



ISSUE 1 – SPRING 2010

The Bolter and Chainsword Presents The Legio Imprint

THE DORNIAN HERESY



INCLUDES
ALTERNATE
HERESY
INDEX
ASTARTES
ARTICLES
FOR THE

WORLD EATERS

EMPEROR'S
CHILDREN

RAVEN GUARD

WORD BEARERS

ULTRAMARINES

WHITE SCARS

SPACE WOLVES

THOUSAND
SONS

AND

BLOOD ANGELS



INTRODUCTION & CONTENTS

Welcome to the first issue of the *Legio Imprint*, an electronic magazine produced by the Bolter and Chainsword, the Ultimate Space Marine Resource Site. The Legio Imprint aims to showcase the best of the articles and features to be found on the Bolter and Chainsword, as well as including original content created especially for the publication.

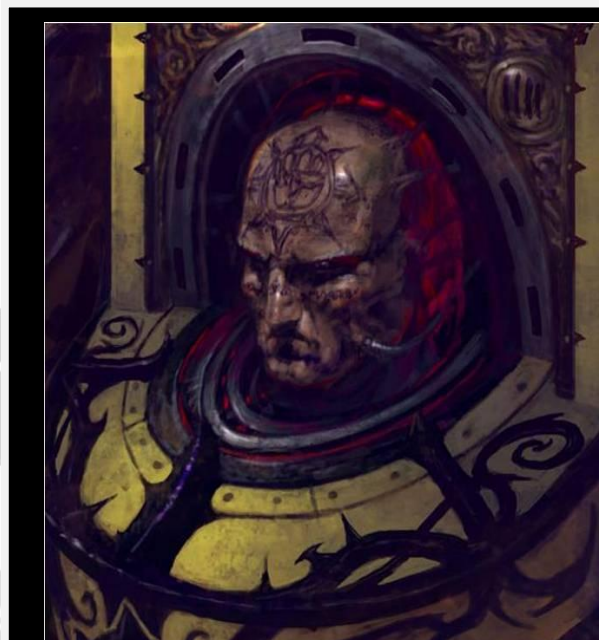
This premier issue is devoted to chronicling something a little different; a twisted alternate timeline in which Warmaster Horus was able to cast off the daemonic influences that sought to possess him, and where the Ruinous Powers were instead forced to corrupt Rogal Dorn to overthrow the Emperor. The Dornian Heresy is the tale of an alternate universe where choices, sometimes large, sometimes small, have led to the familiar primarchs and legions meeting very different fates. For instance, how different might things have turned out if Sanguinius had instead been found and raised by the mutant tribes of Baal, or if Angron's first meeting with the Emperor had been as an honourable ally against the slavers at Fedan Mhor? Well, read on!

The first article – The History and Legacy of Dorn's Betrayal – gives an overview of how different things are in this alternate timeline, with different aspects of the story told from the perspective of individual Space Marine Legions in their own Index Astartes articles. The Dornian Heresy is such a large undertaking that we can only present the fates of the first nine legions here, although the plan is to publish the second half of the project in a future issue of the Legio Imprint.

For those of you who have been following the Dornian Heresy as it has been released on the Bolter and Chainsword, we have given the articles a polish, added some amazing original artwork, and have also included articles for three legions not yet seen on the board – the Khornate Space Wolves, the soul-bound psychic Thousand Sons and the plague-infected Blood Angels.

So thanks for downloading this first issue of the Legio Imprint. We hope you enjoy it!

Aurelius Rex - Editor



ROGAL DORN – THE ARCH-BETRAYER

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THE DORNIAN HERESY

THE HISTORY AND LEGACY OF DORN'S BETRAYAL

BY
AURELIUS
REX

*E*laidanath was dying; poisoned and ravaged by the Death Guard.

It shouldn't have been this way.

The Farseer had been there at her birth; seeding the ball of rock with life. He had watched the Maiden-World of Elaidanath mature over the millennia into a verdant paradise; a place of peace and unparalleled beauty. That was, until the arrival of the Death Guard.

He had foreseen the threat too late to avert it, with only a small group of his companions from the Em'brathar Craftworld arriving before the webway portals succumbed. Thus, trapped on the doomed planet, they had done what little they could against the Plague Marines, but it was clearly a lost cause. Animals lay bloated and glassy-eyed, awaiting the end; the once-great forests were reduced to endless swathes of slime-coated tree trunks. The only creatures to flourish were Nurgle's favoured pets; the flies and maggots, but even that wouldn't last. Elaidanath was rapidly returning to the lifeless rock it had once been. It was such a pointless waste.

With the eastern horizon lightening from black to a deep bruise-purple, Exarch D'Larha signalled for them to seek shelter during the daylight hours in nearby caves. Even before the warriors had declared the refuge safe, the Farseer had slumped down wearily in the entrance of the cave. He was tired, worn thin by his wounds, age, and the heartbreak of what he had witnessed. Within seconds, he had settled into a fitful, febrile sleep.

This fate was wrong. Not just that of his companions, or even of this world; the whole galaxy had taken a wrong turn, with The Ruinous Powers corrupting everything they touched. His thoughts went back, investigating what could have been... It shouldn't be this way... It needn't be this way... If only he could change things, find a different, better path...

Rather than detaching his consciousness to search the possible futures, he felt himself being pushed back; moving into the past. He traced the strands of history back further and further, feeling the alternate universes flowing together, with even the tiniest choice causing a division, innumerable streams joining and flowing into the sea of time. From his view outside of history, the mon-keigh's Heresy was the greatest confluence; the place where a single choice could have changed the course of history so profoundly. He searched for a strand where the Death Guard and their ilk had never turned to Chaos; for a path where this wrong fate, both on this planet and in the wider galaxy, could be averted.

Before he could find his utopia, a dark presence slammed him back into the time-stream, forcing him down into a brutal and twisted alternate history...



Pre-Heresy: The Seeds of Destruction

In the closing years of the thirty-first millennium, the Emperor's Great Crusade to reunite humanity under His banner was continuing apace. Vast expeditionary armies, spearheaded by His primarch sons, surged out across the galaxy, bringing enlightenment and compliance wherever they went. The future seemed assured, and during a mighty celebration on Ullanor, the Emperor announced that He would return to Terra, and that Horus, Primarch of the Luna Wolves would command the Great Crusade in His stead. Some say that this event was where the seeds of disaffection were planted amongst the primarchs, with one of their number being so publicly elevated above the rest. In truth, the rot had started long before.

After the Ullanor Declaration, the cracks began to appear. Bitter disputes over the use of psychic powers came to a head at Nikaea, with legions vehemently split over their use. The Emperor's final ruling, and the special concessions he gave to the Thousand Sons, enraged Russ and his Space Wolves. They saw Nikaea as a terrible mistake, and secretly vowed to save the Emperor from himself.

On the feral world of Davin, Warmaster Horus was struck down by a mysterious contagion which baffled the finest of the legion's apothecaries. During his recovery, Horus attended an initiation ceremony of one of Davin's primitive warrior lodges, after which the Warmaster's condition dramatically worsened to critical. That a primarch could succumb to any natural pathogen should have given a hint that what happened in the halls of the Knife of Bone involved the supernatural. It was in fact an act of possession by a powerful warp entity, although at the time the concept of the daemonic was widely regarded as errant superstition. Only with the aid of the psychic might of the blind Primarch of the Thousand Sons, and spiritual counselling from Chaplain Erebus of the Word Bearers, could the entity finally be cast out. So, with the Warmaster having escaped

their snare, the Ruinous Powers turned their attentions elsewhere.

The ordeal revealed to the Warmaster the true dangers of Chaos - a power so great that even he and his fellow primarchs were not immune to its corrupting touch. Horus was severely weakened by the events of Davin, and out of position to deal with what was to come. First, Curze of the Night Lords attacked Rogal Dorn, before going on the run with his legion. Worse still, word came from the galactic east that Guilliman had declared independence from the Imperium, claiming dominion over a massive region of space that he called 'Ultramar Segmentum'.

Even as the Imperial forces assembled to confront the Ultramarines, terrible news came from Prospero that the Space Wolves had fallen upon the homeworld of the Thousand Sons.

With the Warmaster having escaped their snare, the Ruinous Powers turned their attentions elsewhere...

They proclaimed that Magnus was mired in foul sorcery, and sought to destroy them before they could betray the Emperor. With the dream of mankind coming apart at the seams, the legions came into high orbit around Istvaan V.

Betrayal at Istvaan

Guilliman and the lion's share of his massive Ultramarines Legion were identified as being present at his newest conquest, the fifth planet of the Istvaan system. This was set to be the place that the Imperium would crush the rebellious primarch and his dreams of an independent domain.

With Horus still recovering after Davin, Rogal Dorn used his position as the Emperor's Praetorian to take command of the forces congregating around Istvaan. The Ultramarines were by far the most numerous legion, in

large part due to Guilliman's organisational skills, and so a suitably overwhelming force was assembled in opposition. Dorn summoned the might of nearly half the Emperor's legions to the task, although offers of forces from long-time rival, Perturabo of the Iron Warriors, were pointedly rebuffed.

Such was the size of the task of bringing the secessionist realm back to heel that two whole legions were sent deep into Ultramar Segmentum. The Alpha Legion, never friends of the Ultramarines, were to infiltrate and undermine the rebel worlds, while the religious zealots of the Word Bearers used a more direct approach: bringing the light of the Emperor to the very core of Guilliman's powerbase on the Eastern Fringe.

The first to join the Imperial Fist fleet outside the Istvaan system were the Raven Guard and the increasingly insular and secretive marines of the Iron Hands. These were closely followed by the Salamanders, led by their burned, bitter primarch. Shortly after came the Emperor's Children, fresh from extinguishing the xenos threat on the planet Laer. The events of that campaign had affected Fulgrim deeply, and on arrival he declared that his legion had achieved the pinnacle of the Emperor's 'Perfection'. The relish with which they embraced the chance to prove their superiority over other Astartes bordered on the unseemly.

Then, in precise, well-ordered formation, came Angron's World Eaters. Long-gone was the savage gladiator mentality of Angron's early years - his first meeting with the Emperor on the slopes of Fedan Mhor had seen him reject his former brutality as the impetuosity of youth. The final force to break from the warp was composed of vessels belonging to the Dark Angels, whose arrival came as a surprise to those assembled. Lion El'Jonson himself had sent word that they would not be able to return in time from their assignment among the Ghouls Stars. It was explained that the force had arrived directly from their homeworld of Caliban, and Luther, the



The Arch-Betrayer - Primarch Rogal Dorn of the Imperial Fists

legion's second in command, was welcomed into the burgeoning fleet.

On the eve of the battle, Dorn went down to the planet's surface under flag of truce to speak to Guilliman. On his return, he gravely reported that no peaceful solution was possible, but that he had taken the opportunity to view the defences and had formulated a plan to crack them wide open. Knowing Dorn's tactical expertise at siege warfare, no-one questioned the wisdom of this plan. The Imperial Fists, Dark Angels, Salamanders and Iron Hands made planet-fall first. Their stated intention was to draw an ever-tightening ring of steel around Guilliman, so that the Raven Guard, World Eaters and Emperor's Children would be able to sweep in from orbit and land the crushing blow.

Instead of the pressurised, demoralised opponents Dorn had predicted, the second wave found the drop-zones to be heavily fortified killing grounds, well-garrisoned by the Ultramarines. The three legions took horrendous losses fighting their way to link up with their allies, only for their supposed brothers to open fire on them

in an act of base treachery. In the greatest betrayal and military disaster the Legionnes Astartes had then faced, the Imperial Fists, Dark Angels, Iron Hands and Salamanders decimated the survivors of the planet-fall. It was only the timely intervention of the cruiser, Eisenstein, which had been commandeered by loyalists among the turncoat forces, which allowed even a small percentage of the ambushed legions to fight their way back into orbit, and escape.

When Horus had slipped from their clutches, the Ruinous Powers had moved to groom another for the role of Arch-Betrayer. True, they had been able to corrupt other primarchs, but Rogal Dorn was chosen for his potential to bring the entire Imperium crashing down. They preyed upon and magnified his feelings of jealousy at being passed over as Warmaster, and then being withdrawn to Terra while his brothers were carving a reputation across the galaxy. Feeling revulsion at such thoughts, Dorn had sought to drown out these shameful doubts of his father's judgement in the scourge of the Pain-Glove. As the pressure increased, he spent longer and longer

in the device, until eventually it unhinged his mind, and he was claimed by the Pantheon of Chaos. He was not beholden to one, but to the glory of Chaos Undivided.

Ultramar Segmentum's neutrality in the Heresy had been bought with the blood of three loyal legions, and as agreed, the traitors left Guilliman and his realm. The Chaos powers had not even needed to corrupt Guilliman to split him from the Emperor - his pride and the need to entrench his position was enough to ensure temporary quiescence. The Imperial Fists, Salamanders and Iron Hands headed to the Sol system to tighten their grip on Terra, while Luther and his Dark Angels went to rendezvous with their brothers under Lion El'Jonson on Caliban. What occurred on the Dark Angel homeworld is unrecorded by Imperial history, except that it ended with the utter destruction of the planet.

The Space Wolves that left the ruins of Prospero and set course for Terra were a much changed breed. Although they arrived believing that they were protecting the Imperium, the ferocity of their battle with the Thousand Sons



stripped away their veneer of righteousness. By the end, the Space Wolf Legion had been baptised in blood, and anointed into the overt worship of Khorne, the Blood God.

The events on Istvaan had revealed a third of the Legionnaires Astartes as traitors to the Emperor, with five loyal legions left either effectively destroyed, or entangled on the other side of the galaxy in an interminable conflict. With the news growing worse by the day, the remaining loyalist legions scrambled to get back to Terra, and to save the Emperor...

The Siege of Terra

With Dorn's Betrayal on Istvaan prematurely revealed, the Emperor and his Custodes were able to seal themselves off inside the Imperial throne-room complex. Dorn's intention had been to quietly dispose of the legions he could not corrupt, and then return to the palace before his treachery was discovered to deal with his father. Dorn, however, had allowed for this eventuality. As the Emperor's Praetorian, a portion of his legion garrisoned the Imperial Palace, and when the time came, guards became jailers, trapping the Emperor and His Custodes within the armoured bunker of the Imperial throne-room.

Dorn's grip upon Terra was tightened as, according to his plan, the Blood Angels fleet broke from the warp. What emerged from the landing craft at the Eternity Wall spaceport were not the proud, red-armoured sons of Baal, but gaunt, diseased creatures, who fell upon the terrified defenders to feast upon their blood. The legion had fallen prey to some form of malady that first rotted their blood, forcing them to take fresh stocks from unwilling victims, and in the process ate away at their sanity and loyalty to the Emperor.

A ray of hope came for the embattled defenders as the mercurial Night Lords appeared from nowhere. Nothing had been heard from the legion since their primarch, Konrad Curze, had physically attacked Dorn and taken his followers into hiding. Once more,

Night Lord fought Imperial Fist, but this time the reason for it was clear. Characteristic of the Night Haunter's favoured tactics, the battle through the Imperial Palace was brutal and swift. Then, without warning, they withdrew to take the fight elsewhere across Terra.

This respite was short-lived, though, as within days the Arch-Betrayer, Dorn, arrived back from Istvaan in force, along with the Salamanders. The Iron Hands moved to secure Mars for the rebellion, silencing all word from the Adeptus Mechanicus and their Titan Legions. Shortly after, the fleets of the Sons of Horus and the Iron Warriors battered their way through the blockade to make planet-fall, before encircling the Imperial Palace in a counter-siege. This forced the Imperial

***Before them stood
Sanguinius of the Blood
Angels, skin pocked and
welted, and his once
white-feathered wings
now balding and slicked
with necrotic pus.***

Fists to defend the outer walls of the palace at the same time that they tried to break into the heavily fortified throne-room. The combination of the Warmaster's cold fury and Perturabo's siege-craft slowed Dorn's progress towards the Emperor.

In those bloody days the war hung in the balance, with neither side able to land a fatal blow. With the Iron Hands incommunicado, seemingly following their own agenda on Mars, and the renegade Space Wolves and Dark Angels unaccountably slowed to a crawl in the warp, Dorn turned evermore towards the daemonic to win the war. Through foul sorceries and blood-pacts, Terra became a playground for all manner of entities from the Emyrean. To try to crush the resistance, Dorn despatched units of

possessed Imperial Fists and the plague-ridden Blood Angels across the globe using his Sky-Fortress, but still the civilian uprising grew apace.

The loyalists, however, had their own troubles. The Death Guard were stranded on the other side of the galaxy, having been ambushed by Eldar raiders, which had left their warp engines wrecked and their navigators dead. The White Scars were thought lost in the warp, having not been heard from since their first astropathic recall. At any other time, the Palace's great Cassius bell would have rung out ten thousand times in mourning, but in such blood-soaked days even a lost legion would have to wait for proper remembrance.

By the 55th day of the siege, the Iron Warriors had broken through to the Ultimate Gate. Perturabo himself led the assault that he fervently hoped would bring him face-to-face with Dorn. As the mighty gates were blasted open, it was not Dorn that defended them, but Sanguinius of the Blood Angels, skin pocked and welted, his once white-feathered wings now balding and slicked with necrotic pus. As the two brothers fought, the wider battlefield grew still. All eyes fixed upon the epic clash as they traded blows that would have crippled lesser beings. In the end, Sanguinius hefted the stunned Perturabo aloft, and brought him down across his knee, breaking his spine. Sanguinius then took flight, carrying his dying brother into the air, and drained him of blood. As the Ultimate Gate was bulldozed shut once more by the defenders, Sanguinius contemptuously threw the corpse back down at the broken Iron Warriors.

As it transpired, the Ultimate Gate was never assaulted again, and within a day Dorn breached the adamantium walls of the throne-room. What he found, however, drove him to a fury. The Emperor was long-gone - spirited away by the Night Lords at the start of the siege. While Chaos had focussed its attention upon the throne-room, the Emperor had used the time to organise



resistance across Terra. The skeleton force of Custodes that had remained to maintain the illusion bore the brunt of Dorn's anger.

Despite strenuous assertions from Horus that He must leave Terra, the Emperor flatly refused. He had spent the whole of his long lifetime battling to unite Terra and mankind, and had fought at the forefront of the Great Crusade. He would not be driven away from His own planet. He also had a plan. In the time since His rescue by the Night Lords, He had been working to this end, and just after the death of Perturabo, the Emperor completed His modifications and bonded a portion of His consciousness with the Astronomicon. In an instant, the warp-influence weakened planet-wide, with whole legions of lesser entities banished from the physical realm.

The rebellion was wounded, but not finished. Then, beyond all expectation, the White Scars arrived. Thought lost, their ships filled the comm-channels with disturbing, discordant harmonics before swooping down into the embattled Lion's Gate spaceport. They murdered the Imperial defenders, and without even fortifying their positions, the corrupted White Scars took to their vehicles and scattered across the planet at high speed to make sport with the cowering civilian population.

With another fresh legion throwing its weight behind the traitors, and the fleets of the Dark Angels and Space Wolves only days away, the Emperor had no choice but to cut out the Heresy at its source. He and his finest troops prepared to board the *Phalanx* and destroy the Arch-Betrayer, Dorn, on his own battle-barge.

The Phalanx

As soon as the Emperor announced His decision to board the *Phalanx*, Curze appeared from the shadows and volunteered his services. It was known that the Night Lord Primarch was privy to prophetic visions, often of the worst possible fates, and yet even to the Emperor he rarely spoke of what he saw. It was said that these nightmares were not inevitable, and that Curze was

constantly tormented to ensure that the worst excesses of his visions would not come to pass.

Before he could be asked more details of his plan, Curze was gone. True to his word, though, at the appointed hour sensors registered an internal explosion aboard the *Phalanx* and the shields preventing teleportation flickered and died. The Emperor, flanked by his Custodes, and Horus along with his Mournival of captains teleported onto the ship, but were scattered across the vast command decks by sinister magicks. Called by the psychic presence of the Emperor, the loyalists fought their way back to their leader.

Horus reached the Emperor just outside of Dorn's personal Sanctum, to find the primarch's Terminator armour-clad guards dead, and the armoured doorway already open. A wail of

The Phalanx had seen the deaths of two of his sons. The Emperor hardened his heart to cause a third.

unutterable anguish echoed from the chamber beyond. The pair ventured inside and found the room a wreck. Fine tapestries had been ripped from the walls, and Dorn was smashing the complex mechanisms of his Pain-Glove with the sheared adamantium haft of his personal standard – the banner awarded to him by the Emperor. The pair advanced, ready for the kill, but Horus recognised the look in his brother's eyes from his time just after the possession on Davin and urgently waved his father back.

Dorn mumbled that he had been freed – that the pulse from the Astronomicon had given him enough strength to finally banish the daemon. He said that he had killed his corrupted bodyguards and retreated to the Pain-Glove to atone for his sins. Empathising with Dorn, the Warmaster put aside his weapons and advanced, open-handed in friendship, to embrace his returned

brother. More wary than Horus, the Emperor hung back, and as though compelled by some unexplained urge, kicked aside a fallen tapestry to reveal the brutalised corpse of Konrad Curze.

With his deception revealed, Dorn raised the broken standard pole and plunged it deep into Horus' chest. The Warmaster died, never realising that he had been betrayed a second time. Spurred into action, the Emperor leapt at Dorn. The room had seen the deaths of two of his sons, and He hardened his heart to cause a third. Dorn, though, had been endowed with all the gifts of the Ruinous Powers, and was a match for even the Master of Mankind. The two battled for what seemed like an age, but when the Mournival, led by Captain Abaddon, reached the devastated site of the battle, they found both of them broken, burned and shattered beyond aid.

Dorn's Heresy had been ended, but doing so had claimed the Emperor's mortal life. All that remained was an echo of His spirit that had been bound to the Astronomicon. It bade Abaddon to reclaim the bodies of the Emperor and His loyal sons, and to re-unite the physical shell with what remained of His immortal soul. They fought their way off the ship with cold fury, and after that the *Phalanx*, under the command of Sigismund, stayed in orbit just long enough to collect the remaining Imperial Fists. The coalition of traitors fractured, and then scattered, with the Blood Angels, Salamanders and White Scars commandeering whatever vessels they could to escape. The Dark Angel fleet turned from its Terran course, and even the blood-crazed berserkers of the Space Wolves faltered, before falling to fighting amongst themselves.

The Emperor was brought to the Astronomicon, where His shattered, lifeless, flesh was integrated with the psychic machinery of the beacon, and fed and nourished with a thousand souls a day to sustain His wavering life-force.

The Long War to drive the traitors from the Imperium could then begin.



"Horus was weak. Horus was a fool. He stayed his hand and allowed the Arch-Betrayer to cripple the Emperor. If he had survived I would have executed him myself."

"We are no longer the Sons of Horus. Neither are we the Luna Wolves. That is the past, we are the future, and must crusade to take back what was lost, and to destroy the traitors. From this day forth, we are the Black Templars"

**Legion Master Abaddon,
First High Lord of Terra**

The Bitter Harvest: Post-Heresy to M41

The Heresy had been averted, but amongst the many casualties had been the Imperium's Manifest Destiny to rule the galaxy. The Emperor's vision of a Great Crusade was but a memory, and although the eight Traitor Legions had failed to claim Terra, they were far from defeated: Guilliman's secessionist Ultramar Segmentum was only the largest and most organised of the rebellious realms.

With the Emperor hovering as a ghost in the machine, the Warmaster and most of the loyal primarchs scythed away, it was Abaddon who stepped forward and became de facto leader of the Imperium. Hating his primarch for not protecting the Emperor, he first reorganised, and then re-named his legion to shun their past, and to reflect their crusading future. Thus, the Black Templars were born, and just as the Warmaster had done before him, Abaddon proved supremely adept at manipulating the disparate parts of the shattered Imperium back to some semblance of order.

Accepting the numerical weakness of the Legionnes Astartes at that time, and the vast numbers of threats and

enemies they faced, Abaddon made the Black Templars the core of an overwhelming force composed of as many legions as possible. The idea was to prevent the legions becoming isolated, both so that they would not be destroyed piecemeal, and that they would watch over one another to prevent any further legions falling to the Ruinous Powers. Initially there was resistance to such a cautious approach, especially from legions whose primarchs had survived. However, the tragic fate of the isolated Raven Guard, and the grievous losses the Iron Warriors sustained trying to dislodge the Imperial Fists from their Iron Cage worlds reinforced the wisdom of Abaddon's proposals.

Soon he was able to command the fealty of the surviving primarchs, and played on their individual preferences and prejudices. For instance, Mortarion would commit to a force to drive the Space Wolves from Fenris proposed by Magnus, on the understanding that reciprocity would be observed when it came to mounting a xenocidal crusade against an Eldar Craftworld. For Fulgrim and the Emperor's Children, an attack on Guilliman deep inside Ultramar Segmentum in revenge for Istvaan was the prize, and Lorgar was pacified with leadership of the newly formed Ecclesiarchy and support for his legion's Wars of Faith. Painfully slowly, but surely, the tide turned and the borders of Imperial-controlled space rolled back once again.

In the course of a long lifetime, Abaddon saw his patience rewarded. The remaining loyalist legions were rebuilt and expanded, and the Traitor Legions were pushed from their homeworlds and enclaves towards the massive warp-rift which became known as the Eye of Terror. He died as he lived; leading the Imperial forces from the front. On the world of Uralan, in the shadow of a monumental tower, Abaddon was struck down by a huge golden-skinned creature bearing an enormous blade of warp-construction. The first High Lord of Terra was dead, but his philosophy would live on.

After the Heresy, the Imperial Fists

were regarded with bitterness by the other traitors. If they had won, the Imperium would have been forced to accept the Traitor Legions as the heroic liberators they knew themselves to be, but Dorn's failure, and perceived weakness, had ultimately broken the rebellion. Now they would forever be condemned as pariahs. Worse, the ravages of extensive daemonic possession and the brutal meat-grinder battles of the Siege had reduced the Imperial Fists to a shadow of their former strength. Inheritor of Dorn's mantle was Sigismund, who, to avoid the hated 'Imperial' associations, renamed them as the brooding 'Black Legion'.

Such was the bitterness surrounding the legion that Sigismund could not expect to command the loyalty of the other traitor primarchs - he could not even prevent elements of his own command from rebelling. Alexis Polux led many of the possessed marines to their own fate, and these bloody-handed butchers showed even the Space Wolves the true meaning of savagery. Another group despised the way Sigismund had turned his back on their primarch. Proudly and defiantly calling themselves the Scions of Dorn, they set about carving a reputation by targeting a selected Great Company, be they loyalist or traitor, and not resting until it had been annihilated to the last marine.

The Imperium slowly pushed the Traitor Legions out of their traditional enclaves, and most set up bases on the hellish worlds in and around the Eye of Terror. Each seemed driven to periodically strike out from their daemon-worlds for spoil, pleasure, or necessity. The contagions afflicting Sanguinius and his cadaverous Blood Angels grew worse over the centuries, and they were forced to raid further and further afield to provide the fresh blood and replacement organs they so desperately needed. The worst afflicted brethren were driven insane as the build-up of toxins rotted their brains beyond recovery. These wretches are often grouped together and in battle herded towards their enemies. Although little more than beasts, their



warp-boosted vitality, maniacal strength and inability to register pain make them more than a match for even veteran Astartes warriors.

Although their home-world of Caliban was reduced to an asteroid field, Luther and his Dark Angels have stubbornly retained a strong presence in the system, although they have also been seen to appear from nowhere and destroy targets throughout the galaxy. The reason for these attacks has been hotly debated by Imperial strategists over ten millennia, with theories ranging from institutionalised insanity to that they are searching for, or trying to obliterate, someone or something...

The intentions of other Traitor Legions, such as the White Scars and the Space Wolves, are much clearer. The White Scars now exist only for the thrill of speed, sensation, and battle, while the Space Wolves have submerged themselves wholeheartedly in the worship of Khorne. The disappearance of Leman Russ during the Purging of Fenris saw the legion disintegrate into warbands, each competing to be the most brutal and bloodthirsty in honour of their god. The Space Wolves' attentions extend little beyond slaughter, and scant attention is given to the crafting of weapons or armour. Instead, the Space Wolves have chosen to scavenge such things from slain foes, which act both as trophies to proclaim their combat prowess, and to repair the battle damage they inevitably sustain.

Vulkan's nihilistic disillusionment with what he saw as the hypocrisy of the Imperium spread over the centuries to encompass his fellow traitors. He and his legion came to despise the petty excesses of the Chaos Gods and their servants, and made war with both the Imperium and their fellow traitors. Their attempted Burning of Skalathrax

was only narrowly averted by a joint action of the newly rebuilt Emperor's Children and World Eaters, and this early success cemented bonds of brotherhood between them. Imperial cogniscii have proposed that the Salamanders have formally aligned themselves with an aspect of the Warp they call 'Malal', although what this means in practice is unclear. What is certain is that the Salamanders remain an unpredictable and dangerous foe.

The actions of the Iron Hands are, if anything, even more bizarre. Other than at Istvaan, the legion has never been seen to fight alongside the forces of Chaos, and it is widely believed that Manus fought there solely to further his own agenda of raiding Mars. Their objective there has remained shrouded in mystery, as they ignored priceless stores of archeotech to instead excavate

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something from deep beneath the mountains of Noctis Labyrinthus. After leaving Mars, the Iron Hands vanished, and were thought lost to history, appearing once or twice in a millennia. A collation of confirmed sightings, usually from attacks on archaeological excavations of dead worlds, showed a creeping mechanisation of the body, replacing flesh with metal. Some Iron Hands, the so-called Rubrics of Paullian, appear to revel in total mechanisation.

The Iron Hands only revealed themselves fully during the Gothic

War, when the legion assaulted and spirited away several of the arcane Blackstone Fortresses that had formerly defended the sector. A being claiming to be Ferrus Manus himself led the successful assault on Blackstone II, but if it was Manus, the fabled liquid metal that covered his hands seemed to have enveloped his entire body. The Mechanicus has never been able to account for what the Iron Hands excavated from beneath the red sands of Mars, but as the frequency of attacks by the legion increases, so too does pressure for a proper explanation.

To the galactic east, Guilliman took advantage of the anarchy of the Heresy to further cement his realm. Despite strenuous crusades and the insurrectionist actions of the Alpha Legion, the massive size, military efficiency and organisational ability of the Ultramarines and their off-shoot successor 'chapters' meant that any losses were swiftly reclaimed into the Ultramar fold. This has changed in recent centuries, as wars within its own borders with xenos races have sapped their prodigious military strength. The arrival of the extra-galactic hive-race of 'Tyranids' was proclaimed by the Ecclesiarchy as a judgement from the Emperor, although this line of rhetoric has been dropped recently as hive-fleets have started attacking into the heart of Segmentum Solar.

As dangerous as the incursions from the Tyranids may be, they are only one of the rising threats to the Imperium. After ten thousand years, the Traitor Legions at last seem to be putting aside their differences. That Chaos should finally follow the tactics dictated by Abaddon of a massed crusade would be a terrible irony. What their intentions would be are unknown, but if the Ruinous Powers were to attempt a second assault on Holy Terra, the bloodshed would be truly apocalyptic.



THE DORNIAN HERESY

INDEX ASTARTES:

WORLD EATERS

BY
AURELIUS
REX

Of all the Space Marine legions, none exemplifies the virtues of martial honour and strict self-control more than the World Eaters. Just as Angron transcended his violent youth, he ensured that his legion would shrug off every setback and betrayal to become paragons of the warrior creed, and ardent supporters of the Emperor's intention to unify the galaxy.

Origins

According to Carpinus' *Speculum Historiale*, the best record of Angron's early years, the young primarch was born and raised into bloodshed and death, but never let these things claim him. Stolen away from the Emperor by the Ruinous Powers and scattered throughout the galaxy, the infant Angron was found, on an un-named planet, surrounded by the corpses of what were thought to be armed bandits that prowled the region. He was taken in by the locals, was fed and clothed, and according to their traditions promptly sold into slavery to repay their generosity. Given his obvious skill in the combat arts, he was forced first into small-time pit-fighting, and inevitably was traded to the capital city's gladiatorial arena.

The planetary rulers used the grand spectacle of the gladiatorial arenas to slake their population's bloodlust, and to remind them of the penalty for thoughts of revolt. As the primarch grew, so too did his reputation, and his frustration. Ever-eager to boast of the brutality of their fighters, the slavers had named him Angron, but the Emperor had made him to be more than a bloodthirsty taker of skulls. It was his name, but not what he was.

Angron resented that he and his fellow gladiators were being forced to fight and kill for the pleasure of their masters, and that of the baying crowds. Even worse were the physical and mental mutilations imposed upon them to provide better sport. Implants, 'glanding' and the replacement of arms with hooks or blades were all commonplace in the arenas. Angron saw them all as an attempt to steal the only things the slaves still possessed; their dignity and sense of self. Worst of all were the psycho-surgical procedures where 'aggression chips'

were implanted directly into the brain, turning the subject into little better than a mindless berserker. After suffering this fate, Angron bent all his will to escaping these puppet masters.

The walls were high and the guns of their guards powerful, but using his natural talent as a warrior and leader of men, he found a way. During a massed display of gladiatorial combat, the slaves, as one, turned their weapons on their guards. Angron's meticulous and inspired planning saw to it that they took control of the arena with a minimum of casualties, but the bloodshed that followed shocked him to the core. With freedom in sight, many of Angron's gladiator brothers became uncontrollable, and with the guards routed, continued to fight rather than make good their escape. In the height of blind fury, some of the berserkers turned on the fleeing crowds and even, in their madness, their brother gladiators.

The slave army escaped the city, but without their berserker brethren, which remained to kill and be killed. The experience brought home to Angron that without iron-willed self-control they would lose themselves. The look in the eyes of his blood-drunk former brothers he had been forced to kill that day convinced Angron that he himself must never suffer that fate.

While the gladiators fled into the wild-lands, the rulers of the city assembled and despatched an army of mercenaries to chase them down. Angron and his brothers ambushed the overconfident and ill-disciplined soldiery, stripped them of their weapons and provisions, and sent them back to the city as a bloodied warning not to pursue them any further. However, with word of Angron's escape spreading and fomenting unrest among the gladiators

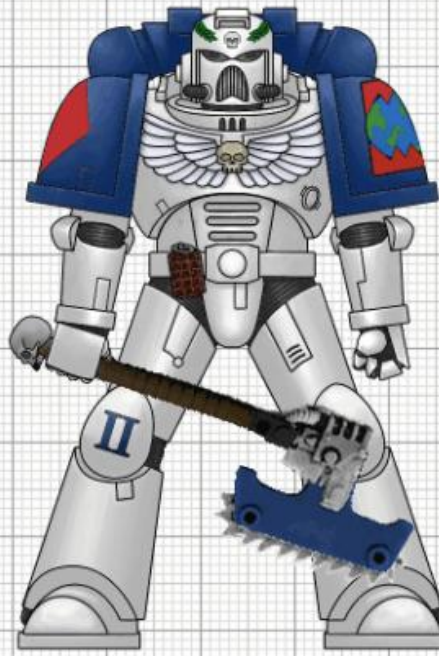


in other cities, this was not something the planet's rulers were able to ignore. Fearing for their grip on power, and no longer underestimating this 'simple gladiator', a force a hundred thousand strong was mobilised and sent to scour the land. Against such overwhelming force, Angron's only option was to press further and further into the mountains, but eventually there was nowhere left to go. At the summit of Fedan Mhor, Angron and his brothers prepared to make their stand.

In the time since the loss of the primarchs, the Emperor had not been idle. Guided by His unparalleled psychic talents He homed in on His lost sons. And so it was that as Angron prepared to address his army for the hopeless battle to come, Imperial ships of the Great Crusade hastily entered orbit. Unwilling to risk losing his son before they had even been reunited, the Emperor ordered that Angron be teleported aboard, but Horus, who was accompanying his father, urgently counselled against it. Horus' peerless insight into the psychology of the warrior recognised that to whisk a true leader to safety while his army was butchered would be intolerable. He saw that such an act would irrevocably taint the relationship with bitterness and resentment from the start.

Horus successfully convinced his father that there was a better way, and when the sun rose on the mountain, the slaver's armies were faced not only by Angron's former gladiators, but by The Master of Mankind, and the Astartes of the Luna Wolves. Against such powerful adversaries, the slaver's forces were easily routed. As they fled the field in disarray, Angron approached his father through the smoke, and knelt in supplication, recognising the bond between them, and respecting the true nobility of the

FILE NO. W31L8



Tactical squad Brother-Sergeant of the World Eaters

Emperor and His cause. Accepting the inevitable, the planet's ruling elite quietly stepped down from power, and the world rapidly acceded into the Imperium.

Horus took Angron under his wing, educating him in every aspect of the Imperium. In doing so, he was able to assuage his brother's lingering doubts that he would simply be swapping one set of chains for another; that the Emperor was far from being just another slaver who wanted him to fight and die for his own amusement. Their first meeting on Fedan Mhor had gone a long way towards this, and the presence of Horus and his Luna Wolves overcame Angron's initial misgivings about the implants and psycho-conditioning that becoming a marine entailed. At first, the process seemed to be eerily similar to the aggression chips and cybernetic implants that the slavers had forced upon the gladiators, and which had made them less than human. However, after seeing the Luna Wolves in action, Angron knew that such things were merely tools to make them more

efficient warriors, and with rigid self-control they were nothing to be feared. When the Twelfth Legion finally arrived to formally meet their primarch, Angron was ready for command.

Angron had not forgotten his old comrades, and the army of former slaves were the first from the planet to join his new legion. The aggression chips were cast off as tools of the oppressor, and the legion was dedicated to the course of martial honour and iron-willed self-control. Berserker fury became a shadow of the past; a legacy of their enslavement that would never again be permitted. Committed to the glory of the Imperium and the Emperor, they would be masters of their own fates. Some aspects of his past - such as his own name -

Angron retained, and even embraced as reminders of what they must always fight against. Back in the arena, the slavers called Angron and his fellow gladiators the 'World Eaters' to brag to other cities of how violent and frenzied they were. Thus, to the surprise of members new and old, he chose it to remind them of the darkness against which they must always guard. He renamed the Twelfth Legion the World Eaters.

