

ROGUE TRADER

SECRETS OF THE EXPANSE

RIPTS OF HECATON

Here be Demons

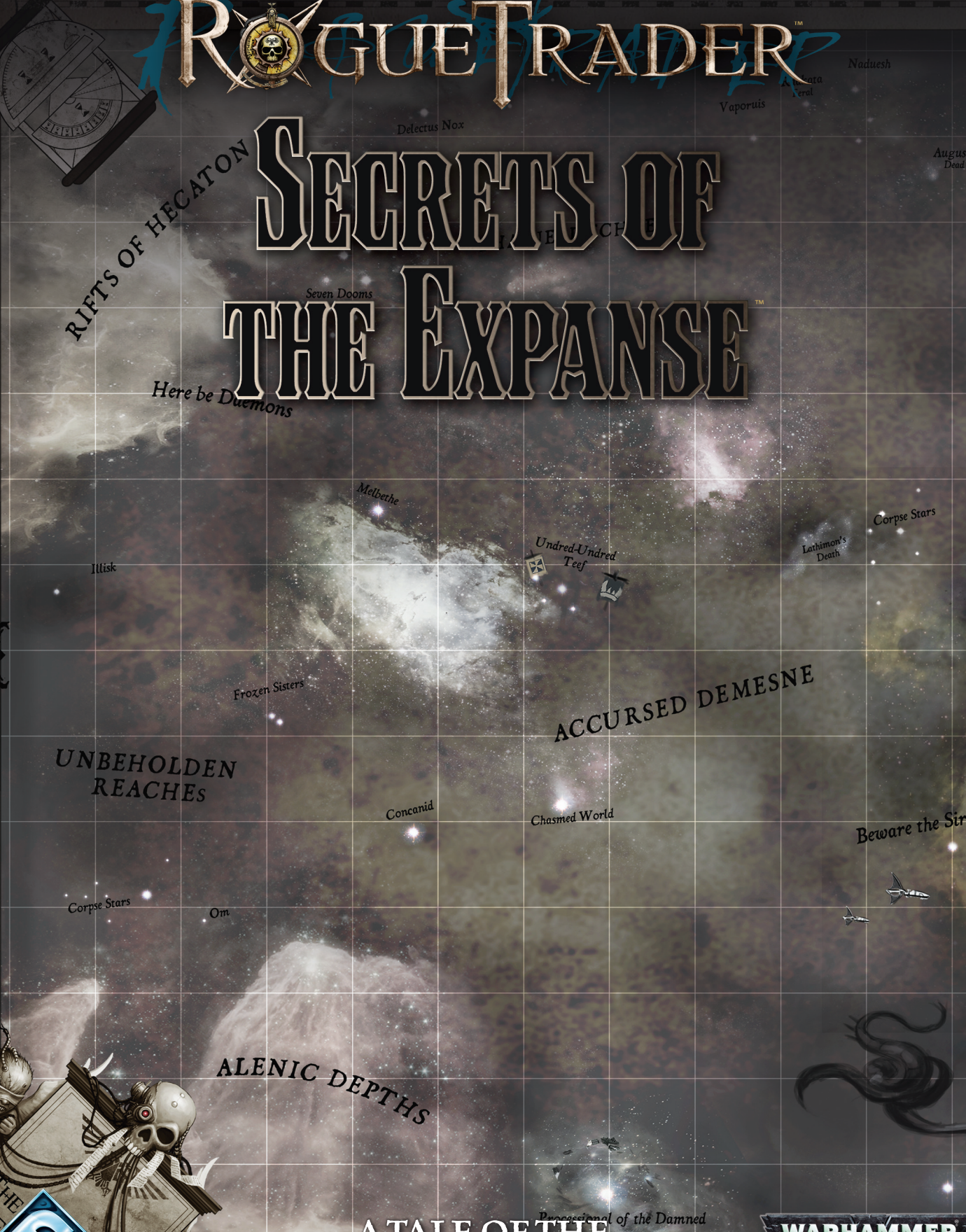
ACCURSED DEMESNE

UNBEHOLDEN REACHES

ALENIC DEPTHS

A TALE OF THE DARK FRONTIER

WARHAMMER 40,000 ROLEPLAY



Ah, so you wish to know of the Koronus Expanse—that the Mechanicus Calixis sometimes still call the Khronus Expanse after he who was said to be its original discoverer. I know of a man you should listen to, though his sanity wanes in these late years, and his tractability with it. He is a holy man born of Archaos and at one time a chronicler for the Rogue Trader Amphian Deed, yet somehow evaded the pyre that was Deed's recent end.

