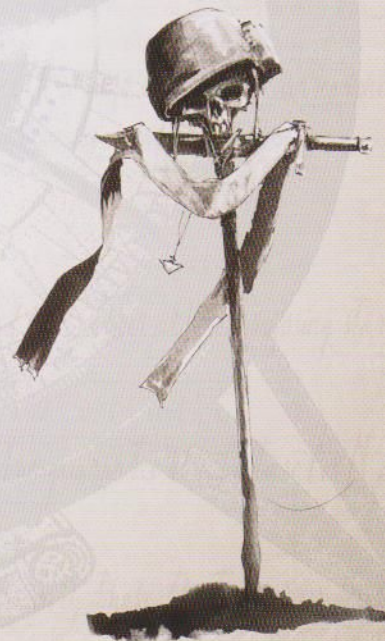
Weapons

Prow mounted heavy bolter (Facing Front, 120m; -/-/10; 2d10+2 X; Pen 5; Clip 100; Reload 3 Full; Tearing)

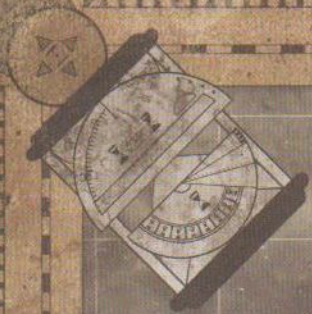
Special Rules

Ground Vehicle: The Trojan Support Vehicle follows all rules for ground vehicles.

Dozer Blade: The driver may make a Ram Action to destroy obstacles weighing up to 5 tonnes. A successful **Challenging (+0) Drive (Ground Vehicle) Test** automatically destroys the obstacle. Failing the test causes 2d10+10 damage on the vehicle itself, counting the attack as coming from the Front Facing.







RIFTS OF HECATON

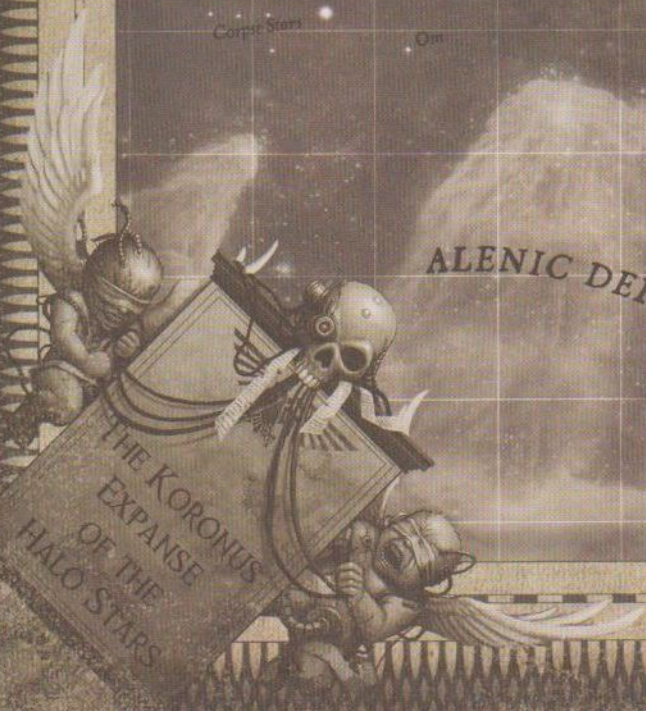
PHAINEAL ECHOES

Here be Daemons

ACCURSED DEMESNE

UNBEHOLDEN REACHES

ALENIC DEPTHS



Defecus Nox

Vaporatus
Knakorn
Feral

Naduesh

Anguish
Dead

Seven Dooms

Hick

Methane

Unired-Undred
Tad

Antagonist
Death

Corpse Stars

Frozen Stars

Concarnid

Chasmed World

Beware the Siren Stars

Corpse Stars

Om

Processional of the Damned





Warp Shoals

Borsarian

Zeph War

Valerian's Salvation

Egarian Dominion

Burnscour Death

WINTERSCALE'S REALM

Bostion

Lucifer's Breath Emperor

SCREAMING VORTEX

RAGGED WORLDS

FOOTBALL ORBITAL

The Temple

PORT WAVE ORBITAL

Ward World

Hermitage World

THE KORONUS PASSAGE

THE CAULDRON

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