The Heresy

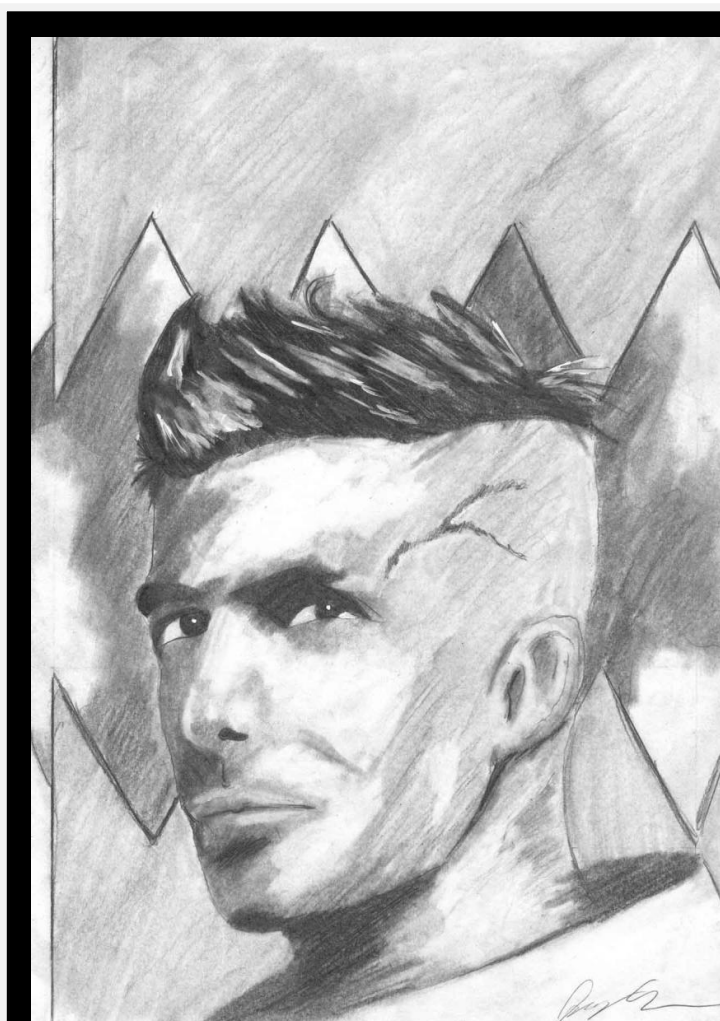
In the following years the World Eaters became synonymous with martial honour, and were paragons of the Emperor's dream to re-unite humanity in the galaxy. Their grand companies often fought alongside those of the Luna Wolves, with Angron's idealism tempering Horus' more pragmatic approach. In fact, at a banquet to celebrate the successful completion of the Herax compliance, Horus publicly praised Angron as his 'moral compass'. When Horus was elevated to the rank of Warmaster at Ullanor, none was more forthcoming in support for his mentor than Angron, and it seemed



that even with the Emperor returning to Terra, the Great Crusade would be in safe hands.

Sadly, it was not to be. First the Warmaster was laid low by an unknown malady, and then word came that Roboute Guilliman had declared the vast swathes of the galactic east liberated by his Ultramarine Legion to be an independent realm - the so-called Ultramar Segmentum. Such an affront to the Imperial dream saw the World Eaters pledge themselves immediately to bringing Guilliman back to his senses, or to end this betrayal once and for all. Under the command of Rogal Dorn, the Emperor's Praetorian, seven legions assembled in orbit around the Ultramarine's latest conquest, at the fifth planet of the Istvaan system. The World Eaters, along with the Emperor's Children and Raven Guard, made planet-fall into what they were told was a shattered and broken rebel legion, but instead were devastated by the guns of both the Ultramarines, and their erstwhile allies. Dorn had been corrupted by the Chaos Gods, and had taken the Imperial Fists, Iron Hands, Dark Angels, and Salamanders with him into damnation. Knowing the World Eater's legendary idealism and loyalty to the Warmaster, Dorn had not even attempted to turn them to his cause. Instead, he opted to use them as a blood sacrifice to his Dark Masters, and to buy the Ultramarine's neutrality in the coming war.

Wading through rivers of their own blood, the shattered remnants of the three loyal legions fought their way to evacuation. Angron's martial code demanded that such a gross betrayal



The scars that resulted from removing the aggression chips became a palpable reminder of the World Eater's rejected past.

must not stand unchallenged, but even he knew there was nothing to be gained from suffering a glorious massacre. Their mission now became to warn the Emperor of Dorn's treachery. After dragging as many of their fallen brethren as they could onto the evacuation landers, they came under intense fire from heavy weaponry from Salamanders commanded by Vulkan, their hideously disfigured primarch. With shuttles and landers full of his brothers exploding around him, Angron took this final opportunity to save his legion, and to fulfil his personal code. He threw open the hatch and leapt out of the slowly rising vessel into the midst of the Salamanders.

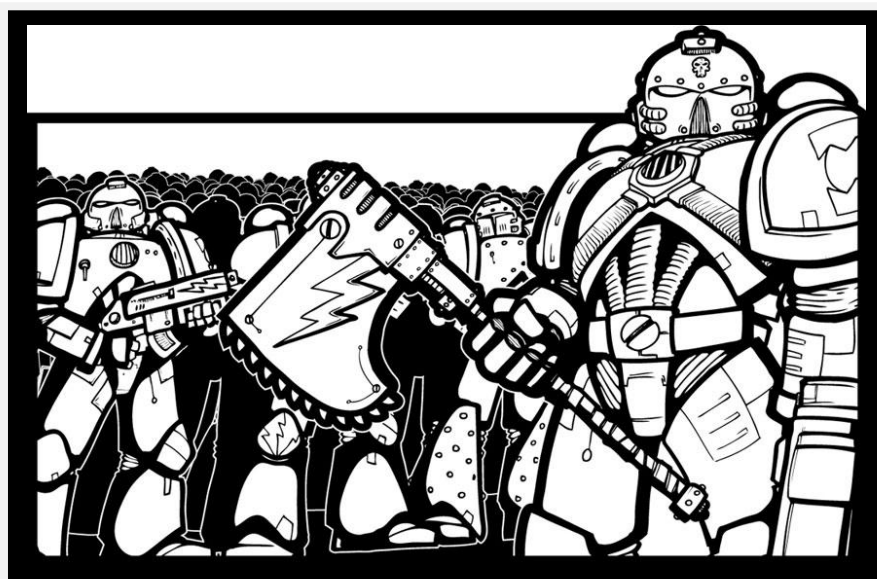
The heavy weapons directed against

the transports were silenced, and the few survivors of the three legions evacuated to safety.

Angron's ultimate fate is a matter of heated conjecture. The World Eaters and Emperor's Children both assert that he met his end in combat with the turncoat Vulkan, while scurrilous black propaganda spouted by the Salamanders hint at a considerably less heroic end. Needless to say, ever since the Heresy the World Eaters have taken every opportunity to take the fight to the Salamanders. Any campaigns involving these two legions, such as the Battle of Skalathrax or the Cleansing of Gorthan-Liess, are bitterly contested in the extreme.

After Istvaan, the World Eaters were reduced to a shadow of their former strength. They limped back to their homeworld with the intention to rebuild their forces, and to play some part in

ending Dorn's treachery, but it was not to be. The Heresy had reached even their own planet. The former rulers of the world were gone from power, but still retained much wealth and influence. On their isolated estates, away from prying eyes, they continued their decadent ways and fell into the worship of Chaos. History is unclear whether this happened independently, or as part of Dorn's plot to destabilise the legion, but when they realised that the World Eaters had been decimated, and the Imperium wracked by civil war, they seized their opportunity. Private armies besieged the legitimate Imperial government, and paid agitators, sought to raise mobs in rebellion. The war was short, though, as even in their weakened state the



World Eaters were quickly able to rout the enemy and re-establish order.

Enraged at having power snatched away a second time, the deposed leaders enacted their final solution: If they could not have the planet, then no-one would. At their command powerful explosives detonated along seismic fault-lines and inside the planet's geothermal power plants, spewing lava across the land and choking the atmosphere with ash. This triggered further waves of volcanic activity that plunged the world into darkness, and caused a global extinction event. The World Eaters, protected by power armour, were the only survivors of the cataclysm, but even their fortress-monastery on Fedan Mhor was seriously damaged. Evacuating to their orbiting fleet, the legion stood vigil over their dying homeworld for one hundred days, and then left, vowing always to remember, but never to return.

Recruitment

Before the Heresy, the World Eaters recruited extensively from the former gladiator and pit-slave population of their homeworld. These proved to be a hardy and talented source of marines, although to their regret they found that not all were suitable. A proportion, be it through ill-treatment or by inclination, took such enjoyment and abandon in the spilling of blood that to become a World Eater was simply out

of the question. Angron had seen the damage that the blood-drunk could do, to both themselves and their erstwhile friends, and decreed that iron-hard self-control was vital to become one of his legionnaires.

Part of this was the removal of their aggression chips, and the ugly scar tissue that resulted from the procedure became a palpable reminder of their rejected past. In solidarity the Terran legionnaires that had never had the procedure took to tattooing the scalp above the left temple, and even ten millennia later, this practice still endures.

After the destruction of their homeworld the legion necessarily had to draw their recruits from other systems. The World Eater fleets range far across the Imperium, so the legion

is able to select the finest candidates wherever they may be found. Each grand company's battle barges have the knowledge and resources to recruit and train the next generation of World Eaters. The legion is well respected and universally regarded as being fair and honourable, and most planetary governors are eager to become a recruiting world, with all the added protection this entails.

Combat Doctrine

Given their primarch's origins as a pit-fighter and gladiator, and Angron's devotion to martial honour, it is unsurprising that the legion places such a particular emphasis upon close combat. This is reflected by the high number of Assault squads found in their orders of battle, but far from being bloodthirsty maniacs, its roots come from their own code of martial honour, and ironically, a desire to avoid indiscriminate slaughter. Where many legions routinely use orbital bombardment and saturation firepower against a rebellious world, the World Eaters take great pains to minimise civilian casualties, even when it means that they themselves suffer greater losses as the result. It is against an enemy's leaders and military forces that they take the fight, and test their mettle; there is no honour to be gained in butchering the old, infirm or infants, especially when done from orbit. In close combat the World Eaters know and suitably value each human life they take.

On many occasions, most notably the

Skalathrax

Their shared experiences on Istvaan brought the legions of the World Eaters and Emperor's Children together, and forged a strong bond of friendship between the two despite their philosophical differences. Just decades after the heresy, while both legions were still in the midst of rebuilding, they deployed together to defend the world of Skalathrax from the Salamanders. The traitors claimed that the incineration of Skalathrax would anoint it as their new daemon-world, but together the loyalists managed to avert this, and in doing so extracted a measure of vengeance for the Salamander's betrayal at Istvaan. The phrase '*Remember Skalathrax*' became a rallying cry for a resurgent Imperium, one that echoed from the halls of the High Lords on mighty Terra to the darkest depths of the Eye of Terror.



famous assault on the rebellious Partrum Junta and the boarding of the Battle Barge *Black Narcissus*, entire grand companies of World Eaters have taken to the field armed solely with bolt pistol and chain-axe. However, that is not to say that the World Eaters eschew ranged weaponry - particularly when facing xenos and warp-tainted opponents. The bolter is as holy an instrument of the Emperor's will to them as it is to any of the other loyal legions, and since their earliest days, World Eater Devastator squads have been referred with genuine honour as 'The Teeth of the World Eaters'. The legion is clinical in its assessment of the best method to eliminate the Imperium's foes, and on the battlefield Assault, Tactical and Devastator squads mesh seamlessly into an unstoppable white and azure engine of power armoured death.

Organisation

Having no homeworld, the World Eater Legion is now fleet-based, and has spread itself out amongst the stars. Each grand company, numbering upwards of a thousand battle brothers and commanded by a captain and his lieutenants strive to perform their assigned duties to the utmost. Normally at least two-thirds of World Eater grand companies are to be found engaged in the Crusades proclaimed by the High Lords of Terra, a proportion unmatched by any other legion. These grand companies are at the vanguard of the battle against the Ruinous Powers and xenos threats and reclaiming areas of the galaxy long-lost to Imperial rule. Such a role is a dangerous one even for the Legionnes Astartes, and the vehemence with which the World Eaters pursue this task is enviable.

Once the crusade has achieved its objective, they return to the Imperium proper to recruit, train and replenish their strength. Though this could be considered as reserve status, there are still many battles to be fought inside the Imperium. Rebellions against rightful Imperial rule are sadly all-too common, pirate fleets plague the space-lanes and even the Imperial crusades are unable to prevent wide-

Khârn the Deathless

Angron's noble sacrifice on Istvaan allowed a precious few World Eaters to escape the carnage, and with them they dragged as many of their wounded and dead brothers as they could. Among the corpses was Captain Khârn, equerry to the primarch himself. Covered in the blood of a hundred grievous wounds, Khârn woke in the makeshift morgue, later saying that Angron had come to him in a vision and told him that it was not yet time for Khârn to join him, and that he still had a mighty task ahead. This proved to be the case. Khârn led the tattered shreds of the legion back to their homeworld, and as legion master overcame insurmountable challenges to rebuild and revive the World Eaters. Having passed into the vale of death, and yet returning all the stronger, Khârn the Deathless is an analogy for the legion itself.

scale invasions by heretics and warlike alien races.

The diffuse nature of the World Eater Legion means that, in practice, each grand company retains a great degree of independence. The ultimate authority is the Council of Captains, headed by the legion master, which by necessity meets almost exclusively by astropathic means. It is essential in coordinating the actions of the World Eaters across the Imperium, as well as ruling on the commitment of forces to Imperial crusades, and on rare occasions sanctioning the creation of a new grand company.

Beliefs

The World Eaters retain their primarch's sense of martial honour, discipline and iron-willed self-control. They are, if anything, even more organised and regimented than the secessionist Ultramarines and their successor chapters, although the World Eaters restrict themselves to military matters rather than extending it into the civilian side of things. Despite the betrayals and losses they suffered during the Heresy, the World Eaters have never lost their idealistic belief in the concept of the Emperor's Imperium. To this end they are endlessly willing to contribute forces to crusade alongside other legions and the Imperial Army. Unlike some of the other legions though, the World Eaters are motivated by a deep-seated belief that it is the right thing to do, rather than as part of some political

machination to serve their own agendas.

While the legion does maintain a Librarium of psychically gifted battle brothers, they are few in number, and their remit specialised. This springs primarily from their innate distrust of the immaterial, instead preferring to rely on the heft of an honest chain-axe to the summoning of eldritch fire. After the Heresy revealed the horrifying scope of the threat posed by the Ruinous Powers, successive legion masters began to realise the value of being able to fight on the aetheric plane as well. To this end, World Eater librarians are charged with the vital role of sensing the malefic, and warding the souls of their brethren from harm. These roles do not exempt librarians from their normal duties. They are World Eaters, and so are expected to prove themselves at the bloody edge of battle - a place in which their psychically attuned force weaponry comes in extremely useful.

Gene-seed

Gene-seed of the Angron line suffers an unusual degree of genetic drift, and the omophagea implant is absent altogether. Adeptus Mechanicus records showed that the implant abruptly and inexplicably disappeared from samples submitted for purity testing in mid-M34. When the offer was made to return gene-seed from tithed stocks which still contained the omophagea, the legion declined the offer, stating in no uncertain terms that



such an implant was no longer required.

The general degradation in gene-seed quality is attributed to the use of higher than recommend doses of certain chemicals involved in marine hypnotherapy and indoctrination. This hazardous treatment allows World Eater marines to control their responses, emotions and autonomic reactions beyond that of other legions, in line with their compulsion to enforce iron-willed self-restraint on the battlefield. While this genetic drift has not yet been observed to have materially affected implant quality, there is serious concern that eventually the long term viability of the gene-seed as a whole could be in jeopardy. The Imperium can ill-afford to lose the World Eaters, but despite this the legion has strenuously resisted pressure to modify its procedures.

Battlecry

"For Angron and the Emperor!" is a common battlecry, although where World Eaters face traitors of the Salamanders Legion, *"Remember Skalathrax!"* is often used instead.

Varren stepped aside of the wildly swung frost-blade. In return he brought the chain-axe round and caught the Space Wolf in the vulnerable area between upraised arm and toughened breastplate. Energised teeth churned easily into armour and flesh, sending an arterial spray across the room, and coating his face and once-white and blue armour in darkest crimson.

The traitor slumped to the floor, nearly chewed in half by the blade. He was incapacitated, but still clinging to life. It saddened Varren that one of the Emperor's legions could have fallen to the worship of the Ruinous Powers, dedicated only to the spilling of blood and the taking of skulls. Looking into the madman's eyes, a chilling thought struck him; would this have been his fate if Angron hadn't turned his back on bloodshed? There but for the grace of the Emperor...

'Do you have any last words, oath-breaker?' Varren asked, raising his chain-axe in preparation for a warrior's execution.

'Blood for the Blood God. He cares not from where it flows,' rasped the Space Wolf with a burbling chuckle. 'We are brothers in blood now –' the sacrilegious insult was cut off abruptly by the falling blade.

Varren absently licked his lips, and tasted the coppery tang of the traitor's blood. Just for the briefest second his mind filled with the memories of his opponent, and he experienced the joy of losing himself within the rising blood-tide...

Then the walls of self-control slammed back into place, and with revulsion he fell to his knees. Over the sound of his own retching, Captain Varren was certain he could hear the taunting laughter of the Dark Gods.



THE DORNIAN HERESY

INDEX ASTARTES: EMPEROR'S CHILDREN

BY
AURELIUS
REX

Before the Heresy, Fulgrim proclaimed that his legion had achieved a state of perfection, and for their pains were targeted for destruction at Istvaan by the Ruinous Powers. Through their peerless abilities they survived and ever since have fought tirelessly against the entropy and decline that has afflicted even the Legionnes Astartes. With their meticulously maintained marks of ancient equipment and weaponry, they are the epitome of a small, but elite, mobile strike-force.

Origins

So concerned were the Ruinous Powers by the Emperor's plan to create the primarchs that they stole the infants away and scattered them throughout the galaxy. Not even this, though, could deflect Fulgrim from his fate. The planet of Chemos, like many before the Emperor's reunification, had been settled during mankind's first expansion into the cosmos, but having lost the gift of spaceflight, had become isolated over the ages. By the time Fulgrim fell to earth, the inhabitants of Chemos had slipped perilously close to extinction, clinging to survival by scavenging from deserted settlements and endlessly recycling their increasingly sparse stocks of food and water.

It was five decades later that the Emperor finally set foot on Chemos, and it is a testament to Fulgrim's exceptional abilities that in that time he had risen from a foundling to become the ruler of the entire planet. What is more, he had transformed it from a faltering society in terminal decline to a powerful, resurgent world reclaiming the lost settlements and rediscovering long-forgotten knowledge. No longer were they living day to day: Fulgrim had given the population of Chemos hope for the future.

On meeting his father and hearing the Emperor's story, Fulgrim was struck by the parallels between their lives. Both had risen to power purely through merit, and the Emperor's Great Crusade to reunite the lost human worlds into a galaxy-spanning Imperium echoed his own achievements, and reassured Fulgrim of the truth of his father's words. Back on Holy Terra, Fulgrim was introduced to his legion. Due to a catastrophe with

their gene-seed the legion was only 200 strong, but the return of their primarch would change this. In front of the massed Terran dignitaries and even the Emperor Himself, Fulgrim addressed his warriors, saying: *"We are His children. Let all who look upon us know this. Only by imperfection can we fail him. We are the Emperor's Children, and we will not fail him."*

The onlookers were shocked by the presumption of appropriating the Emperor's name for the legion, but the Master of Mankind simply laughed, and further indulged His son. The newly named Emperor's Children were allowed the signal honour of being the only legion to bear the Emperor's Aquila on their armoured breastplates, a distinction that endures to this day. Thus named and anointed, the arduous process of building the legion to fighting strength began. In his eagerness to prove himself, Fulgrim volunteered his legion for duty at the earliest opportunity. Unfortunately, they were so few in number that they had to accompany another force. Fulgrim chose that of the Emperor and His praetorians, the Imperial Fists.

The first meeting between the brothers, Dorn and Fulgrim, was cordial, but this state of affairs did not last. The source of the hostility stemmed from a clash of personalities, and Fulgrim's opinion, perhaps borne out by what followed, that he rather than Dorn should be the Emperor's Praetorian. Fulgrim was certainly forthright when it came to criticising the performance of the Imperial Fists, and was the first to boast of his warriors' achievements to the Emperor. Fulgrim clearly saw himself as the favoured son, and when the Emperor's Children finally reached full-strength, a lavish ceremony was

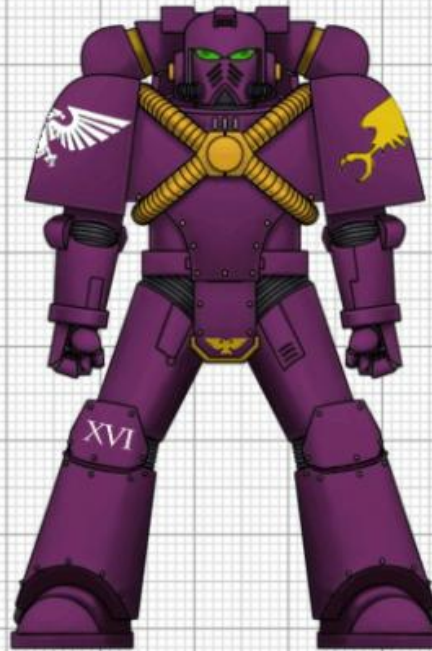


held on the newly compliant world of Pelthan. Expectations among the legion were that at this coming of age, they would take their rightful mantle as the Emperor's new Praetorians. When they were instead merely granted their own expedition of the Great Crusade, a palpable sense of shock and outrage at the injustice spread through the hall. Dutiful son that he was, Fulgrim stood, silenced his troops, and contritely thanked his father for the honour.

The voyage from Pelthan was a lonely one for the Emperor's Children. There was a sense that their fate, and indeed the entire universe, had been upended. Worse was to come as the demoralised legion suffered a succession of gruelling, drawn-out campaigns of compliance, the last of which left Fulgrim critically wounded. Lord Commander Eidolon immediately suspended the expedition, and the fleet returned to Chemos, fully expecting to lay their primarch to rest on his home soil. Rather than succumb though, Fulgrim awoke reinvigorated, and demanded to address the legion. He spoke with eloquence and passion that they had collectively been blinded by doubt and fear, but on the brink of death he had been gifted an epiphany. Their path was to seek out and achieve perfection in the arts of war, and once they achieved it, they must hold to it unflinchingly.

Just as Fulgrim had done when he first came to Chemos, this second arrival brought hope to the population. Thus armed, the Emperor's Children, with Fulgrim at their head, returned to the Great Crusade with renewed purpose, knowing that they would not fail again. After innumerable stunningly successful campaigns that brought countless worlds into the growing Imperium of Man, Fulgrim redirected the fleet from their assigned course,

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Emperor's Children Battle-Brother
of the 16th Grand Company

and turned them instead towards a xenos world inhabited by a hostile and powerful race known as the Laer.

Such was the threat posed by the Laer that Imperial planners had projected any force attacking them would be wading through rivers of blood for decades. As the Laer were seemingly content in their isolation, they had been left until now. Fulgrim, however, saw them as his legion's greatest test. He would exterminate them, and furthermore achieve this task within a standard solar month. The Emperor's Children found that rather than a single race, the Laer had adapted and specialised their bodies to such a degree that they were barely recognisable as the same species. The only traits they held in common were a mastery of their own sphere of combat and the desperate tenacity of those facing total extinction.

The war wrought a terrible toll on both sides as weapons of incredible power were unleashed. The skills of the legion's apothecaries, long the

guardians of genetic purity, shone as they performed miracles in keeping their brothers alive and fighting. From weightless conditions aboard orbital defence platforms to dog-fights among freezing clouds and lethal close-range meat-grinders aboard deep submersible habitats, the Emperor's Children scoured the Laer from existence. The very last Laer was cut down in one of their blasphemous temples, three days before the allotted month was out. Despite being regaled with tales of its haunting beauty, Fulgrim declined to tour the site, saying he had no wish to so dignify the xenos or their superstitions. He instead had the fane pounded to dust by orbital bombardment, along with every other remnant of Laeran culture.

Back in orbit around the dead world, Fulgrim addressed his entire legion. He said the campaign had proved that they had indeed achieved the Emperor's perfection. Driven to constantly change and adapt, the Laer had twisted their minds and bodies beyond all recognition, and yet the Emperor's Children had defeated them through their unsurpassed skill and devotion to purity. Similarly, the legion must be wary of diluting their Emperor-given state of perfection in the guise of 'progress', as to corrupt the ideal in this way would be an unforgivable act of sacrilege.

This war is the crucible in which we will be tested, my brothers. In their ignorance, the foul Laer offer us the chance to achieve perfection. Apotheosis is within our grasp!"

**Fulgrim, on the eve of the
Cleansing of Laeran**



On that day, the Emperor's Children became a bastion of constancy in an ever-shifting galaxy.

The Dornian Heresy

No sooner had the Emperor's Children reached their apotheosis than they received an urgent astropathic communiqué concerning the Ultramarines. Guilliman's legion had brought much of the far galactic east into Imperial compliance, but now by right of conquest had claimed the area as their own. Rather than showing dismay and disbelief that one of his brother primarchs could turn his back upon the Emperor, Fulgrim took the news with quiet satisfaction. It reinforced his feeling of superiority, and gave him the chance to put his legion to the test against the closest thing that remained to a challenge: other Astartes. The only thing to sour the moment was the news that the force sent to discipline the Ultramarines would be commanded by his adversary, Rogal Dorn.

The Emperor's Children set course for the Istvaan system. It was the site of Guilliman's latest addition to his 'Ultramar Segmentum', and both the rebellious primarch and much of his massed legion were present on the fifth planet. Seven legions were called to Istvaan, with the Imperial Fists, Iron Hands, Salamanders and Dark Angels making planet-fall first to encircle, devastate and demoralise the defenders. The Emperor's Children, World Eaters and Raven Guard were given the task of falling upon what remained to administer the coup de grâce. On Dorn's command the three legions descended from orbit, only to find themselves caught in an ambush. Far from demoralised, they found the Ultramarines well dug-in, heavily armed and highly organised. Landing craft were torn apart by concentrated anti-aircraft fire and drop pods incinerated before their hatches were even blown. Under the peerless leadership of the Emperor's Children, the mauled remnants of the three legions broke out to link up with their supporting legions, only to uncover the true depths of the betrayal, as their

erstwhile allies also opened fire upon them.

The comm-channels were awash with pleas for their brothers to cease fire, and it was Fulgrim who first guessed the terrible truth. This was no accident: Dorn had betrayed them. The Emperor's Children vented their frustration on the turncoats before them, and Fulgrim led what remained of his personal retinue against the Primarch of the Iron Hands. Fulgrim had considered Ferrus Manus to be a rare friend rather than a rival, and so the betrayal was all the deeper. Legion records tell that Fulgrim managed to mortally wound Manus, and even sever one of his fabled metal hands. Sadly, this account has been proved to be apocryphal, as Manus was later seen on Mars, and personally commanded his legion in the Gothic Sector as recently as early M41.

Through daring, skill and determination a tiny fraction of the three legions escaped back to orbit to spread word of Dorn's Great Betrayal to the wider Imperium. Despite their brutish demeanour, the World Eaters had impressed Fulgrim on the field of battle, and genuine bonds of friendship were forged that persist to this day. Corax and his Raven Guard left, as was their way, silently and swiftly for their home-world. Though it pained Fulgrim to do so, it was agreed that their numbers were so few that the only option was to return to their home-worlds and rebuild their legions for the

Fabius Bile

Despite Fulgrim's declaration that the Emperor's Children had reached perfection during the Laer campaign, a small faction within the legion defied their primarch's injunction. Most prominent amongst these conspirators were a group within the Apothecarion who covertly continued their experiments under the cloak of treating their wounded brethren. These perversions included re-wiring the pleasure centres of the brain and even using xenos biological material from the vanquished Laer in their blasphemous works. This unforgivable breach of discipline was swiftly rooted out on the voyage to Istvaan. The leader, a talented but misguided apothecary by the name of Fabius Bile, took the coward's way out rather than having to answer to Fulgrim for his crimes. By the time they were able to break into the apothecarion, Bile's body had been rotted to an organic stew inside his armour by powerful enzymes. If he had lived, Bile's punishment would undoubtedly have been an order of magnitude worse.

inevitable fight-back. The Emperor's Children had risen from the ashes once, they would do so again.

After the Heresy

Despite their betrayal and near-extinction at Istvaan, Fulgrim's assertion that his legion had achieved the heights of perfection remained unshakeable. If anything, these events reinforced his view. They could not have been corrupted or defeated in a fair fight, so instead Dorn had tried – and failed – to obliterate them beneath overwhelming numbers. Dorn's Heresy was brought to a bloody end before they could properly reconstitute their losses. Chief among the casualties was the Emperor Himself, who was left as little more than a ghost in the Astronomican machine.

Although Fulgrim never spoke openly of it, he clearly grieved for his father, and perhaps even regretted his choice to rebuild the legion rather than trying to fight their way back to Terra. Dorn, the Arch-Betrayer, was dead, and yet other traitor legionnaires still drew breath. The urge to track them down and mete out bloody retribution was powerful, yet Fulgrim never once compromised his principles to boost their numbers. Only the finest recruits were inducted into the Emperor's Children, which meant that while their high standards were maintained, the legion remained pitifully small. For this reason they deigned to fight alongside other loyalist legions, first with the World Eaters, where they



"And what of Fulgrim?" rumbled the first voice.

"He and his legion are ripe with pride, arrogance and jealousy," said the second voice. "Even now they are walking straight into the embrace of my children, the Laer. By the time they reach Istvaan, they will be willing supplicants to -"

"No! I forbid it!" roared the primarch through the pain.

"Forbid?" whispered the second, as silky and dangerous as an unsheathed blade.

The four paused. Could their control have slipped?

"They don't deserve to be elevated like that," said the primarch more levelly.

"They don't deserve such a reward." The poisonous animosity between the two was a livid wound upon his psyche. It was clear to the four that the outburst was motivated by loathing rather than mercy.

"Very well, my lord," said the third in the phlegmy rattle that passed for a voice. "In any case, I know my brother has his eye on another morsel, the White Scars."

"So be it – we grant you this boon," said the fourth voice, "but you must make sure that you have sufficient forces to crush them utterly."

"It will be my pleasure," said Rogal Dorn as he deactivated the Pain-glove, climbed out, and strode rigidly from the empty room.

saved the planet of Skalathrax from the Salamanders, and eventually took their place in Abaddon's massed Crusades. To finally strike back was cathartic, but Fulgrim was horrified at the short-cuts the other legions had taken to replace their losses, in particular the new, inferior marks of war-gear being rushed into production. Though it significantly slowed the rate at which the Emperor's Children could reconstitute their ranks, Fulgrim was confident he had made the right choice. They would not compromise their principles and their purity.

Ever since the dark days of the Heresy, the Emperor's Children have been dedicated to the protection of the Imperium. However, while they do fight against xenos incursions and bring heretical regimes back into the Imperial fold, they rarely see such opponents as a worthy challenge. Their real passion is ignited by the chance to test themselves against the Traitor Legions, and especially those that betrayed them on Istvaan. It was Fulgrim who proposed a Crusade against Roboute Guilliman himself, that it was their duty to finally end the existence of the man who had triggered the Heresy. It was Fulgrim who led the nine loyal legions deep into the hostile

territory of Ultramar Segmentum, and it was Fulgrim who met, and bested Guilliman on the blood-soaked world of Prandium.

Such a deed would have made Fulgrim the only person, bar the Emperor, to have killed one of the traitor primarchs, and yet he willingly forwent this singular honour in favour of a far more fitting punishment. Using their superior pre-Heresy technology, the Emperor's Children placed the dying Guilliman within a temporal stasis field and returned it to Holy Terra so that his eternal torment might be witnessed by the Emperor. The body is housed within the deepest vaults of the Purgatory Falls Sepulchre, and although it should be impossible, it is said that the agonies of his long final second have been felt by generations of telepaths down the millennia.

Of Fulgrim's own fate, nothing is known for certain. He disappeared without a word from the inner sanctum of his flagship, the *Pride of Chemos*. Much has been read into the physical evidence in the chamber, such as the etched adamantium wall-panels. Some speculate that it was caused by some unknown type of weaponry; others said that Fulgrim had ascended to another

spiritual level, and that it was a physical manifestation of this transcendence. Few though, within the legion, truly believe that their primarch is dead. They only differ over how and when he will return.

Homeworld

Before the arrival of Lord Fulgrim, Chemos was isolated from the wider galaxy, its inhabitants clinging to existence on their desperately polluted world. Fulgrim reversed this decline, reclaiming previously abandoned settlements and giving the population hope for the future. With the arrival of the Emperor and an influx of Imperial technology, this development leapt forward dramatically. Chemos became the site of the legion's fortress-monastery, and extensive new mines and manufactories were built to arm the Emperor's Children for their wars in the Great Crusade.

This increased level of production darkened the skies with pollution, an image akin to the desperate days before the coming of the primarch. This, along with the desire for perfection and the call of his artist's soul prompted Fulgrim to decree that they would turn the planet itself into a place of beauty: a world fit for the Children of the Emperor. Using influence that only a primarch could wield, Fulgrim ordered that the planet be terraformed. Pollution was scrubbed from the air and water, and Chemos was transformed into a wild, verdant world of azure skies, shining lakes and deepest forests. So as not to spoil this idyll, Fulgrim also ordered the manufactories, mines and main population centres be relocated below the surface in vast, hermetically sealed caverns.

Such a mighty task took many centuries to fully complete, interrupted as it was by the Heresy, the near-destruction of the Emperor's Children at Istvaan, and the dark times that followed. Eventually, Fulgrim was rewarded for his labours with a world to rival even the lushest pleasure-planet in its beauty. Only the Emperor's Children themselves and civilians



charged with the upkeep of the environment and for the production of fresh food for the legion are allowed access to the surface. The remaining population labours endlessly in the buried hive cities, producing the pre-Heresy patterns of equipment and weapons demanded by the Emperor's Children. The skill of these artisans in keeping alive knowledge of patterns and marks used during the Great Crusade is unparalleled even, so they boast, by the Adepts of Mars.

Sadly, despite their best efforts, the beauty of Chemos has faded over the millennia. In the absence of the Lord Fulgrim, entropy has taken a heavy toll upon the little-understood terraforming equipment, and catastrophic cave-ins have scarred the once-pristine world. In addition to the death-toll, these disasters have caused irretrievable losses of ancient technology. For instance, Persuai sub-hive was responsible for vital power generation systems used in mark 3 *Iron* pattern power armour. The catastrophic collapse that destroyed it in late M39 has meant that ever since these suits have incorporated non-authentic elements cobbled together from later marks. To this day, search-teams still excavate the ruins of Persuai, ever-

hopeful that the lost knowledge might one day be reclaimed.

Combat Doctrine

Marines of the Emperor's Children are expected to be proficient, nay, to excel in each and every battlefield role. This means that a battle brother would be expected to crew a vehicle as capably as they would fire a heavy weapon or fight in close combat. Although this is sought through endless training, as it is among the other loyal legions, the Emperor's Children add a different aspect to their regimes – the incorporation of artistic pursuits.

The most obvious benefit of this is their approach to close combat. Where the World Eaters are coldly clinical and methodical, with each member of the force meshing together seamlessly, the Emperor's Children have a fluid grace borne of the study of dance and poetry. They flow across the battlefield, darting aside from blows and bullets before sweeping past their foes to strike three more before the first corpse has hit the ground. Officers of the Emperor's Children are renowned for their powerful rhetorical style, honed through intense study of the form and function of literature, poetry and the oratorical arts.

Their steadfast rejection of technological developments has meant that many vehicles commonly used by the other legions are absent from the armouries of the Emperor's Children. For them the trusted, ancient marks of Predator, Rhino and Land Raider are more than sufficient. Modifications such as the Tilvius APC or the brutish Vindicator are looked upon as at best a corruption of the purity of the venerable Rhino chassis. Even smaller variants in weapon system such as the Predator Dominator and the Land Raider Incinerator are shunned.

Their laborious production of older weapons and wargear mean that the Emperor's Children are the only legion able to field appreciable numbers of jet-bikes, which they maintain, with some justification, are more than a match for the slow and ungainly Land

Speeder. Another example of the superiority of the legion's venerable war-gear is the Raptor jump pack. The complexity of manufacture and maintenance of these devices became prohibitive even for the Legionnes Astartes. When the STC for the simpler, but far less effective DH2 pattern jump pack was discovered, only the Emperor's Children opted to retain the older form in service. Such rigid adherence to Fulgrim's pre-Heresy vision of perfection, along with the luxury of limitless access to the manufacturing base of an entire planet, is a defining feature of the combat doctrine espoused by the Emperor's Children.

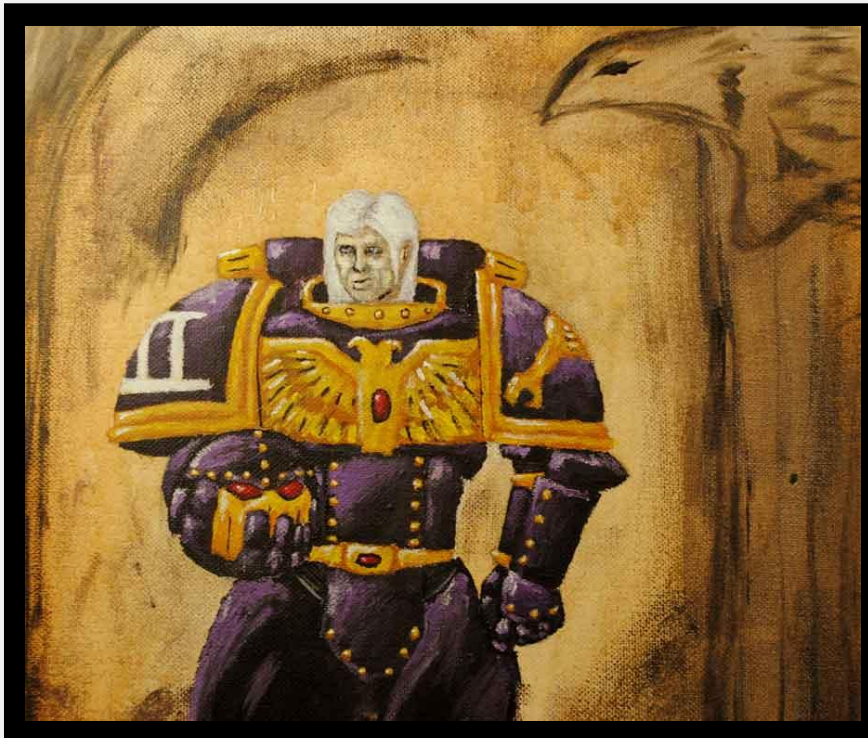
Organisation

While other legions have increased in size and adapted their command structures over the millennia, the Emperor's Children have defiantly remained the same. They are composed of thirty grand companies, the same number that made up the legion during the ascension of the Laer campaign. Each grand company is led by a lord commander, an instrument of Fulgrim's will, who through his subordinate captains directs upwards of a thousand marines. Respect for their superior officers is ingrained into the psyche of the Emperor's Children, with each successive rank moving closer to Lord Fulgrim, and by extension, closer to an unquestionable ideal.

The excessive care taken over both gene-seed purity and the calibre of new recruits has meant that even in the aftermath of the Istvaan Betrayal, the Emperor's Children have never compromised their standards simply to fill out the ranks. Similarly, given the degree of time and effort required to produce their venerated wargear, it is unsurprising that they are by far the smallest of the Emperor's legions. What they lack in numbers, they say, is more than compensated for with their unparalleled skill. This is something which they are all-too eager to demonstrate to Astartes of other legions, be it in the duelling cages, or on the battlefield against the Emperor's enemies.

The Chemos Curse

From orbit, Chemos was infamously compared with the face of *"an aging courtesan, far past her prime but gamely applying rouge and powder to cover her pitted, pock-marked face."* Admiral Markovich, received orders to patrol the Ghoul Stars shortly after uttering this unflattering witticism, a tour from which his grand cruiser and escort cadre never returned. This has led to an Imperial Navy superstition that to speak ill of Chemos is deathly bad luck, and that anyone doing so is roundly flogged, be they the lowliest ship's rating or the commanding officer.



Among lord commanders there is a strictly defined hierarchy. In the absence of Lord Fulgrim, what would elsewhere be called the post of legion master resides with the Lord Commander of the First Grand Company. Even before the Heresy, each grand company had its own favoured style of combat. This was a reflection of their lord commander's personality, something encouraged by Fulgrim himself. This was reflected in unofficial, but enduring names for each grand company. For example, the Seventh Grand Company are informally known as the 'Hawk Lords' for their unmatched skill at aerial warfare with Raptor pack and jet-bike.