This holy man is by name Ibraham Totimus, and he can be found in this year 815. M41 within a twisting manse of the mighty void-station Port Wander, an Imperial city in its own right, set at the very edge of the Marches of Saint Drusus, and the gate to the Koronus Expanse in the Halo Stars beyond. Every alcove of Totimus's manse holds dataslates, rare tomes, strange materials brought back to the Imperium by Rogue Traders ... and a slaving cyber-mastiff, waiting for the command to kill. These things and the web of knowledge connecting them are, I believe, all that keeps him clinging to his life.

I caution that when I say "holy man" I mean to say that Totimus holds himself in favor of Drusian Adherency. Which is to say that he is of a particularly strident and disowned sub-cult of the Dissident Drusian movement, itself a faction of a prominent cult within the Ministorum of the Drusus Marches. For those of a less theosophical bent, I remind you that the Drusians honor Saint Drusus above all other saints, he who took command of the Angevinian Crusade in its darkest years of M39, banished the foul xenos from what was then the Calyx Expanse, and founded the Calixis Sector in the God-Emperor's name. There exist entire shrine worlds rightfully dedicated to his deeds, and billions chant his name.

Dissident Drusians, such as Drusian Adherents, teach that the Saint's Crusade never ends, and that the God-Emperor commands all men to take up the unfinished acts of Saint Drusus in whatever way they can—with the aim of conquering worlds, establishing new colonies, crushing the xenos, and expanding the borders of the Imperium of Mankind. It is a popular theology with Rogue Traders who harrow the Koronus Expanse, though an apostate would say that this is because Dissidents provide a path to the vast coffers of the Ministorum, rather than through any heartfelt faith. What is the faith of a rogue, a reaver, an outcast noble soul who brings the Emperor's fury down upon far worlds? Ask him if you dare.

But to Totimus. Those of Archaos are ever difficult and contrary—it is a world renowned not so much for its philosophers as for the sheer foaming breadth of its philosophies, theologies, Ministorum cults, and raging theosophical battles. Archaosians are instinctively against any new concept before they are grudgingly for it, and that is their nature. Just agree with everything Ibraham Totimus says to you, whether it is that the God-Emperor has been ascendant upon the Golden Throne for all eternity, or that certain xenos are less than vile, and let no other hear you doing so.

But you should listen to him.

Light the candles, if you would. Why? Because I am old, you are young, and my augmetics press pain upon my bones ... and I'll tell naught if you do not. These matters are conducted properly, or not at all — the faithful have labored to inscribe and seal the wax with blessings, and to carry the candles across the void from far Sentinel and the Scribes' Shrinehold of Maccabens Quintus. Show respect for their contribution to the Saint's creed, or it is the hounds for you!

You wish lore from me, hum? Do you accept the God-Emperor Eternal and the Ascendant Imperium? Do you accept that He made all the galaxy from the primordial masses and tests us each day within His creation? Good, good. You would not understand otherwise. The Rogue Traders, you see, they are His chosen — by the very hands of the Adeptus Terra, empowered by His will, even blind as those hands so often are. A Warrant of Trade is a holy writ and the Koronus Expanse is created by Him to test us all. Rogue Traders at the head of our hosts.

Our hosts of war and zealous pilgrimage! You know of how Calixis came to be, yes? This will be again, a new Sector, but in the Halo Stars of the Expanse! So will we be made exalted in the God-Emperor's eyes, and blessed by Saint Drusus!

But a far path it is, hum? Look here at this lithic void-map made by the Divine Astrometricum — how the One True Passage foretold by Abernicus cleaves the storm-voids beyond this void-station to open the Expanse, and see what little is known and true beyond. The House of Winterscale, bless their warrior souls, have set stars in their rightful place in this map, and even yet give battle to the foul Ork who rises from the Accursed Demesne. The Lady Chorda and others I will not name carry the faithful to the Foundling Worlds, and set them there to praise the Emperor and light the darkness with their psalms.

But the hearts of these Rogue Traders are filled with Thrones and treasure, not faith! They do what they do for themselves alone. Even the House of Umboldt quails before duty to Saint and Emperor! And these small domains won are but a fragile fragment of what the farthest reaching fingers of the God-Emperor have touched upon in the Expanse. It matters not, no, for is it not said that He builds righteousness even when His tools are false? Patience, patience. Bolder and more holy Rogue Traders will emerge, yes.