Beliefs

With all their hearts, the Emperor's Children believe in their own purity and innate superiority. They cling tight to Fulgrim's assertion that they achieved perfection just before the Heresy, and will do nothing to dilute this, be it with the new, inferior marks of weapons and equipment, or accepting anything less than the most

pristine specimens of gene-seed. This obsessive attention to detail means that while the Emperor's Children will never be a large legion, each member is a paragon of what it means to be an Astartes. They believe that the only being to surpass them is the Emperor, and while they do not view him as a god, their respect and admiration for him is unbreakable.

Fighting alongside allies, such as the Imperial Army or even Astartes from other legions is often a source of friction. Their superiority can sometimes be mistaken for arrogance or high-handedness. Despite this, the Emperor's Children enjoy demonstrating their skills to others, but ultimately are most comfortable fighting alone, where they only have to rely upon their own trusted battle-brothers.

Gene-Seed

Since the gene-seed disaster that nearly wiped out the legion in its infancy, the Emperor's Children have taken obsessive care in the screening of

implants. This solemn duty falls to the legion's apothecaries. From the battlefield harvesting of progenoid glands from critically wounded brethren to the testing, culturing and implantation into new recruits, they are the guardians of Fulgrim's genetic legacy. As such, the gene-seed of the Emperor's Children is of unmatched purity, with all nineteen implants working as well today as when they were first gifted by the Emperor.

Despite the stability of the Fulgrim gene-seed, the stringency of the screening process still results in a relatively high proportion of rejections. Although this is in part compensated for by an implantation success rate unmatched by the other legions, it does mean that the Emperor's Children are slow to replace brothers lost in battle. The legion has been brought twice to the brink of destruction, and twice they have emerged triumphant. They see this as a testament to the strength of their gene-line, and a vindication of their zeal in guarding its integrity with terminal intensity.

By long tradition, the progenoid gland in the chest is surgically removed as soon as it matures, while the second is harvested only upon the marine's death. The early elective removal of one progenoid minimises the chances that it will be damaged or subjected to contamination. In the event that some catastrophe should destroy the legion's stocks of gene-seed, surviving battle brothers carry within them the means to continue the Fulgrim line. As a legion that has faced extinction on more than one occasion, the Emperor's Children are acutely aware of the need to consider such things.

Battlecry

The legion has, of course, kept its Pre-Heresy battlecry - "*Children of the Emperor! Death to His Foes!*"



THE DORNIAN HERESY

INDEX ASTARTES:

RAVEN GUARD

BY
AURELIUS
REX

Corrupted while attempting to rebuild their legion after the Istvaan massacre, the Raven Guard have dedicated their lives and souls to Tzeentch, the God of Change. Flesh follows desire, as bone and armour is moulded into wings and claws. Even before their Fall the legion was able to strike from the darkness, to end battles before they even began. Now, guided by their powerful sorcerers, they are able to manipulate the fates of entire worlds.

Origins

When the infant primarchs were scattered across the galaxy, most came to rest on worlds outside the bounds of the growing Imperium. The infant Corax, though, landed on a moon orbiting a planet that had recently been brought into compliance, yet there was no way for the Emperor to know that His lost son was already within His domain. The pale youth was found on Lycaeus, an airless mining moon orbiting the world of Kiavahr. Unfortunately, the Imperium's presence on the planet extended little beyond a handful of officials sent to ensure that the ruling Tech-Guild kept up the flow of equipment and weapons to nearby expeditions. Lycaeus was a penal colony, with the mines worked by criminals and dissidents opposed to Kiavahr's rulers. To be shipped up to Lycaeus was a life and death sentence combined, as the back-breaking labour, bad air and ever-present risk of cave-ins meant that life was ugly, brutish and short. Protests were quickly stamped upon by the guards, backed up with the ultimate sanction that if unrest ever became too vocal, the force-domes that enclosed the settlements would be deactivated and the unruly elements vented to open space.

The boy-primarch was found by the convicts, who recognised something exceptional about him. They hid the child from the guards and named him Corax, or 'the Deliverer', so certain were they that he held the key to their salvation. This vision was shared by Corax, who from an early age had dreams of a vast, winged presence, a raven that guided him in times of trouble and spoke of a great destiny to protect mankind from its enemies. The first steps on this long road were to

free the downtrodden population of Lycaeus from their brutal masters.

Despite the sickly surroundings, Corax matured rapidly to become a warrior of superhuman proportions. As he did so the convicts taught him all manner of techniques honed in Kiavahr's criminal underworld. Tactics such as sabotage, misdirection, intimidation and assassination would be vital in freeing them from the iron grip of their jailers, and Corax put all these skills and more to use. It was clear that they could not hope to match their overlords in open combat as the only weaponry they possessed were mining tools and machinery.

Corax clinically analysed his enemies' weaknesses and constructed an ingenious plan to bring about their demise. Through a subtle campaign of sabotage, Corax's followers steadily increased the pressure on the guards without ever drawing their wrath. The prisoner's mining skills were invaluable in this, first in gaining access to restricted areas, and later to outflank and surround their enemies. A series of 'accidents' at the spaceport grounded much of Kiavahr's small fleet of mining shuttles which saw the guards' tours and shifts constantly extended as their replacements were trapped on the planet below. By the time Corax's revolution finally ignited, the warders were exhausted, disgruntled and easy prey. The greatest threat came from the towering black mountain from which their overlords ruled the moon, but it too was neutralised when the defenders found their control of the force domes had been subverted. Their attempts to vent the rioting prisoners into space only resulted in their fortress's blast doors grinding open and the force

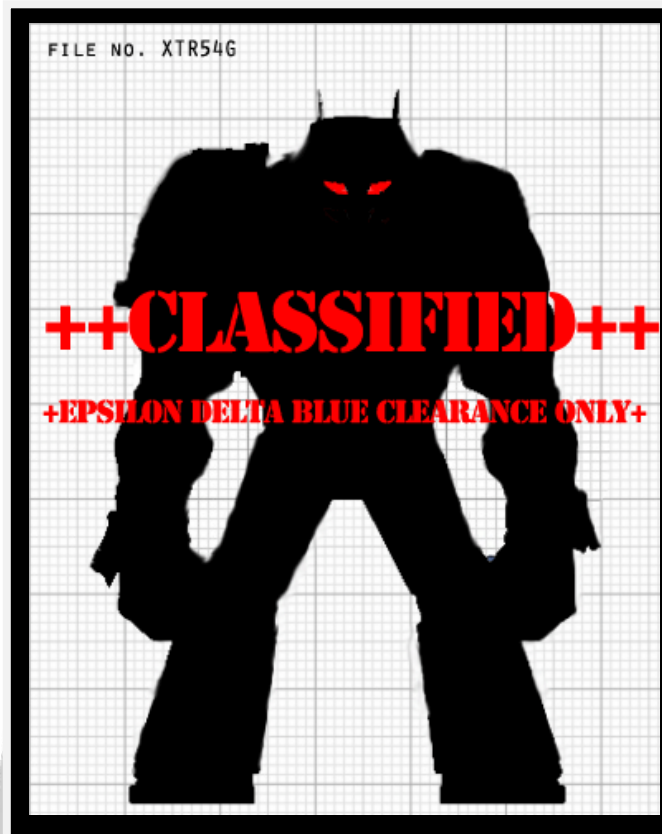


dome over the tower failing, flushing the guards themselves into space.

Incensed by the rebellion, the rulers of Kiavahr used their remaining shuttles to carry military forces up the gravity well. They fared no better than the guards before them, and were torn apart by Corax's grim-faced rebels, made all the more deadly by the weaponry taken from their former warders. Finally recognising the seriousness of the threat they faced, the leaders of the Tech-Guilds called for aid from the Imperium to put down the revolt. Without access to their moon's mineral resources the forges would rapidly fall cold, and the expeditions they supplied would soon falter.

The Imperial fleet arrived with creditable haste, heading directly for the turbulent moon, and after only a brief time the heads of the Tech-Guilds were curtly informed that the rebellion was at an end. When the Imperial flagship's landing craft touched down at Kiavahr's main spaceport, the rebel leader was brought out not in chains, but emerged proudly as a victor, alongside none other than the Emperor Himself. All assembled fell to their knees before the Master of Mankind, who proclaimed Corax as His son, and the man who would from that day onwards rule the Kiavahr system in His stead.

Cowed by this edict, and the legion of Astartes placed under Corax's command, the now subservient Tech-Guilds were given the task of providing arms and armour for his new 'Raven Guard'. Conditions for the miners were dramatically improved, and the moon of Lycaeus, now renamed '*Deliverance*' for Corax's achievements, became the legion's home. The forbidding black tower that had been the symbol of the Tech-Guild's power was reinforced and expanded to become the legion's



fortress-monastery, and named the '*Ravenspire*'.

It has been suggested that the great raven in Corax's dreams was a manifestation of the Emperor reaching out to find him. Certainly, after father and son were reunited, Corax was rarely visited again by this mysterious presence. At Ullanor, Corax famously asked his father about this phenomenon, but, ever enigmatic, the Emperor simply smiled knowingly.

The Great Crusade

Even with the power of a legion of Astartes at his disposal, Corax continued to follow the precepts with which he had been brought up. He trained his commanders to observe the enemy, to strike at the place they were the most vulnerable, and to cripple their ability to strike back. While some primarchs used their forces as a bludgeon to bring worlds to compliance, the Raven Guard were the rapier of the Legionnes Astartes.

Because of this, the Raven Guard rarely needed to operate in large groups. Instead they spread themselves

out across dozens of expeditionary campaigns alongside many other legions. Indeed, it is said the reason Horus claimed so many victories was because he so readily used the Raven Guard to crack open the defences of worlds, which his own legion then followed up and took credit for liberating. In other cases, though, the cultural differences were just too great. Corax had forbidden the creation of a psychic Librarium within his legion, and considered that the way the Thousand Sons' embraced their burgeoning psychic potential bordered upon sorcery. He forbade the Raven Guard from fighting alongside them, and even spoke out against Magnus at his trial at Nikaea.

The other legion the Raven Guard went out of their way to avoid was the Imperial Fists. Rogal Dorn's distain for tactics he deemed dishonourable was legendary, publicly decrying camouflage as being "*the colour of cowardice*". It is not clear if offense was intended, or if it was simply part of Dorn's brash insensitivity, but in the wake of such pronouncements the Raven Guard saw fit to remove themselves from Imperial Fist led campaigns.

Despite this, the list of worlds brought into the Imperium thanks to the Raven Guard's subtle application of military pressure continued apace. The fortress-system of Sangramor had withstood the might of the Imperium for decades, but within three months of arriving Corax's legion succeeded in isolating and crippling the system's rulers. With the planetary confederation fractured, the system's planets easily fell one after another and accepted the Emperor's rule. Their mastery of warfare was not restricted to battling human societies, either. When the Tanaburs sub-sector was threatened by a massive Ork uprising, the Raven



Guard were able, through assassination and sabotage, to kill and discredit the most troublesome leaders without detection. The inevitable squabble for power stalled the Orks long enough for the Imperium to amass a large enough force to exterminate the xenos threat once and for all.

With the future of His Imperium seemingly assured, the Emperor withdrew to Terra, but before He did, He called His sons together at Nikaea. Evidently Corax was not alone in his concerns over Magnus, who stood accused of pushing beyond the boundaries of the psychic and into the forbidden realms of sorcery. One after another Russ, Mortarion, Corax and even Dorn spoke out against their brother. The Raven Guard were not the only legion to have rejected librarians, and at Nikaea the nature of psychic ability itself was put on trial.

On the night before the Emperor rendered His judgement, Corax's dreams were again visited by a great bird. Rather than a comforting presence, it was troubling and elusive, an indistinct figure spied out of the corner of his eye. This disturbing omen presaged the Emperor's decision, which not only allowed the legions, with certain precautions, to continue the use of psychics, but went further and gave significant concessions to the Thousand Sons. Magnus was to be personally instructed by the Emperor in the subtle arts of the psychic, and could pass this knowledge on to his legion. In return, he and his marines would submit to the soul-binding process. By merging their essences with that of the Emperor, it was claimed, they would be shielded from the horrors and temptations of sorcery. This compromise did little to allay the fears of the most sceptical primarchs and led to bloodshed later, yet the Emperor seemed blind to the resentment it caused.

The primarchs returned to their legions to continue the Great Crusade. Under Horus' stewardship as Warmaster the list of worlds under the Emperor's dominion continued to grow, but without His presence a sense of

malaise set in. This found form when the Warmaster himself was struck down by a sickness, and was unable to respond to the stories coming from the Eastern Fringe that Roboute Guilliman, Primarch of the Ultramarines, was about to secede from the Imperium. With Warmaster Horus indisposed, Rogal Dorn, in his role as the Emperor's Praetorian, assembled a fleet sufficient to bring the massive Ultramarine legion to heel. Along with many others, the Raven Guard was one of the legions summoned in their entirety to the Istvaan system.

*"Do not ask me to approach
the battle meekly, to creep
through the shadows, or to
approach my foes quietly in
the dark.*

*I am Rogal Dorn...
Imperial Fist...
Space Marine...
Emperor's Champion."*

The Istvaan Betrayal

Guilliman's new 'Ultramar Segmentum' composed a sizable portion of the galactic east, and in their relative seclusion the Ultramarines had grown to vast proportions. To oppose them, fully half of the Legionnes Astartes had been called to the task, with seven alone assembled to strike at Guilliman in his forward base of Istvaan V. Though disturbed that it could have come to brother fighting brother, and worse, doing so at the command of Rogal Dorn, Corax approached the task with his usual analytical nature. His offers to aid in the planning of the assault were brushed aside by Dorn, whose own skill at siege-breaking was legendary. Corax was dismissively informed that Dorn would lead the first wave of four legions to make planet-fall. They would weaken the Ultramarines, while the Raven Guard, World Eaters and Emperor's Children waited in orbit ready to strike the killing blow.

On the eve of the attack on Istvaan, as often happened at times of great

turmoil, Corax's dreams were visited once again. As on Nikaea, the presence was elusive and did not reveal itself, but this time it spoke to him. Corax had been counselled by the raven countless times before, and so the warning that the legion faced a great disaster chilled him to the core. Corax's journal describes the dream:

'I begged the figure to show itself, to explain what must be done to avert this terrible fate. From behind me I heard a scratching of claws in the shingle floor and turned to see not the raven that had guided me in my youth, but a thing far more like a vulture in aspect. The creature spouted bile, hissing that the Emperor had forsaken me, but that the lives of my men could be saved if I denounced my father and dedicated body and soul to the God of Change.

I confess to be so revolted and stunned that I could not speak. Perhaps mistaking my silence for consideration of its offer, the thing came closer and asked again if I would betray my father. "Never!" I shouted, and pushed it roughly away. It reared up into the air, plumage flushing pale blue, and fixed me with its evil, malevolent gaze. In a sibilant hiss it claimed that I would run like a coward on the battlefield of Istvaan, and consign my legion to utter ruin.

I picked a stone from the ground, and pouring into it all my revulsion and anger, cast it at the apparition. It caught the vulture in one of its hateful, blue-filmed eyes, provoking it into a fit of screeching curses. Its final threat of "Nemo me impune lacessit", or 'No one attacks me with impunity', echoed in my ears long after I awoke.'

Disturbed by the dream, Corax re-examined anything he could find about the coming battle to make sure that the prediction would not come to pass. At the final briefing Corax raised his concerns about the lack of visibility over the drop-site, but was mocked by Dorn for his caution. The Praetorian even portrayed it as cowardice in 'not



wanting to take to the battlefield in an honest fight for once'. Before this escalated further, Dorn threw down a sheaf of images of the planet below, taken, he said, the previous night during his unsuccessful visit to persuade Guilliman to surrender. None of his brother primarchs would return Corax's gaze as they filed out to start the attack on Istvaan V.

The four vanguard legions landed and reported good progress, and after what seemed like an eternity of waiting Dorn gave the command for the second wave to attack. Despite having scoured the images, Corax could find no fault in Dorn's plan. An orbital strike was part of the Raven Guard's favoured approach, so they took to their drop pods and ships with confidence, but even before they reached the ground it became clear that something was very wrong. They were targeted by ground fire far beyond that predicted, with jump pack equipped brethren cut to bloody shreds and even the lightning-

fast drop pods meticulously blown apart by the Ultramarines' defences.

Corax assembled the survivors, only to be set upon not just by the Ultramarines, but also Dorn's vanguard legions gone turncoat. Stung by the prophesy that he would run like a coward, Corax assembled what remained of his legion for an attack against their betrayer, Rogal Dorn. Time and again the Raven Guard struck out of the darkness at Imperial Fist command positions, and yet Dorn himself was nowhere to be found. Certain that Dorn had finally been located, Corax appealed to the World Eaters and Emperor's Children for support, only to find them making a fighting retreat to their rescue landers. Cursing his brother primarchs for their weakness, Corax led the remnants of his legion in a forlorn, hopeless attack into the teeth of the Imperial Fist's guns. Heavily outnumbered, they sustained hideous losses, but while their primarch marched on, his men

loyally followed to their doom. Finally, with only a score of his brothers left around him, Corax realised what his pride had done to the legion. He bitterly ordered the retreat, and the tattered remnants of the once-mighty Raven Guard faded back into the fog of war to join the evacuation.

With the Imperium alerted to Dorn's betrayal, the three broken legions evaded the traitors and paused, before returning to their respective homeworlds to rebuild. Corax silently fumed, not only at the traitors but at his allies for not supporting his final, catastrophic attack upon Rogal Dorn. He was certain that if they had followed his lead they could have killed the Great Betrayer and ended his treachery there and then. This resentment only deepened as the true scale of the war reached Deliverance.

The Fall

Nothing was heard from the legion for some years after Istvaan. This in itself was not surprising as the entire Imperium was in the midst of a civil war, and the Raven Guard was ever a taciturn legion. When Imperial forces finally investigated rumours of dark goings on in the surrounding area of space, they found not just Deliverance, but also Kiavahr completely deserted. Even the force domes which retained the atmosphere around the Ravenspire were down, the great gates flung wide, and the fortress-monastery exposed to the vacuum of space. The account of what happened in that dark time has been drawn from what are thought to be Corax's own words, although their accuracy, and completeness, are matters of much conjecture.

Corax's journal tells that in his desire to rebuild his legion, he used the kind of accelerated zygote implantation techniques used in the earliest days of the Imperium. These methods had been abandoned for good reason, as the vast majority of the test subjects proved to be grossly deformed. Rather than dramatically increasing their numbers, it instead resulted in the depletion of their stocks of gene-seed. The lowest levels of the Ravenspire were filled with slaving monsters that became



known as the 'Weregeld', and their rhythmic, hypnotic hammering against their prison walls – like his shame – haunted Corax wherever he went.

At this low ebb, Corax's dreams were again taunted by the daemonic presence. It did not speak, and only looked down in silent judgement upon him with those cold, dead, vulture eyes. The next day, as Corax walked the corridors of the Ravenspire's vaults and happened to stare at one of the pitiful wretches penned within, he noticed the same vulture-like gaze staring mockingly back. Down the rows of Weregeld he searched, and inside each cell he found the same corruption of the soul looking back at him. Knowing what he had to do, Corax dismissed his assistants and went from cell to cell to systematically expunge his mistakes from existence. The rhythmic hammering of the creatures rose to a shuddering crescendo in the hour of the wolf, but by the dawn, it was at long last silenced.

The full story of what happened later – of how Corax was deposed and of his eventual fate – is far from clear. The bloody raids that brought the Imperium back to Deliverance were commanded not by the legion's primarch, but a shadowy figure known variously as the

Clonelord, Progenitor or even the Manflyer. Extant records such as Corax's journal talk in glowing terms of an individual that had 'solved' the problem with the creation of new marines, although any reference of how this was achieved, or the identity of the Clonelord, had been carefully removed. As the Raven Guard's numbers rose, so did Corax's spirits. He took to training the new battle brothers and even wrote of taking a force to help in the Siege of Terra. However, this was eventually replaced by disquiet at the nature of his new marines, in particular their increased level of uncontrolled psychic abilities, and the disturbing methods used to create them.

After this the journal entries end, although further information has been gleaned from writing on the wall of a specially constructed cell in what would have been the fortress-monastery's Apothecarion. The following was written in what was undoubtedly Corax's hand, and indeed in the primarch's own blood:

"At first I thought I was still asleep; all I could hear was the same rhythmic thumping that has haunted my dreams for so long. Then I opened my eyes and realised I was truly in a waking nightmare. What I

saw about me made the Weregeld look like beatific angels in comparison."

It appears that Corax had been drugged and imprisoned by the Clonelord as both a vital source of genetic material, and a cruel demonstration of what his legion was becoming. Corax went on to describe, in painful detail, how the Clonelord went about perverting his genetic legacy, and repeatedly chastised himself for a wilful blindness of how his new brothers had been created. He told of the breeding of monsters, the forerunners of those who would go on to become all-too familiar opponents of the loyal legions. Through blasphemous rites their natural psychic potential was dramatically enhanced, turning the most skilled into sorcerers able to effortlessly manipulate the powers of the Warp. The majority were only able to use their latent powers to reconfigure their own bodies, and to a lesser extent their armour and weapons.

"For these abominations, form follows desire. Fingers mould into talons. Nascent wings are extruded to lift them aloft. The failures, and those unable to control the changes they invite upon themselves, become little more than amorphous sacks of claws and spite."

The equerry paused before the inner sanctum's door, his knuckles inches from the dark wood. The Lord Corax had wallowed in the depths of depression since the night of slaughter, shifting between raging anger and black melancholy. Feeling the calculatingly expectant gaze of the visitor at his back, he rapped sharply three times, and entered at the grunted response.

"My lord," he said, "the honoured envoy from the Emperor's Children has arrived and seeks an audience." His primarch stood before the window in finely polished power armour, but looked haggard, as though he had not slept in weeks. Receiving a curt nod, the visitor was ushered in. Rather than coming as a warrior in armour, he wore the simple white robes of an apothecary, overlaid with a tabard of soft, finely tanned leather.

On his way out, the equerry heard Lord Corax rumble that he had thought they had been forgotten after Istvaan, but then brightened, his voice filled with hope once more. As the door swung shut he heard the expectant, almost pleading words from his primarch.

"So, Fabius, you have come to help me rebuild the Raven Guard... Do you really think you can do it?"

The remainder of Corax's writings become ever-more incoherent as imprisonment, realisation and whatever experiments the Clonelord subjected him to took their toll. The final marking, drawn in blood, was a simple representation of a raven.

What ultimately became of Corax is unknown. When the Imperium came to investigate Deliverance the door of the prison cell was open and no body was ever found. At first it was thought that rapid decompression when the fortress-monastery's force dome failed had vented all of its occupants into space, but the rest of Deliverance, and Kiavahr were similarly deserted. The Imperium has recorded seventeen different instances of Raven Guard warlords and daemon-princes claiming



to be Corax, but all have been discredited over the millennia. As the corrupter of one of the Emperor's loyal legions, much time and effort has gone into establishing the real identity and fate of the Clonelord, though after ten thousand years the trail has grown cold. No-one by that name has been associated with the Raven Guard since they fled Deliverance, although he could easily have taken another.

Post-Heresy

In the wake of Dorn's Heresy, the corrupted Raven Guard fled their home moon of Deliverance and scattered to the whims of the Warp. While many of the Traitor Legions gravitated to the Eye of Terror to craft daemon worlds in their own images, the Raven Guard rejected such stagnation and have never been observed to stay in one place for long. Instead they endlessly move from planet to planet and from place to place, following the unfathomable whims Tzeentch, their dark God of Endless Change.

Anywhere touched by their foul presence is never the same again, as crops grow twisted and insanity and mutation run rampant. Investigations by the Adeptus Mechanicus, Thousand Sons and the Ecclesiarchy have each put forward theories to explain these phenomena, yet none have been able to effectively combat the corruption. Purging the area with fire and sowing the ground with salt seems to be the only way to prevent further loyal Imperial subjects from becoming corrupted.

For all the many changes that their corruption had wrought, they retained their primarch's ability to cripple an enemy before they even know they are fighting. In the centuries following their Fall, the Raven Guard carried out raids on disparate targets that left Imperial commanders bemused. While they had been bloody and militarily successful, the targets themselves were unusual, leaving other, much higher priority locations untouched. Initially it was attributed to the inevitable insanity associated with the worship of Chaos. In time, though, it became clear that

Corax loped through the shadows, slipping effortlessly back into the role of the terror in the dark. It was only a matter of time before the bodies were found and the alarm was raised, but for now he ruled the darkness. The raven, though bloodied and broken, had returned to him at long last and had purged his mind of the madness that had poisoned him. He didn't even want to consider the deeper significance of the apparition's torn flesh and ragged plumage. Here and now he knew what he had to do. With the controls to the force domes and the fortress-monastery's blast doors set and locked down – a repeat of his earliest visit to the tower - only one thing remained.

He caught sight of his prey, surrounded by those monstrous acolytes. Corax was emaciated, exhausted and unarmed, but he was one of the Emperor's primarchs, and still more than a match for the grubby little apothecary that had murdered his legion. Then the alarm howled through the halls of what had once been his home, and more of the creatures started to arrive. There was no other choice. Without a sound he scaled the wall, the better to leap over the heads of the beasts and get as close as possible to the Clonelord. Whatever else happened with the force dome, however thorough it might be at expunging his mistakes, he had to end the life of the traitor no matter the cost.

Embracing his fate, Corax leapt.

these small, seemingly unconnected attacks were part of something far more sinister. For instance, a chain of events that started with a small raid on a promethium refinery in Pinosa Minor has been shown, with nudges from the Raven Guard, to have caused the loss of the entire Jhadra sub-sector a century later.

Because of this, confirmed attacks by the Raven Guard are analysed time and again by Imperial commanders for fear of where it might lead. Sometimes the very reinforcements and pursuit forces requested to bolster a region pays directly into their hands, as defences around the legion's true target are drawn away and left ripe for destruction. Such are the subtle weaving of fates the Raven Guard seek to engineer.

Of all the loyal legions of Astartes, the one with the best record of deflecting and thwarting the Raven Guard's wiles are the Thousand Sons. Their psychic divinations have enabled them to set traps for the Raven Guard, to counter their sorcerers, and banish their daemonic allies back to the warp. This rivalry has led to titanic battles between the two legions, although many of the worlds caught in these

aetheric conflagrations have been left as uninhabitable husks.

Recruiting

Sometimes on their twisting path through the galaxy the Raven Guard choose to take captives rather than simply kill their victims. Among those destined to become slaves and sacrifices for their dark rituals, a few may be chosen to join the legion's ranks. Given their eldritch powers, it has been postulated that they are drawn to claim those with psychic potential. Be it an isolated agri-world settlement or the depths of the underhive, it seems that nowhere is beyond their grasp.

Whereas in most legions the creation and implantation of new marines is the responsibility of the Apothecary, in the Raven Guard this grisly duty is solely the domain of their sorcerers. The process is an abomination of warp-craft which transcends any mere surgical procedure. It wipes away the conscience and morality of the victim and opens them up to the God of Change, and in doing so unlocks their psychic potential. This horrific process unleashes an uncanny ability to twist flesh and armour so that, as Corax put it, 'form follows desire', and in the most receptive individuals



produces psychics amongst the most powerful in the galaxy.

Combat Doctrine

The Raven Guard has retained the ability to attack without warning where the enemy is most vulnerable, and a favoured tactic is to strike under the cover of darkness, be it true night or a form of stygian gloom conjured up by their sorcerers. As befits their lightning-fast ambush tactics, the legion favours infantry over heavier vehicles. At the forefront of attacks are always their assault squads, who sweep in on sable wings before rending their victims apart with razor-sharp talons. In their wake come all manner of daemonic creatures spitting balefire and hate, and the grossly mutated spawns that can only be directed, if not controlled, by their sorcerer masters.

The youngest, least mutated marines are tasked with providing a strong gun-line to suppress the enemy. These brethren, whose abilities to transform their bodies and armour are yet to fully mature, fight instead with bolters and on occasion with heavier weaponry. An over-reliance on static firepower is rare though, and the role of laying down the heaviest ordnance is most often provided by the monstrous Annihilators. These abominations have willingly given themselves over to daemonic possession to enhance their natural abilities, and are able to transform their bodies and armour into a wide array of exotic weaponry. Be it a mob of Orks or an Imperial Land Raider, there is no target that these living tanks are unable to deal with.

How the Raven Guard are able to travel so rapidly between battle-zones without the aid of conventional transportation has never satisfactorily been explained by the Imperium. The most mundane theory has it that they have well-camouflaged transport vehicles away from the site of the battle. In recent centuries, though, credible reports have claimed seeing Raven Guard forces both appearing out of, and disappearing into, thin air. This could point to their ships possessing some advanced form of massed

teleportation array, although the Raven Guard have only been observed to use the smallest types of capital ships. Given the power of their sorcerers, it is possible that this ability may be warp-derived, or, given their battles with the Farseers of the Ulthwé Craftworld, the Raven Guard may have forced access to the fabled Eldar Webway.

Beliefs

After leaving Deliverance, the Raven Guard fragmented to all intents and purposes, and has never fought as a legion since. They broke into warbands called 'covens' and spread out to every corner of the galaxy to further their own vision of how best to serve Tzeentch, the God of Change. These missions are frequently inexplicable, and on some occasions have led them into bloody conflict with rival covens. With a great deal of hindsight and infinite patience, dozens of seemingly minor nudges at history by the legion over the course of centuries have been shown to have catastrophic consequences. Imperial scholars and strategos have spent lifetimes trying to unravel the greater meaning behind the Raven Guard's actions, to as they say 'unweave the strands of fate'. The Adeptus Terra conducts periodic crackdowns upon this kind of research, saying, with some justification, that

such cogitation is to invite only insanity, and that no good can come from trying to know the mind of a Chaos god.

Organisation

Raven Guard covens are led on the battlefield by their greatest warriors, although careful examination has shown that the true leaders are the sorcerers. As direct conduits to Tzeentch, the cabal of sorcerers guide their charges and direct them towards whatever incomprehensible mission they might be intent upon. The number of sorcerers in a coven varies depending upon its size and prestige, and the coven will sometimes split apart or merge with another seemingly on a whim.

According to Chief-Librarian Mieuren of the Thousand Sons, the success of a Raven Guard coven can be judged by its composition. Older, more established forces are composed largely of assault troops. Ones that have recently split off from a larger warband, or that have taken heavy losses, contain more of the younger, bolter armed marines that have yet to fully manifest their abilities to transform. According to Mieuren, covens rarely grow beyond a hundred marines in size – not including the

Kayvaan Shrike - Daemon-Prince of the Raven Guard

Of all the Raven Guard covens at large in the galaxy, the most feared is undoubtedly that led by Kayvaan Shrike. He claims to have been born on Kiavahr, which the Adeptus Mechanicus have periodically tried to repopulate, and rose swiftly through the ranks to command the Subtle Blade Coven. His campaign to destabilize the Targus system, long a bulwark against the local Ork empires, reduced the million strong Imperial Army stationed there to a fraction of its former strength. Even the arrival of the Sixth Grand Company of the Iron Warriors could not halt this decline, who themselves lost more than half their number and three associated Ordinati to the crippling Raven Guard raids.

The loss of the Targus system, and the subsequent Ork rampage across the surrounding sub-sector crowned Shrike's ascension to daemon-princehood. His taunting proclamations that *'We are closer than you think, and our blades are sharp'* strikes fear into what little remains of the Imperial Army in the area. What deeper reason Tzeentch might have for unleashing this tide of greenskins, beyond fomenting chaos and unrest, is unclear, but the High Lords of Terra themselves watch for Shrike's next appearance with great apprehension.



... because of the nature of the targets the Culexus Temple was approached, who dispatched six of their operatives to locations throughout the Dortask sector. The Eternal Night Coven was finally identified on the northern continent of Argosa II, and Operative Dervlas Rykhart was rushed to the scene. On arrival, Operative Rykhart was able to infiltrate the Raven Guard defences and carried out his primary objective of executing every one of the coven's cabal of sorcerers, but was killed while attempting to evade the remaining Traitor Astartes.

The follow-up operation was delayed by a warp-squall, and when Imperial forces arrived on Argosa II more than a month later, they expected to find the coven long gone. While the initial settlement was abandoned, it was clear that the coven had not left the continent. Aerial scans revealed sixty eight shapeless spawn creatures aimlessly wandering the surrounding area, the exact number of Raven Guard that remained after Operative Rykhart's mission. This supports Magos Karsarno's theory based on observations of captured Raven Guard marines that the sorcerers somehow keep their brethren's transformations in check, and without their presence they eventually degenerate in an uncontrolled manner...

Officio Assassinorum mission status report (Extract)

attendant spawns and summoned daemonic entities - as their style of warfare achieves with lightning strikes what others would attempt with a massed assault. The number nine also seems to hold a fascination for them, with units composed of nine members being particularly favoured.

Because of the vital role played by the sorcerers to the continued existence of the coven, on only the most critical and sensitive occasions does a senior magus venture onto the battlefield. Usually lesser members of the cabal are sent in their stead, but such is the importance of even these individuals that they are inevitably surrounded by a cadre of brutal killers, summoned daemonic entities and the hideous results of their failed genetic experiments. Outside the cabal,

marines are given respect based upon the extent to which they can transform their bodies. The monstrous Annihilators and the raven-winged Assault squads are held high above their younger bolter-armed brethren. Even the youngest initiates, though, look down in pity upon the amorphous spawn. These unfortunates have proved unequal of Tzeentch's gifts, and in doing so have paid the price with their sanity.

Gene-seed

The shadowy Clonelord's perversion of the Raven Guard intentionally and irrevocably altered the legion's gene-seed; not only was Corax betrayed, his genetic legacy was murdered. In addition to the usual methods of implantation, chemotherapy and

psycho-indoctrination, the sorcerers of the cabal utilise other, more esoteric methods to create new brethren.

Many of the original implants, such as the Mucranoid, Betcher's gland and often the Haemastamen are absent in the Raven Guard, while the intent of others have been changed radically, and completely new ones added. These changes, in particular the drastic alterations to the catalepsean node, are primarily focussed on enhancing psychic abilities. In true prodigies this leads to the creation of sorcerers of incredible power, and in time can stimulate transformational abilities in others. While the remarkable ability of Raven Guard brethren to grow wings may be due in part to a hyper-stimulation of ossomodula and biscopea, nothing short of warp-craft would explain the way that ceramite and adamantium can be re-shaped at will into razor-sharp talons.

Despite the seemingly infinite variety into which the Raven Guard twist themselves, one constant remains. Just like their tragic, betrayed primarch, their skin is as white as snow and their hair and eyes are black as night. If this is an immutable part of Corax's genetic heritage or a bitter, taunting joke at his expense, only the God of Change knows for certain.

Battlecry

Due to their chosen role in conducting ambushes, assassinations and covert operations, the Raven Guard prefer to approach their prey silently. Instead the legion's motto is simply "*Nemo me impune lacessit*".



THE DORNIAN HERESY

INDEX ASTARTES:

WORD BEARERS

BY
AURELIUS
REX

The Word Bearers are tireless in their crusade to have the galaxy worship the Emperor as divine. It is a duty they carry out with both impassioned, fiery rhetoric and the cleansing purity of the bolt gun. They were one of the first legions to comprehend the existence and threat of Chaos, and that faith in The God-Emperor was soul-armour against its wiles. They used this knowledge to save Warmaster Horus from possession on Davin, but to their eternal regret were unable to prevent the Dornian Heresy, which crippled their living deity. As Guardians of the Faith, they founded the galaxy-spanning Ecclesiarchy, and after witnessing how it nearly plunged the Imperium into another civil war, now act as its moral compass to ensure that such a powerful body can never again be corrupted.

Origins

Uniquely among the Emperor's primarchs, Lorgar's formative years were spent not on the battlefield, but within the cloistered halls of the seminary, struggling with concepts of faith and the nature of divinity. The planet of Colchis had been settled early in the first wave of human expansion into the galaxy, but had become isolated and fallen into feudalism during the Age of Strife. Through the long millennia an order known as the Covenant remained a spark of hope against the darkness. Though much of the meaning behind their belief had been lost to superstition, they kept alive the knowledge of a humanity that had colonised distant stars, and the promise that one day they would be reunited.

The tale of how Lorgar came to the Covenant is recounted by Carpinus in his *Speculum Historiale*. It posits that Lorgar was subconsciously aware that the Emperor was searching for him, and this was the reason the Covenant's tenets resonated so strongly. Once initiated into the Covenant, he absorbed every aspect of the vast and complex creed, and as would be expected of a primarch, excelled in its practice. Driven by the knowledge that re-unification was at hand, and urged on by his friend and mentor, Kor Phaeron, Lorgar undertook a pilgrimage across Colchis, preaching to whoever would listen. His speeches were electrifying, and soon drew crowds in their tens of thousands, but

gave his political enemies a chance to eliminate what they saw as a powerful rival.

It was only with an army approaching that Lorgar's innate skills in warfare came to the fore. Over the course of eighteen months, his small entourage of clerics and civilians was transformed into a battle-hardened army numbering in the hundreds of thousands that swept away all who opposed them. Lorgar had not started the fight, but he was determined to finish it. Whenever he wearied of the slaughter, Kor Phaeron was there to assure him of the righteousness of their cause, and by the time the final enemy stronghold was razed to the ground and peace restored, the death-toll was truly monumental. His actions were vindicated, though, when shortly after the Emperor, accompanied by Magnus of the Thousand Sons, did indeed land on Colchis. Unafraid, Lorgar knelt before the Master of Mankind, and pledged the planet to His worship.

Lorgar was instructed by Magnus on the marvels of the Emperor's Imperium, and given command of the legion of Astartes based upon his genetic pattern. He named them the Word Bearers, and inducted his most devout followers into their ranks. Kor Phaeron was of course amongst the first members of the Covenant chosen to join the legion, but in a tragic twist of fate, suffered catastrophic side-effects during the gene-seed implantation process. Though the death of his closest friend since childhood



was a source of great pain to Lorgar, he bore the loss stoically, as an event predestined to occur.

Despite such views being regarded as laughable superstition on all but the most primitive Imperial worlds, Lorgar was unashamed by his beliefs. He saw to it that the Word Bearers and the Covenant embraced the worship of the Emperor with unrivalled devotion. They made it their duty to bring enlightenment to the galaxy.

The Great Crusade

Lorgar and his legion of Astartes were charged with reclaiming the scattered worlds settled by humanity under the rightful dominion of the Emperor, and they took to the task with zeal. Each world they liberated required a lengthy period in which they built great cathedrals to the Emperor, and won the people over to the cause. They would not continue on to the next planet until the previous one's devotion was unquestioned. Although their progress was much slower than that of other legions, the planets converted by the Word Bearers, such as Yara and Fortrea Quintus, stand among the most devout in the Imperium, unwavering in even the darkest days of the Heresy. However, with a million worlds to claim, the Emperor grew concerned.

When the summons came to attend to The Master of Mankind, the Word Bearers took it as a pilgrimage, and the entire fleet set aside their plans of conquest to attend to their lord. Lorgar took his audience with the Emperor as a great honour, and hung on every word his father said. He emerged transformed; his eyes opened to how he might even better serve the great work. By making such slow progress, they were denying so many other worlds the Emperor's Truth. In the words of Lorgar: *"Let the reclamation*

of worlds in the Great Crusade be the way we praise Him".

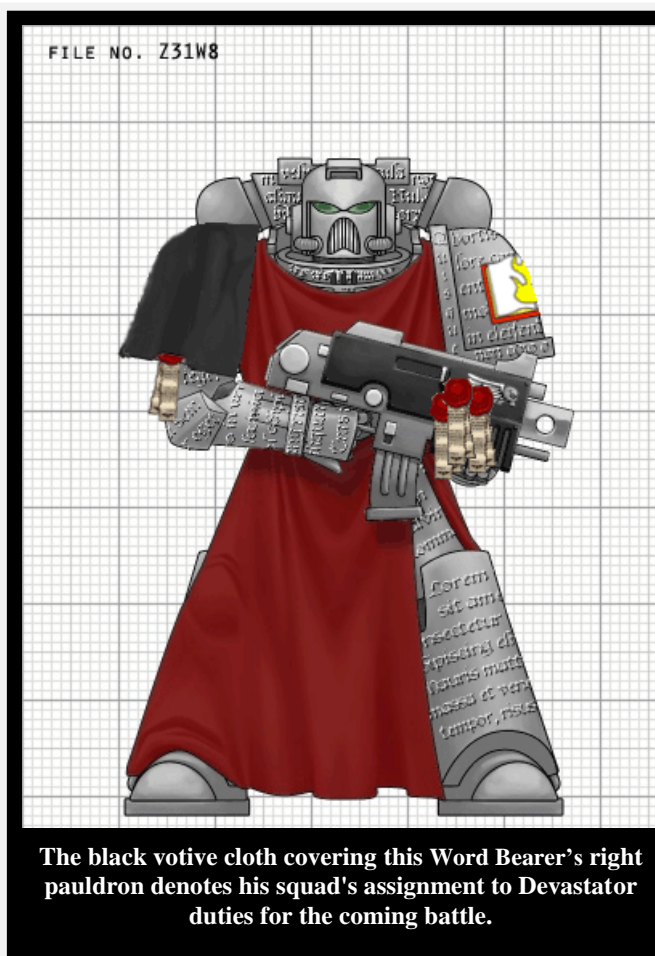
By the time the Word Bearers reached their next world, the expedition had transformed its practice beyond all recognition. The task of converting newly compliant worlds to the worship of the Emperor was instead given over to men and women from outside the legion. These preachers and missionaries were given the task of guiding the worlds in worship after the Word Bearers had gone. Beyond the ad-hoc army of zealots that gravitated to their banner, a new, highly trained and well resourced military formation was created, called the Frateris Militaris. Nominally independent of the Imperial Army and Navy, they would ensure the preachers' voices were heard.

These changes greatly accelerated their progress in the Great Crusade, but not content with spreading the word to their one small corner of the galaxy, Lorgar went further. He approached

his brother primarchs to incorporate chaplains into their own legions, and while many rebuffed the idea as outside interference, the Thousand Sons, Dark Angels and Luna Wolves were the first to embrace the concept. Lorgar sent his personal confessor, Chaplain Erebus, to Horus' legion, and he became a frequent visitor and confidant to the man who would eventually become Warmaster.

As Lorgar's tenets for the worship of the Emperor as divine spread through the Imperium, it incorporated other nascent cults dedicated to the Master of Mankind. One of the most influential sects they absorbed was that of Lectitio Divinitatus, a faith prevalent amongst the artists, poets, iterators and even military forces that accompanied the Great Crusade's expeditions. The co-opting of this group strengthened a religion already in the ascendant, and brought with it a group of people adept at catching the imagination and stirring the passions.

At Ullanor, the Emperor announced that he was going to return to Terra, and that Horus would command the Great Crusade as Warmaster in his stead. His last act before leaving was to call a conclave at Nikaea to rule upon the allegations of sorcery surrounding the Thousand Sons, and indeed that of all psykers within the Legionnes Astartes. The brother-primarchs were sharply divided in their opinions, and not even Lorgar's robust defence of his friend could sway Russ and Mortarion from their stance. The Emperor eventually ruled that there would be tighter restrictions on Astartes librarians, and in addition the Thousand Sons would be 'soul-bound', and merge their essence with Him to grant them greater protection from the dangers of the warp.





Lorgar disappeared behind the great armoured doors of the throne room. Outside, Horus stood stiffly to attention amongst the Custodes, unable to relax. He had witnessed events that had moulded the fate of the Imperium, and the meeting going on beyond that armoured wall had the feel of another pivotal moment.

He had only met Lorgar once before today, and that briefly. His brother had struck him as intense and earnest, even brittle, but Magnus classed him as a friend, and Horus had learned to value his judgement. That was why he had been so ardent in trying to change the Emperor's mind. Certainly the Word Bearer expeditions had been slow, but it was borne from the best of intentions. Horus knew the Emperor was uneasy that some of His subjects had taken to deifying him as a living god, preferring a form of empirical rationalism to such errant superstition, but perhaps such beliefs could be harnessed for the good of the Great Crusade.

Horus' concern was that there was something fragile about Lorgar; as though he was a fine blade that had not yet been tempered. He sensed a great potential within his brother, but that at this stage too brutal a chastisement from the object of his worship would cripple him. That had been the reason Horus had pushed his father so hard to take a more measured approach.

Something about that conversation puzzled him even now. When he had asked where the harm was with some of his subjects worshipping him as a god, his father's face had darkened, and He had muttered 'Better they pray to me than to... others...' before pausing. It was as though He was on the verge of revealing some great secret that had been welling up inside Him, but then the moment passed as fast as it had arisen.

It was alright, though. Perhaps it was Lorgar's infectious faith rubbing off on him, but Horus felt certain that his father would tell him what he needed to know when the time was right.

Lorgar saw this as a great honour for his friend, and when he spoke with Magnus even referred to it as a "communion with the divine". It was then that Magnus revealed the dark truth that had been haunting him; that the words of Corax, Russ and Mortarion held more to fear than even they realised. On that night, Magnus explained to Lorgar the nature of the Emypyrean, the existence of the Chaos gods, and the vulnerability of psykers too weak, or weak-willed, to resist. It was, he said, a truth so devastating that the Emperor would rather it not be known, even to most of His sons, for the fear it would bring. Magnus, however, believed that Lorgar must know, and that widespread belief in the Emperor would be vital to shield them from the Sinister Powers.

The vigilance of the Word Bearers and the Thousand Sons paid off sooner than they could possibly have expected. On the primitive world of Davin, Warmaster Horus was laid low, and while the baffled apothecaries misdiagnosed the malady as the effects of poison, Chaplain Erebus recognised the signs of daemonic possession. Together with the psychic presence of the Thousand Son's Primarch, Erebus carried out an exorcism which

banished the entity and brought the Warmaster back from the brink.

From that point onwards, the Sons of Horus joined the covert war against Chaos.

Ultramar Segmentum

The barely averted possession of the Warmaster had brought home to Lorgar the dire threat posed by the Ruinous Powers, and that not even the primarchs were immune to the danger. The Imperium was not yet ready to accept the full horror of what they faced, but Lorgar, along with Horus and Magnus, remained alert to the machinations of Chaos. In a bitter twist of fate, this very caution was used by the Arch-Betrayer to further his own schemes, and is a salutary lesson into the wiles of the Great Enemy.

For some time there had been disquiet voiced over Roboute Guilliman's ever-expanding realm in the galactic east. During the Great Crusade his quest for power and control had driven him to claim vast areas of the galaxy, and his legion had swollen correspondingly. Even with the Eastern Fringe brought into compliance, Guilliman's domain had continued to grow as Imperial worlds bordering it petitioned to join

his so-called 'Ultramar Segmentum'. When Rogal Dorn approached Lorgar with evidence that the Ultramarines were set to secede from the Imperium and challenge the rightful rule of the Emperor, Lorgar was instantly concerned that the Ruinous Powers had found a new champion.

Aware of Lorgar's suspicions, Dorn laid subtle hints to reinforce the impression that the Ultramarines had been corrupted. Claiming it was the will of the Emperor, Dorn had marshalled fully half of the Legionnes Astartes to assault the Ultramar Segmentum. While the bulk of the forces arrayed against Guilliman moved to strike at him on his newly conquered world of Istvaan V, the Word Bearers and the Alpha Legion were tasked with attacking Ultramar Segmentum from within. As was his favoured tactic, Alpharius scattered his legion far and wide to destabilise the rebellious Segmentum, while Lorgar's fleet set course for the core worlds on the assumption that with Guilliman captured or dead, the rebels would look to Macragge for leadership. This plan was stymied because of the ever-increasing numbers of enemy vessels that shadowed them through the warp. This was seen as yet more evidence the



Ultramarines were in league with the daemonic, and only much later did it become clear that their course had been given away by Dorn, the Arch-Betrayer. Forced to break out of the warp far short of Macragge in an area of space known only as 'the Abyss', the Word Bearers tore into the shadowing Ultramar fleet with a ferocity borne of the righteous denied.

Despite their triumph, it was clear from astropathic scans and readings of the Emperor's Tarot that overwhelming forces had been massed for the defence of Macragge. Knowing the Word Bearer's dogmatic approach, the Ultramarines had expected that nothing would deflect Lorgar from a frontal attack, and so had drawn their armies and fleets back to the expected, well defended battleground of their capital world. Although not possessing the tactical genius of Horus or Alpharius, Lorgar's decision to split the fleet and attack the neighbouring systems to draw the Ultramarines away from Macragge caught the defenders off-guard.

Displaying a degree of brutal inventiveness not previously associated with the Word Bearers, the lightly defended Ultramar worlds were devastated. Iax and Talassar were invaded and their cities sacked, Masali was bombarded from orbit, and Calth's star was put to death by the Battle-Barge, 'Kor Phaeron'. Even that paled compared to Quintarn, which they turned into the World of the Blind without having to fire a single shot. The campaign proved successful in drawing the Ultramarines away from Macragge, and in the early stages it



seemed that it was only a matter of time before the planet would be weak enough to attack directly. All-too soon, though, reinforcements started to flow into the area, and not just from neighbouring sub-sectors, but Ultramarine forces fresh from their shocking victory at Istvaan.

Communication so far back to the Imperium through hostile territory was problematic, but eventually it became

clear that Istvaan had been a ruse. Rogal Dorn had been in league with Guilliman, and the Praetorian had plunged the Imperium into a civil war. Many of Lorgar's captains pleaded with him that they should return to Terra with all haste, but they were over-ruled. Lorgar said that no force could stand against the Emperor, and that as a god, He would inevitably destroy the traitors. Their duty remained the same; they must destroy Dorn's ally and prevent them from marching on Terra. Historians have debated Lorgar's motives for not returning to Terra. Most attribute it to his stubborn dogmatism and faith in the divinity of the Emperor, although a few cite practical considerations; that they were so far away and so deeply mired in combat that they would never have been able to return in time to make a

difference. Lorgar had already shown greater tactical skill than he was generally given credit for, and this has been viewed as further evidence of a growing tactical maturity.

As the war went on, Guilliman himself returned to coordinate the defences, and the scouring of the core worlds degenerated into a bloody stalemate. Although the legion was gratified that the threat they posed at the heart of

+++ People of Quintarn, you have turned your eyes from the Emperor's Light, and for this heinous crime you must face the consequences. Our fleet will arrive in <crackle> sixty... nine... hours and... twenty... one minutes, <crackle> and unless every single eye has been plucked out before that time, your entire world will be reduced to ash. <crackle> People of Quintarn, you have turned your eyes from the Emperor's Light... +++

Fragment of automated recording broadcast by the Word Bearers fleet



their realm prevented the Ultramarines from moving to reinforce Dorn's insurrection, the prospect of the Word Bearers ever setting foot on Macragge seemed to diminish with each passing day. That was until the arrival of envoys from the Alpha Legion.

Working together at last, a plan was devised to break the impasse. With Alpharius's tactical genius and the Word Bearer's stubborn determination and indomitable will, Macragge was to be brought to its knees. Using Alpharius himself as bait, the Alpha Legion drew Guilliman and a large proportion of his forces to the planet of Eskrador. The Ultramarines could not pass up this rare chance to strike back at the Alpha Legion in open battle, and took advantage of the seemingly collapsing Word Bearer threat to strike with overwhelming force.

The grand assault upon Macragge never came, though. Just as the Word Bearers were withdrawing from their scattered battlefields to assemble for a massed planetary assault, their plans were torn apart by catastrophic news; the Emperor had been grievously wounded by Dorn and lay dying. Lorgar couldn't have stopped his legion leaving for Terra even if he had wanted to, and they threw caution to the wind in their flight. In their grief, the Alpha Legion was forgotten. Withdrawal turned to rout, and many brothers died during the return to their ships. Many more lost their lives as their vessels were destroyed by the pursuing Ultramar fleet.

A feeling of desolation settled over the legion on the endless journey back to Terra. Despite Lorgar's calming presence, the thought that their God-Emperor could be proved vulnerable, and therefore fallible, gnawed at them. For some wounded brothers it was all too much; brethren in the ship's Apothecaria who should have returned rapidly to their squads died in their droves. Even proud veterans who had passed unscathed through the bloodiest battles of Calth and Iax succumbed to the soul-sickness, laying down their heads to rest, but never awaking.

In the depths of the gloom Lorgar addressed them. Every brother on every ship heard his proclamation. The Emperor was not dead, he said. His heart still beat and His soul still blazed like a nova within the Astronomicon. Had He not destroyed the Arch-Betrayer and banished the Traitor Legions from His sight? He explained that this was an act of transcendence, pre-ordained, and that just like the fate of his friend, Kor Phaeron, it was not their place to question or doubt the divine actions of the Emperor. The events they had endured were a test of faith; some had been found wanting and been judged accordingly. Those that remained had proved themselves, and were all the stronger for it.

When Lorgar stepped down from the command-pulpit, there was a silence so deep it drowned out the noise of the fleet's warp engines. Then, as one, every brother raised a cry of devotion to the Emperor and to their primarch. With that one speech Lorgar healed the spiritual wounds that had threatened to cripple the Word Bearers, and by the time they reached Terra they stood ready to take their place as paragons of faith in The God-Emperor of Mankind.

The Ecclesiarchy

The Dornian Heresy had revealed the true, horrifying nature of the Ruinous Powers, and despite, or even because of the Emperor's sacrifice, Imperial citizens turned to worship Him in their trillions. Lorgar's talk of faith in The Master of Mankind being soul-armour against Chaos resonated with a fearful populace, and within decades it had become the official religion of the Imperium. The monumental task of coordinating the worship of The God-Emperor across the galaxy was given to a new body called the Adeptus Ministorum, or Ecclesiarchy. It was only natural that Lorgar, author of most of their tenets of faith and son of The Divine Emperor should lead this new body. As Ecclesiarch, he became one of the High Lords of Terra, the group that ruled in the Emperor's stead.

Cathedrals, basilicas and monasteries dedicated to the faith sprang up across

the Imperium, especially on planets where the Emperor Himself had walked during the Great Crusade. No true Imperial citizen was without a devotional medallion bearing the thunderbolt and lightning sigil, and shrines in workplaces and homes became commonplace. Preachers and missionaries accompanied the fleets that brought worlds back into the Imperial fold, with even the most backward feudal world taught a suitably simplified version of the creed.

Lorgar used his growing influence to heal the rift between Terra and the Adepts of Mars. There was much bitterness at the Mechanicus's relative silence during the Heresy, but after much discussion, an understanding was reached whereby the tech-priests and magos very publically re-affirmed the Omnissiah as an aspect of the Emperor's divinity. He also bartered the Word Bearer's support for Abaddon's Crusades in return for his own Wars of Faith. In the main these were directed against the Traitor Legions that most closely aligned themselves with the Gods of Chaos, but on occasion it became necessary to fight against human worlds that had perverted the Imperial creed for their own ends.

The Age of Apostasy

Although Lorgar was the Ecclesiarch, he was also a primarch of the Adeptus Astartes and continued to lead his legion into battle. In M36, warp-storms swept across the whole of the Imperium, disrupting travel and

We Astartes charge the guns of the arch-enemy clad in ceramite and bearing the most potent weaponry that mankind can devise. They do the same wrapped only in a prayer. The next time you speak ill of our pilgrim brethren, boy, you'll be doing the same.

- Sergeant Dolchac of the Word Bearers



weakening the boundaries between the physical plane and the realm of the Ruinous Powers. This led to widespread unrest as planets were periodically isolated and the whispers of Chaos grew stronger. It was the start of what later came to be called 'The Age of Apostasy'. To combat this, Lorgar personally voyaged across the Imperium, re-igniting the faith of those who had faltered, and rooting out the Chaos cults that sprang up in unprecedented numbers.

On the planet of Dimmamar, Lorgar led a force of Word Bearers and Frater Militaris against an outbreak of the Plague of Unbelief. The scale of the infection ran far deeper than had been anticipated, though; most of the population had degenerated into hollow-eyed walking dead and daemons of Nurgle stalked the streets. Despite Lorgar's inspiring presence, his small force was cut off and surrounded by enemies numbering in the billions. When their final bolt round had been expended and the last flask of sanctified promethium had run dry, Lorgar threw open the great doors of the cathedral they had garrisoned. In the shadow of his father's house of worship, he and his battle-brothers strode out, unafraid, into the press of plague-infected wretches. In a strong, steady voice, Lorgar recited from the Scriptures of the Dead, his sacred warhammer in one hand, a metre-long adamantium spike of the cathedral's damaged altar in the other.

For days the slaughter went on, and Lorgar wearied, not of battle, but of the waste of his Emperor's humanity. Though he could have fought on until the end of time, Lorgar dropped to his knees in prayer to his father. As his retinue formed a protective circle around their primarch, the battlefield was enveloped by a golden glow and a feeling of peace which gave even the pestilent hordes pause. When it faded away, the Primarch of the Word Bearers' soul had returned to the Emperor. Despite the many wounds he had suffered, his face was peaceful and at rest. This final sacrifice infused the world with the Emperor's Grace, and in doing so every daemon was



'Lorgar's Great Sacrifice', from a tapestry hanging in the Basilica of the Emperor Ascendant on Dimmamar

banished and the Plague of Unbelief driven from every human on the planet. It is said that there is no zealot like a convert, and the survivors of Dimmamar set out to demonstrate the truth of this. As living proof of the power of the Emperor to save their bodies and souls from the Fell Powers, they returned to the worship of Holy Terra with a passion. Dimmamar rapidly became a shrine world, and such was their piety that the Word Bearers even took to recruiting from the planet.

For the Word Bearers, the loss of Lorgar was a tragedy second only to the Emperor's grievous wounding at the climax of the Dornian Heresy.

Without their primarch, the Word Bearers were bereft, going through the motions as before, but pale shadows of their former selves. Into the yawning chasm left by Lorgar stepped an ambitious and greedy marine by the name of Goge Vandire. He excelled in organisation rather than in piety, and his guiding principle proved to be the accrual of personal power. Such a person should never have been allowed to become a Word Bearer, but once inside, his manipulative, scheming nature saw him rise inexorably through the ranks. While the legion grieved, Vandire smoothly assumed command of the Word Bearers, and in so doing became the Imperium's new Ecclesiarch.



Once ensconced on Terra as a High Lord, Vandire traded on the deep well of sympathy over the death of Lorgar to further extend his power base. As his confidence and lust for control grew, he used manipulation, bribery and threats of excommunication against High Lords who dared to oppose him. By the time it became clear that Vandire had ordered the assassination of the Master of the Astronomicon and replaced him with a more malleable candidate, it was already too late – his grip on power was unassailable.

Vandire's Imperium was in a perilously fragile state, though. Still wracked by warp-storms and beset by the resurgent Traitor Legions, his response was to call for ever-more brutal Wars of Faith. Rather than targeting the true enemy, these pogroms were aimed at persecuting parts of the Imperium that showed even minor doctrinal differences to his own increasingly idiosyncratic view, or worlds which baulked at the ever-higher tithes demanded by the Ministorum. While Vandire's radical interpretation of the lore differed wildly from Lorgar's, the concept of disobeying orders came harder to the Word Bearers than to perhaps any other legion. A sense of deep unease spread through the legion, and they took increasingly creative interpretations of Vandire's edicts to minimise the harm that they were doing, much to their master's displeasure.

Events came to a head when Vandire moved to oppose the only group able to threaten his schemes: the Legionnes Astartes. Up until that point the other legions had stayed neutral in the power struggle. The Wars of Faith were carefully targeted to avoid systems with marine homeworlds or recruiting bases, and both sides were unwilling to be the first to fire for fear of igniting a second Inter-Legionary War. This uneasy arrangement was broken when Vandire accused the Emperor's Children, who had never felt the need to have chaplains in their ranks, of impiety. When the Legion Master of the World Eaters spoke in their

defence, he and their chaplaincy were branded apostates for defying the will of the Ecclesiarch. With the threat of whole legions being branded Excommunicate Traitoris, it seemed inevitable that brother would once again be pitted against brother, to the ruin of all.

The Fall of a Tyrant

The man who eventually rose to epitomise resistance to Goge Vandire's reign of terror came from within the ranks of the Word Bearers; a young initiate by the name of Sebastian Thor. He was everything that Vandire was not; devoutly pious and selfless. Thor had in fact been born on Dimmamar at the time of Lorgar's ultimate sacrifice, the symbolism of which was not lost upon his followers. Thor claimed with great passion and eloquence that the actions Vandire had taken spat upon everything that their primarch had stood for, and called for him to immediately step down. In response, Thor was branded a heretic and sentenced, in his absence, to death. Any forces sent to carry out the Ecclesiarchal decree, be they Frateris Militaris, Imperial Army or detachments of Word Bearers only swelled Thor's host, as they were won over by his stirring oratory. Recognising a sense of the purpose they had thought lost, the Word Bearers flocked to Thor's banner. Even marines from other loyalist legions joined the great pilgrimage through the Imperium, which led inexorably towards Holy Terra, and the

Chaplains of the Word Bearers

Even amongst a legion of the devout, Word Bearer chaplains stand out as paragons of the Emperor's Truth. Charged with ensuring the spiritual health of the legion, those chosen to enter the Reclusiam are trained and tested extensively before they are allowed to bear the Crozius Arcanum and Rosarius of their office. As befits their dedication to the Emperor, the imagery of His ancient thunderbolt and lightning icon is prominently displayed. This device predates the Aquila, and goes back to the wars to unify Terra. Lorgar selected it over the double eagle, honouring his father's decree that Fulgrim's legion would be the only Astartes to bear the later image. Just as their souls are sanctified and annealed by their training, so too is their armour. The process darkens the slate grey ceramite plates to midnight black. This, and the distinctive death head skull mask they wear, makes them a fearsome sight to behold.

confrontation with the insane Ecclesiarch.

Feeling his control of the Imperium slipping away, Vandire revealed the existence of a previously hidden and fanatically loyal force. He had long been concerned over the way his own legion had responded to his edicts, and knowing the Frateris Militaris were no match for Astartes, Vandire had, though base trickery, groomed a sect called the Brides of the Emperor to become his enforcers. Their faith was subtly corrupted into an unshakeable devotion to Vandire himself, and using his position armed them with potent weaponry and even a crude version of power armour. Thor's open defiance pushed Vandire to send contingents of his Brides to ensure the compliance of the Word Bearers, but this insult backfired. The resulting bloodshed pushed ever-more grand companies to side with Thor.

By the time the coalition reached Holy Terra, Vandire's paranoia and desperation had reached fever-pitch. The seriousness of the situation had even penetrated the secluded, armoured throne room of the Emperor Himself, and tragedy struck when a group of Custodes were attacked and killed by the Brides, who claimed that they had tried to sway them from their loyalty to Vandire.

After that outrage, what became known as the Second Siege of Terra was bloody and brief. Unwilling to back down, even in the face of the



Emperor's displeasure, the Brides died to a woman, and their order expunged from the pages of history. Dishevelled and raging, Vandire was hauled bodily from his hiding place by Sebastian Thor, his time of misrule at an end. The two Word Bearers were then brought by the Custodes to the Emperor's throne room to face judgement. While Thor emerged as the new Ecclesiarch, Goge Vandire was never seen again, and none present would ever speak of his fate.

It is a testament to the character of Sebastian Thor that he was able to rebuild the reputation of both the Ecclesiarchy and the Word Bearers. Part of the act of contrition was to make radical changes to the organisations of both bodies. While the High Lords on Terra were purged of Vandire's influence, Thor took advantage of the waning warp storms to tour the Imperium and reorganise the Ministorum. Even though Vandire was gone, his cronies were unwilling to yield their petty fiefdoms without a fight. The Traitor Legions had also taken advantage of the confusion to venture forth from the Eye of Terror. By the time the Word Bearers reached the domain of the Apostate Cardinal Bucharis, they found that the entire sub-sector's population had been

culled by the butchers of Leman Russ' Space Wolves.

At long last the greed, corruption and lust for power that had been so rife under Vandire's rule were swept away. With the Ministorum returned to its role of guiding the galaxy in the worship of The Divine Emperor, and to protecting the Imperium from the whispers of the Fell Powers, Sebastian Thor announced his final reform: he stepped down as the Ecclesiarch. No longer would any Word Bearer hold the role. Instead, the legion became the Chamber Militant of the Ministorum, acting not only as its strong right arm, but as the body charged with ensuring it never again overstepped its bounds. These decisions returned stability to the galaxy, and marked an end to the Age of Apostasy, and ever since, the Word Bearers have remained diligent guardians of the Emperor's Truth in the Imperium.

Combat Doctrine

The legion frequently takes to the field of battle leading much larger groups, such as the Frateris Militaris, Imperial Army or even massed mobs of pilgrims. It also places much weight upon divinations and interpretations of the Emperor's Tarot, and for these reasons the Word Bearers have gained

a reputation for tactical inflexibility and naivety. While it is true that they cannot match the skill at arms of the World Eaters, or the strategic acumen of the Alpha Legion, it is a foolish commander who underestimates them. Once dedicated to a goal, the Word Bearers are enthused with an unquenchable will to succeed, and the exhortations of their chaplains drive them to incredible feats of strength and endurance that can only end in victory or martyrdom. They inspire the same fervour in those around them, so that once committed, the only way for the battle to end is with the total annihilation of one side or the other.

While the Word Bearers are the fatal spear-point in any attack, the psychological effect of an endless tide of wild-eyed zealots closing on the enemy cannot be discounted. These mobs are often little more than local citizens, untrained and armed with nothing but improvised weapons. Individually they are no match for a well-drilled opponent, and yet they give their lives willingly in the service of the Emperor, and are lauded for doing so. Across the Imperium there are vast monuments built to honour the glorious sacrifice of these martyrs, often alongside the mass graves of the fallen.

The Tower of Blood

The tallest monument to the martyred is the recently completed Tower of Blood, on the world of Tanakreg. Traitors of the Iron Hand Legion stormed the capital-hive of Shinar and drove the survivors into the surrounding wilderness. The small contingent of Word Bearers that responded found the enemy numerous and well dug in, but were able to rally the scattered refugees and whipped them into a righteous fury to re-take their city. Even hardened veterans of the Imperial Army would have faltered at the sight of their comrades being flayed to the bone by the weaponry deployed by the traitors, but the citizens of Shinar were resolute. In a long night of bloodshed the hive was liberated, and though it was reduced to an uninhabitable ruin in the process, the mechanical abominations of Ferrus Manus were at last destroyed.

In honour of the fallen, a vast tower was constructed where the city had once stood. At the dedication ceremony, Chaplain Veraik, a veteran of the campaign, said that the tower had been built, like the Imperium itself, with the blood of martyrs. The tower extends high into the clouds above, and the pilgrims contest that it contains one block for every life that was lost that day, although calculations have shown that if this was truly the case it would reach into low orbit.

Organisation

For nearly five millennia the Word Bearers were commanded by Lorgar, and in their primarch's absence, this role has fallen to the legion master. Aware that the first person to hold the position came perilously close to destroying the legion, subsequent masters have been diligent in their attempts to redeem it. Despite the moral authority that chaplains wield amongst the Word Bearers, they do not command. Such a task is far too important to get bogged down in the minutiae of directing the flow of battle. Instead, their role is to provide spiritual guidance, inspire their brethren, and watch over the souls of those under their charge.

Librarians are greatly valued by the captains of the grand companies, and



their divinations and predictive abilities through readings of the Emperor's Tarot are used to inform strategy. It is also common for companies to be drastically reorganised on the eve of battle based on how the cards fall, even if it flies in the face of what is known of the enemy or expected battlefield conditions. Despite disdain for this practice from outside the legion, it has proved to be divinely inspired on countless occasions. Even when it has led to catastrophic defeats, these are borne with stoicism as the Will of the Emperor.

Because of the dramatic changes in organisation from battle to battle, squads are not assigned to Assault, Tactical or Devastator specialties. Instead, marines are expected to be proficient each of the roles. Their designation on the battlefield is displayed by coloured votive cloths draped from shoulder pauldrons, with sergeants proudly displaying their colours on richly embroidered back banners. Such ostentatious displays not only help to identify the squad's position to their officers, it also acts as a spur to inspire their allies to ever-greater acts of valour.

Their role as guardians of the Imperial creed, enforcing and, where necessary, checking the power of the Ministorum, requires the legion's strength be distributed thinly across the galaxy. For this reason, Word Bearer grand companies are composed of less than five hundred brethren each, perhaps half the size of that found in most other legions, the better to cover the vast distances involved. Their fleets are accompanied by ramshackle civilian transports packed with zealots eager to martyr themselves for the cause, as well as regiments of Frateris Militaris. Encased in matt-black carapace armour and wielding powerful hellguns and purging flame weaponry, the grim-faced Frateris endlessly strive to emulate their Astartes superiors.

Beliefs

Belief in the Emperor as divine is the guiding light of the Word Bearers.

They understand better than most the threat from the Ruinous Powers, and that mankind is beset on all sides by malign forces that would seek to destroy or enslave it. Only through a deep understanding and acceptance of the Emperor's Light can the Imperium hope to survive, and to that end they help to spread His Holy Word to the furthest corners of the galaxy.

Though it is routine to carve the words of Lorgar into the ceramite of their power armour, some initiates choose to sear large passages of the holy texts into their flesh so that they will never be without the words of their primarch. This practice is often taken to extremes by chaplains, with a rare few covering their entire bodies, heads and even their tongues with the sacred script. This is done with a red hot stylus and the sap of the Black Jula bush, a plant native to Colchis. Because of the super-human regenerative capabilities of the Astartes constitution, even this potent scarring will fade over time, and just as faith must constantly be renewed, so too must the devotional script branded into their skin.

Homeworld

Colchis, long-isolated from the wider human galaxy, was reborn with the

arrival of Lorgar. His presence brought back not only a new era of piety, but drew the attention of The God-Emperor Himself to their world. In the thousands of years since it was embraced by the Imperium, Colchis has become a focal point for the Adeptus Ministorum. The holy places and temples of the Covenant have been expanded, and now there are a multitude of cathedrals, basilicas and shrines to the saints, and through them, the Master of Mankind.

Pilgrims flock to Colchis in their millions, but the holiest site, the place where the Emperor first set foot on the world, is forbidden, because on that spot was built the legion's fortress-monastery. From there, protected by adamantium walls as strong as their faith, the Word Bearers ensure that their compact with the Imperium is kept. Engraved upon those walls, just as it is engraved upon their souls, is the credo that Lorgar adopted on returning back to Colchis after seeing the Emperor entombed within the Astronomicon: "*The Emperor protects, but we must also protect the Emperor.*"

Gene-Seed & Recruitment

Like their faith, the gene-seed of the Word Bearers is pure, with all implants

Despite all their interventions, his body was tearing itself apart. He called out to the Pantheon of Chaos to save him; his great work was not yet complete. Lorgar had been blooded, pushed to take the lives of innocents. He had been primed for blind, credulous belief. Having passed inspection by the hated Emperor, and in possession of a whole legion of Astartes, he was ripe for disillusionment and enlightenment to the true powers of the divine. All the intricate plans, all those years of work... All ruined by the incompetence of an apothecarion implantation servitor.

Through the agony, and eyes clouded with rheum he dimly made out a presence; Lorgar. He tried to speak, to convince him of the majesty of the Chaos Gods, but his trachea had swollen closed against the breathing tube. He tried to reach out to the tray of surgical equipment to slash open the fool's throat, but he had been firmly restrained to prevent his violent muscle spasms. As the Larraman's cells began to curdle the blood in his veins, he heard the final, unknowing insult.

"I am sorry, my brother, but fear not. No one will ever be allowed to forget your loyalty and service to the creed. You will forever be remembered as Master of the Imperial Faith."

Trapped inside his meat prison, begging for release, Kor Phaeron howled.



working as efficiently as when Lorgar commanded the legion. Their apothecaries treat the gene-seed as sacred; a palpable connection to their beloved primarch, and regard it with the same reverence the chaplains hold the word of Lorgar.

The Word Bearers draw their recruits not just from Colchis, but from across the Emperor's realm. Strength of faith is as important a factor as skill at arms, and as such Cardinal-worlds and the Ministorum-run Schola Progenium orphanages are prime recruiting grounds. Word Bearers are expected to be thoroughly conversant with Lorgar's writings, which teach the

importance of sacrifice, and the willingness to suffer pain and death in the face of the unrighteous. Such lessons are an excellent preparation for the life of an Astartes.

Just as the gene-seed implantation procedure strengthens the body, their lessons in theology strengthen their souls. Despite the skill of the legion's apothecaries, there are cases where the primarch's gene-flesh finds the neophyte wanting. Just as happened with Lorgar's friend, Kor Phaeron, this is stoically accepted as the Will of the Emperor. Most of those who are rejected are granted the Emperor's Mercy, but some are spared, and find

another way to serve doing menial tasks for the Ministorum. Because of this, it is not uncommon to see these pitifully misshapen, hunched figures in the shadows of cathedrals, acting as choral page-turners during masses or ringing the bells to call the faithful to worship.

Battlecry

The Word Bearers do not have a single fixed battle cry. Instead, an appropriate passage is chosen by the chaplain from amongst the Books of Lorgar. He then leads the assembled marines in a recitation of the faith, before blessing them for the coming battle.





THE DORNIAN HERESY

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ULTRA- MARINES

BY AURELIUS REX

Manipulated and betrayed first by the Traitor Legions, and then by the Imperium, the Ultramarines now stand defiantly against both great powers. From their fortified realm of Ultramar Segmentum, the legion and its successor chapters watch with pity as the Imperium falls ever-deeper into superstition, ignorance and corruption. Built firmly upon the inspired organisational principles of Roboute Guilliman, they patiently gather their strength for the day they will invade Terra and reunify humanity under their own benign rule.

Origins

Although it is commonly stated within the Imperium that the infant primarchs were abducted and scattered across the galaxy by the Ruinous Powers, the tale of Roboute Guilliman's arrival upon Macragge has led the people of Ultramar to doubt the received wisdom. According to legend, Consul Konor Guilliman, one of Macragge's planetary leaders, was granted a vision of a noble child alone in the deep forest, and that a shining entity, supposed later to be the Emperor Himself, commanded Konor to guide and protect him. In the shadow of the mighty Hera Falls, the infant was found playing amongst the wreckage of his gestation vessel, and sensing the power within the boy, Konor did as he had been instructed. He named the child Roboute, or 'The Great One', and raised him as his own son.

Imperial scholars claim that this was simply the Emperor seeking to protect His sons until they could finally be reunited. However, the Ultramarines believe that the Master of Mankind deliberately engineered the dispersal so that the primarchs would be able to experience life among common humanity in their formative years. Furthermore, they propose that Guilliman was intended to be found and mentored by Konor in his unique style of leadership and organisation.

As befitting the son of a consul, Roboute Guilliman was intensively tutored, and rapidly absorbed every scrap of knowledge on offer, before taking his place at the prestigious Agiselus Barracks in Macragge City. There he was trained in the military arts, and in short order outstripped his fellow students and even his

instructors. With nothing left to learn, he graduated, and re-took his place alongside Konor. It was clear that Guilliman's gifts for the practice and organisation of warfare would be of great use in battling Macragge's enemies, both on and off the planet. Proving that their faith in him was not misplaced, Guilliman delivered an unbroken series of military victories. This culminated with the complete destruction of the pirate fleets that had long-plagued the space-lanes between Macragge and the nearby systems with which it had remained in contact.

At a banquet held in honour of Guilliman's achievements, Konor's co-consul, Gallan, proposed that an ancient Macragge tradition be re-instituted: After performing some great deed for the nation, a feted hero would be rewarded with the opportunity to carve out territory of their own. What new lands they could conquer for the kingdom, they could keep. Gallan proposed that Illyrium, Macragge's wild, bandit-haunted northlands, would be the perfect challenge and reward. Its savage barbarian tribes had never been pacified, and although they attacked the expedition with unparalleled fury, within six months Guilliman had bested each of the tribal leaders in single combat and earned their respect and fealty.

The conclusion of this stunningly successful campaign was tainted by the news that Konor had passed away, and that as sole remaining consul, Gallan had taken command of his holdings. Gallan sent his condolences, but also commanded that Guilliman and his forces leave Illyrium at once to swear allegiance to him. Guilliman returned as requested, but was horrified to see



the state of disrepair that his adopted father's former lands had fallen into in the few short months of its new consul's stewardship. So it was that when he stood before Gallan, he defiantly refused to kneel.

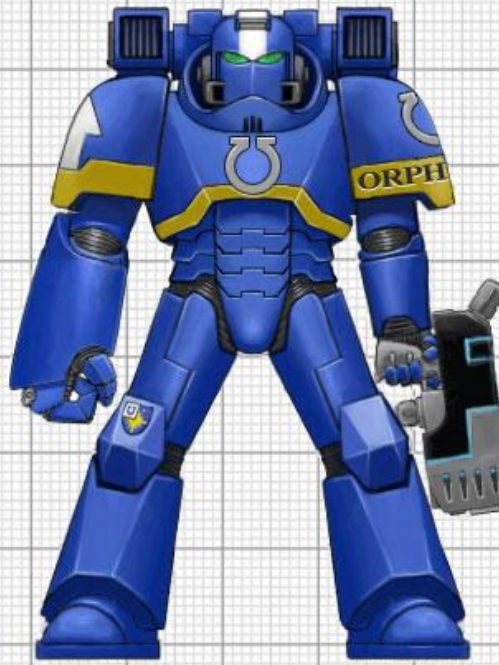
Before the assembled nobles he stated in no uncertain terms that Gallan was not the only consul; that before them stood the Consul of Illyrium, as laid down in the ancient traditions Gallan himself had invoked. Gallan had no more hold over him than the stars themselves. With that, Guilliman returned to the north at the head of his large, battle-tempered army, and after such a display of martial strength, no more talk of fealty was heard from Gallan.

Free from the restraints of tradition, Guilliman forged his own vision of civilisation. Within a decade the once barren wastes of Illyrium were home to industries and military forces that put those of the rest of the planet to shame. By the time the Emperor arrived at Macragge, drawn by tales of the nation that Guilliman had wrought, Illyrium was firmly the centre of political and military power. In comparison, Gallan's stagnant holdings were a mere backwater. The reunion of father and son, and the relocation of the Thirteenth Legion of the Astartes to the planet merely reinforced Guilliman's position as the true leader of Macragge.

Ultramar Segmentum

Roboute Guilliman set his legion, which he renamed the Ultramarines after the deep blue seas of Macragge, to work reclaiming lost human worlds for the Emperor. First came the planets with which Macragge had remained in contact through their isolation from Terra, such as Talassar, Calth, Quintarn and Tarentus. The incorporation of these early planets became the template for the future. The

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Ultramarine of the Orpheus Chapter wearing Mark 16 'Damocles' pattern power armour

legion went to great lengths to avoid unnecessary civilian bloodshed, even at the risk of sustaining greater casualties themselves. This, along with the way they repaired and improved each world's infrastructure, meant that with every conquest they gained a stable world willing and eager to contribute to Guilliman's mission, rather than a resentful population that required garrison forces to pacify. In this way the Ultramarines were able to draw recruits and materiel from an ever-larger area, and in doing so expanded their numbers at a rate unmatched by any other legion.