I see you looking at my oddities, my curios from the Koronus Expanse. Yes, yes, these things are all a necessity to my lore. Look, solidified nephium mined from Lucin's Breath, kept in suspension at the temperature of that frigid place. Purest nephium, enough to fill holds and sate the treasure-lust of a Rogue Trader! This, this is a shard of a cursed and deserted Egarian structure—see its xenos nature in the very way it twists holy candlelight. There are those of corruptible nature who pay fortunes for such xenos works—and the faithful laugh at their foolishness, for wealth cast upon the forbidden drives Rogue Traders to greater heights in their fated toil for the God-Emperor and Saint Drusus.

They carry out the Drusian prophecies, even unknowing, for that is the Emperor's will!

In that casket there are pressed xenoflora from Rain and Valcetti's Salvation. Do not touch the last in line—unless you desire mortification of the flesh, humm? Good, good, the hounds would have to drag your corpse from here, and I cannot abide the howling they make in the course of such labors. Xenos beasts and terrible plants a plenty has the Expanse, and it is the Emperor's wish that we faithful destroy them in circus and rations-processory. Destroy them!

Now you point to a foundation-stone from Footfall, which is here only that I might loath it more readily. I will not speak of that vile void-city of stone and chains, save to curse its very existence. It is a blight upon the far end of the One True Passage, where all that is heretic and outcast congregates, and where Rogue Traders are tempted away from their God-Emperor-given duties. If it serves any purpose in His design, it is that its destruction by the lancefire of faithful Drusians in years to come will be a grand cleansing of false worshippers, apostates, and those too weak to carry out the Saint's toil, those who have faltered at the very last step before the Expanse itself.

That ugly arrangement of cerasteel, gnawed upon by my hounds, is an idol-wheel of Zayth, brought to me by Jonquin Saul, one of the few Rogue Traders to see the Expanse as it truly is. Upon Zayth, a billion men await the God-Emperor's word and pray in vain to heathen gods. You are right to make the Aquila in fear of that device, but what worth to give to heathens, humm? What do I care for their souls? Some say they have none until the God-Emperor's worship fills their lives. No, what is important is that He has placed these lost worlds of men amidst xenos threats such that we—who are the blood of the Imperium—are made greater by the acts of Rogue Traders, His appointed champions. Rogue Traders are the reason for this void-station and the greatest of all the faithful by their actions, no matter whether these heathens are crushed, burned, or saved.

But corruption! Too many Rogue Traders battle it not greatly enough. too many of the faithful succumb. and I fear when these vaults of the station turn from the star-heat and the void chill: all. Pirates and witches have slipped into the Koronus Expanse in these Reaver Centuries. and they yet taint the holy toil taking place in far voids. They poison the root of the Imperial dominion that must be created if we are to honor Saint Drusus as the God-Emperor commands. Treacherous Eldar cut at the God-Emperor's grand design. deceitful beings who flee righteous void-battle and bring naught but woe to those who heed their words! Even the far-flung tendrils of the Mechanicus turn against Drusian prophecies in the distant Expanse. where the Disciples of Thule have journeyed nigh unto the Rifts of Hecaton and have been made strange by their discoveries.

They are not the God-Emperor's chosen. and they have fallen for their pride.

The Rifts of Hecaton block all. and the stars are a carpet before their dread. dark depths. They have swallowed even Kobras Aquairre. and so what hope have others who win their way beyond the dread Ork to such desolation in the voids? Only the True Servant prophesized by Abenicus will bear the God-Emperor's blessings into those realms and so win victory in the Saint's name.

And worse. worse corruption! Things I will not talk of. Artefacts from the far Halo Stars. from dead worlds trailing stars made corpse-embers before their time. Have you heard tell? Good. good. I will not speak of them. or the fate that befalls those who touch them. Beware the Cineris Malificum! There is a dread pattern I see amidst all my curios. all my tomes. A greater test has the God-Emperor for we who follow the teachings of Saint Drusus than any others see...but I see it. There is an awakening. a vile thing. an old foe from ages past that rises to challenge the Saint's Crusade once more...

But no. there are ears in the void. Ears that hear and mouths that whisper! We will speak of safer lore. Attend the lithic void-map. for its worth is greater than yours or mine. Point out the sigils you came here to understand. and I will tell of what is discovered or rumored in the Expanse - a realm created by the God-Emperor such that we may bear the mantle of Saint Drusus and that Rogue Traders may bring greater glory to the Imperium.

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