The worlds under their control became closely knit, with an identity as much Ultramarine as it was Imperial. With each new world, these *Ultramar* planets grew in military strength and cultural influence. Often their reputation would precede them to such a degree that invading forces would be welcomed on their arrival by cheering crowds rather than armed resistance. Eventually their expansion reached so far that it came into contact with

worlds brought to compliance by other Imperial expeditions. Recognising the superior way that Ultramar was run in comparison to the staid, inefficient Administratum, an increasing number quietly petitioned to join them. There were even calls from some planets on the Eastern Fringe to rename Ultima Segmentum as *Ultramar Segmentum*.

This led to bitter exchanges between the Administratum and the Ultramarines. The legion was charged with instigating these petitions and of undermining the Imperium. This was strenuously denied, but the defiant Ultramarine representatives said that they would continue to lend their expertise to those Imperial planets that requested it. The war of words escalated to the point where, at the Jhalta conference, high ranking Administratum officials accused the Ultramarines of attempting to take control of Imperial worlds by stealth. During one particularly heated exchange, a member of the Administratum even dared suggest that they had turned their backs on the Emperor. With the meeting seconds from descending into violence, Guilliman himself entered the room. His superhuman charisma and presence calmed the tense situation, and by the end of the conference the Administratum representatives had accepted the primarch's intentions as benign. Many were even discussing organisational theories with him and taking notes. It appeared that the misunderstanding had been resolved.

Istvaan V

With the Administratum seemingly pacified, Guilliman was shocked and horrified to receive a covert communiqué from Rogal Dorn, who brought a warning that the Emperor had personally ordered that he and the



able to convince several of the primarchs over the course of the journey, Corax, Fulgrim and Angron had been beyond reason. As repugnant as it was, Dorn proposed that their legions could be 'neutralised' by ambushing them at the newly compliant Ultramar world of Istvaan V. Dorn also revealed that the Word Bearers and the Alpha Legion had been ordered to strike deep into the heart of Ultramar Segmentum. To seal the pact, Dorn transmitted to Guilliman the projected routes of the Alpha Legion and Word Bearer fleets so that they could be more easily tracked, and eventually countered.

Seeing no other option, with a heavy heart Guilliman agreed to Dorn's plan. His legion, supported by those that Dorn had been able to convince of the Emperor's folly, crushed the Raven Guard, Emperor's Children and World Eaters on Istvaan V. With knowledge of their transponder codes, the Ultramarines were able to target the landing ships and drop pods before most of their occupants could even set foot on the planet. The few that survived fought like lions, and while they were no match for the forces arrayed against them, a handful still managed to escape back into orbit, carrying with them word of the rebellion.

Dorn and his legions prepared to leave Istvaan, but before they departed the two brothers met one last time. Guilliman offered the renegade legions asylum within Ultramar Segmentum. Dorn thanked him for the offer, but said that he had to return to Terra to explain his actions to the Emperor. Dorn warned that those manipulating their father were experts in the arts of twisting the truth, and the same people who had whispered falsehoods against the Ultramarines would doubtless begin to spread their black propaganda against Dorn and his comrades in the months to come. Whatever news might reach them, Dorn urged Guilliman to remember their friendship, and to trust in him.

With that, Guilliman bade them

entire Ultramarines Legion be put to death. Despite the unthinkable nature of what Dorn was saying, the haggard, haunted look in his brother's eyes convinced Guilliman to hear him out.

According to Dorn, since the Emperor had withdrawn to Terra, He had become increasingly isolated, and this had been played upon and twisted by sinister forces so that He had refused to see even His own sons. Dorn said that behind closed doors the misunderstandings with the Administratum had been manipulated to the point where their father had become convinced Guilliman was on the brink of seceding from the

Imperium. The situation had spiralled out of control, and in a fit of rage, the Emperor had commanded that a vast battle fleet be assembled to tear down Ultramar Segmentum. Dorn said that when disquiet was voiced at the prospect of brother marines, indeed brother primarchs, trying to kill one another, the Emperor had decreed that anyone who opposed the order be declared a traitor and be put to death.

And so it was that Dorn came to approach the fringes of Ultramar Segmentum in command of the Imperial fleet. The Emperor's mind, he said, had been clouded by lies and paranoia, and while Dorn had been



farewell and good luck. As much as he desired to return to Terra and help free his father from the malign forces that surrounded Him, Ultramar was still under attack from two full legions of Astartes. Every marine, indeed, every citizen of Ultramar Segmentum, would be needed to defeat them.

Fortress Ultramar

Ultramar mobilised to defend itself, with travel, trade and communication cut off with the Imperium. What news did leak in told of all-out civil war, and as Dorn had predicted, his forces were portrayed in lurid terms. They were accused of having perpetrated acts of gross excess, torture and genocide. There were even fanciful stories of sorcery, magicks and daemons, which only reinforced their belief of the desperation of Dorn's enemies.

Within their own borders, the fleets of the Word Bearers headed arrow-straight for the heart of Ultramar Segmentum. Thanks to Dorn's warning, the Ultramarines were able to assemble sufficient forces to intercept their ships before they reached Macragge. Denied their primary target, Lorgar's fleet turned its fire on any planet they could find. They seeded Calth's star with arcane minerals that quenched its celestial fire and plunged the planet into eternal, icy night. Quintarn fared little better. With the zealots' threat of exterminatus hanging over them, the entire population were forced to pluck out their eyes. Even to this day, Quintarn is known as the 'World of the Blind'. What Lorgar's legion lacked in tactics it more than made up for with religious fury and a fanatical determination never to give up, whatever the cost. They did horrendous damage, and the Ultramarines had to expend great effort simply to prevent the Word Bearers from massacring entire civilian populations.

The Alpha Legion's approach to warfare was radically different, yet just as deadly. Where Lorgar's assault was a battering ram, destroying all in its path, Alpharius was a debilitating poison that spread insidiously through Ultramar Segmentum. The enemy were

The Librarium

Coordination of a realm as large as Ultramar Segmentum is a monumental task, but it is one to which the rigidly organised sons of Guilliman are equal, and none are more vital to this than those of the chapter's Librarium. With no access to the 'soul-binding' ritual required to produce astropaths, only the powerful Astartes psykers of the Librarium have the ability and resilience to the Warp to communicate across the length and breadth of the segmentum.

Strong psykers are particularly valued in Ultramar, and the danger of 'wild' or even weak psykers is well known. Most are weeded out, but some still lurk on the fringes of society. It is the responsibility of the librarians to sniff out the spoor of these misguided fools, as whole cities have been lost to daemonic incursion because of the unguarded mind of a single rogue psyker.

seemingly everywhere, disrupting the command structures of each world they touched through assassination, disinformation, terrorism and sabotage. Worse, they were like ghosts: working through networks of human agents and maddeningly difficult to bring to the field of battle. In any realm other than Ultramar such an approach would have caused widespread paralysis and thrown every world into selfish isolationism, but Guilliman's organisational teachings saw them weather the worst of the storm.

Eventually, Guilliman ran Alpharius to ground on the world of Eskrador. To throw his brother primarch off-balance, Guilliman forewent his usual tactical caution and instead attempted to beat Alpharius at his own game. Taking the enemy by surprise, Guilliman's force hit them from multiple directions at once, overwhelming them and cutting off all chance of escape. With no other option, the cornered Alpha Legion had no choice but to engage in a conventional battle, and though they fought fiercely, they could not stand against the Ultramarines.

After a duel that seemed to last for hours, Roboute Guilliman finally executed Alpharius for his crimes at the foot of the Amanthi cliffs. Rather than being a catharsis, Eskrador proved to be a pyrrhic victory for the Ultramarines. Many great heroes of Ultramar, such as Captain Orar and Lord Kharta, Regent of Talassar, died to achieve it, yet the loss of their primarch did not stop, or even

significantly slow the insurrectionist cancer the Alpha Legion had spread throughout the segmentum.

Better news came when the Word Bearers broke off their attacks on Ultramar's core worlds and set course back towards the Imperium. It seemed that the zealots' will to fight had been broken. In time it became clear that this had been sparked by the death of the Emperor, although it seemed that Dorn and his side of the civil war had also been defeated. Despite all that had happened, Guilliman still grieved for his father, but he knew that this was merely a pause in the larger conflict. Wounded and bleeding though the Imperium was, it was only a matter of time before their vengeful gaze turned back towards them. War production was redoubled, and a metaphorical "Curtain of Steel" was thrown around the Ultramar Segmentum.

For decades the only contact they had with Imperial forces was in the form of the insidious insurrections and guerrilla actions inspired by the Alpha Legion, and some dared to hope that they would be left largely in peace. Guilliman, though, remained adamant that they must stay vigilant. He was proven right when the hammer-blow came in the form of massed Imperial crusades. Through meticulous planning, skill and bravery they turned aside every attack. The death-toll was horrendous, with whole planetary populations lost in the fighting, but Ultramar, as ever, endured.



Seeing the rise in corruption and ineffectiveness of the Imperium after the Emperor's death, Guilliman refined and codified his thoughts in his organisational masterpiece, the Codex Ultramar. As well as laying down how civilian authorities should be structured, it also decreed that his own legion be sub-divided into more self-sufficient units to cover the vast areas of space under their protection. The grand companies were reorganised and renamed as chapters of the wider Ultramarines Legion, with chapter masters given far greater autonomy. In this way, Guilliman created a structure that was tied closely to the worlds they protected, but was still able to call upon the rest of Ultramar when faced with overwhelming threats like Imperial crusades.

This was put to the test when they came under attack from hideously perverted forms of marines bearing the insignia of the legions they had fought alongside at Istvaan. It was accompanied by an explosion in the number of bizarre and brutal cults within their borders. Although this was initially attributed to a new ploy by the Alpha Legion, it soon became clear that it was something far more dangerous, as the full, hideous nature of the Warp was belatedly uncovered by the legion's librarians. As though the reality of daemonic possession, the existence of the Ruinous Powers and their ability to corrupt even Astartes was not shocking enough, it also brought the sickening realisation of how Dorn had manipulated them, and their view of the civil war. It became horribly clear that the fanciful tales from beyond the Imperial borders – tales that had been dismissed as nothing more than black propaganda – contained a bitter kernel of truth.

The realisation of how he had been used by Rogal Dorn was devastating for Guilliman. Dorn had played expertly on Ultramar's isolation from Terra and the misunderstanding with the Administratum for his own ends. Guilliman's trust in his brother had been used to make him complicit in the destruction of three loyal legions at

Istvaan, and pushed him into choosing the wrong side of the uprising against the Emperor. Guilliman's hands were stained with his father's blood, and this realisation threw him into a bout of black depression and anguished self-reflection. This development concerned his men deeply, and when he emerged from isolation, he made two announcements. The first was the aching certainty that history had repeated itself. It had always been thought that Konor's death had been accidental, but in light of Dorn's plot to isolate Guilliman in his attempt to kill the Emperor and snatch power, Gallan's actions became far clearer. From sending him far away to Illyrium, to the speed with which he took control, it became obvious that the man who had adopted him had also been murdered. Under the glare of scrutiny, Guilliman's assertions were rapidly proved correct, and the name of Gallan and his line were cursed across the whole of Ultramar.

Guilliman's second announcement was even more shocking. They must heal the rift between Ultramar Segmentum and the Imperium. Despite all the blood that had been spilled, they must reunite to overthrow Chaos, the Great Deceiver. Much to the consternation of his lieutenants, Guilliman opened up a détente with those who ruled in the Emperor's stead, and the world of Prandium was chosen as the place for what should have been a historic meeting.

Instead, it was the site of a cowardly ambush under the flag of truce, and the last, best hope for peace between the realms was squandered. The Imperial delegation lulled them with warm words, and discussions between the two sides appeared to be progressing well, until the massed ranks of Imperial Astartes tore into their Ultramarine hosts without mercy. Guilliman was the target of their ire. In his final report as head of the primarch's honour guard, Kaisus described cutting through the press of bodies, only to see Fulgrim of the Emperor's Children strike his Lord Guilliman down from behind. The two were then obscured in a cloud of acrid fyceline smoke, and when it had cleared, both were gone.

They had both been whisked away into orbit, and though the Ultramarines hounded the Imperial fleets all the way back to the border and beyond, they could not rescue their primarch. Only later did they find out the awful truth, that the Imperial forces had trapped Guilliman in a stasis field a moment from death as a special torture, and that he had been brought to Terra as some grisly spoil of war.

This atrocity destroyed forever any chance of reconciliation between the realms. It was clear that the Imperium could never be trusted, and that it would not rest until every last Ultramar world and citizen was enslaved. From what they could glean from their covert agents and from refugees who fled

Ultramarine Successor Chapters

The concept of successor chapters was born out of Guilliman's early years on Macragge. After he had proved himself, he was sent out into the wilderlands and given the chance to carve out a domain of his own. The same opportunity has been given to Ultramarine heroes down the millennia, and hundreds of new chapters have been founded, split off from the greater legion and sent out to garrison the wild border areas of Ultramar Segmentum. The marines that strike out on their own do so for a variety of reasons. Some, such as the Sons of Guilliman and White Consuls, were founded by marines eager to challenge themselves, and to emulate Guilliman. Others, such as the death-cult worshipping Mortifactors did so to gain greater autonomy and acceptance of their views. Though these successors wear different heraldry and battle-colours from the Ultramarines, and may deviate, sometimes wildly, from the norms of Guilliman's great Codex, all are unified in their support for the ideals of Ultramar Segmentum.



across the border, the Imperium was trapped in a downward spiral of superstition, corruption, inefficiency and brutality. Without the Master of Mankind, the Imperium was slowly dying, but like any badly wounded beast it could still be lethal in its death throes.

Ultramar Ascendant

Beyond retaking worlds conquered by Imperial crusades and building up defences against the next assault, there was a wide consensus that the borders of Ultramar Segmentum should expand. The task of wresting systems from the dead hand of Imperial misrule was given primarily to newly founded successor chapters, who, like their primarch before them, carved out new territory to prove their prowess. Although the borders of Ultramar Segmentum have waxed and waned over the millennia, these aggressive young chapters have been the cause of a gradual expansion of the realm.

Though it is but a fraction of the Imperium's size, Ultramar Segmentum continues to be ordered, productive and efficient, which enables it to support its vast military. It is also enlightened, tolerant and cultured, a far cry from the bigotry and closed-minded repression of the Imperium. This is why refugees take such risks to reach it, and the reason that populations fight so hard against being taken back into the corrupt and brutal Imperial fold.

There have also been many calls down the millennia for Ultramar to undertake a crusade of its own. Not just to liberate border worlds, but to mount a strike deep into the rotten heart of the Imperium and stop the attacks once and for all. This is also motivated from a burning desire to storm the gates of Terra and finally reclaim the body of Guilliman from his stasis prison. They passionately call for his release, allowing him either to die with dignity, or to be healed, so that he might lead the reunification of the whole of humanity into a new era of enlightenment.

The last of these calls came just over

The Battle for Macragge

Macragge's northern polar defence fortress was the site of the bloodiest battle in the planet's history. At the height of Hive Fleet Behemoth's attack upon the planet, countless millions of Tyranid organisms were scattered like seeds across the land. Seemingly endless swarms converged upon the northern polar fortress, and deep below it the legion's gene-seed repository, but it was a location that the Ultramarines could never allow to fall. Though the First, Third and Seventh Companies of the Macragge Chapter died to a man in its defence, their sacrifice had not been in vain. It bought enough time for the rest of the planet to mobilise and exterminate the xenos invaders.

Not only did they save the genetic legacy of the Ultramarines, they prevented the horror that would have ensued if the Hive Mind had been able to feed on such a rich store of biological information. Recognising the vulnerability of relying on a single site, the Ultramarines have since constructed further gene-seed repositories. Needless to say, the number and locations of these sites are among the most closely guarded secrets in the segmentum.

two centuries ago in 740.M41. A large number of new successor chapters had just been founded, and the Lord of Macragge, Marneus Calgar, seemed set to decree just such a crusade to rescue their primarch. This bold plan, though, was derailed by the arrival of the Tyranid Hive-mind from beyond the galactic fringe. These implacable aliens devoured everything in their path, stripping whole worlds to the bedrock in their hunger. This first hive-fleet, designated 'Behemoth', was only stopped by a segmentum-wide deployment of forces, and the sacrifice of the bulk of the Calth Battle-Fleet. Despite this, the Tyranids succeeded where the Imperium had failed so many times, by landing forces upon the surface of Macragge. Enemies and allies alike took advantage of the devastation, with Orks, the Imperium and even the previously friendly Tau encroaching into Ultramar space.

This stopped calls for an attack on Terra in their tracks, and for a short while after the realm of Ultramar contracted. These events were shrilly proclaimed as being "*judgements of the Emperor*" by the Imperium's Ecclesiarchy, and these calls rose to fever pitch in the last decade with the emergence of a second Tyranid hive-fleet, code-named *Kraken*.

But Ultramar Segmentum does as it always does: It endures. Strengthened

by the lessons learned in the struggle against the Tyranids, and infused by technology gleaned from their wars with the Tau, they will rise again, all the stronger for their trials.

Gene-Seed

As befits the legacy of Roboute Guilliman, each of the nineteen gene-seed implants operate at the same outstanding level of efficiency they did when they were first created. Untouched by the corrupting nature of the Ruinous Powers, and free of the superstitious ritual of the Adeptus Mechanicus, their gene-seed is undoubtedly the purest of all the Legionnes Astartes. Their optimised methods of implant culturing and aspirant selection minimises rejection and ensures that the Ultramarines can replace losses and produce new marines at an astonishing rate.

To ensure that the high quality of Ultramarine gene-seed is maintained, each of the legion's chapters regularly tithe samples to a facility deep beneath Macragge's northern polar defence fortress. There it is tested for any sign of deviation or genetic drift, catalogued and stored. This process has been invaluable in replenishing the gene-stocks of chapters that have suffered catastrophic losses, and during the founding of new successor chapters to expand the borders of Ultramar Segmentum.



Homeworlds

Ultramar Segmentum spans a vast swathe of the galactic east, and with each passing year it encroaches ever-further into the crumbling Imperium. Along with the technological benefits that membership of Ultramar brings, the legion also imports its culture and values and weaves them seamlessly into that of the original society. This means that while Ultramar Segmentum encompasses a vast array of different cultures, from the savage head-hunters of New Posul to the aeronauts in the floating cities of Doromus Minor, each one is tied, with great affection, back to Macragge.

As befits the world where their Primarch, Roboute Guilliman, fell to earth as an infant, Macragge remains the heart of Ultramar Segmentum. The fortress-monastery still dominates the northlands of Illyrium, and from there the chapter master rules with beneficence. Like every world in their culture, Macragge is home to a great many military academies, and through the halls of these hallowed institutions have passed countless generations of Astartes and segmentum guardsmen. The most venerated academy is the Agiselus Barracks in Macragge City, where Guilliman himself was trained.

While Macragge houses the first and greatest of the Ultramarine chapters, many other planets such as Orpheus

and Ulixis have the honour of hosting one from the original legion, or one of their many successors. Of the core Ultramar worlds, the frozen planet of Calth and the shrine-world of Prandium, where Guilliman fell in battle, have both housed chapter monasteries. Over the millennia, Calth has grown into an orbital shipyard second only to the segmentum Navy dockyards in Kar Dunaish. After Hive Fleet Behemoth came so close to devouring Macragge, a successor chapter, the Lamenters, was founded on Prandium. Sadly, both they, and another successor, the Scythes of Guilliman set to guard the outer rim, were completely destroyed in the Second Tyrannic War against Hive Fleet Kraken.

Despite now being deep inside the borders of Ultramar Segmentum, Istvaan V has continued to be a frequent target for Imperial attacks. Though it has become a veritable fortress-world, it still holds a special attraction for forces headed by the Emperor's Children and World Eaters. Sadly, they seem unable to grasp that the Ultramarines were as much victims of Dorn's Great Betrayal as they were.

Since the schism that tore humanity apart, the worlds along the border with the Imperium have been ringed with defence platforms and are under constant patrol by fleets of warships. It

has been called a 'Curtain of Steel', and is certainly a formidable barrier, yet despite the Ultramar Navy's best efforts, raider forces still slip past them to prey upon the more settled worlds beyond. There are even wars within the segmentum's borders, from skirmishes against the Tau beyond the Damocles Gulf and the omnipresent threat of Ork infestations to the insidious rabble-rousing of the Alpha Legion and the minions of Chaos. Every Ultramarine and every successor know all-too well the threats that face the segmentum, but with courage and honour, they will endure.

Combat Doctrine

The master of organisation and strategy, Roboute Guilliman laid down the blueprints for these teachings in his Codex Ultramar. It is a comprehensive tome, covering not just military and Astartes organisation, but also vital civilian aspects of governance and trade. The Codex emphasises a balanced, combined-arms approach to warfare, but is also flexible enough to recognise that there are times, such as when Guilliman defeated Alpharius, when a more extreme approach is required. He encouraged additions by later commanders to allow for the arrival of new enemies or developments in things such as tactics or weaponry.

Each of the legion's chapters and successors has their own copy of the Codex, each with different changes and additions to reflect their own circumstances and experiences. The original, unamended version, written in Guilliman's own hand, is stored in the deepest vaults of the fortress-monastery on Macragge, and is, like its author, preserved in temporal stasis. This incalculably valuable relic is retrieved only for the inauguration of a new chapter master. By placing his right hand on the fragile book, he signifies his intention to rule according to his primarch's tenets and wishes.

The most important examples of changes to the Macragge Chapter's annotated Codex in the last millennia are those concerning the best uses of

"My brothers, we have become complacent. Yes, our technology is superior to that of the Imperium, but our advances have come in tiny increments – continual evolutionary improvements – rather than the leaps forward that will be required to defeat the next hive-fleet, or to finally break the stalemate with the Imperium and reclaim Terra for all humanity."

"Look to the Tau. In the millennia that we have been facing down the Imperium and the Ruinous Powers they have grown from dwelling in caves to mastering technology that in some cases exceeds even our own understanding. By their unprovoked attacks across the Damocles Gulf, the Tau have rendered their treaties with us null and void, including those about the use of their weaponry."

"The time has come to put aside our pride and our preconceptions and use this new source of technology to strengthen our fleets, our defences and our Astartes. If we do not, if we instead blindly and timidly continue as we always have, we will inevitably fall to the enemies that surround us."

- Chapter Master Marneus Calgar, after the First Tyrannic War.



heavy rail-gun technology, and the extensive tactics built up to combat the extra-galactic menace of the Tyranids. Before any additions to the Codex are allowed by the chapter's librarians, the prospective author must be able to recite, and show a thorough understanding of, Guilliman's original text. In this way their primarch's philosophy and intentions for the Codex have been protected down the millennia.

Organisation

The vast scale of Ultramar Segmentum necessitated that Guilliman break his legion into far more autonomous units. Instead of the grand companies, the chapters of the Ultramarines were created, with ten companies each of a hundred brothers. Each chapter was given stewardship over an area of space, and charged with ensuring its good governance and defence. New recruits come from amongst the local population to closer bind their fates together. Drawn from the most promising youths, usually from the military academies modelled upon the Macragge tradition, these potentials are sent to the Tenth, or Scout Company, where they are rigorously trained, tested and implanted with the organs necessary to forge them into full Astartes battle-brothers. From there they pass into one of the four reserve companies, where they are trained in the arts of war, from piloting a vehicle, providing heavy weapon support, close combat with bolt pistol and chainsword, or - the backbone of the chapter - in the bolter-armed Tactical squads.

The Second to Fifth Companies are the main front-line fighting strength of the chapter. In line with the balanced approach laid down in the Codex, the ideal is for each of these battle companies to contain six Tactical squads, supported by two Devastator squads and two Assault squads. The chapter's First Company is composed of the veterans. Clad either in Terminator armour or power armour, these marines are tasked with the most deadly missions, and by their example inspire all those around them to great

Chapter Master Calgar felt the buzz of anticipation among his bridge crew as the Seditio Opprimere came to full battle-readiness. The battle barge's last action had been in the defence of Prandium from Hive-Fleet Kraken, and while she had served valiantly, not even her ultimate sacrifice had been enough to save the planet from consumption. She had needed more firepower, and this was now just what she had been given. Not just another upgrade to her lances and gun-decks, but a wholesale refit with completely new technology. The super-heavy rail-guns had astonishing rates of fire, and were as devastating at extreme range as when firing point blank at a target.

Calgar had warned his fellow chapter masters after the First Tyrannic War, but only a few of them had been willing to listen. Mastery of the Macragge Chapter brought with it a great deal of influence over the other chapters, but he did not control them. According to tradition going back to Guilliman's defiance of Consul Gallan, each chapter master had ultimate authority within his own realm, and the inertia of history could not easily be overcome. The concept of gradual evolution had become the norm within Ultramar Segmentum, and even in the face of dire threats, revolutionary ideas and approaches were shunned, despite Guilliman himself carrying out such actions on countless occasions. Even on Macragge alone, Calgar's scribes had returned from the archives bearing reports of groundbreaking developments in weaponry that had been rejected by chapter masters down the ages as being too radical. Advances that could have saved countless lives had been quietly filed away and forgotten. He could only imagine what wonders lay mouldering in the vaults of the other chapters...

It felt like a betrayal of his primarch to even think such a thing, but in part he blamed the Codex Ultramar. Guilliman's master-work was so useful and all-encompassing that in some cases it seemed to have replaced the need for independent thought. He had applied the most promising innovations, combined with the best insights gleaned from the Tau, to resurrect the Seditio Opprimere. In the face of such scepticism, though, it seemed that only a comprehensive and overwhelmingly successful field-test would shake the other chapter masters out of their complacency.

As predicted by their enhanced auger array, the trio of Imperial cruisers broke out of the warp. It was time to put his new ship - and the principle in general - to the test.

feats of heroism. Although a chapter of the Ultramarines is composed of only a nominal thousand Astartes warriors, these are only the tip of the spear. The chapter master is in effect the military governor of every world in his domain, and so also commands every Ultramar guardsman, Navy ship and auxilia, and when the Ultramarines go to war, so too do they.

Beliefs

Above all things the legion venerates Guilliman and his teachings, and the realm of Ultramar Segmentum that they have created together. They

believe that it is their manifest destiny to extend the boundaries of Ultramar Segmentum so that one day it will encompass all the worlds of humanity. The misguided, corrupt Imperium will inevitably fall and they will subsume it, be it by slow expansion or a single strike against Terra to topple the regime once and for all.

They see the Emperor as one of the greatest men who ever lived, and the father of their primarch. However, despite the proclamations of the Ecclesiarchy, they know that the Emperor is long dead, and have no



respect for the incompetent thugs that rule in His name. For all of this, their attitude towards the Imperium is one of distaste and pity rather than hatred. Their true loathing is reserved for the servants of the Chaos Gods, and

especially the Traitor Astartes, who have given up all semblance of humanity. Only once they have the full resources of mankind, though, will they finally be able to extinguish the Ruinous Powers from the galaxy.

Battlecry

Each chapter and successor is free to choose their own battlecry, although *"For Guilliman, and the greater glory of Ultramar!"* is favoured by the Macragge Chapter of the Ultramarines.





THE DORNIAN HERESY

INDEX ASTARTES:

WHITE SCARS

BY FERRATA

Though a trusted friend to Warmaster Horus, it was Jaghatai Khan's fate to fall to the clutches of Slaanesh. The Dark Lord of Ecstasy enticed the White Scars' Primarch with promises of material wealth, power and above all else, freedom from the confines of the Imperial war machine. Their betrayal was as swift as their attacks and equally devastating; bringing a tear to the eye of the sternest warrior. Though Jaghatai himself has long-since lapsed into decadent and ecstatic repose, his khans still terrorise the Imperium with lightning strikes; each a mockery of the Emperor they used to serve.

Origins

The inhabitants of Mundus Planus know nothing about the past of their world, the truth hidden deep in ancient lore kept secret since the Heresy. The only surviving text, *The Terror of Quan Zhou*, predates the arrival of the Imperium of Man to Mundus Planus, when the people called their home Chogoris. The long verses paint a picture of soaring mountains, vast green plains and deep turquoise seas. Cities of white stone sparkled along the coasts of these oceans, their inhabitants living prosperous and comfortable lives under their leader, the Palatine. Though they had achieved little beyond basic black powder technology, these metropolises were havens of luxury and learning. Opposed to these high walls lay the spartan land of the Empty Quarter, which stretched featureless for as far as the eye could see. Scattered across the plains were tribes of horsemen; nomads whose savagery and lust for battle were infamous across the lands.

Many of the tribesmen's own fables told of the dreaded Talskar tribe and their khan, or leader. Though he was called many names, such as Aūdac, Cīhttera and Mephaeta, amongst his own he was Jaghatai, the great warrior. His legend began when Ong, then the khan of the Talskar, happened upon a small child wandering lost across the plains. Knowing that any soul alone in his world should return to the earth within a day, he was astonished to find the boy had survived the passing of the moon. Believing he was a gift from the Sky Father, Ong took the youngster as his own. Teaching him the arts much valued by their society, Jaghatai became a master of the bow, the sword and the horse. His tactical wisdom and foresight earned him the respect of

many of his father's bondsmen, though others mocked him for preaching of a united tribe of the plains.

Sensing the power and potential of his son, Ong heeded the young Jaghatai's words, approaching many tribes under the banner of peace. Initially, few gave them presence in their camps, deeming such friendships signs of weakness and a plea for aid. Countless times the Talskar had to prove their strength in arms to be allowed to leave alive. But, against the odds, and eased by the smooth tongue of Jaghatai, a fledgling alliance grew around Ong and the Talskar. Unfortunately many still refuted this new nation and war continued to rage across the Empty Quarter. When brute force did not achieve the desired result, raiders of the Kurayed tribe ambushed Ong and Jaghatai. Father and son fought back-to-back, the last two remaining souls of their hunting party. Skill and courage won the day and the two returned to their encampment more determined in their quest. Reinvigorated, the united tribe prospered and gained strength as more khans pledged themselves and their families to Ong's banner. Soon their lives were luxurious and comfortable; a rarity which had not been seen upon the steppes before, where food could be promised and children were allowed to play. Jaghatai was held as a champion of the times, holding true to the ideals and virtues of his teachings. Even as this young nation bloomed to life, fate would play heavily against it.

While riding the plains one day, Jaghatai came across three horsemen from the white cities attempting to ravish a young tribeswoman. Years of luxury had not dimmed the skills of the young warrior, who quickly took the



heads of two of the attackers and allowed the badly wounded third to escape as a warning to his people. Jaghatai was not to know that he had damned himself, his father and his tribe that day, for one of the men he had killed had been a favoured son of the Palatine. Soon an army stood on the plains craving revenge.

The Palatine was not a foolish man; he knew full well the strengths and weakness of his enemy like all great commanders. As vanguard to his army, a force of diplomats visited the tribes that made up the alliance, offering money, horses and countless luxuries if they refused to take to battle. The campaign of subterfuge and bribery succeeded in turning the heads of Ong's allies, leaving the Talskar to face the Palatine's armies alone when they met on the Fields of Zhangiu. Though they had been abandoned, they fought like beasts. They were almost slaughtered to a man before they fled the battlefield. The few who were able to retreat were left to do so in peace,

When I was a youngling, my father honoured me with his company on a hunt. He was a man many thought weak due to my teachings, my dreams. The vultures of the plains swooped down from their hidden perches, striking our party. Our strength in arms saw victory that day, but maybe it would have been better if my father had died instead of falling this night. 'Words' I told my father, 'promises and pacts' was the way forward, the way to unite the tribes, not by sword and bow. We shared our food, our gers and our horses; we gave and ask for nothing in return. I was wrong. Whispered words and dirty handshakes have defeated the alliance, slain my father, your Khan. Tonight we take back our lands, our homes, our women. Tonight we unite the tribes through fear!

- Jaghatai Khan as night drew close on the Fields of Zhangiu

the broken ranks of the Palatine unwilling to pursue further into the field of blood. Unfortunately for the tribesmen, amongst the survivors was Jaghatai, a son who had lost his father and a man who had seen his dream shattered by the weaknesses of others.

Outraged by their treachery, Jaghatai swore that the Empty Quarter would die by his sword. Riding down upon those who had failed them, the remaining warriors of the Talskar became daemons of the plains. Finding pleasure in the screams of pain that surrounded them, they extended the torture of their enemies as long as possible. Though it was the Palatine's nation which had shed the blood of the Talskar, it was the tribesmen who suffered the pain of Jaghatai a thousand fold. The legends of Jaghatai Khan took form from these horrors, and by taking their rights of conquest in armour, horses and women, the Talskar grew in strength. Not even a united force, like the one Jaghatai himself had dreamt of, could withstand their fury.

As the Empty Quarter fell under the terror of the Talskar, the Imperium finally made contact with Chogoris. The Emperor Himself is said to have walked upon the soil of the planet, with the Palatine quickly offering his allegiance. Sensing one of His sons, the Emperor wandered the lands in search for one of humanity's greatest heroes. The first meeting between the Master of Mankind and Jaghatai was far from pleasant. The Emperor found His son perched upon a throne in a ger of luxury, the years of war funding a tent of pleasure and excess. Surrounded by intricate armour, beautiful women and sumptuous feasts, Jaghatai was not a warrior-hero but a dreaded warlord drowning in his own ecstasy. The Emperor was outraged at how low one of His own had fallen. In a bitter irony, although the Talskar's lightning emblem echoed His own, the two leaders could not be more different. This ghoul had destroyed where he could have conquered; terrorised those he could have ruled, but the Emperor was forced to embrace this child of His. So simple were the

urges of Jaghatai that the Emperor had little trouble convincing His son to join the Great Crusade; simply telling him of the treasures of the shining Imperial Palace and the glory he could find amongst the stars was sufficient. With his eyes wide with greed, Jaghatai eagerly pledged himself to the Emperor, becoming the Great Khan of the Fifth Legion of Astartes; baptising them the White Scars after the tribal markings of the Talskar.

The Great Crusade

As with all things in his life, Jaghatai took to commanding his legion with ease. He abandoned his home world to train in the heat of battle, he adapted to the bike over the horse with the skill only a son of the Emperor could. Not yet trusted to command an expedition of their own, the White Scars were instead enlisted to aid the other, more established legions. Serving alongside Dorn, Guilliman and Magnus, the White Scars became infamous for being reckless allies; abandoning their duties to charge the flanks of the enemy, chasing those who fled and bathing in the agony of the foe. It was whilst fighting alongside the Luna Wolves that Jaghatai found purpose. Horus, angered by the needless losses his legion had sustained because of Jaghatai's rash actions, struck his younger brother, telling the wild primarch to act like a commander and not a dog. Instead of lashing back, Jaghatai embraced his brother, saying he had finally met a man he could respect.

The White Scars and their primarch were reborn, the silver tongue that Jaghatai had used to first unite the tribes of his homeland now eased the desires of his men, chastising their mindless actions. After barely a year they had become a respected ally and Jaghatai a trusted friend of Horus. Indeed, the legion became popular amongst expeditions of the Great Crusade, their swift strikes timed beautifully to crush the enemy. When the Emperor decreed that Jaghatai would lead his own grand campaign, twelve of his brothers' legions sent representatives to congratulate him,

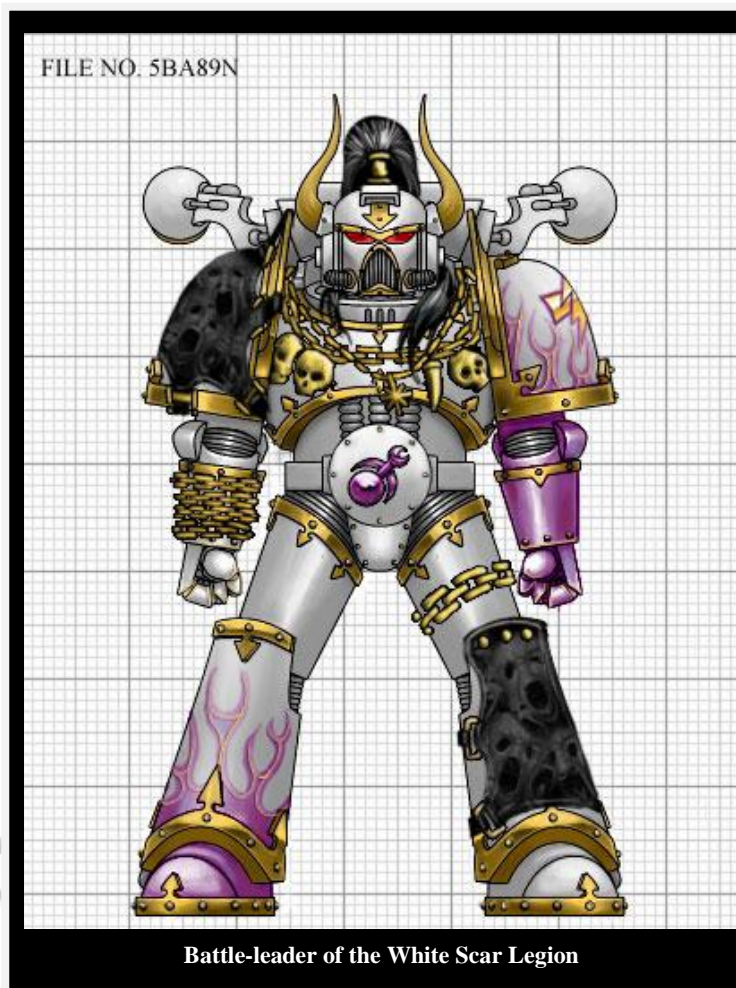


with three of them personally attending the great feast. Though sad to be leaving the comfort of those he held dear, Jaghatai's face was alight with pride as his father bestowed the greatest honour upon him – allowing the Fifth Legion to bear the lightning emblem of the Emperor which had been refused when the legion had been renamed.

Many new worlds fell to the war machine of the White Scars, so swift were their actions that the Imperium failed in documenting them all. The battle honours for the legion did little to represent the number of victories that the Scars claimed. From the Hive World of Kerait to the jungles of Olkhun, it seemed wherever the Fifth Legion took to battle, glory and triumph rode with them. Jaghatai personally headed many of the battles himself, his personal banner standing tall at the rear of his modified jet bike, his huge shoulders thrusting his power lance deep before assaulting the enemy with his sword. Not only did his men see the honour of the Great Khan, but those who he defeated would willingly serve him and the Imperium.

For a second time when his life looked fruitful and promising, Jaghatai was struck down. The isolation from his brothers who he had begun to trust, love and depend upon troubled the primarch deeply. He had felt loneliness like this only once before, during the battle against the Palatine. Without council from those who he respected, such as Horus and Mortarion, he took the responsibility of every death, either brother or ally, as a personal failure. He even lamented the deaths of his enemies, when words had failed and

force had been necessary. Constantly confined to his war room, he spent sleepless nights poring over tactical maps, viewing and reviewing the wide-reaching arms of his expeditions. He became distant from the warfront, swamped instead by petitions for his presence, local governors seeking aid in petty disputes or to honour them by accepting invitations for social gatherings. For a man born under the night stars with blood on his hands, the imprisonment of the diplomatic world was a grinding axe worse than death. Alone, with no-one to turn to for conversation without sly meanings, he attempted to find tranquillity in the sea of confusion that was becoming his life. He learned to appreciate the many great artefacts which had come to adorn his chambers. Tributes, bribes and gifts, each tainted by hidden meanings, underhand favours and silent wants – though he found an old feeling of comfort and security in such items.



These years were not kind to the wild primarch. He became less the warlord and more the bureaucrat, separated from the rush of battle and the emptiness of the plains. His only connections to the frontline were the few times he was able to abandon his quarters to spectate selected battles; his khans showing him his heroic legion. Once Jaghatai had returned to his chambers, his men continued to plunder armouries, reliquaries and treasuries in search of the perfect gift for their lord. Those who brought him the most precious items were heavily favoured, and soon Jaghatai was surrounded by sycophants instead of leaders, minions rather than heroes. As he listened to their tales of valour, honour and bravery, warzones were scavenged by blade and blood in the most brutal of ways to satisfy his greed. The tide of fresh victories earned by Jaghatai's expedition slowed to a trickle, and the poor tactical acumen of the new khans caused horrific losses to the Fifth Legion.

The items which garnered the lion's share of the Great Khan's pride were a twin pair of gauntlets named *Mamonas* and *Avauras*, which had been gifted to him by the High Priest of Ikesentii. The jewel incrustated gages were of little use in combat, their protection compromised by the golden weaving and delicately placed precious stones, but by then Jaghatai had little need for weapons of war, instead his vanity took dominance. It is said that he became bound to them, unwilling to leave their presence, even going as far as to declare that *'only a son of the Emperor was equal to their beauty and magnificence'*.



"A dog they call you – a tamed beast with no claws."

The intertwined voices were in his head, yet Jaghatai knew they belonged to Mamonas and Avauras. He couldn't remember a time when the two spirits hadn't guided his way – a blessed gift from the Sky Father.

"Caged. No freedom, no power, nothing. Just a pawn to their whims. We can offer you everything. Rule without question, wealth beyond the damned Imperial treasury. We can give you an escape from this coffin – you can live again. All you have to do is listen, and obey."

Jaghatai listened, and Jaghatai obeyed.

The Dornian Heresy

Jaghatai had ventured far from the heart of the Imperium when the direst of messages reached him. When all those around him were turning against his father, Warmaster Horus contacted one of the few souls he could trust to support him. He was forced to inform his younger brother that Primarch Dorn had turned his back upon the Emperor, and he was not alone. With echoes of the Fields of Zhangiu against the Palatine reverberating in his heart, Jaghatai flew into a violent rage, swearing that he would personally destroy all those who had failed mankind. Halting his expedition and recalling all of his forces to his banner, the fleet prepared for warp jump destined for Terra, intending to stop only at Chogoris to recuperate their losses. Retreating to his chambers to reclaim his calm, Jaghatai lost himself among his precious gifts; the intricate armour plates from Khasa, the hand-crafted sword which had cost the lives of three Arslanii forge masters, and finally Mamonas and Avauras, which whispered sweet words of comfort into the primarch's heart. Even when the fleet's warp engines inexplicably failed, he would not be distracted from his obsession.

The Warp has neither night nor day, just a constant stretch of time without respite. When Jaghatai emerged from his quarters, his crew and men had lost all morale, believing themselves abandoned in the Warp and their commander distraught from his brothers' treachery. Though his eyes looked sore from lack of sleep, they

glistened with an energy which only emphasised the grin which spread across his face. Unknown to all but Jaghatai himself, he had found a saviour from the troubles that racked his mind. Walking amongst his blood-brothers, he called them all by name and judged their skill with a sword, their worth as a comrade and their eagerness to follow his lead. With his renewed vigour he personally fixed the warp engines, labouring for many hours alone in the dark confines, with only his gauntlets for company.

When the fleet finally broke into real space at Chogoris, Jaghatai had organised a patchwork force of all the brotherhoods, stating that if the White Scars were to fail, then all would be represented in the rebirth of the legion. As this detachment secured the

fortress-monastery upon Chogoris and prepared the citizens for war against a fallen Imperium, the Great Khan left them with chilling orders, *"Isolate yourself from the outside, be the viper in the pit, hidden, but ready to strike. Bar me or the Emperor Himself, trust no-one."*

The arrival of the White Scars on Terra was meant to be a beacon of hope to the loyalist cause; reinforcements to aid the war against the traitorous Dorn. Unfortunately, all communications with the legion were lost in static, with only the crazed mumblings and screams of the damned breaking the interference. Jaghatai Khan had lost none of his tactical mastery over the years, leading his host of Thunderhawks directly for the Lion's Gate Spaceport. Mindful of the massacre perpetrated by the Blood Angels at the Eternity Wall Spaceport, and unable to receive any coherent reply to his hails, the spaceport's commanding officer ordered that the Lion's Gate anti-air defences and heavy shields remain active. Only through the direct intervention of Warmaster Horus himself were these systems finally deactivated and the White Scars given permission to land. This proved to be a grave error of judgement. The details of the slaughter which followed were overshadowed by later actions across the globe, and the

Horus yelled through his vox caster – his usual calm demeanour finally broken through the stress of the Siege of Terra. Whilst his men, and those of the other loyalist legions present, were laying down their lives for the Emperor, this captain, this damned captain, refused to allow allies to land. Every second the anti-air defences remained up was a second the White Scars could not be fighting alongside him.

"Lower those batteries captain, or do I have to come down there myself?"

"...Warmaster...Scars are...attack formation....no call signs...sounds of screams...sir?"

The weak voice of the captain struggled to break through the interference which had plagued Imperial communications for the past few hours; only the visual sightings of the White Scars' Thunderhawks had announced their arrival. Horus had to rely on a series of short-distance messages to relay his commands across the battlefield; his temper shortening with each minute he was left in the dark.

"I don't care if they start shooting at you - lower those defences!"



ground of Terra shook under the bikes of White Scars dedicated to Slaanesh.

At first Horus refused to believe the reports which reached his command post, but once Jaghatai had accepted the bounty of the Imperial Palace from Dorn - a prize which the Great Khan saw as rightly his after the promises of his father - and began massacring the citizens of Terra, the Warmaster was forced to accept that in these darkest of days even one of his closest friends could betray him. Painting a single tear drop in the corner of the Eye of Horus which emblazed his chest, he stood amongst his Sons as they accepted the charge of the White Scars. The initial assault devastated the loyalist line, but to universal surprise the second attack never materialised. Having proved their worth on the battlefield against their Astartes brothers, and with the riches of the Imperial treasury now secured in their ships' holds, the White Scars capriciously returned to the spaceport. Ignoring the bitter threats from Dorn and the other traitor primarchs, and seemingly indifferent to the fate of the Heresy that hung so precariously in the balance, the Fifth Legion left Terra in search of further plunder.

Since the Heresy

Whilst the victorious loyalists still wept at the death of the Emperor, the White Scars slaughtered world after world and ransacked their riches. Relic worlds, shrine worlds and forge worlds all suffered from the lightning strikes of the White Scars, with countless treasures lost to the greed of Jaghatai before he finally retreated into the Eye of Terror.

Jaghatai never set foot upon Chogoris again, seemingly forgetting his childhood home. The fate of the planet is, however, detailed extensively in the



Jaghatai Khan, wearing his prized gauntlets, *Mamonas* and *Avauras*

chronicles of Abaddon's Crusades. After stabilising what remained of the Imperium; the First High Lord turned his gaze to the homeworlds of the Traitor Legions. A combined force of Death Guard and Black Templars, under the dead eyes of Mortarion, was given the honour of reclaiming Chogoris. The patchwork brotherhood abandoned by Jaghatai fought like wolves, alongside the endless tides of tribal horsemen and Palatine infantry. Still heeding the words of the Great Khan, none dared to question the righteousness of their cause. Their hearts were full of sorrow, for the coming of the enemy meant that Jaghatai, and indeed the Emperor, had failed, and that they were the last warriors of his memory.

There would be only one result to this war; a triumphant Imperium. The tragedy of this conflict would only come to light when the few surviving White Scars were interrogated for the location of their primarch. The defenders believed themselves the final guardians of the Emperor's dream, the invading force, to them, were the

traitors. As the truth was told, many refused to accept that their primarch could have discarded them. Others wept as it struck chords within them, their souls telling them all they needed to know. Those left behind were the ones Jaghatai had been unable to taint, those too noble and pure of spirit. For their virtues, they had led their people into a massacre. A remembrancer of Abaddon's fleet penned the words for this most harrowing of events; *"Chogoris, burnt to ashes, bloodied by war. Though enemies, though foes; only loyal sons of the Emperor died that day."*

In the first few millennia after the Great Betrayal, a daemon-centaur claiming to be Jaghatai led invasions into the Imperium, striking without warning and seemingly without logic. During this time, the beast commanded the legion to such horrors as the Red Highway Massacre, a feat which, even with their bitter hatred of one another, the Khornate Space Wolves respect as an act of bloodshed almost without comparison. As the centuries wore on, Jaghatai became increasingly distracted from his conquests, instead depending upon his khans to fight in his name whilst he lived in ecstasy surrounded by treasures and pleasures. It has been many millennia since the Daemon-Primarch of Slaanesh has personally made war upon the Imperium, and many scholars doubt he truly still commands the legion.

Homeworlds

Mundus Planus, or Chogoris as it was once known, was a planet of two worlds when Jaghatai rode across its soils. The cities that had belonged to the Palatine were built from white rock, a shining beacon of humanity's glory from horizon to horizon. The ivory walls secured a life of peace and prosperity for its inhabitants. Both



landscape and lifestyle stood in contrast to that of the Empty Quarter. As grasslands stretched into grasslands, it seemed impossible for any single man to claim it as his own. Hills rolled into mountains, of which the elixir of life trickled into the mighty rivers which fed the land. Upon these nomads a strict life was forced, food was scarce, war was frequent and many died young. Master of the horse, the bow and the sword, it was these people who raised Jaghatai as their own, and it was they who formed the ranks of the White Scars.

All the bloodshed in its history paled in comparison to the fate of the world. Abandoned and deceived by Jaghatai, a small force of loyal White Scars stood alongside both tribesmen and warriors of the Palatine against Abaddon's Crusade. Not only was every inhabitant slaughtered in the foolish war, the culture and legacy of the world was also obliterated. In the centuries to come, the planet was transformed into the Mundus Planus of today. The cities of marble were replaced by endless factories, pumping smoke and pollutants into the air whilst the Empty Quarter became host to towering hives that would make the nomads turn in their graves. Though spared the horror of Exterminatus, Mundus Planus was instead sentenced to become but a simple, anonymous cog in the Imperial machine. For century after century it has quietly and unremarkably produced its worth in goods and regiments, oblivious to the horrors of its dark past.

Of the White Scars themselves, they settled upon the daemon world of Kaprax, located deep within the Eye of Terror. The vast plains of their home world were recreated to the whims of Jaghatai, the very earth given form by the desire of their primarch. Allowing his men to roam free, doing as their urges decreed, the planet became home to excess, greed and indulgence. Those with enough blood-money and power erect gers filled with exotic luxuries which ape the great Pleasure Dome of Jaghatai himself. It is unknown how many brothers of the White Scars, like their primarch, have not left Kaprax since its creation, spending all eternity there without ever growing bored.

Recruitment into the White Scars is a torment for even the sternest of soldiers, and few enter the path willingly. The ancient rituals which once produced warriors loyal to the Emperor have become twisted like their masters into ceremonies of pain. The magicks of Chaos allow any host to be overcome by the power of Jaghatai's gene-seed. Stormseers - the masters of the winds of Slaanesh - bind the genes of the Great Khan to the captive whilst apothecaries carry out the ritual scarring. The transformation takes many weeks, although to the recruit it seems to be an eternity of agony. During this time the Stormseers never cease in their trance-like chants, delivering new souls to the Dark Lord. Many weaklings fail, their physical forms too frail for the power of Jaghatai.

Beliefs

The ideologies and practices of the White Scars have travelled a dark path, much like the legion itself. The teachings of the Stormseers, both skilled in the art of magicks and the ways of Slaanesh, are structured around two core pillars by which all brothers live and die. These central beliefs are that one must attain all that is possible and live to their body's fullest capabilities. If an Imperial preacher taught these words to his flock they would be virtues of life, creeds that would surely send a soul to the table of the Emperor, but the twisted minds of the White Scars have belittled these tenets into nothing more than greed and ecstasy. They want for all that is not theirs, but once they have acquired it, it pales and fails to satisfy their lust. They take their bodies to the highest of pleasures and the deepest of pains all in the name of their patron, Slaanesh.

Organisation

Though all White Scars still remain loyal to the Great Khan, it has been long millennia since he left his palace of pleasure to lead the legion. Instead, groups have formed around inspiring khans who command by strength of arms, fear and, above all else, the promise of wealth. These brotherhoods range from a small band of like-minded individuals to forces equalling that of several loyalist grand companies in number. Of all the brotherhoods of the White Scars, the triumvirate of the Rampagers, Destroyers and Marauders constantly vie to be the most brutal and feared.

Each brotherhood is structured around the disposition and resources of their khan, making each one individual and unique. A few commonalities have survived the fall of the legion, such as the absence of Havoc squads and the distaste towards Dreadnoughts. Whilst the first is simply antagonistic to the flowing style of warfare taught by Jaghatai, the latter strikes a fear into the hearts of the fearless. Entombment within the sarcophagus of these beasts is seen as the greatest of torments for them, the cold metal devoid of the

The Red Highway Massacre

Of all the sadistic acts in the history of the White Scars, the slaughter of the refugees of Urganich is by far the bloodiest. After days of constant attacks which culminated with the critical destabilisation of the city's reactor core, Jaghatai retreated to his ger to watch the hive cripple itself with fear. Instead, the valiant Imperial Governor led his people on a desperate march to the neighbouring hive of Merv.

The onslaught of the White Scars was swift, their bikes allowing them to easily catch the massive train of civilians. Over a period of six days and nights, the population of Urganich was besieged by the murderous hordes of Jaghatai Khan.

Not a single soul made it to the gates of Merv.



sense of pleasure. It has been known for khans to punish those under their command by imprisoning them inside a dreadnought when such behemoths can be captured from loyalist forces. These poor souls quickly fall to insanity and are launched into the heat of battle, resulting in much consternation throughout the enemy's ranks.

The preference for mobile warfare within the legion still echoes from the tribesmen of Chogoris, with the use of bike squads being heavily favoured. These brothers will often group in sixes, the sacred number of Slaanesh, and those who embrace it are smiled upon by their Dark Lord. The White Scars are the only Traitor Legion able to field Land Speeders, though their numbers are limited by the legion's inability to produce the vehicle, instead depending on pillaging them from the battlefield. A khan who manages to acquire such treasures will find his status and power much advanced.

Though there is no true ranking of the splinter-factions bar that Jaghatai is lord of all, there are positions of great power within the legion. An Astartes known only as the Voice of the Great Khan speaks in the name of Jaghatai, and effectively rules all. It is a foolish khan who refuses to follow the orders of the Voice for the wrath he can bring is almost equal to that of the primarch. The Stormseers are also a dominant force within the legion, their expertise in the magicks of Slaanesh granting them power beyond the dreams of others. They extract a high price in treasure and slaves for their services on and off the battlefield, but it is one the khans must pay for the continued existence of their brotherhoods.

The Lord of the Hunt is a much feared brother of the White Scars. Owing no allegiance to any force, he roams the galaxy in search of his prey. A few marines, drunk on the thrill of the hunt, follow the stalker on his missions, though none survive long. The Imperial records on the Lord of the Hunt are confused at best, whether it is a single man who has survived since the Heresy or if as one dies, another takes up the title, is mere postulation

The Legend of the Hunter

Brother-Captain Cato Sicarius was a proud warrior of the Ultramarines, a champion of Guilliman and heir-apparent to the throne of the legion. He was quick with the blade, precise with the pole arm and deadly with the axe. This degenerate, this White Scar, had been a competent foe, but he had been a fool to challenge him. Be they loyalist or traitor, none could match the martial prowess of the Ultramarines.

Sicarius sighed at the waste of such ornate armour. The helmet alone was a masterpiece, crafted in the form of a snarling wolf; it was a work of art. His foe was crippled, unable to move for the pain racking his body, and yet he seemed to be revelling in the experience. With a practiced movement of his Talassarian Tempest blade he removed the head of his enemy in a single stroke. It was his last act as a warrior of Ultramar. From deep within him a voice that was not his own spoke:

'Welcome vessel, I am the Lord of the Hunt – and you are mine.'

by scholars. The legend states that a khan walked the fields at the Siege of Terra, challenging loyalist and Chaos champions alike to single combat. The number which fell to his blade is unknown, but since that day, the coming of the Lord of the Hunt is a harbinger of death for his prey.

Combat Doctrine

Since their fall to the Dark Prince of Excess, the White Scars have only furthered their mastery of mobile warfare. Their assaults are reminiscent of those of the Talskar as they bled the Empty Quarter dry. Appearing from all sides, the only warning is the thunder of engines as bikes appear on the horizon. Strikes come hard and fast, only for an eerie silence to settle as the White Scars retreat though victory could easily have been achieved. Such tactics are deemed foolish by many strategists, as they allow an unprepared foe time to dig in, but such is the brutality of the first blow that the enemy is demoralised and terror begins to spread its insidious roots. The White Scars watch in glee as the enemy force tears itself apart from within, unable to cope with the fear of a second attack that might come at any moment.

Wherever the sons of Jaghatai tread, destruction follows. Their ability to isolate the weak link in any defensive force wreaks havoc across the line. A once secure flank finds itself

surrounded by the enemy, whilst a foe thinking itself under attack awakes to see no enemy but can hear the screams of men in defensive lines behind them. There have been occasions when the nobility of humanity has prevailed, and instead of falling apart, a strengthened, united community stands against the White Scars. Such insults are treated harshly, and the brave fools sometimes find themselves suffering a fate worse than death – forced induction into the legion against which they fought so bravely.

Such is the decoration and wealth of the armour and weapons which adorns each marine that many have confused brothers of the White Scars as leaders. Blades worthy of loyalist captains are found in the hands of mere warriors. It is said that a victory over the legion, if it can be achieved, is a lucrative one indeed, for the riches earned from pillaging the bodies of the Astartes could build a city.

Gene-Seed

Even while serving the Emperor during the Great Crusade, the purity of the White Scars gene-seed was thrown into doubt. The genetics of the tribesmen of Chogoris proved as resolute and strong as the people themselves, entwining itself with the gene-seed of Jaghatai. Their lust for war and savagery became one with the brutality of the Space Marine to produce a dark stain in



humanity's history. Even without the recruits of their home world, the White Scars have become increasingly sadistic and barbaric in their nature. Even their most hated ally, the Khornate Space Wolves, have been known to call the White Scars cruel.

Mutations have become rife in a number of the brotherhoods, whilst others have managed to maintain some

genetic integrity. The Marauders are renowned for the daemonic forms many of their marines have taken; their horror almost rivalling that of the myriad creatures of the warp. The magicks which are used to create new recruits for the legion only further stifle the purity of Jaghatai's legacy, the poison of Chaos flowing early into what was once a holy ritual. Even as a marine is born into the foul life of the

White Scars he is obsessed with want and destroyed by pleasure - a true child of Slaanesh.

Battlecry

Although many different calls are used by the White Scars, "*For the Khan!*" remains a constant across the brotherhoods.





THE DORNIAN HERESY

INDEX ASTARTES:

SPACE WOLVES

BY
AURELIUS
REX

Leman Russ' early experiences on Fenris left him with an abiding hatred and suspicion of sorcery, a feeling that was reinforced by what he saw during the Great Crusade. Concerned that the Thousand Son's magicks would lead them to corrupt even the Emperor, the Space Wolves attacked them to avert a worse fate. When Magnus' counter-attack brought them to the brink of destruction, Russ called out to his father for aid, but his pleas were instead answered by Khorne, the bane of all enchantments. The Space Wolves prevailed by giving themselves over to the beast within, revelling in bloodletting and bestial fury. Now, as Khorne's chosen legion, they have turned on the Emperor, who they see as the Arch-Sorcerer. They now slaughter all in their path, taking skulls and trophies from their fallen opponents for the glory of the Blood God.

Origins

Ancient Fenris, the world onto which the infant Russ came to rest, was a world of violent extremes. Trapped in an acute elliptical orbit, its winters were long and dark, and the gravitational upheaval as Fenris passed close to its sun threw the scattered inhabited islands into turmoil. The human tribes were forced to make their living from the storm-tossed seas, building boats from the few trees to survive to maturity and the hides from monsters of the deep. These vessels were vital not just for fishing, but to relocate entire communities to new islands as their own sank beneath the waves. Such a harsh world forged hard and hardy people, nomads, with little care for knowledge that couldn't be carried inside their heads. Survival meant not just being able to navigate the waves, but to drive the enemy into the sea, be they raiders, or simply a tribe unable to defend, and hence unworthy of inhabiting, the precious islands.

However, it was not these people that the infant primarch was found by, but something far more dangerous. According to Gnauril the Elder's legendary saga, *The Ascension of the Wolf King*, he was raised in the first few years of life by a pack of Fenrisian wolves, suckling from the she-wolf like a cub and hunting on all fours with the pack. It was these raids that first brought him into contact with the tribes of man. On hearing of the wolves terrorising his vassals, the ruler of the island ordered his bondsmen to bring back their pelts. The pack was lured

into a trap set by a wyrd, one of their rune-priests, who planted the impression that one of their number was wounded and crying out for help. Once hemmed in by the steep walls of a gorge, the dense undergrowth was set ablaze with flaming arrows, and the maddened animals slaughtered as they broke from cover.

The boy-primarch saw his den-mother charge at the hunters, only to be knocked to the floor by the rune-priest's eldritch lightning. With a wordless howl of fury he leapt to the mighty she-wolf's side, scattering the humans that sought to harm her. Despite being struck by many a poisoned arrow, rage and defiance still burned within him. In the end it was the rune-priest's sorcery that finally rendered him insensible. The wolves were skinned, but the feral curiosity was securely bound and returned to the halls of Thengir, King of the Russ tribe. Seeing a challenge before him, Thengir boasted that he would tame the feral child and teach him the human tongue. Though it started as a humorous wager, the king soon grew to regard the boy as his own son, naming him Leman of the Russ. While he retained a certain lupine savagery, the boy took to his new-found human heritage with aplomb. His extraordinary strength, skill and cunning earned him a dominant role within the tribe, and cemented his position as the rightful heir to Thengir's throne.

In Leman Russ' rise to greatness one group found themselves excluded from



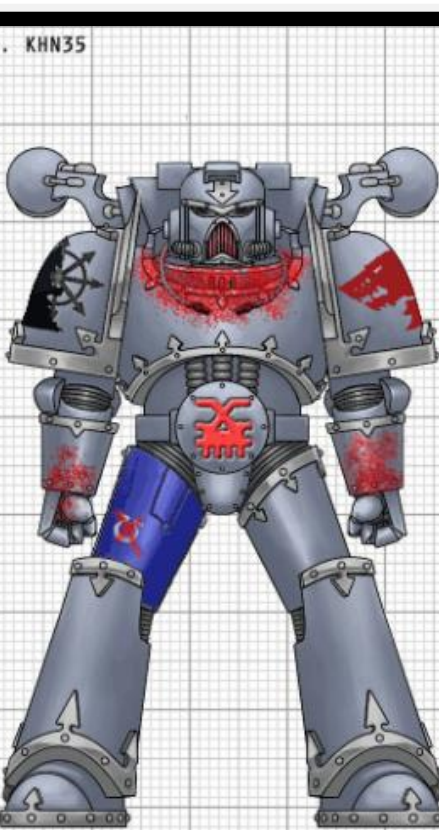
the king's councils: the once-powerful rune-priests. Some say that Russ could never forgive what they had done to the great she-wolf who had raised him. Others claim that having only recently gained the power of speech and human reason, seeing the wyrd's cloud men's minds and steal their thoughts seemed to be the worst kind of crime to the young primarch. His instincts were vindicated when the rune-priests used their powers to twist loyal members of the tribe to attack Russ and King Thengir. Recognising the taint of sorcery, Leman Russ swiftly dispatched the rune-priests among the group and ended the attack, but not in time to prevent Thengir from suffering a mortal wound.

The freed bondsmen grovelled for their lives at the feet of Leman Russ. They spoke of how their will had been stolen, that they had been nothing but helpless puppets in the attack. They also claimed to have heard talk of the involvement and complicity of other rune-priests, both on the island and further afield. Grimly, Leman Russ bade them stand, and in a voice filled with certainty made the following proclamation:

"To beat someone in a fair fight and prove your dominance is only right. To trick your opponent to do so... all the better. But to steal someone's mind with sorcery; to take from them the very thing that makes them human... that can never be forgiven."

"We will kill them all."

To this end, the tribe of the Russ took to wearing torcs made of solid, dependable iron. A known protective against sorcery, its qualities were further enhanced by quenching the



Post-Heresy Space Wolf
Note use of Ultramarine cuisse taken as a trophy

glowing metal in the blood of an enemy. Thus protected, by the time the Emperor arrived on Fenris the newly crowned Wolf-King, had expunged the taint of sorcery from the island, and also from those of their neighbours.

Russ' early instinctual acceptance of the Emperor as his true father was severely shaken when it became clear that He was not just what the Fenrisians would call a wyrd, but the most powerful one in the galaxy. The Emperor patiently explained the difference between wild sorcery and his own tightly controlled psychic powers, but Russ refused to listen. Even the honour of commanding a legion of the Adeptus Astartes was taken as an insult. He coldly accused the Emperor of being no better than the rune-priests who had used others to fight their battles for them, and contemptuously threw the offered golden thunderbolt and lightning sigil to the floor. Russ confronted the

Adeptus Custodes who had subtly moved to protect their lord, but the Emperor bade His guards stand aside, and realising what it would take to convince him, issued Russ a challenge.

The Master of Mankind and the Wolf-King fought bare-handed all through that night, and as the sun rose over the wreckage of the lodge-house, the matter was finally settled. The Emperor had shown He was willing to spill His own blood, rather than just demand it of His subjects, and by merely surviving that long, Russ had proved beyond doubt that he was truly one of his father's primarchs. All that remained was for the Emperor to establish His dominance without question. With a mighty blow that stunned the assembled crowd, the Emperor struck Russ

square in the face and knocked him out cold. Then, to the appreciative cheers of the Fenrisians, the bloodied Master of Mankind placed His golden sigil around Russ' neck. In doing so, the Emperor formally passed command of the Sixth Legion to their primarch, known ever-after as the Space Wolves.

The Great Crusade

When Russ awoke he was a man transformed: at ease with his place as the enforcer of the Emperor's will among the stars. The legion took the stable and previously unexplored continent of Asaheim as its base and established their fortress-monastery, which they called *the Fang*, at the summit of the highest and most forbidding mountain peak. The original Terran legionaries adapted quickly to their primogenitor's whims, and the hardy islanders of Fenris proved to be excellent candidates to take the Helix Lupus and join their ranks.



Though savage and unconventional by the standards of many other legions, the Space Wolves' innate skills as seafarers and raiders translated well to the role of bringing the lost human worlds into compliance with the Imperium. Russ' legendary charm, amply backed by the threat of his ferocious warriors, persuaded all but the most truculent planetary leaders as to the benefits of the burgeoning Imperium. On occasion the Space Wolves found themselves fighting alongside marines from other legions, and while Russ counted most of his brother-primarchs as firm friends, in the case of the Dark Angels the rivalry was far from cordial. The gregarious and headstrong Russ found Lion El'Jonson to be cold, arrogant and superior, a fact made worse by them having brought a greater tally of worlds into compliance than the young Space Wolf Legion. This antipathy spilled over to such a degree that after their shared enemies had been defeated it was common for unseemly fistfights or even blood-duels to erupt.

Despite their complete trust in the Emperor, the culture of Fenris left the Space Wolves eternally vigilant for any taint of sorcery in the worlds they conquered. Where less 'superstitious' legions blinded themselves to the truth, the Space Wolves took the same direct and bloody approach to the uncanny that they had on Fenris. It seemed that on every planet they brought into compliance, no matter how tranquil, a coven of wyrds lay hidden like the maggot within the apple. Though the very concept of the daemonic was treated by others at the time as laughable, the Space Wolves saw them for what they were. In the face of mass possession and daemonic manifestation, even the oblivion of global extinction was a kindness.

While Russ himself calmed the misgivings of his men over working with aberrations like Astropaths and Navigators, he forcefully forbade battlefield psykers in his legion, and was outspoken about their use by other Astartes. The worst offenders in Russ' eyes were the Thousand Sons. Their primarch, Magnus the Red, believed

"Books? We keep our knowledge up here! [taps head] Any tribe that used its wood to make paper rather than spear shafts or axe handles wouldn't last long on Fenris, I can tell you! We were given some books once to try to 'civilise' us, so they said. They came in very useful to get the fire going, and the pages were certainly smoother and more comfortable on the cheeks than using ghora leaves after a big meal, [grins toothily] though I don't think that was quite the 'civilising' effect they had in mind!"

- Chief Bran Irontooth on the benefits of the Imperium

wholeheartedly that psychic talent was the key to Mankind's future, and used it as an integral part of his war strategy. The first and last time the two legions fought alongside one another, they came within moments of all-out warfare. The experience convinced Russ that Magnus' explorations into the nature of the Immaterium were nothing more than thinly veiled sorceries of the blackest kind.

Russ was not alone in his concerns, and on the planet of Nikaea the Master of Mankind called a council to stand in judgement on the subject. The Wolf-King was characteristically forthright in his views, and supported with damning testimony from like-minded primarchs such as Mortarion, Corax and even Dorn, Magnus' fate appeared sealed. When judgement came, the Thousand Sons were not only allowed to continue their practices, but also given leave to soul-bind themselves to the Emperor. Fearing that Magnus had used his corrupt powers to influence their father's decision, Russ stormed from the council and laid plans to save the Emperor from Himself.

The Burning of Prospero

Believing that the soul-binding ritual would allow Magnus to poison the Emperor's essence with sorcery, Russ gathered his entire legion together to attack the Thousand Sons' homeworld of Prospero. To their credit, not a single brother shied away from the terrible thing the Wolf-King had asked of them.

With all of their cunning and skill, the Space Wolves were able to catch the legion of sorcerers unawares, chasing

off their fleet and blasting their orbital defences into wreckage before descending onto the planet below. What they found beneath the shining white cities' veneer of purity sickened the Space Wolves to the core. They uncovered entire libraries of sacrilegious texts, buildings constructed for the sole purpose of conducting black rites, and a populace who openly bore the mark of the mutant and the witch. While the Space Wolves drew the noose around the heavily protected capital city of Tizca, Russ had no qualms about ordering sustained orbital bombardments to scour the lesser cities from the face of the planet.

The Space Wolves advanced cautiously beneath the protective shield-curtain, and at first met only scattered resistance. Emboldened, they pressed on, only to find the city itself becoming a labyrinth, as though the buildings themselves were moving and re-arranging to divide their forces. It was then that the Thousand Sons finally showed themselves. Isolated and unsupported, the Space Wolves were attacked from all sides by balefire and mind-numbing enchantments. Their iron torcs were of little use against such potent magicks, and with his legion dying around him Russ called out to his father, to anyone, for aid in destroying the sorcerers.

The answer came from deep within him. It was the personification of the bestial fury that had boiled inside his soul since he had first run with the wolf-pack on Fenris. It was the part of him that yearned to slaughter whole worlds, to feast upon warm flesh and to swim in oceans of blood. The howl



that started at the back of Russ' throat echoed from the shining towers and was in turn taken up by every Space Wolf in the city. In an instant the enchantments faltered, the insane cartography shifted back to the norm and aetheric lightning guttered and died in the sorcerer's hands.

Transformed into little more than slaving beasts, the Space Wolves fell upon their tormentors. Only after they had reduced the city of Tizca to a charnel pit did they return to anything resembling sanity. They did so with the name of their saviour on their reddened lips: Khorne, the God of Blood and Skulls, the bane of all sorcery. There were bodies of Thousand Sons among the piles of corpses, but not nearly enough to account for their full numbers. Most tellingly, of Magnus himself there was no sign. Stalking through the rubble of the primarch's tower sparked a memory of the battle in Russ that changed the legion forever. He remembered fighting the cyclops primarch, trading blows which shook buildings to their very foundations. Just as he had Magnus at his mercy, a figure in golden armour appeared from nowhere and parried the death-blow with an ornate spear. The memory of the heart-strike, only narrowly turned aside by Russ' thick chest-plate, brought back an ocean of pain, but it was washed away by the joyous remembrance of tearing the assassin apart a second later.

Magnus the Red was long gone, but the corpse of the golden armoured warrior remained. He recognised the man for what he was, a member of the Adeptus

Custodes, his father's personal bodyguards. He also found the remains of the golden thunderbolt sigil that had been destroyed by the Guardian Spear's thrust. With an iron certainty Russ knew the truth of the matter. From the actions of the Adeptus Custodes, it was painfully clear that the Emperor not only condoned the sorcery that Magnus had perpetrated, but stood proudly with him. Russ also recognised the thunderbolt sigil for the focus of psychic power it most certainly was. While he had worn it Russ had been influenced to be utterly loyal to his 'Allfather'. After its destruction, Russ could see the Emperor for what he truly was: The Arch-Wych.

With the Thousand Sons gone, Prospero's shining cities in ruins and its mutant population put to the sword, Russ tasked his legion with an even greater challenge. The whispers of his new patron in his ears, Russ declared that they would tear down the Imperial Palace and put the Emperor to the sword.

Drowning in Blood

The news that Rogal Dorn had also seen the light and had crushed three legions loyal to the Emperor roused the Space Wolves to jubilation. It seemed that at last mankind was awaking to the threat, and was rising up as one against sorcery. In a state of high excitement the legion returned to its fleet and set course for Terra to join the revolution. This celebratory mood rapidly soured though, as the legion immersed themselves in the worship of Khorne with riotous bouts of bloodletting and head-taking. Worse still, what was always going to be a long journey seemed to be cursed. The tides of the warp had turned against them, slowing their progress to a crawl and sweeping them far off course.

The fleet's Navigators were blamed, either through incompetence or by intent, yet even the most bloodcurdling of torments failed to right their course. Russ' realisation that their new-found gifts allowed them to traverse the warp as well as any Navigator put an end to

the mutants' lives, but not to the fleet's predicament. Cooped up with no one but each other to vent their frustration upon, Russ became concerned they would either arrive too late, or that the legion would destroy itself long before it reached Terra.

Their salvation came from an unexpected source: the Dark Angels. When yet another warp-jump deposited them far off course and within hailing distance of a Dark Angels fleet, the Space Wolves prepared to continue their long-standing feud. Instead they were greeted warmly as fellow enlightened of Chaos. Luther, the Dark Angel's commander, said that he had personally slain Jonson for the glory of Chaos, and further, claimed to have embraced and studied the Dark Gods in all their aspects. With Luther's aid, the Space Wolves were able to control and direct their aggression. This was performed in a symbolic bloodletting on the planet of Dulan. Even though the world had sided with Chaos, the two legions tore down the Crimson Fortress of its ruler, the tyrant Durath. The blood pact, sealed with Durath's evisceration, gave the Space Wolves a deeper understanding of Khorne. From then on, Russ and his brothers had the chance to be masters of the blood-tide rather than its servants.

Both fleets continued onwards, drawing tortuously slowly but surely towards Terra. With the two Chaos Legions only days from their destination, and the war balanced upon a knife-edge, the Emperor was forced into a desperate gamble to attack the leader of the Heresy on his flagship. Though Dorn was killed and the heart torn out of the Chaos Legions on Terra, it left the Emperor a broken, mortally wounded husk.

Even with the Chaos Legions in full retreat and the vengeful loyalists eager to avenge their fallen lord, Russ still continued onwards. It was only the sage counsel of Luther that turned him from the path of certain destruction. He said that they must have faith that everything had transpired according to Khorne's great plan. With the

"Fear not of how Imperial history will judge our actions. If we stand aside this day, the Imperium itself will soon be history."

**- Leman Russ
on the eve of the
Burning of Prospero**



Imperium in such a state of upheaval there was an entire galaxy of skulls ripe for the harvesting. The idea that Khorne himself had prevented them from reaching Terra in time did not go down well with the Space Wolves, with Wolf Lords openly voicing their disgust. At last, however, Russ turned them aside, and they set course for Fenris, leaving a swathe of butchered worlds in their wake.

The Scourging of Fenris

As the Imperium regained its strength, it took to reclaiming the worlds which had sided with Chaos during the Dornian Heresy. The ancestral homeworlds of the so-called Traitor Legions were particular prizes for them, but were something that could only be attempted by massed crusades of the loyalist Astartes. Excepting Macragge, which has not fallen to this day, Fenris was the last Astartes homeworld to fall. For long periods it was isolated by swirling warp storms from the Eye of Terror which, as

though attracted by the worship of the Blood God, had swept out to encompass Fenris. Still the consummate raider, Russ used the brief periods in which the warp was calm to bring the judgement of Khorne down upon the already weakened Imperium, always returning to Fenris just before the storms descended once more.

Eventually, three years shy of the second century anniversary of the Emperor's entombment inside His Golden Throne, the warp-storms enshrouding Fenris briefly cleared and a crusade was launched to assault the world with overwhelming strength. The loyalists had hoped that their relative isolation would have caused the skull-takers to turn upon one another, depleting their numbers, but this was not to be.

During the Scourging of Fenris, every isolated island became a battleground. The animals and even the landscape itself seemed to rise up as though

driven by the will of the Blood God to oppose the invaders. The war of attrition stretched from weeks to months, but finally, under a burning sun that filled the sky with ominous portent, the Imperial forces breached the walls of the Fang itself. Though there were other legions and indeed primarchs fighting across Fenris, only the Thousand Sons led by Magnus, the Word Bearers commanded by Lorgar and the Black Templars under High Lord Abaddon set foot inside the Space Wolves mighty fortress-monastery.

In the centuries since the Wolf-King and the cyclops had fought to a standstill on Prospero, Russ had become both a daemon-primarch and an avatar of Khorne. In such a clash no mere mortal could hope to survive, and the Fang's massive halls were choked with the dead of both sides. Then, after three days, the loyalist simply withdrew and returned to their ships. The only sign the Space Wolves found of their primarch was his frostblade,



Mjalnar, and his massive, empty suit of daemon-armour scattered outside the entrance to his personal temple to Khorne.

Though consumed by the disappearance of their primarch, there was no time for the Space Wolves to ascertain Russ' location, or even if he was still alive. The loyalists had fled because the world itself was dying, its ever-eccentric orbit in terminal decay. The Space Wolves blamed the Thousand Sons, claiming that only the foulest of sorceries could have performed such a deed. Bereft of their primarch, and with their world tearing itself apart, the legion did the same. Some remained on Fenris and slaked their bloodlust by killing whoever they could find before the end. Most took to their ships and were scattered across the galaxy by the tides of the warp, content simply to wreak their vengeance upon the Imperium.

Organisation

After the disappearance of Leman Russ, the Space Wolves' fiercely headstrong and independent nature meant that no single Wolf Lord could claim the unanimous support of their peers. As a result the legion fractured into great companies, with charismatic Wolf Lords such as Kyril Grimblood, Hengst Bloodmane and Bjorn the Fell Handed leading their brothers out on disparate, uncoordinated rampages. In time even these allegiances began to fracture. The first to depart were groups of younger Astartes who broke away from what they saw as the staid and complacent rule of their commanders. As death or spawn-hood claimed the original Wolf Lords, feuds erupted amongst those who sought to succeed them. Such confrontations generally end with the victor claiming the skulls of his challengers, but on occasion it has led to the acrimonious breakdown of once-mighty great companies.

Newly inducted marines start out grouped together into large packs known as Blood Claws. With the vitality of youth, they rush headlong towards the enemy to spill blood in the

The Wolf Brothers

Burning with the arrogance and certainty of youth, and no longer burdened by their fealty to Leman Russ, large numbers of Blood Claws rejected the teachings of their elders and struck out to show the galaxy the meaning of unbridled aggression. Wilfully ignoring the structure of Luther's teachings, which they saw as an anathema to the purity of Khorne, each competed to be the most brutal and bloodthirsty in honour of their god. Though these so-called 'Wolf Brothers' drowned the stars themselves in blood, such intensity could never be sustained. They were rapidly consumed in the crucible of war, dead either at the hands of the enemy, or just as likely, murdered by each other. Such a fate is little deterrent, though, and periodically bands of rebellious Blood Claws leave the confines of their great companies to follow in the footsteps of the original Wolf Brothers.

name of Khorne. Those skilled or lucky to survive long enough to assimilate Luther's insights take a more measured, and even more effective approach to battle. These Grey Hunters use stealth and cunning to quietly lope into position, the better to deliver swift death to their unsuspecting enemies. The finest exponents of Khorne's art rise to the position of Wolf Guard. They are charged with the most important tasks, such as enforcing their master's will upon a difficult pack, or clearing a path for the Wolf Lord to challenge the enemy's leaders.

The legion has no love or need for the written word, instead storing all of its knowledge and history in the form of sagas recited aloud. While every brother strives to tell the epic tale of their deeds on the battlefield, the legion's specialists use it as an aid to complete their own tasks. The Iron Priests consign everything to memory in this way, from the operation of starships to the repair of weapons and armour, while the Choosers of the Slain use the sagas to recall the procedure for the creation of new Space Wolves.

The Space Wolves' ships are crewed by humans referred to as bondsmen. They attend to the marine's needs and even follow them onto the battlefield. Some are cultists of Khorne who have consciously sought out the legion in a vain attempt to prove their worthiness as Astartes. Most bondsmen are simply souls taken captive rather than swiftly

killed during raids. In either case such weaklings do not last long before running foul of one of their master's rages, or becoming food for the Fenrisian wolves on the long journeys between battles.

Combat Doctrine

On the field of battle, the Blood Claws throw themselves madly towards the enemy. In their desire to fight, these young marines, often transformed into bestial Wulfen, lose all thought of tactics or stealth. The more mature Astartes use their years of experience to work their way into position, ready to attack the enemy in its vulnerable flanks. The psychological effect of this cannot be over-estimated. Even the most disciplined gun-line has faltered and broken on the realisation that they face not only an onrushing tide of claws and teeth, but that the enemy is already behind them and slaughtering its way towards them.

While the legion does not intentionally summon daemons, such acts being much too akin to sorcery for their liking, the entities are drawn to the sites of their butchery anyway. Lesser daemons have been observed to burst from corpses or exude themselves from pools of freshly spilled blood to aid in the slaughter. After the fight has been won, and befitting their nomadic nature, the legion and its assorted hangers-on descend to pick the battlefield clean. Guided by scent the battle brothers return to the sites of their kills to take trophies from worthy enemies. In the case of other Astartes



'I was barely initiated and full of the spirit of the Wulfen when the primarch himself summoned my pack of Blood Claws. He led us deep into the forests of Asaheim, and put our skills to the test tracking a pack of Fenrisian wolves.'

'From the cover of a rock outcropping we watched as the pack brought a herd of snow-elk to bay. The young wolves howled and snarled, then charged straight towards the solid wall of bulls that faced them. I gasped at such brave stupidity, muttering that they would be torn apart upon the elk's razor sharp antlers, but Russ just laughed softly and pointed to a patch of scrub. From it burst the older and wiser members of the pack. They had taken advantage of the noisy distraction to infiltrate the herd's weakly guarded flanks. In the panic the defensive line was scattered and the young wolves had no trouble bringing the mighty bull elks down one by one without a single casualty.'

'As the pack began to feast, Russ turned to me and said "That is how a true wolf fights, Bjorn. That is how we fight..."'

- Wolf Guard Bjorn the Fell Handed

this can include weapons and pieces of armour to replace the damage that inevitably occurs. They rarely repaint it, preferring that it remain as a reminder of their battles, and as a taunting sign to their enemies of their previous defeats.

In their wake come the Choosers of the Slain. They stalk the battlefield selecting skulls adjudged to be particularly prized by Khorne. They also claim the gene-seed of fallen Space Wolves and select those enemies who fought well enough to be saved from the brink of death and forcibly initiated into the legion. Under the direction of the Iron Priests, the legion's bondsmen are sent out to scour the area for anything of use. As the Space Wolves have little manufacturing capacity, and even less interest in settling down to use it, almost everything they have has to be scavenged, ranging from bolt-rounds to entire Land Raiders. Only when the Fenrisian wolves have returned from chasing down and glutting themselves upon enemies that fled in cowardice from the battlefield does the legion start its journey to the next battle.

Gene-seed & Recruitment

Back to the earliest days of the legion, the Space Wolves' method of gene-seed implantation has been brutally idiosyncratic. Since their conversion to Khorne, this has become all-the more acute. After the infant primarchs

had been stolen away and scattered across the galaxy, the Emperor ordered that the legions' implants be created based upon what remained of their gene-templates. In the case of the Space Wolves, the process was flawed, resulting in extensive and crippling levels of rejection and mutation. A number of alternate therapies based upon their primarch's gene-sequence were investigated, but the one finally selected was known as the Helix Lupus. At first the process was almost rejected as it transformed the aspirants into incoherent savages, devoid of all reason. However, when the changes had subsided, it was recognised as the missing piece of the puzzle, reconfiguring the aspirant's body into a form far more amenable to the quirks of the Russ gene-line.

This was initially conducted under controlled conditions, with subjects restrained throughout the process and intravenously fed with the nutrients required to fuel their transformation. On taking command of the legion, Russ changed these procedures dramatically. A sterile laboratory was no place for the birth of a Wolf of Fenris, and so immediately after the Helix Lupus was administered, aspirants were dropped into the mountainous wastes of Asaheim. In the midst of the change, these bestial creatures were expected to follow their urges; to hunt down and consume the flesh needed to reconfigure their

bodies. They then had to show enough composure to return to the Fang so that the process could be completed and their training begin in earnest.

After the Heresy, the application of the Helix Lupus became even more brutal. On the battlefield, the legion slaughters indiscriminately, dedicating their kills to Khorne, their God of Blood and Skulls. Stalking through the carnage like cadaverous wraiths are the Choosers of the Slain. Part apothecary, part acolyte of Khorne, they minister to their fallen brethren, deciding if they are worthy to live on, or to yield up their gene-seed and skulls to their god's throne. The Choosers also select those enemies that have fought with sufficient valour and ferocity, and proved worthy of joining Khorne's legion. They are touched by the will of the Blood God himself, with skills that far exceed the wit of even the most skilled chiurgeon. Under their ministrations, and with the application of the Helix Lupus, even a mortal wound may be averted.

Once marked by Khorne in this way, the beast within is released, and the long, agonising process of transforming their bodies and minds into those of sons of Russ can proceed. While traditional gene-seed implantation processes require that the aspirant be no older than early puberty, it appears that the ministrations of the corrupted Helix Lupus can allow this process even in full grown adult candidates. It has even been suggested that it can even be used to forcibly corrupt Astartes of other legions to serve Khorne. Though none of the loyal Astartes legions have ever admitted this has occurred with any of their brothers, it would certainly bring a new danger to the prospect of fighting against the Space Wolves; that in doing so they risk a fate worse than death.

In addition to the bestial nature of the Helix Lupus, the Russ gene-line has always exhibited certain quirks, such as their uncannily sharp senses and how their incisors grow long and tusk-like with age. Over the millennia, the warping power of Chaos has bestowed



further beneficial changes which boost their already considerable strength and brutality. Under the watchful eyes of the Choosers of the Slain this process has been guided to bring them ever-closer to their ideal of the perfect killer.

Homeworld

Fenris, the place of the legion's birth, was a death-world even before it was claimed by Khorne. Its islands periodically sank beneath the waves, forcing the population to brave the kraken-haunted seas in search of new homes. The fertile volcanic soils allowed them to grow crops in season to see them and their animals through the long, cold winters, as well as grain for the brewing of ales.

The planet's sole continent, Asaheim, was the only place insulated from this tectonic upheaval. Permanently raised up above the battering seas, its coast was a single precipitous cliff-face, which meant that the first time humanity was able to set foot there was with the arrival of the Imperium. The animals that stalked the forests and mountain peaks of Asaheim were no less dangerous than those found in the oceans: bears, mammoths and most dangerous and iconic, the Fenrisian wolves. Packs of these had even been found on the islands, hunting the livestock and inhabitants, and well able to brave the seas in search of fresh prey.

Though Fenris died when its erratic orbit plunged it deep into the heart of their sun, a more subtle death occurred when Russ returned after the Heresy. Those that would not dedicate themselves to Khorne were culled and the turbulent seas ran red with the blood of the 'unenlightened'. The twin losses of both primarch and homeworld shattered the legion into warbands which set off on the sea of stars in search of new planets on which to ply their murderous trade.

On occasion these warbands tire of the Imperium and gravitate to the Eye of Terror to test their blades and take the skulls from worshippers of the other

The Collars of Khorne

Worn by the warriors of Fenris as a ward against magic, iron neck torcs became common even amongst the Terran-born members of the Space Wolves. After the legion came to the worship of the Blood God, they took to calling them 'Collars of Khorne' and carved elaborate skull symbols into the metal. Far beyond simple superstition, these devices have a potent protective effect against psykers and magic, Khorne being the bane of such things. As the custom is to anoint the collar in the blood of a defeated opponent, the chest armour of a Space Wolf is constantly splattered crimson. So ingrained is this that collars taken from dead Space Wolves have been observed to exude blood for months or even years.

The most infamous collar was crafted for Bjorn the Fell-Handed, the iron for which supposedly came from the blood of thousands he had personally slain. It is said that Khorne took exception to Bjorn's hubris at withholding that which was rightly his, and damned the Wolf Lord for his actions. At the climax of the Proxima Rebellion, the moment of his greatest triumph, Bjorn was struck down and consigned to eternity inside a dreadnought. Any son of Russ who dares to wear this collar is imbued with Bjorn's legendary fury and skill, although not, it seems, with a long life.

gods of Chaos. Like many other legions they have claimed a world there, though not as a home, but a shrine. It is to this dead world, far beyond the prying sensors of the Imperium's null-ships, that the legion comes to make their offerings to Khorne. The mountains of votive skulls stretch up into the daemon-haunted clouds, a pile they say that supports and raises Khorne's throne higher with every death. In a realm where the warp and the material plane intersect, who is to say that they are wrong?

Unable to accept that their ancestral home is truly gone, some Space Wolves are drawn to return to the Fenris system. This knowledge has been used by the Imperium, and in particular the Thousand Sons, to bring them to battle. The presence of the legion's blood-enemies desecrating the site of their homeworld is an insult that no true son of Russ could ignore. Many a Space Wolf warband has gone willingly into the teeth of such a trap, the most glorious being the fate of Wolf Lord Skyrar and his Dark Wolves. They destroyed three escorting frigates, and even with their ship debilitated by wild magicks, were able to ram the Thousand Sons' battle barge and catastrophically breach its warp core. Long after it had closed, the

echoes of Skyrar's Rift still pulse through the Fenris system as a sign of their defiance.

Beliefs

Since their enlightenment at Prospero the Space Wolves have dedicated themselves to the worship of Khorne, slaying entire systems in his name. Without the structures of faith gifted to them by Luther, their wild, self-destructive excesses would long-since have driven the legion to extinction. As a mark of respect, the Dark Angels are one of the few of the Chaos Legions the Space Wolves are willing to fight alongside. They usually prefer to fight alone, confident that even while heavily outnumbered, they are more than a match for any opponent.

While the fate of Leman Russ is unknown, every Space Wolf has a theory. Some say that, like Roboute Guilliman, he was captured by the Imperial primarchs and returned to Terra in chains. Others say that he was banished to the warp, or that his very essence was annihilated by Magnus' psychic power. They all agree, however, that even death itself will not be able to prevent Russ from returning to reunite the legion for the final great battle – the *Wolftime*. Some believe that with the forces of Chaos gathering and finally organising themselves for



an almighty attack upon the Imperium, that the End of Days is at hand, and that Russ' return is imminent. Having been denied setting foot upon Terra during the Dornian Heresy, they believe that no power in the universe could prevent him from taking his part in the final destruction of the Arch-Wych.

Battlecry

Usually the only thing the Space Wolves' opponents hear before the attack is the berserk, ravening howl of the Blood Claw packs, but on occasions where the whole force fights out in the open, "*For Russ, for skulls, for the Woftime!*" is frequently used as a battlecry by the Wolf Lord.





THE DORNIAN HERESY

INDEX ASTARTES: THOUSAND SONS

BY
AURELIUS
REX

Magnus was the first of the primarchs to recognise the existence and the threat the Ruinous Powers posed to Mankind, and because of this the Thousand Sons became the first legion to be targeted for destruction by the forces of Chaos. Though it cost them dear, those that survived the Space Wolves' slaughter were pivotal in bringing the Dornian Heresy to an end. As the most powerful battle-psykers in the Imperium they are feared and mistrusted, even by the people they selflessly defend against the encroaching darkness.

Origins

During the great diaspora, when humanity colonised the galaxy, the world of Prospero was chosen by the mutants and psykers that settled it precisely because of its remoteness and lack of mineral resources. In their splendid isolation, these outcasts from the rest of humanity created Tizca, a shining city of light, learning and culture amidst the barren wasteland. Although they had been cut off for thousands of years, tales still abounded of the howling mobs that had persecuted their forefathers, and they lived in quiet dread that their haven would be invaded. Unsurprisingly, when the infant Magnus' incubation chamber fell to earth amongst the shining silver towers in Tizca's central plaza, the population was gripped with terror. Finally overcoming their trepidation, they found it to be not an orbital bombardment or the vanguard of an invasion force, but a battered, scorched and damaged wreck containing a badly injured child.

Though he was near the point of death when they first found him, the boy displayed a tenacious will and remarkable constitution. Under the ministrations of the commune's healers he quickly returned to robust health, but nothing could be done to save the boy's right eye. An ugly welt of scar tissue covered the socket, but in a society where mutation and deformity were rife, this was little cause for comment. He was named Magnus, or, more usually and affectionately, Magnus the Red after his ruddy complexion and the colour of the unruly mane of hair that he doggedly refused to cut. Magnus quickly grew to vibrant maturity and threw himself wholeheartedly into learning.

He was most often to be found poring over the ancient tomes in the city's extensive libraries and animatedly debating with wizened scholars many times his own age. Knowledge was his passion, and with the fiery certainty of youth he believed that no subject was beyond his mastery. It was the study of the hermetic arts of alchemy and sorcery that changed his life forever. Doing so awakened him to the true power of the Warp, an act which levelled the building in which he had been studying. As his psychic powers blossomed, he became aware of both the Gods of Chaos, and his father, the Emperor of all Mankind.

Though separated by half a galaxy, the Emperor and Magnus recognised each other for what they were. With his insatiable thirst for knowledge, Magnus eagerly learned about every aspect of the young Imperium, of the Great Crusade, and the search for his brother primarchs. Through his expanded acuity, and the tutelage of his father, Magnus became the first of the primarchs to learn of the terrible threat posed by the Ruinous Powers. Even as the Emperor taught him these things, He swore Magnus to secrecy, explaining that the threat was so grave that even knowledge of their existence would be enough to seduce some to their worship. Magnus had seen to his cost the palpable link between sorcery and Chaos, but argued that the Ruinous Powers could easily use such ignorance to corrupt the unwary. Despite this, he was unable to persuade his father. The Emperor spoke of a grand plan that would one day see humanity strong enough to resist Chaos's wiles, but until then, He solemnly forbade Magnus from telling anyone outside his own legion, even his own brother primarchs, of what he had learned.



The thing shredded old Master Colpek without breaking its stride, and advanced on Magnus. They had summoned a creature of nightmare... His nightmares! He recognised the same rasping growl and the way its talons moved like liquid flame; it was the thing from his earliest memories. It had torn its way into the vessel that had brought him to Prospero and taken his eye. Now it was back for more.

Something had happened to him. At first Magnus thought that his skull was splitting, but now the pain had gone, and his mind had opened up to something far beyond the material plane. His awareness snapped back into the hermetic tower to find himself alone with the entity... the daemon. Before he could react, the thing had him pinned to the floor with a talon pinning the flesh around his one good eye. It whispered to him, gloatingly, that it had come here to stop him from becoming a powerful tool of his master's rival. The names it spoke of, 'Khorne' and 'Tzeentch', resonated through his soul like shards of ice.

Despite his desperate struggles the creature whispered that it would first take his eye to complete the set, and then pluck out Magnus' heart to appease its master. Then, just as the talon broke the skin beneath his eye, a total calmness descended. It all became so clear to him. With a smile, Magnus reached out with his mind and snuffed out the daemon's very essence. The ensuing explosion was heard all across Tizca. Untouched by the conflagration, Magnus considered the daemon's words. He would not be a puppet of this Tzeentch, and no one would take his eye.

By the time the Emperor and the Fifteenth Legion of Astartes had reached Prospero, father and son knew each other as though they had never been parted. Despite all of Magnus' assurances, the arrival of the Master of Mankind and His fleet of warships was greeted with suspicion by the people of Prospero, but the Emperor's legendary charisma quickly won them over. To further assuage their fears, Magnus had his legion build their fortress-monastery at the heart of Tizca in the hope that they would no longer have to apprehensively watch the skies.

The legion itself had particular reason to celebrate finding their primarch. Although they had not recruited on the basis of psychic talent, the gene-seed they had been patterned upon had boosted their innate abilities and triggered latent ones. As a side-effect it also caused a very high incidence of both genetic and implant mutation among the brethren, to the extent that the legion was smaller than most of the others. As the home of the mutant and the psyker, Prospero was the perfect place for such a legion. By the time Magnus was ready to join the Great Crusade, his original 'Thousand Sons' had expanded moderately beyond their

nominal level by the cream of Prospero's talents. As they set out to do the Emperor's great work, what they lacked in conventional numbers was more than made up for with highly trained battle-psykers able to kill an enemy with but a thought.

The Great Crusade

As Magnus and his new legion ventured across the stars, it gave them an opportunity to gain that which they craved the most: knowledge. Each world brought into compliance with the Emperor's will revealed to them the learning and insights of a new culture. As well as the countless human societies, the myriad xenos breeds were also a constant source of wonder. From the subtle Eldar to the brutal Orks, each new sample was characterised, dissected and catalogued. This expansion also brought with it fresh dangers. Even forewarned against the Ruinous Powers, the Thousand Sons still suffered losses. Every battle brother that fell hardened their hearts against the evil of Chaos, and turned Magnus' thoughts to the casualties sustained by the other legions who had no concept or defence against the threat they faced.

Their travels across the galaxy brought them into contact with many of Magnus' brother primarchs. Some, in particular Horus of the Luna Wolves and Lorgar of the Word Bearers, became firm friends. Others, such as the Mortarion of the Death Guard and Leman Russ, the feral primarch of the Space Wolves, took an instant dislike to Magnus and everything he stood for. The uncouth Russ called him mutant, sorcerer, unclean and even a cyclops after the one-eyed giant of Terran legend. At every meeting, be it cordial or adversarial, Magnus respected the Emperor's demand to keep silent about the nature of Chaos, despite the crushing certainty that ignorance left his brothers vulnerable to the predations of the Ruinous Powers.

Magnus bore his brothers' harsh words with good grace, in the certainty that once on the field of battle all enmity would be placed aside. This was tested most sorely on the fortress-world of Bartok, where a campaign by the Space Wolves to bring the planet into Imperial compliance had degenerated into a bloody stalemate. In order to bring the campaign to a rapid conclusion, the Emperor Himself had ordered the Thousand Sons to reinforce the assault. The headstrong Leman Russ detested the idea of being seen to need the help of another legion, especially one he had so publically denounced, but he grudgingly submitted to his father's decree.

Even with the might of two legions, it soon became clear why Russ had struggled. The final and greatest city was protected by directed energy fields and ringed with trenches, strongpoints and bunker networks resulting in brutally effective interlocking fields of fire. The approaches had been turned into a killing ground worthy of those designed by Perturabo or Dorn. As Russ prepared to throw his forces into yet another headlong charge against the enemy guns, Magnus and his legion exposed the weak link in the Bartok defence. All across the battlezone, the Thousand Sons reached into weak, unguarded minds and urged them to turn their guns on their friends. Even as Russ' Wolves advanced, heavy weapon



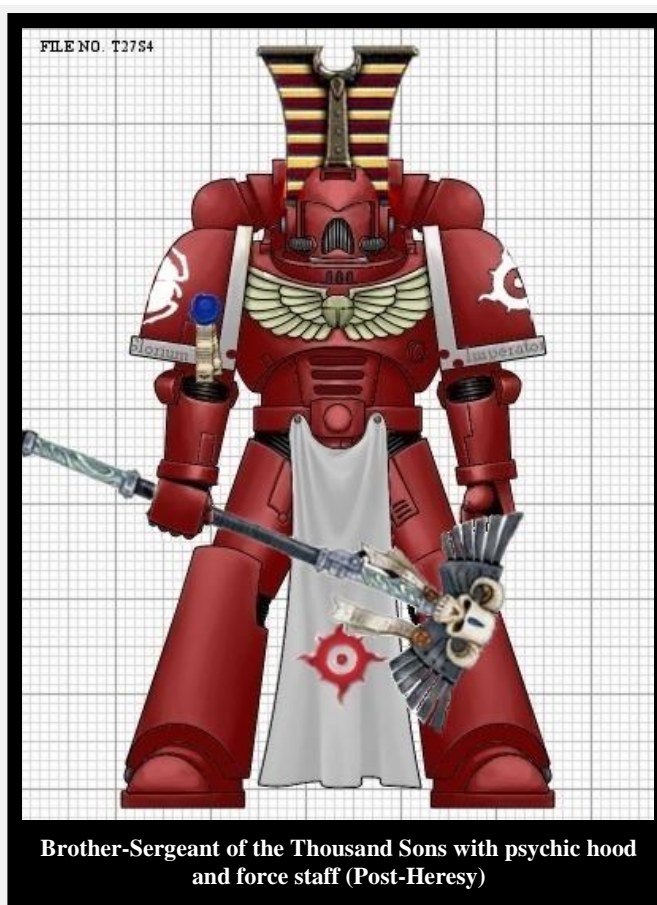
emplacements tracked away from them to fire upon each other. The doomed forlorn hope was transformed into a famous victory, and once inside the lines of defence, the city quickly fell.

Perversely, the Space Wolves did not appreciate this intervention, again throwing accusations of sorcery and evil intent. Though Magnus well knew the difference between warp-tainted magicks and the pure psychic talents his legion deployed, Russ could not be reasoned with. Only a rapid departure from the warzone averted fratricidal bloodshed. Magnus hoped that never again putting his legion in a position to fight alongside the Space Wolves would allow his brother's anger to cool, but by then the damage had already been done.

The Coming Storm

Just before the Emperor was set to return to Terra, leaving Horus in supreme command of the Great Crusade, He called His primarchs together to the planet of Nikaea. There He sought to address the increasingly acrimonious disputes that had broken out over the nature of psychic ability. Mortarion, Dorn, Corax and of course Leman Russ led the charge, saying that there was no boundary between psychic abilities and the use of destructive sorceries. It was all a matter of degrees, with one inevitably leading to the other. The Emperor's decision to withhold knowledge about the nature of Chaos had not stopped the primarchs from sensing its dangers, and as Magnus had feared, some lashed out against psykers, the eternal scapegoats.

Hamstrung by the Emperor's decree, Magnus realised that no words of his could pacify the growing mob. He desperately begged a private audience with his father, and in a move both practical and symbolic, proposed that,



Brother-Sergeant of the Thousand Sons with psychic hood and force staff (Post-Heresy)

starting with himself, every member of the Thousand Sons be soul-bound to the Emperor. Just as soul-binding fortified Astropaths against the horrors of the Warp, the rite would purge and protect the legion from the temptations of sorcery, and be a palpable sign of their loyalty. The Emperor agreed to this elegant solution, and the act was performed that very night.

When the primarchs and their attendants filed into the council chamber the next morning they saw

Magnus standing proudly alongside his father, his one eye socket an empty wound. The process of soul-binding, of merging essences with the psychic might of the Emperor, had burned out his optic nerve and left the 'cyclops' blind, but Magnus was filled with a second sight that left him far from vulnerable. Though it pacified most, the judgement did nothing to assuage Leman Russ, who stormed from the chamber, and into the service of the Blood God.

Before the legions left Nikaea, Magnus met with his brother primarch, Lorgar of the Word Bearers. He was a pure soul, genuinely happy for the great honour that he saw his friend had been given. Magnus had long held his tongue about the Ruinous Powers, but it had cost him his eye, and he feared that before long it would cost them all far more. For the first time, Magnus broke the vow to his father and warned Lorgar of the threat posed by Chaos. The dire news was received gladly, as it reinforced all that the Word Bearers believed. Their piety and dedication to spread the worship of the Emperor as a deity stood vindicated as vital to the continuation of the human race.

The Thousand Sons returned from Terra irrevocably changed. Though the

In the heart of the Warp, a prized soul that had long been destined to fall to Tzeentch flared like a nova. It incinerated the numberless daemonic entities which had been shepherding it along the path, and floated free once more. Tzeentch, the Weaver of Fates, roared in disbelief as the course of the future lurch down a new and unexpected path.

Magnus and his legion would have been pivotal in the corruption of the Imperium, but as the God of Change, part of him revelled in this unexpected turn of events. Searching the myriad branching threads of the future, Tzeentch traced one that caught his vulture eye. It contained a potent brew of loss, pain, degradation and rebirth, and started inside the dreaming mind of the Raven Guard's primarch...



soul-binding had taken their sight, they were given a psychic awareness of their environment that was far superior. It had also given them a measure of inner strength – a touch of the Emperor’s reflected aura, as it were – that they had not even known they had been missing. The most obvious outward sign of their change was shown in their helms, which they had re-forged on the journey back to Prospero into un-nerving, eyeless masks. They still retained the ability to obtain detailed information on their surroundings from their suit’s autosenses, something that became of particular importance in the presence of psychic blanks such as the Sisters of Silence.

As well as eliminating the need for the vision-enhancing effects of the oculolobe implant, the soul-binding also had the welcome effect of reducing the rate and severity of mutation within their bodies and gene-seed. They also brought back with them a member of the Adeptus Custodes. Though ostensibly sent as the Emperor’s personal envoy to monitor the progress of the soul-binding, Magnus suspected that his father had learned of the confession to Lorgar, and the guard was a reminder that he was being watched closely.

Just as the newly transformed legion prepared to return to the Great Crusade, Magnus received intelligence of the utmost importance: The

Archenemy had made a move against Horus. While visiting the Warmaster, a Word Bearers chaplain named Erebus had recognised the malaise that Horus had contracted on Davin was in fact nothing less than possession by a powerful daemonic entity. Only through an epic act of heroism that required both spiritual salvation from Erebus, and the combined psychic might of the entire Thousand Sons Legion, could the warp-creature be cast out and Horus’ life saved. In a terrible irony, before they could even recover from the exertions of saving one primarch from Chaos, another descended upon Prospero intent on planetary annihilation.

The Dornian Heresy

Without warning, drop pods and assault craft lit up the sky like comets, and the worst fears of the people of Prospero were realised. Distracted by the events of Davin, and, it is suspected, with their precognitive skills blunted by Khorne’s power, the Space Wolf fleet devastated the planet’s orbital defences. Before any kind of effective resistance could be mustered, the newly built cities were turned into funeral pyres, killing all those who had come from across the Imperium seeking protection. Though shielded from orbital bombardment behind powerful energy fields, grey figures were seen massing just outside Tizca for a grand offensive. Unthinkable as it was, Magnus sanctioned his legion to

use lethal force against other Astartes.

Before the Thousand Sons had always held back their true power for fear of alienating their allies, but in the face of extinction they threw caution to the wind. They lured their enemies into ambushes on the outskirts of Tizca, first disorienting them with psychic powers, and then cutting them down in lethal crossfires. Just as the battle seemed to be tipping in the Thousand Sons’ favour, the power of Khorne tore through the Empyrean like a tidal wave, affecting every psyker on the planet. The Thousand Sons, protected as they were by the soul-binding, were left powerless and dazed. The civilian population was affected far more gravely. Those who survived boiled madly from their shelters, only to be torn apart by the bestial, inhuman creatures the Space Wolves had become.

With his world turned to ash and its people murdered, Magnus strove to access his psychic powers, but to no avail. Under such physical and mental assault, it was all the Thousand Sons could do to stay alive. When Leman Russ inevitably came for Magnus he was unrecognisable: a blood-drunk beast steeped in the power of Khorne. Only through the Custodian’s heroic self-sacrifice was Magnus able to escape with his life. With the disruption to the aetheric plane finally beginning to wane, Magnus was able to obscure his remaining brothers from view, and leave the necropolis that Tizca had become.

Hearing of Dorn’s betrayal at Istvaan, it became clear that the attack on Prospero was just the opening salvo in a much larger war. Even with their numbers so depleted, the Thousand Sons were determined to do what they could to save the Emperor. Following Russ’ much larger fleet at a discreet distance, they used their mastery of the warp to delay the enemy and send them far off track. It was hoped that in this way they could buy time for the loyal legions to end the rebellion before they arrived. Their gambit to divert the Space Wolves into contact with their bitter rivals, the Dark Angels, sadly did

Constantin Valdor had always felt this assignment a fool’s errand and a complete waste of his talents. He was of the Adeptus Custodes - one of the Emperor’s elite guardians. How could he protect his Emperor from half way across the galaxy?

But as he followed the thunderous noise of combat into the Thousand Son Primarch’s private chambers, his master’s purpose for sending him here became clear. Magnus, who only a short while before he had been ready to denounce as a practitioner of sorcery, was sprawled on the shattered marble floor, and above him, howling in triumph, stood Leman Russ. Whatever faults the Thousand Sons may lay claim to were as nothing compared to the evil that emanated from the Space Wolves’ Primarch. As the inhuman creature before him raised his weapon high to administer the death-blow, Valdor knew how he must serve his Emperor.

Knowing that even he could not hope to stand against such an opponent, Valdor energised his Guardian spear, and leapt at Leman Russ.



not erupt in the hoped for bloodshed. They greeted each other as allies in Chaos, although it did at least mean that from then on they were keeping two Traitor Legions from the Emperor's throat.

Their contribution did not come without a price, however. The continuous strain began to take its toll, and towards the end every day that went past left another brother as a powder-dry corpse inside his power armour. With the Space Wolves and Dark Angels just days from Terra, the Emperor was forced to break the stalemate and confront Dorn directly. Magnus felt the psychic battle going on aboard the *Phalanx*, but was powerless to intervene. Though the Dornian Heresy was ended that day, it left the Emperor wounded to the core, and Magnus felt every one of those agonies across the light-years.

The Bloody Aftermath

As the Traitor Legions scattered to the stars, the Thousand Sons arrived to do what they could. Along with the Iron Warriors, Magnus interned the Emperor's paralysed body within the life-sustaining mechanism of the Astronomicon. Meanwhile, the rest of the legion put their talents to use in cleansing the taint of the daemonic from the planet. Terra had been the site of many desecrations and summonations, and it took decades to ward all of the portals that had been created. The worst site of all was inside the old Imperial throne-room. When Dorn had found that the Emperor had escaped him there he had desecrated the nascent webway portal that had been under construction. An army of daemons had flooded out, and even after the Heresy it took an almighty effort to seal.

Magnus threw himself wholeheartedly into finding a way to restore his father's vitality. It became an obsession, with effective command of his legion falling to Captain Ahriman of the First Great Company. One day Magnus emerged from the Astronomicon in high spirits, and, eschewing all offers of company, left

Terra, saying only that the solution was "*to gather together the Emperor's sons*". What was meant by this, he has never explained, not even to his own legion or to the High Lords of Terra. By this point most of the primarchs were either dead or turned to Chaos, and as the millennia pass, fewer and fewer remain alive.

The Thousand Sons have never grown used to the unsettling nature of their primarch's frequent disappearances and unheralded returns. At first his quests were measured in months or years, and he found the time to lead them on the quest to purge the Space Wolves from their homeworld of Fenris. As time went on, Magnus vanished for decades at a time, his whereabouts obscured from even the most determined of seers.

In Magnus' absence, Regent Ahriman went to great lengths to see the Thousand Sons rebuilt. His callous and high-handed attitude towards the lives of allies, especially those of the Imperial Army, meant that even as their numbers rose, the regard in which they were held fell. This reputedly earned a furious rebuke from Magnus on his return, after which Ahriman was careful to show more respect for non-psychics, or at least to moderate his public comments.

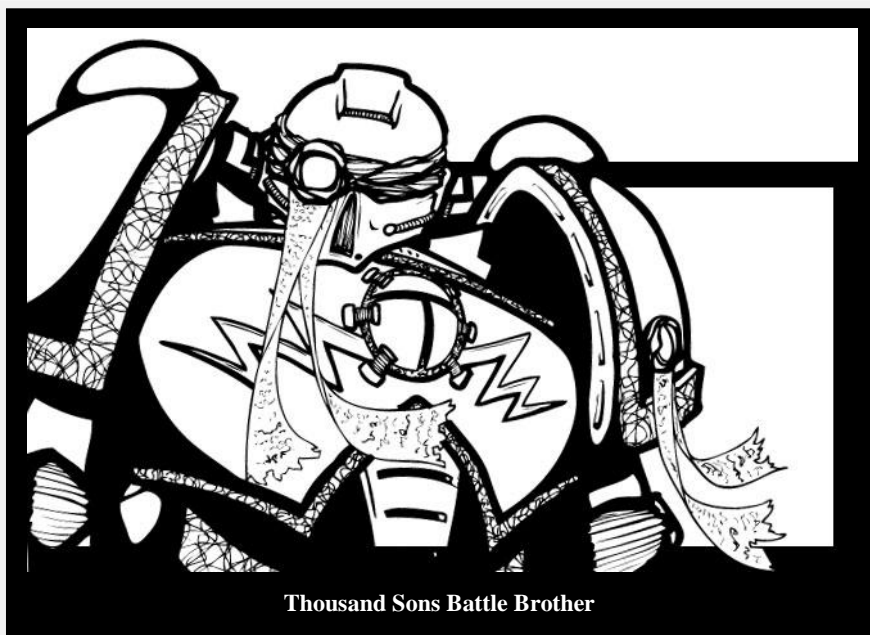
At the end of his life, Regent Ahriman was finally able to redeem himself. When the hexagrammatic wards used to seal the webway portal in the old Imperial palace began to decay and threatened to tear wide open once more, Ahriman was at the forefront of researching a way to permanently close

Magnus had shadowed the small band of outlaws through the badlands for more than a fortnight, but having searched for years to find his man, he was content to wait a little longer. They had finally shaken off the Arbites squads in the badlands three days ago – Magnus had been tempted to subtly lend a hand, but if his target had needed help to escape local law enforcement, he wouldn't have been worth the effort of saving. They always seemed to be troublemakers. They would see a wrong and, filled with the righteous certainty of their convictions, seemed compelled to right it, be it a corrupt official or a den of possessed. Despite the man's filthy clothes and several days' growth of stubble, he had the same patrician bearing that he remembered from so long ago. The way their inner purity shone out from beneath the often grimy exterior, it was no surprise that some had called them 'Grey Knights'. It also explained the devotion they inspired in their followers. It made sense, Magnus supposed. Their father would have been the same even before he rose to power.

Up ahead, wild magicks flickered across the sky from their target. Perhaps it was ostentatious, but he preferred to make contact just as they were fighting for their lives against the forces of the daemonic. Then, with the bond of comradeship established, Magnus would reveal to the man his true lineage – the reason for his unearthly powers, and why he had never grown old. The man was one of the Emperor's immortal sons, from the days when He had walked among humanity and sowed his wild oats. They were, in a sense, Magnus' brothers.

He would also explain that within them they held their father's only hope for salvation. Down the long millennia, Magnus had dedicated his existence to contacting every one of these very special individuals. When he had found enough, they could be gathered together to heal the Emperor's soul and bring Him back from the point of death. They were the hope of all humanity. It was a mission so audacious and secret that his brother primarchs, and even the members of his own legion could not be trusted to know about it.

What Magnus would not be able to tell these Grey Knights was the extent of the sacrifice that would be involved. Only by releasing their spirits from their physical forms and infusing them into the Astronomicon could the Emperor hope to be saved. Magnus just hoped that his father would be able to forgive such an act.



Thousand Sons Battle Brother

In a legion of battle psykers, the captains of the grand companies are amongst the most potent and skilled, with powers far exceeding those of the chief librarians of any other Astartes. Commanding upwards of a hundred squads, each captain is charged with a specific task by the regent. This varies from guarding Holy Terra and combating incursions of the daemonic, to prosecuting the Long War against the Traitor Legions, in particular the berserkers of the Space Wolves. Realising that psychic strength is nothing without the fortitude of faith in the Emperor, the Thousand Sons were the first legion to import Lorgar's concept of chaplains. These individuals play a vital role in guiding the moral and spiritual growth of the legion. Initiates who, as Lorgar put it, display a particularly intense 'communion with the divine' during the soul-binding ritual are marked out for further training within the Reclusiam.

Just as the chaplains guard their brethren's souls, the grand company's Apothecarion and Armoury protect their bodies and wargear. Despite this, it has been said that comparatively little care is given to these roles, with positions such as the crewing of vehicles being seen as dumping

the rift. His divinations showed that this could only be done from within, something which, as the pre-eminent expert, he insisted on doing personally. Despite all of this, there are still some who claim that it was a ploy; that he survived the process, and became the first human to walk the webway's paths and search out the secrets of the Eldar's Black Library. Though such guile was certainly part of Ahriman's character, if this was the case he has never returned to the Imperium to speak of what he found there.

numbers to frequently work alongside more numerous organisations such as the Imperial Army. Ever since the damaging days of Regent Ahriman, Magnus has taken great pains to ensure that the Thousand Sons are perceived by their allies as an invaluable advantage in any battle. So important is this that Thousand Sons of any rank may be reprimanded and even demoted for giving their allies the impression they are being treated as disposable cannon fodder.

Organisation

Though still nominally commanded by their primarch, Magnus' lengthy disappearances mean that in practice the legion is led by the Captain of the First Great Company as the Regent. It is rare enough to find a candidate worthy of becoming an Astartes in a normal legion, but when they must also be strong and resilient psykers, the task becomes even more difficult. For this reason they have never been a large legion, although they have long ago exceeded their nominal thousand brothers. Their grand companies are small, and only Fulgrim's self-imposed limit of thirty grand companies has allowed the Thousand Sons to exceed their numbers.

Though they intentionally cultivate a distant and mysterious persona, the Thousand Sons are forced by their low

Skyrar's Rift

Fighting down the rising sense of apprehension, Brother-Captain Iaos extended his mental probe of the rent in space-time. It was bad enough that more than three hundred of his brothers had died in the explosion, but that Wolf Lord Skyrrar and his butcher warband could have survived to emerge on the other side was unconscionable.

Preliminary scans confirmed the initial report that the rift was indeed a form of wormhole, and that the local celestial body was the Fenris system's sun. Simple triangulation with the Astronomicon confirmed this, but something nagged at him. The star was being orbited by a planet eerily familiar: Fenris! It should be long-dead and gone, but here it was! Mastering the rising sense of panic, Iaos tentatively interfaced with the Astropathic network beyond the threshold, and despite finding the protocols very different, searched for word of Skyrrar.

What he learned revolted him. Not the brief mention of Skyrrar, but what had become of his beloved Thousand Sons in this warped reality... He withdrew his mind from beyond the threshold and bitterly collapsed the rift with a spread of plasma torpedoes.

Skyrrar had not escaped justice, it seemed. Being stuck in that terrible place would be his life sentence.



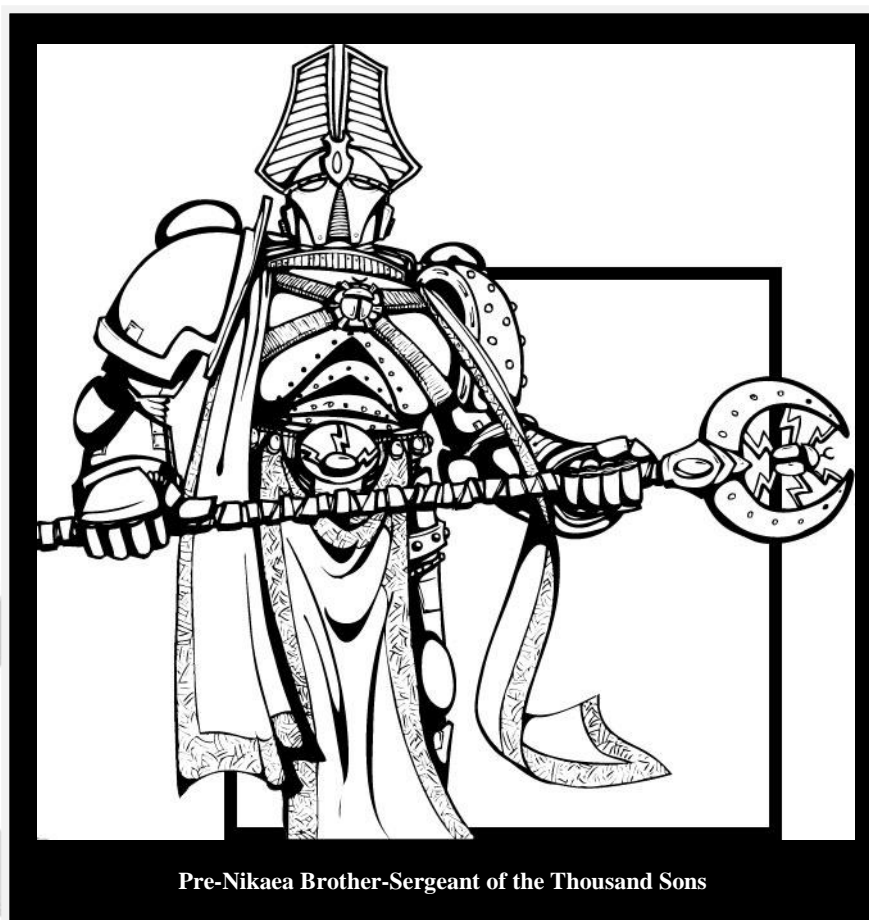
grounds for those who have not fulfilled their early promise as battle-psykers. However, this is not always the case, as among their ranks are brethren able to manifest psychic talents invaluable to these specialties. Such prodigies can perfectly attune themselves to their subjects, able to reach inside matter to re-knit flesh, soothe a restless machine spirit or re-forge a shattered mechanism, and are vital to the legion's continued existence.

Combat Doctrine

As has always been Magnus' intent, the Thousand Sons use their psychic talents to the full on the battlefield. As well as wielding powers that make them formidable opponents, the legion's commanding officers use their prodigious talents to guide and coordinate the movement of their squads and those of their allies. Never a numerous legion, they rely heavily upon the Imperial Army, as well as on guidance from the Emperor's Tarot to strike at the most auspicious time and place. Though this sometimes strikes their allies as intransigence, once committed they are able to turn the tide of any battle.

Individual squads are led by sergeants who are powerful battle-psykers in their own right. It is their responsibility to coordinate and focus the less mature abilities of those in their charge. Despite the intensive training they receive to do this, it is an exceptional talent who can effectively direct more than five or six of his brethren. In this way, each squad is able to employ psychic powers to complement their battlefield role. Such is their unity that each feels the other's pain. A wound suffered by one, let alone a death, is felt across the mental link by all, and the loss of the sergeant can leave the squad stunned and without focus.

Tactical and Devastator squads are able to telekinetically guide their shots to hit weak points in an enemy's armour, or to strike down those who believe themselves safely behind cover. Units specialising in close combat use their skills to blot themselves from their



Pre-Nikaea Brother-Sergeant of the Thousand Sons

opponent's sight, allowing them to approach undetected. The most skilled of veterans can even use their powers to read what an opponent will do even as they think it, an advantage they use to the full in the brutal mêlée of the battlefield. By the time a brother has earned the right to wear Terminator armour his skills are all-but mature. At this stage they are able to channel their psychic might through the crystalline matrix of a force weapon, and the long, arduous training to lead a squad of their own can begin.

Homeworld & Recruitment

The Thousand Sons' homeworld of Prospero was originally colonised by outcasts from human society, in particular by those gifted with psychic talent who wished to escape the baying mob. By the time Magnus the Red arrived on their world they had constructed a haven of enlightenment, a place where learning was pursued for the simple joy of it. The psychic gifts displayed by the population were a perfect match for Magnus' new legion,

and under the primarch's aegis, psykers flocked to Prospero from across the Segmentum. New cities mirroring the beauty of the capital were constructed, and this influx of hardy, resourceful immigrants improved still further the quality of recruits available to the legion. This idyll was short-lived, though, with even the oracles of Tizca unable to foresee the global destruction the corrupted Space Wolves wrought upon the world. Despite the best efforts of the Thousand Sons the cities were blasted to rubble, its libraries burned to ash and the population brutally exterminated.

After the Heresy, with Prospero nothing more than a mass-grave, the Thousand Sons felt no reason to return there. The place held too many memories and ghosts of dead friends. With Magnus labouring to modify the Astronomican to sustain the Emperor's essence, and the Thousand Sons' invaluable psychic talents put to use in eliminating the taint of the daemonic



from the very heart of the Imperium, they began to regard Holy Terra as their new home. Quietly, and with the consent of friends among the High Lords of Terra such as Lorgar and Abaddon, the legion fortified and expanded the complex used to carry out the soul-binding ritual into their new fortress-monastery. From this imposing edifice of silver and white, the Thousand Sons select recruits from amongst those psykers brought in by the Black Ships. They are tested in any number of ways, the final one being the ritual of soul-binding. Those who survive are declared ready for training, and for the gene-seed implantation process to begin.

Gene-seed

In the early years of the legion's history there were severe problems with spontaneous mutations, both of the body and among their gene-seed implants. With the advent of the soul-binding the incidences of this dramatically reduced. This communion with the Emperor has been described as alleviating the innate mutability of the Magnus gene-seed, although at the time critics claimed it had more to do with the legion being forced to forego the corrupting influence of sorcery. Despite this, the Thousand Sons still suffer more from spontaneous mutation than any other loyalist legion. Although the use of bionic limbs to replace ones lost in combat is common among the Emperor's Astartes, for the

Thousand Sons the cause is more likely to be due to the effects of progressive mutation.

This instability also extends to the Magnus gene-seed. While it continues to enhance the psychic talent of the recipient, its inherent mutability shows a noticeable decline in implant efficiency within a bare handful of generations. Although this has been remedied by the frequent infusion of fresh gene-stock derived directly from their primarch, this dependence is yet another cause for concern over Magnus' frequent and lengthy disappearances. Even beyond their anxiety over the risk of losing their primogenitor, the Thousand Sons realise that his death would also be the harbinger of their own extinction.

Beliefs

The Thousand Sons believe that the only way humanity as a species can ultimately defeat the Ruinous Powers is for it to gain sufficient psychic strength and fortitude to resist its predations. This brings with it a great dilemma as their very existence, and that of the Emperor, relies upon the Black Ships which bring in a constant harvest of psykers from across the Imperium. How, they ask, can humanity increase its psychic potential when psykers live in fear of the howling mob, and while the finest talents are constantly being removed from the gene-pool?

To this end the legion yearns to reconstitute the original dream of Prospero by creating isolated havens for those with psychic talent. Whenever this has been tried over the millennia it has ended in disaster, either through massed daemonic incursion or resentment from neighbouring cities at the extensive and preferential protection offered by the Thousand Sons to these settlements in times of war. Their staunchest critics leap upon such plans as evidence that the Thousand Sons are intent on the forcible replacement of humanity with those of the 'mutant psyker strain'. There are some amongst the legion who whisper that in the face of such hatred perhaps this would be a good thing. They are, however, in a very small minority, and the legion continues to fight as loyally for the Imperium as it has since the day that Magnus first knelt in fealty to the Emperor.

Battlecry

As the Thousand Sons are able to communicate far better telepathically than with mere words, the legion rarely uses a conventional battlecry. Their silent, coordinated movements, along with their blank-faced helmets all contribute to their otherworldly image, inspiring fear in their enemies and unnerved respect among their allies.

Magnus sat numbly, barely hearing the assembled High Lords as they discussed the defences being erected against the tendrils of Hive-fleet Leviathan. Billions of men, whole battle-fleets were being mobilised to fight and possibly die, and yet it seemed inconsequential compared to what he had learned earlier that day.

He was roused by the representative of the Ecclesiarch – even after all this time it still threw him to see someone else in his friend Lorgar's place. Magnus realised that he had been asked if, during his telepathic communion with the Emperor, the Master of Mankind had deigned to bless their course of action against the xenos breed. His response was that the God-Emperor was indeed pleased by their plans, and that those who fell would be welcomed warmly into the afterlife by the celestial hosts as Imperial martyrs. It was rousing and inspiring, and Magnus wished it had been anything more than a reassuring lie.

In truth it had been centuries since the Emperor had been able to communicate. With each visit his father's spirit grew weaker and weaker, the fractured, screaming elements of His psyche long since having blotted out all coherence. But even that had been better than the pitiful silence he had faced today. Magnus blamed himself for being too slow in the Gathering. If only he had worked harder or even reached out to his brothers he could have found them faster. But what was done was done. There, while the High Lords of Terra ordered the death of worlds, Magnus silently made a decision far more momentous.

The Grey Knights must be assembled before there was nothing left of their father to save.



THE DORNIAN HERESY

INDEX ASTARTES:

BLOOD ANGELS

BY
AURELIUS
REX

Found and raised by the mutant-cannibal tribes of Baal Secundus, Sanguinius grew up despising the normal humans who had tried to murder him as an infant. Taunted with images of his death at the hands of the Emperor, Sanguinius entered into a pact with Nurgle to cloak his true nature, a decision which culminated in the damnation of his entire legion as unwilling, cadaverous plague-carriers. The Blood Angels now raid world after world, driven by the need to obtain fresh, untainted blood to dilute the toxins running through their veins.

Origins

Even before the infant primarch of the Blood Angels came to rest on Baal Secundus, the moon's history was one of a struggle against adversity. Although the moons of Baal had once been home to technologically advanced and bounteous human settlements, terrible wars had long since scoured them away. All that remained of the population were tribes clinging to existence, scavenging for food amongst a landscape turned to irradiated glass and toxic sludge by the atomic and biological weapons of their forefathers. Lacking even the most basic protective equipment against the harsh radioactive environment, mutation and sickness was rife, and only the strongest and most resistant survived.

Life for these scattered tribes of the Changed, as they called themselves, was one shorn of all sentimentality. The shadow of starvation was ever-present, and they did what they must to survive, including eating the flesh of those who had lost the battle for survival, be they friend or foe. The only thing to strike fear into the hearts of the Changed were those creatures known as the Faceless Ones: implacable armies of killers who seemed to exist solely to hunt down and exterminate them. Stripped of their heavy protective suits and characteristic mirrored faceplates they were nothing more than humans, and yet they looked down with contempt upon anyone bearing the stigmata of mutation.

So it was that when a group of Faceless Ones came across the infant primarch lying unprotected in the burning radioactive sands, and saw the stubby wings protruding from his back, they judged him as a mutant abomination.

Had their convoy not then been attacked by a war-party of the Changed, the greatest being ever to set foot on Baal Secundus would have been slain there and then. The ambush at Angel Falls, which had saved the babe's life, was just the latest skirmish in an endless struggle, and the infant primarch grew up harbouring an abiding and righteous hatred of the faceless killers who had tried to murder him. As he matured into robust adulthood, seemingly untouched by the ravages of the world's deadly legacy, he became an object of worship to the

As Rupal raised his spear, ready to plunge it down into the winged child, something made him pause. The creature was plainly a mutant, and yet there was something regal, almost divine about the boy.

In his three decades, Rupal had slain dozens of mutant-cannibals, and yet this child was different. Spear still raised high, he turned back to address his people, ready to make them understand that in some way this boy could mean salvation for their whole planet, when the arrow struck him in the chest.

Rupal stumbled backwards and fell, paralysed by shock and the effect of the poisons. He survived just long enough to see his people running in terror from the ambushing mutants, and their twisted leader bearing down upon the infant angel. With the black hand of death upon his heart, Rupal's final thought was not for himself, or even his tribe, but the desperate hope that the child would be spared.



Changed, and a figure of terror to the Faceless Ones. His wings, now full and plumed with feathers of purest white, gave him the image of an angel, both terrible and divine. For his skill and savagery he became known to both sides as Sanguinius – the Bloody Angel.

The tribes of the Changed flocked to his banner, and sensing that their extinction was at hand, the Faceless Ones also banded together. At Angel Falls, the place the primarch had first been found, a mighty army closed in upon Sanguinius' growing warband. Hemmed in on one side by cliffs, and the guns of their enemy on another, the Changed urged their beloved leader to fly away in the dead of night and save himself, but he would not leave them. The first light of dawn glinting upon Sanguinius's pristine wings signalled the start of a day of carnage unmatched since the world's Great War. Even though the Changed were outnumbered more than five to one, they had been trained in the arts of war by an avatar of destruction who they loved more than life itself.

Allegedly, the tribes of the Changed ate well that night.

Victory at the Battle of Angel Falls broke the power of the Faceless Ones across Baal Secundus, and Sanguinius made certain that they would never rise again. His army scoured every inch of their blasted world, and brought back numberless rad-suits as trophies. In the following years the pile of helmets – each with the mirrored face-plate symbolically smashed – grew steadily at the base of the cliff at Angel Falls. So it was with great ceremony that Sanguinius and his honour guard approached the hiding place of the very last group of Faceless Ones – a damaged bunker complex left over from the war. No barrier or bulkhead

FILE NO. 5BA89N



Post-Heresy Blood Angel

could deflect Sanguinius's righteous anger. He was the Bloody Angel of vengeance right up until the moment the defenders triggered the biological weapon stockpiles the bunker had been built to house.

The lethal pathogens killed Changed and Faceless One alike, and even felled the mighty primarch. In his paralysed state, Sanguinius was haunted by fevered dreams of a great power searching the stars to find him. He was granted visions of being greeted by the Emperor, who at first professed to be his father, but upon discovering his mutation turned upon him and proved to be no better than the Faceless Ones. Sanguinius felt his heart plucked from his chest by the armoured giant at the Emperor's side, and witnessed the genocide of every tribesman of the Changed on Baal Secundus.

In the silent, funereal chill, a voice calling itself *Nurgle* offered Sanguinius a way to avoid this fate for him and his people. It said that the Emperor could be defeated, but only through guile. If

Sanguinius could act the dutiful son, the presence promised to cloak him in a glamour that would shield his true intentions, and make all who laid eyes upon him see only the purest of spirits. Fearing more for his people than for his own life, Sanguinius reluctantly agreed, and awoke. Stumbling from the bunker he saw the Emperor's fleet arriving in orbit, and their drop-ships streaking the night sky with fire.

Protected by Nurgle's glamour, the Emperor, accompanied by Horus, joyfully accepted Sanguinius as his son. To be hailed as *"a pure soul, having grown up unsullied on a world of mutant-cannibals"* tore at Sanguinius, but he continued the charade. Against expectation, even his wings were taken as a

sign of his angelic nature rather than a damning mutation. Sanguinius longed to tear out the Emperor's throat there and then, but the image of his lifeless body at Horus' feet stilled his hand. As a parting gift, the Emperor handed over control of the newly arrived Ninth Legion of the Adeptus Astartes – mighty warriors patterned upon the gene-line of Sanguinius himself. These Terran legionnaires were charged with integrating him into Imperial society, as well as exterminating the mutant tribes so that the settlers, who were to provide the legion's new recruits, would be able to thrive.

Sanguinius was forced to watch helplessly as his legion built funeral pyres of his Changed brothers and sisters, but slowly he came to the point where he could control their actions without raising suspicion. He slowed the purges by ordering the bulk of the legion to Baal Primaris to deal with their mutant population first. This gave him the time he needed to learn all he could about the procedure for creating



new marines, under the pretext that they would need fresh recruits to fulfil the Emperor's Great Crusade. During this time, the choking smog from the pyres made life on Baal Secundus more deadly than ever. At first Sanguinius saw this as a blessing, as the Imperial settlers sickened and became easy prey, while the tribes of Changed, long-inured to such a hostile environment, were little affected. When the apothecaries had completed the last batch of gene-seed, cultured from his own body, Sanguinius recalled the Blood Angels from their pogrom. Then, one by one, he revealed his true nature to them.

Sanguinius fought to control his emotions as the Terran captain, Thoros, spoke of his victories against the 'mutant-cannibal scum' in the southern polar reaches. Clearly unnerved by this personal audience with his primarch, Thoros was trying to impress, but his fate had been sealed the moment he had landed on Baal Secundus with the Emperor. Deciding that he had heard enough, Sanguinius licked his thin, angelic lips and asked the question he had posed each of the Terran Blood Angels who had come before him in the last week:

"Would you bleed for me, my son? Would you... die for me?"

The Great Crusade

Fired with new purpose, Sanguinius set to work reconstituting the Blood Angels with recruits drawn exclusively from his own people, the downtrodden mutant tribes of the Changed. Only the hardiest of individuals were able to survive unprotected on Baal Secundus, and they made excellent candidates. Using the knowledge gleaned from the apothecaries, these new Blood Angel initiates were implanted with gene-seed and entombed for a year within

their sarcophagus-like life-support chambers. They emerged as echoes of their primarch – stronger, taller and far more deadly than before – and took up the armour left by the dead Terran legionnaires.

Though Sanguinius was able to reconstitute the legion's front-line fighting forces, he could not replace the technical knowledge that had been lost. Their forge sat idle, and the only maintenance being carried out was the most basic forms conducted by the legion's servitors. Nurgle spoke to Sanguinius once again, offering aid in this matter in return for being let further into their souls, but the pact was roundly rebuffed. Sanguinius intended that the Blood Angels would rely upon shipments of materiel from the Mechanicus until they had mastered the intricacies of producing what they needed themselves.

Sanguinius yearned to simply build up his forces ready for the time they could kill the Emperor, but mindful of the need to maintain the facade of loyalty, ordered his new Blood Angels to take their place in the Great Crusade. To hide their true nature they rarely fought alongside other legions and kept themselves aloof from the Imperial Army. They always met outsiders wearing full armour, and officers hid their twisted faces beneath beautiful masks of shining gold. Despite all this, rumours of their savagery on the battlefield became legendary, alongside darker tales that they drank the blood and ate the flesh of their enemies.

Though true, such lurid tales were easily eclipsed by the success of the Blood Angel expeditions, but as time went on their momentum began to falter. The legion's lack of technical knowledge meant that everything from their vehicles, armour and even warships were becoming increasingly inefficient and unreliable. Worse still, a malaise hung over the legion, souring their wounds and sapping their vitality. When it was discovered that the worst symptoms of this phage could be alleviated with transfusions of blood,

the exsanguination of their victims turned from cultural habit to full-blown necessity. In the face of such adversity, Sanguinius became increasingly resentful of his patron. Since the pact had been rejected, Nurgle had been silent, with demands about how much longer the Blood Angels would have to keep up the pretence of loyalty going unanswered.

Every world the legion brought into the Imperium depleted their resources further, turning their campaigns into grinding wars of attrition rather than the lightning strikes of their early years. Sanguinius was set to return to Baal Secundus to replenish the legion's ranks when he received an astropathic communiqué from Rogal Dorn, the Emperor's Praetorian. Sanguinius's fear that his true intentions had been found out proved to be correct, but instead of anger, Dorn greeted him warmly, and as a fellow conspirator. He told Sanguinius things that melted his suspicions, and requested that he bring the Blood Angels to Terra while Dorn dealt with the three incorruptible legions on Istvaan.

It was what the Blood Angels had been waiting for, but it couldn't have come at a worse time. Ground down by attrition, sickness and equipment failure, there was little chance of them arriving at Terra in time, and even less of them being in a fit state to kill the Emperor. With a heavy heart, Sanguinius opened his soul to Nurgle, and ordered his brethren to do the same.

The Siege of Terra

To the inhabitants of Terra, the full enormity of Dorn's actions had yet to sink in. The destruction on Istvaan and the imprisonment of the Emperor inside his own palace were all-too familiar to them from the blood-soaked civil wars of the Age of Strife. The appearance of Sanguinius and his Blood Angels as they emerged from their landing ships at the Eternity Wall Spaceport brought home the true nature of Chaos. They were gaunt, cadaverous and marked with weeping sores, yet also revitalised by the power of the



Warp. Even the glamour could not hide what Sanguinius had become, or the fevered, hungry glint in his eyes. To the defenders, Dorn's rebellion had been unthinkable, but the Blood Angels were like something out of a nightmare. Pausing only briefly to feed after their long voyage, Sanguinius led his battle brothers to the Imperial Palace.

Inside, they greeted the demi-legion of Imperial Fists that Dorn had left behind. These palace guards turned prison warders had been charged with trapping the Emperor inside His own armoured bunker of a throne room until Dorn's return from Istvaan. The hatred that Sanguinius felt for the Emperor burned so brightly that in spite of his legion's lack of siege-craft he summoned his Blood Angels from their posts on the palace's outer walls to assault the throne room's fortifications. Unsurprisingly, the attack failed, and in the confusion the Night Lords mounted the unguarded battlements and briefly ran amok, before melting back into the darkness. This led to much tension between Sanguinius and First Captain Sigismund, the commander of the Imperial Fist contingent, and caused even more when the raid's true objectives eventually became apparent.

Dorn's arrival was followed shortly after by that of the vengeful Sons of Horus and the Iron Warriors. This saw the Chaos Legions trying to break into the throne room while at the same time holding off the loyalists besieging the outer palace walls. Eager to redeem their past failure, and to avoid his entire legion being ordered away in disgrace to crush the pockets of resistance that were welling up worldwide, Sanguinius threw himself wholeheartedly into the defence of the palace's outer walls. Their greatest test



came on the 55th day of the siege, when the Iron Warriors breached the Ultimate Gate. As his Blood Angels repelled the enemy and sallied out to destroy their mighty war engines, Sanguinius confronted Perturabo in single combat. Energised by the power of Chaos and seemingly impervious to pain, the Bloody Angel triumphed over his brother primarch, snapping his spine over bended knee. Then, in an act that earned them the eternal hatred of the Iron Warriors, Sanguinius drained the dying Perturabo of blood and contemptuously cast the corpse back amongst his demoralised progeny.

It was then the turn of the Chaos Legions to force a breach of their own, this time against the adamantium walls of the inner throne room. Once inside, it became clear that the Night Lords' earlier attack had in fact been a diversion to allow the Emperor to escape. Sanguinius led his Blood Angels in a rampage across Terra to find their quarry, and everywhere they trod, disease and sickness followed. They rapidly traced the Emperor's new base back to the Astronomicum – an

odd choice given the number of more easily defensible sites available. As they closed in on the Astronomicum, the Blood Angels ran foul of the Emperor's latest trick: reconfiguring the psychic beacon to flare with His presence, which weakened the daemonic across the planet. This affected not just the creatures of the Warp, but the Blood Angels themselves, reliant as they are upon Nurgle's favour.

Though facing the brunt of the loyalist legions, the Blood Angels fought on towards the Astronomicum. Every step and every death brought them closer and closer to the Emperor. They even fought on upon hearing that Dorn's Heresy had died with him, and that the other Chaos Legions were fleeing the planet. All that remained for them was that they reach the critically injured Emperor who had been returned to the Astronomicum. In the face of overwhelming numbers and escalating casualties they fought on, but hope finally died when word reached them that even the berserkers of the Space Wolves had turned their fleet aside.



With bitter resignation, Sanguinius led the Blood Angels back to Eternity Wall Spaceport - the first Chaos Legion to arrive on Terra, and the last to leave.

After the Heresy

In the wake of their defeat on Terra, the Blood Angels returned directly to Baal Secundus. They hoped to reconstitute their dangerously thinned ranks in preparation for a second attempt to kill the Emperor, but instead found their homeworld to be dead. The changes in the atmosphere they had observed before departing on the Great Crusade had greatly accelerated in their absence, shrouding the moon in pestilent, acrid mists. It was unclear if this was a twisted reward from Nurgle for their service, or even a punishment for their ultimate failure on Terra, but in either case the result was the same. The tribes of the Changed, who had survived the Faceless Ones, the pitiless rad-deserts and even the pogroms of the Terran Astartes, had finally been annihilated.

Cursing the name of Nurgle, Sanguinius ordered his legion to divide down to the level of individual grand companies, hoping that smaller, more mobile fleets would be better able to evade the Imperial Navy and cover a wider area to find new recruits to their cause. Though re-building their ranks was their goal, it soon became clear that the plague which afflicted them was far more debilitating than they had suspected. The frequency with which blood transfusions were required to alleviate the symptoms increased, forcing Blood Angel raids to focus more upon securing captives than on recruitment. Worse still, their requirement for healthy subjects meant that simply claiming a world and bleeding it dry was out of the question, as their very presence rapidly tainted the populace with Nurgle's plagues.

The Apothecarion's Sanguinary Priests had to become adept not just at transfusing their brethren, but at transplanting organs to replace those atrophied by the build-up of toxins. In the most severe cases the poisons rotted away the brain itself, causing

violent insanity – the so-called Black Rage – which made them a grave danger to friend and foe alike. Known to their brothers as the Lost, these creatures are locked away in the darkest bowels of the fleet's ships, sustained only by the unholy powers of the Warp.

With this constant drain on their numbers, as well as the grinding battle of simply staying alive, the Blood Angels have instead fallen into taking their pleasure in punishing the Imperial worlds they raid. Sanguinius, however, has never forgotten his original purpose, and moves between his fleets urging them on to build towards the long-delayed second assault on Terra. There is a tension between the Blood Angels and their patron deity that has echoed down the millennia since that first misunderstood pact on Baal Secundus. Nurgle has never been able to force Sanguinius to fully submit to his will, but despite this the Plague God has either been unwilling - or unable - to convert a more pliable legion to his wholehearted worship. It is possible that seeing the Blood Angels desperately battle against the grinding entropy of his 'gifts' holds more interest for Nurgle than that of the blind adoration he receives from his more obedient followers.

Combat Doctrine

Even as a youth, leading his tribes to war against the Faceless Ones, Sanguinius would fly high over the battlefield before swooping down to tear into the heart of the enemy line. This simple joy, from a time before his life was marred by either Nurgle or the Emperor, has been imprinted upon the soul of each and every Blood Angel, and is reflected in the legion's fighting style. Highly mobile Assault squads make up the vanguard of every Blood Angels force, and the competition to gain a place amongst their ranks is fierce. Lacking the technical knowledge required to create or even maintain traditional patterns of Astartes jump-pack, a brother must make his own personal pact to create and empower their daemon-engine. These archaic devices emit a discordant sound more akin to the buzz of a swarm of flies than the roar of turbo-fans. In concert with those of their squad brothers, they come together to strike unnatural harmonics that can send their opponents screaming in terror rather than face them.

In support of the assault wave come infantry squads in vehicles that despite their ramshackle and corroded appearance can produce a remarkable

As if in response to Sanguinary Priest Pelter's presence, the sounds of scratching from inside the sigil-engraved case rose from insistent to frenzied. Pelter unfastened the catch and threw back the lid, and into the air rose a score of insects, each the size of a human hand. They were not like the ubiquitous clouds of flies that followed the legion, but forged from brass to bind and house a minor daemonic entity. They were yet another example of the Rite-Master's craft, able to identify those suitable for exsanguination and organ harvesting. Without them, the legion would long-since have fallen to ruin.

The swarm rose, and then moved towards the ragged lines of captives the Blood Angels had assembled. They quailed before the approach insects, but it was a sign of the terror instilled by the Astartes that not a single captive broke and ran. Verdigris-mottled insects landed upon petrified faces to sample tears, or capered across bandaged wounds to dab at the blood beneath with shining, syringe-like tongues. Alarmed by the high-pitched trill signalling tissue compatibility, one of the captives scrambled at the metal insect, shredding his hands on the blades of its iridescent wings. It tumbled to the ground, and was roughly stamped beneath heavy boots until the entity was released from its casing. Before the stench of putrescence and brimstone had dispersed, Pelter had the man pulled from the crowd. He had to make an example of him, and after all, it would be a shame to let compatible blood go to waste...



turn of speed. These Tactical and Havoc squads provide invaluable covering fire, and once the battle is over they cordon the enemy survivors so that they can be tested for tissue compatibility by the Sanguinary Priests. Some of those that remain are gifted by the commander to slake the thirsts of the brethren he deems to have fought most valiantly, but the majority are allowed to live. However, this is not done out of kindness. In their flight to other settlements, these refugees carry the seeds of sickness across the land.

When the Blood Angels wish to ensure the downfall of a planet they will delay their return to the plague fleets and focus their attention beyond small-scale raids. In such instances they unleash the full power of their necrotic arsenal, and become true harbingers of Nurgle's power. The land sickens and the cloying stench of death fills the air. Clouds of flies blot out the sun and the ground becomes slick with decomposing vegetation. Victims of diseases in outlying settlements are herded in their millions against the defender's strongholds. Only when the enemy's morale is at its lowest ebb and stocks of ammunition run low do the Blood Angels finally attack.

Such strategies are effective against all but the most stalwart of opponents, and yet there is one final, terrible, weapon in their armoury: the mindless hordes of the Lost. Though they are undeniably lethal on the battlefield, the Lost are completely uncontrollable, unable to distinguish former friends from foes. Beyond such tactical considerations, the Lost are terrible reminders of the fate that lies in store for them all. For this reason only the direst of circumstances would prompt a Blood Angel commander to sanction their use on the battlefield.

Organisation

The Blood Angels retain the same basic organisational structure they had during the Great Crusade, and revere Sanguinius as their primarch and wellspring of their existence. However, their renegade status, along with the need to raid far and wide to stave off

It was in the deepest level of the deserted fortress-monastery that they found the bones: piles and piles of them stretching out in every direction. They had found hundreds of such sites across Baal Secundus, but as Captain Garro stepped out upon them he realised that this one was different. They had not splintered to dust beneath his armoured boots as a normal bone would have. Kneeling down to examine them closer brought the realisation that this was not just another bone-pit, but the grave of thousands upon thousands of Astartes. He picked a femur from the piles and saw, with an icy chill, that in spite of its ceramically toughened nature, it showed definite signs of having been gnawed.

Before he could ponder the significance of what lay before him, the call came from Mortarion himself to withdraw back to the Stormbirds. As they cautiously made their way back through the catacombs, Garro noticed Brother Decius shudder and grip at his arm. Despite his protégé's protests, the warp-creature's knife had clearly caused him more harm than he was admitting. This whole planet was death incarnate, and the sooner Decius had the wound treated by Apothecary Voyer the happier Garro would be.

the Black Rage, has necessitated that the legion fragment down to the level of individual grand companies. Because of the vast distances that separate the plague fleets, each grand company captain has a great deal of independence and autonomy, although on occasion two or more fleets will converge to carry out particularly large and audacious attacks.

Each grand company, indeed, each ship in the plague fleet, has its own cadre of Sanguinary Priests and Rite Masters; powerful individuals who wield great influence. Without the Sanguinary Priests of the Apothecarion to hold the Black Rage at bay, the Blood Angels would rapidly descend into little better than mindless beasts. The Rite Masters are responsible for the legion's ships, armour and weapons. Much of the technical knowledge for proper maintenance was lost during Sanguinius's bloody reformation of the original legion, and that which survived was useless in the face of Nurgle's corrosive influence. Instead, the Rite Masters use their sorcery to bind and compel the myriad daemonic entities that inhabit everything from the plague ships, to their vehicles and even the armour they wear.

Moving between the different plague fleets, accompanied by his honour guard of ancient veterans, is Sanguinius himself. While other

primarchs who turned to Chaos have long-since ascended to daemon princehood, Sanguinius remains as mortal and terrible as he was during the Siege of Terra. Just to be in the presence of Sanguinius, to learn from his millennia of experience and to replenish depleted stocks of gene-seed fills the grand company with renewed will and purpose. Much is expected of a fleet accompanied by Sanguinius, and the penalty for displeasing the primarch is to meet the same macabre fate as befell the legion's original Terran Astartes.

Being a fleet based legion, the Blood Angels take every opportunity to bring more ships into their service. They do this not just by boarding and claiming other vessels, but by infecting the crew with Nurgle's plagues, leaving them as ghost-ships which can be easily tracked. The most audacious example of this was at Port Maw in M34, when a seemingly minor raid allowed the Blood Angels to contaminate the supplies for much of Battlefleet Gothic. More than forty vessels, including a dozen capital ships, fell in their entirety to the contagion and became a part of the plague fleet.

Homeworld

After the Heresy, with nothing left on Baal Secundus for them to call home, the Blood Angels became fleet-based, the better to raid the Imperium. Unlike



most of the Chaos Legions they have never felt the draw of the Eye of Terror, and have certainly not been lured by the offer of inhabiting a daemon-world created in Nurgle's image. Though the Blood Angels had already turned their back on the place, Abaddon's massed Crusades against the homes of the Chaos Legions drew them inexorably there. By this point the changes wrought by Nurgle were so advanced that even Mortarion of the Death Guard, brought up breathing the noxious chemical smog of Barbarus, would not risk setting foot on the planet without his armour tightly sealed. The loyalists found something approaching a daemon-world, inhabited only by shambling warp entities of the Plague god. The Imperial forces withdrew to orbit, and subjected Baal Secundus to a sustained atomic bombardment which exceeded even that of its Great War in its ferocity.

The thrice devastated moon was declared *Perditia* and quarantined by the Imperium until it was swallowed by the ever-expanding borders of Ultramar Segmentum. Be it through arrogance or ignorance, the Ultramarines chose to settle what remained of the moon. The subsequent plague and the renegade actions of the chapter founded to guard the area sent convulsions through the realm for nearly a century afterwards.

Recruitment

Although the tribes of the Changed on Baal Secundus are now but a memory,

mutants can be found on the fringes of every human society. Captives bearing the stigmata are thrown into the stygian, foetid darkness of the ship's holds, and those resilient enough to survive until their captors have finished their work on the organ-harvesting and exsanguination decks are tested further for compatibility with the Blood Angel gene-seed. If deemed worthy, aspirants are subjected to batteries of surgical procedures and blood-rites to implant and initiate the Sanguinius gene-seed, before being entombed within a medicae sarcophagus for a year. These arcane mechanisms feed and guide the changes wrought by the various implants so that when it finally opens, they emerge bloody, but transformed, an echo of their cadaverous primarch. Through a combination of psycho-indoctrination and gene-line transference they become imprinted with memories and character traits from Sanguinius's earliest days on Baal Secundus. In this way they are reborn sharing an unbreakable bond and a unified purpose.

Those who fail the selection procedures serve the legion for the rest of their lives, guarding and tending to their Astartes lords as they slumber within their sarcophagi. In part this is due to fear, but a more powerful motivation is the desperate hope that their actions might prompt their masters to deem them worthy to become Astartes after all. Given the myriad diseases that proliferate aboard the Blood Angels' fleets, the life expectancy of most of these serfs is

measured in weeks or months. Some, however, gain the favour of Nurgle and build a symbiotic relationship with their diseases, treating every new sore and pustule as an agonising blessing.

Gene-seed

The original gene-seed borne by the Terran legionnaires of the Ninth Legion was stable, efficient and pure, but they, along with their gene-line were wiped from existence. Unknown to Sanguinius, just as Nurgle had polluted his soul, he had also tainted his flesh, and in turn the implants prepared from it to create the new Blood Angels. Because of this the gene-line of Sanguinius has become a curse, acting as a mark of Nurgle upon every marine who bears it. These implants act more like a single parasitic organism than mere lumps of flesh. They aggressively drain nutrients and vitality from their host, causing the Blood Angel's characteristic gaunt, cadaverous appearance. In turn the implants produce a seemingly endless array of potent diseases to which the marine becomes a carrier. The gene-seed shields the host from the worst of the symptoms, and also protects itself by making the bearer remarkably resilient to damage, or at least heedless of its effects until after the battle has ended.

The effect of all this is a build-up of toxins in the bloodstream which damages the organs, and if left unchecked they penetrate the brain causing the insanity of the Black Rage. The Sanguinary Priests treat the symptoms by administering frequent transfusions of uninfected blood, although in extremis it can be drunk and utilised by the body via a unique adaptation to the premonor implant, or second stomach. The Blood Angels spend much of the long warp-journeys between raids inside their sarcophagi, waking only as the next planet approaches. Each sarcophagus incorporates arcane life support equipment which filters the toxin from their blood and allows the marine to enter an enhanced state of suspended animation to slow down his constant decline.

Sergeant Yorah of the World Eaters brought his chain-axe around in a tight arc and decapitated the skittering mutant thing in mid-leap. They were getting bogged down, and every second brought this hulk of a plague ship closer to the planet. He ordered Brother Kellion to clear the corridor with his heavy bolter and checked the auspex for the best route to the life-support systems. They were so few – a single squad against a whole enemy ship – that their only chance was to destroy the Blood Angels before they could awaken.

In the seconds it had taken Yorah to pinpoint the correct path, his auspex had filled with encroaching blips. Despite the danger, he urged his brethren on into the fray. They were the sons of Angron, unmatched in martial discipline. They would prevail against this Chaos rabble.



Though the gene-seed wreaks a terrible toll on its host, this becomes far worse if the implants are damaged in any way. In order to regenerate they draw even more harshly on the body's resources and release potent toxins, necessitating further transfusions and transplants. Needless to say, the only time that a Blood Angel's progenoid glands are removed is at the point of death, as to do otherwise would invite debilitating sickness.

Beliefs

Although the principle that has guided the Blood Angels is to bring about the

death of the Emperor, in practice this is all-too often obscured by the need to quench their thirsts with the blood of their victims. Despite the fates of Sanguinius and the Blood Angels being intrinsically tied to that of Nurgle, the relationship is very different to that of the cult legions of the other Chaos Gods. Where the Space Wolves, Raven Guard and White Scars are eager devotees, the Blood Angels spread disease across the galaxy not for the love of it, but to hurt the hated Imperium. They also have little choice, needing to raid far and wide to obtain the untainted blood they need to

survive, and are well aware that to achieve Nurgle's aim of infecting the entire galaxy would ultimately lead to their own extinction.

Battle Cry

During the Great Crusade the Blood Angels were careful to give no cause for suspicion and went into battle swearing allegiance to the Emperor. Since the Heresy they are far more honest and open about their loyalties and motivations, and the battle cry "*For blood and for Sanguinius!*" has risen to prominence.





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